3D Parsha: A Multidimensional Approach to the Topics You Thought You Knew

# Three Lessons From Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai

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#### :גמרא יבמות ס"ב

ַרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר: לָמֵד תּוֹרָה בְּיַלְדוּתוֹ — יִלְמוֹד תּוֹרָה בְּזִקְנוּתוֹ. הָיוּ לוֹ תַּלְמִידִים בְּיֵלְדוּתוֹ — יִהְיוּ לוֹ תַּלְמִידִים בְּזִקְנוּתוֹ, שָׁנֶּאֱמֵר: ״בַּבֹּקֶר זְרַע אֶת זַרְעֶךְ וְגוֹ״. אָמְרוּ: שְׁנֵים עֶשָׂר אָלֶף זוּגִים תַּלְמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ לְרַבִּי עֵקִיבָא מִגְּבָת עַד אַנְטִיפְרַס, וְכוּלָּן מֵתוּ בְּפֶרֶק אֶחָד, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹא נָהָגוּ כָּבוֹד זֶה לָזֶה.

Rabbi Akiva says that the verse should be understood as follows: If one studied Torah in his youth he should study more Torah in his old age; if he had students in his youth he should have additional students in his old age, as it is stated: "In the morning sow your seed, etc." They said by way of example that Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of students in an area of land that stretched from Gevat to Antipatris in Judea, and they all died in one period of time, because they did not treat each other with respect.

ּוְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם שָׁמֵם, עַד שֶׁבָּא רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֵצֶל רַבּוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבַּדָּרוֹם וּשְׁנָאָהּ לָהֶם: רַבִּי מֵאִיר, וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה, וְרַבִּי יוֹסֵי, וְרַבִּי שָׁמְעוֹן, וְרַבִּי אֶלעָזָר בָּן שְׁמוּעַ, וְהֵם הֶם הֶעֵמִידוּ תּוֹרָה אוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה.

And the world was desolate of Torah until Rabbi Akiva came to our Rabbis in the South and taught his Torah to them. This second group of disciples consisted of Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yosei, Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua. And these are the very ones who upheld the study of Torah at that time. Although Rabbi Akiva's earlier students did not survive, his later disciples were able to transmit the Torah to future generations.

תַנָא, כּוּלַם מֶתוּ מִפֶּסַח וְעַד עַצֵרֶת.

With regard to the twelve thousand pairs of Rabbi Akiva's students, the Gemara adds: It is taught that all of them died in the period from Passover until *Shavuot*..

## פניני הלכה, זמנים ה׳:ה׳:ב׳

כבר מאות שנים נוהגים במירון, ליד קברו של רבי שמעון בר יוחאי, להדליק מדורה לכבוד הילולת רבי שמעון בר יוחאי. ואף בשאר מקומות נוהגים חסידים להדליק מדורות בל"ג בעומר. ויש שנהגו להדליק נרות בבית הכנסת לכבוד ההילולא. For hundreds of years, there has been a custom to light a large bonfire near R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's grave on Mount Meron, in honor of his *hilula*. Ḥasidim have a custom to light bonfires in other places as well. Some light candles in their synagogues in commemoration of the *hilula*.

#### <u>משנה יומא ח׳:ט׳</u>

אמר רבי עקיבא, אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, ומי מטהר אתכם, אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר, [יחזקאל לו:כה] "וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם." ואומר, [ירמיה יז:יג] "מקוה ישראל ה'", מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים, אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל.

R. Akiva says, Happy are you, Israel! Before whom are you purified, and who purifies you [of your transgressions]? Your Father Who is in heaven. For it is said, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean"; and it is also said, "The ritual bath [lit. Hope] of Israel is the Lord"; even as a ritual bath purifies the unclean, so does the Holy One, Blessed be He, purify Israel.

## <u>אבות דרבי נתן ו':ב'</u>

מה היה תחלתו של רבי עקיבא. אמרו בן ארבעים שנה היה ולא שנה כלום. פעם אחת היה עומד על פי הבאר אמר מי חקק אבן זו אמרו לא המים שתדיר [נופלים] עליה בכל יום אמרו [לו] עקיבא אי אתה קורא אבנים שחקו מים. מיד היה רבי עקיבא דן קל וחומר בעצמו מה רך פסל את הקשה דברי תורה שקשה כברזל על אחת כמה וכמה שיחקקו את לבי שהוא בשר ודם. מיד חזר ללמוד תורה.

