



Except for the letter *Yud*, every letter in the *Aleph-Bais* is a composite of others letters. For example, a *Mem* (מ) is comprised a *Chof* (כ) to the right, and a *Vav* (ו) to the left, which have a combined *gematria* of *twenty-six*, the numerical value of the holy *Shem Hovayab*. That already says a lot about the letter.

At the beginning of *Parashas Terumah*, the *Ba'al HaTurim* points out that the word *terumah* is the word *Torah* with the addition of a *Mem*. The message? Only those who learn the *Torah* that was given over *forty* days to *Moshe Rabbeinu* are fitting to eat *terumah*.

Not just over forty days, but over forty years of wandering in the desert. Even though the sin of the spies was the reason for the thirty-nine extra years, it seems to have been more of a pretext, what the verses calls *alillus*:

Go and see the works of God, awesome—alillab—in deed toward mankind. (Tehillim 66:5)

The significance of forty is seen here:

From the third day until the fortieth, one should pray that it will be male. (*Brochos* 60a)

This is because the soul enters the body at forty days, at which time its gender is finalized.¹ This means that forty is a number that indicates the end of a gestation or ripening process, be it physical *or* spiritual.²

This is why the Flood rained down for forty days and nights. God was making a new world, and it needed forty days to form. This is also why Moshe spent forty days on Mt. Sinai, three times in a row, each time representing a different level of spiritual development of Moshe himself, whose name begins with *Mem*. He was also the first one to live until 120 years, which is also three sets of forty years.

Rebi Akiva as well, and his life was divided into three periods of forty years each: forty years as a shepherd, forty years as a student, and forty years as the leader of the Jew-

¹ Until that time, if the gender is not yet established by some other means, it is possible for prayer to impact the gender of a child without it being considered the kind of open miracle that could be deducted from a person's merits in the World to Come (*Shabbos* 32a).

² *Bechoros* 41b.

ish people.³ Likewise, Rebi Yochanan *ben Zakkai* spent forty years doing business, forty years learning Torah, and forty years teaching Torah.⁴ Yitzchak *Avimu* married Rivkah when he was forty.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* spent forty years in Pharaoh's palace, forty years in Midian, and then led the Jewish people for his last forty years.⁵ At forty years of age, a person is said to attain insight,⁶ and it also takes forty years for a student to understand the wisdom of their teacher.⁷ For this reason, *Kabbalah* should not be learned, and *balachic* decisions should not be rendered until reaching forty years of age.⁸

Along these lines, the *Gemora* states that learning something in repetition forty times will commit it to memory.⁹ Perhaps this is why a sinner doesn't just get thirty-nine lashes for violating a negative commandment, but forty less one. Had the person learned the law forty times, he wouldn't have come to sin or the lashes that followed.

According to the *Zohar*, the period of *Techiyas HaMeisim*, the resurrection of the dead, is destined to be-

³ *Sifre, Devarim* 34:7.

⁴ *Sanbedrin* 41a.

⁵ *Bereishis Rabbah* 100:11.

⁶ *Pirkei Avos* 5:21.

⁷ *Avodah Zarah* 5b.

⁸ *Sbach, Yoreh Deab*, 246:4. Obviously there are and have been exceptions to this.

⁹ *Pesachim* 72a.

gin after forty years from the time of *Kibbutz Golios*, the ingathering of the exiles.¹⁰ The truth is, *Kibbutz Golios* has been going on now for hundreds of years with waves of aliyah since the time of the Vilna *Gaon* at least. Was the *Zobar* wrong in its calculation?

In the same discussion, the *Zobar* also mentions that *Techiyas HaMeisim* will only last 210 years according to Rebi Yehudah, and 214 years to Rebi Yitzchak. This would put the beginning of the forty years at 5790, or as early as 5786.¹¹ We are currently in the year 5785, one and five years earlier than these dates.

Forty years prior to 5790 was 5750 or 1990, and before 5786 was 5746 or 1986, two watershed years in recent Jewish history. Russia inexplicably collapsed financially between these years and was compelled to let Jews freely leave the country to secure financial assistance from the West. This resulted in a dramatic change to the Jewish population in *Eretz Yisroel*.

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, triggering Operation Desert Storm and leading to the toppling of Saddam Hussein. That was the good news. The bad news was that the operation encouraged a coalition between American and the Arab world that signaled the waning of Jewish influence in American politics.

¹⁰ *Midrash Ne'elam, Parashas Toldos* 140a.

¹¹ This world will only last six thousand years (*Sanbedrin* 97a), and 6000 less 210 is 5790, and less 214 is 5786.

This, together with other factors seems to be part of a development process of reducing Jewish attachment to and dependence on the West, as part of *Kibbutz Golios*. Therefore, though the process may have begun long ago, it shifted into a higher gear as of 1990, forty years before the time that *Techiyas HaMeisim* is supposed to begin.