(2) What were Akiva's beginnings? It is said: Up to the age of forty, he had not yet studied a thing. One time, while standing by the mouth of a well in Lydda, he inquired, "Who hollowed out this stone?" and was told, "Akiva, haven't you read that 'water wears away stone' (Job 14:19)? - it was water falling upon it constantly, day after day." At that, Rabbi Akiva asked himself: Is my mind harder than this stone? I will go and study at least one section of Torah.

#### שירי ל״ג בעומר

(יב) **בָּר יוֹחָאי,** נָאָזַרָתַּ בָּגָבוּרָה, וּבְמַלְחֶמֶת אֱשׁ דַּת הַשְּׁעַרָה, וְחֵרֵב הוֹצֶאתַ מְתַּעַרָה, שַׁלְפָתַּ נַגֶּד צֹרְרֵיךְ:

(יג) בַּר יוֹחַאי, נִמִשַּׁחְתַּ אַשְּׁרֵיךָ, שֵׁמֵן שַשׁוֹן מֵחֲבֵרֵיךָ:

## <u>שבת ל"ג ב:ה'-ט'</u>

וְאַמַּאי קָרוּ לֵיהּ ״רֹאשׁ הַמְדַבְּרִים בְּכָל מָקוֹם״? דְּיָתְבִי רָבִּי יְהוּדָה וְרַבִּי יִּוֹסְי וְרַבִּי שָׁמְעוֹן, וְיָתֵיב יְהוּדָה בֶּן גַּרִים גַּבַּיְיהוּ. פָּתַח רַבִּי יְהוּדָה וְאָמַר: כַּמָּה נָאִים מַּעֲשֵׂיהֶן שֶׁל אוּמָּה זוֹ: תִּקְנוּ שְׁוָוִקִים, תִּקְנוּ גְּשָׁרִים, תִּקְנוּ מֶרְחֲצָאוֹת. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי שְׁתַק. נַעֲנָה רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַאי וְאָמַר: כל מַה שֶּׁתִּקְנוּ, לֹא תִּקְנוּ אֶלָא לְצוֹרֶךְ עַצְמָן. תִּקְנוּ שְׁוֹלִין — לְהוֹשִׁיב בָּהֶן זוֹנוֹת, מֶרְחֲצָאוֹת — לְעַדֵּן בָּהֶן עַצְמָן, גְּשָׁרִים — לִיטּוֹל מֵהֶן מֶכֶס. הָלַךְ יְהוּדָה בֶּן גֵּרִים וְסִיפֵּר דִּבְרֵיהֶם, וְנִשְׁמְעוּ לַמַּלְכוּת. אָמְרוּ: יְהוּדָה שֶׁעִילָּה – יִהָּרֵג. יוֹסֵי שֶׁשְּׁתַן — יִגְלֶה לְצִיפּוֹרִי. שָׁמְעוֹן שֶׁגִּינָּה – יֵהָרֵג.

אָזַל הוּא וּבְרֵיהּ, טְשׁוֹ בֵּי מִדְרְשָׁא.כל יוֹמָא הֲוָה מַתְיָא לְהוּ דְּבֵיתָהוּ רִיפְּתָּא וְכוּזָא דְמַיָּא וְכָרְכִי. כִּי תְּקֵיף גְּזֵירְתָא אֲמַר לֵיהּ לְבְרֵיהּ: נָשִׁים דַּעְתָּן קַלָּה עֲלֵיהֶן, דִילְמָא מְצַעֲרִי לַהּ וּמְגַלְיָא לַן. אָזַלוּ טְשׁוֹ בִּמְעָרְתָּא. אִיתְרְחִישׁ נִיסָּא אִיבְּרִי לְהוּ חָרוּבָא וְעֵינַא דְמַיַּא, וַהַווֹ מֵשִׁלְחִי מַנַיִיהוּ וַהַווֹ יָתָבִי עַד צָּוָארַיִיהוּ בָּחַלָא. כּוּלֵי יוֹמֵא גַּרְסִי. בְּעִידָּן צַלוֹיֵי לְבִשִּׁי מִיכַּסּוּ וּמִצְלוּ, וַהַדְּר ַמַשְׁלְחִי מָנַיִיהוּ כִּי הֵיכִי דְּלָא לִיבְלוּ. אִיתִּיבוּ תְּרֵיסַר שְׁנֵי בִּמְעָרְתָּא. אֲתָא אֵלְיָהוּ וְקָם אַפִּיתְחָא דִמְעָרְתָּא, אֲמַר: מַאן לוֹדְעֵיהּ לְבַר יוֹחַי דְּמִית קֵיסַר וּבָטִיל גָּזֵירְתֵיהּ.

ּנְפַקּוּ, חֲזוֹ אִינָשֵׁי דְּקָא כָּרְבִי וְזָרָעִי, אָמְרִין: מַנִּיחִין חַיֵּי עוֹלָם וְעוֹסְקִין בְּחַיֵּי שָׁעָה. כל מָקוֹם שָׁנּוֹתְנִין עֵינֵיהֶן מִיָּד נִשְּׂרָף. יָצְתָה בַּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לָהֶם: לְהַחֲרִיב עוֹלָמִי יְצָאתֶם?! חִיזְרוּ לְמְעָרַתְכֶם! הֲדוּר אֲזוּל אִיתִּיבוּ תְּרֵיסַר יַרְחֵי שַׁתָּא. אָמְרִי: מִשְּׁפַּט רְשָׁעִים בְּגֵיהִנָּם שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ. יְצְתָה בַּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה: צְאוּ מִמְּעָרַתְּכֶם! נְפַקוּ. כָּל הֵיכָא דַּהְוָה מָחֵי רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר, הֲוָה מַסֵּי רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן. אָמַר לוֹ: בְּנִי, דַּי לָעוֹלָם אֲנִי וְאָתָּה.

בַּהֲדֵי פַּנְיָא דְּמַעֲלֵי שַׁבְּתָא חֲזוֹ הָהוּא סָבָא דַּהְוָה נָקֵיט תְּרֵי מַדָּאנֵי אָסָא וְרְהֵיט בֵּין הַשְּׁמְשׁוֹת. אֲמַרוּ לֵיהּ: הָנֵי לְמָה לָךְ? אֲמֵר לְהוּ: לָכְבוֹד שַׁבָּת. וְתִיסְגֵּי לָךְ בְּחַד! — חַד כְּנֶגֶד ״זָכוֹר״ וְחַד כְּנֶגֶד ״שָׁמוֹר״. אֲמַר לֵיהּ לִבְרֵיהּ: חֲזִי כַּמָּה חֲבִיבִין מִצְוֹת על ישׂראל. איַתִיבה דּעתּיִיהוּ.

ּשְׁמַע רַבִּי פִּנְחָס בֶּן יָאִיר חַתְּנֵיהּ וּנְפַק לְאַפֵּיהּ. עִיְילֵיהּ לְבֵי בָנֵי, הָוָה קא אָרֵיךּ לֵיהּ לְבִישְׁרֵיהּ. חָזָא דַּהָוָה בֵּיהּ פִּילֵי בְּגוּפֵיהּ. הָוָה קא בָּכֵי וְקָא נָתְרָן דִּמְעָת עֵינֵיהּ וְקָמְצַוְּחָא לֵיהּ. אָמַר לוֹ: אוֹי לִי שֶׁרְאִיתִיךְ בְּכָךְ. אָמַר לוֹ: אַשְׁרֶיךְ שְׁרְאִיתַנִי בְּכָךְ שְׁלְא נָיבּּרְ, שְׁרְאִיתָנִי בְּכָךְ — לֹא מָצָאתָ בִּי כָּךָ. דְּמֵעִיקָּרָא כִּי הָוָה מַקְשֵׁי רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי עָשְׂרִין פְּנְחָס בֶּן יָאִיר קּוּשְׁיָא — הָוָה מְפָרֵק לֵיהּ רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי עֶשְׂרִין פְּנְחָס בָּן יָאִיר קּוּשְׁיָא — הָוָה מְפָרֵק לֵיהּ רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בָּן יוֹחַי עֵשְׂרִין אְיִרִּן.

In this baraita Rabbi Yehuda is described as head of the speakers in every place. The Gemara asks: And why did they call him head of the speakers in every place? The Gemara relates that this resulted due to an incident that took place when Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Shimon were sitting, and Yehuda, son of converts, sat beside them. Rabbi Yehuda opened and said: How pleasant are the actions of this nation, the Romans, as they established marketplaces, established bridges, and established bathhouses. Rabbi Yosei was silent. Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai responded and said: Everything that they established, they established only for their own purposes. They established marketplaces, to place prostitutes in them; bathhouses, to pamper themselves; and bridges, to collect taxes from all who pass over them. Yehuda, son of converts, went and related their statements to his household, and those statements continued to spread until they were heard by the monarchy. They ruled and said: Yehuda, who elevated the Roman regime, shall be elevated and appointed as head of the Sages, the head of the speakers in every place. Yosei, who remained silent, shall be exiled from his home in Judea as punishment, and sent to the city of Tzippori in the Galilee. And Shimon, who denounced the government, shall be killed.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai and his son, Rabbi Elazar, went and hid in the study hall. Every day Rabbi Shimon's wife would bring them bread and a jug of water and they would eat. When the decree intensified, Rabbi Shimon said to his son: Women are easily impressionable and, therefore, there is room for concern lest the authorities torture her and she reveal our whereabouts. They went and they hid in a cave. A miracle occurred and a carob tree was created for them as well as a spring of water. They would remove their clothes and sit covered in sand up to their necks. They would study Torah all day in that manner. At the time of prayer, they would dress, cover themselves, and pray, and they would again remove their clothes afterward so that they would not become tattered. They sat in the cave for twelve years. Elijah the Prophet came and stood at the entrance to the cave and said: Who will inform bar Yoḥai that the emperor died and his decree has been abrogated?

They emerged from the cave, and saw people who were plowing and sowing. Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai said: These people abandon eternal life of Torah study and engage in temporal life for their own sustenance. The Gemara relates that every place that Rabbi Shimon and his son Rabbi Elazar directed their eyes was immediately burned. A Divine Voice emerged and said to them: Did you emerge from the cave in order to destroy My world? Return to your cave. They again went and sat there for twelve months. They said: The judgment of the wicked in Gehenna lasts for twelve months. Surely their sin was atoned in that time. A Divine Voice emerged and said to them: Emerge from your cave. They emerged. Everywhere that Rabbi Elazar would strike, Rabbi Shimon would heal. Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi Elazar: My son, you and I suffice for the entire world, as the two of us are engaged in the proper study of Torah.

As the sun was setting on Shabbat eve, they saw an elderly man who was holding two bundles of myrtle branches and running at twilight. They said to him: Why do you have these? He said to them: In honor of Shabbat. They said to him: And let one suffice. He answered them: One is corresponding to: "Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8), and one is corresponding to: "Observe the Shabbat day, to keep it holy" (Deuteronomy 5:12). Rabbi Shimon said to his son: See how beloved the mitzvot are to Israel. Their minds were put at ease and they were no longer as upset that people were not engaged in Torah study.

Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir, Rabbi Shimon's son-in-law, heard and went out to greet him. He brought him into the bathhouse and began tending to his flesh. He saw that Rabbi Shimon had cracks in the skin on his body. He was crying, and the tears fell from his eyes and caused Rabbi Shimon pain. Rabbi Pineḥas said to Rabbi Shimon, his father-in-law: Woe is me, that I have seen you like this. Rabbi Shimon said to him: Happy are you that you have seen me like this, as had you not seen me like this, you would not have found in me this prominence in Torah, as the Gemara relates: At first, when Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai would raise a difficulty, Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir would raise a difficulty, Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir would raise a difficulty, Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai would respond with twenty-four answers.

### <u>דברים רבה ז':ח'</u>

אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי, מִנַּיִן אַתָּה אוֹמֵר אִלּוּ הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲסֵרִים אֲפִלּוּ אָדָם אֶחָד לֹא הָיְתָה הַשְּׁכִינָה נִגְּלֵית עֲלֵיהֶן, דְּכְתִיב (שמות יט, יא): כִּי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִשִׁי יֵרֵד ה' לְעֵינֵי כָל הָעָם עַל הַר סִינָי,

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: From where do we learn that if a single person had been missing from Israel, the Divine Presence would not have appeared to them? Because it is written: For on the third day, the L-rd will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:11; Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy 7:8)

"Great is G-d's love for Israel, for He revealed Himself to them in a land of uncleanliness and idol worship (Egypt) in order to free them from there."

Again, Rabbi Shimon said: "See how beloved Israel is to the Holy One, blessed be He, for wherever they went into exile, the Divine Presence (Shechinah) went with them: they were exiled to Egypt, and the Shechinah went with them; they were exiled to Babylon, and again the Shechinah went with them. And when Israel will be redeemed in the future, the Shechinah will be redeemed with them, as it is written, 'And G-d, thy G-d, will return (with) thy exile.' "