

## THE POTENTIAL AND THE PRESENT

### Background

**R**abbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the *Zohar* (according to many), was one of the greatest *Tanaim*. He spent twelve years of uninterrupted study in the cave and came out to view the world with a different eye. Yet apparently, HASHEM wasn't pleased with this viewpoint. HASHEM told him to go back to the cave for another year, and when he came back out, it was with a different way of looking at things.

### Questions

**W**hen Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai first came out of the cave, was he correct or incorrect in his worldview? If he was wrong, then HASHEM should have chastised him as a murderer. If he was correct, then why did he have to go back for another year?

#### תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף לג/ב

אזל הוא ובריה טשו בי מדרשא כל יומא הוה מייתי להו דביתהו ריפתא וכוזא דמיא וכרכי כי תקיף גזירתא אמר ליה לבריה נשים דעתן קלה עליהן דילמא מצערי לה ומגליא לן אזלו טשו במערתא איתרחיש ניסא איברי להו חרובא ועינא דמיא והוּו משלחי מנייהו והוּו יתבי עד צוארייהו בחלא כולי יומא גרסי בעידן צלויי לבשו מיכסו ומצלו והדר משלחי מנייהו כי היכי דלא ליבלו איתבו תריסר שני במערתא אתא אליהו וקם אפיתחא דמערתא אמר מאן לודעיה לבר יוחי דמית קיסר ובטיל גזירתיה נפקו חזו אינשי דקא כרבי וזרעי אמר מניחין חיי עולם ועוסקין בחיי שעה כל מקום שנותנין עיניהן מיד נשרף יצתה בת קול ואמרה להם להחריב עולמי יצאתם חיזרו למערכתכם הדור אזול איתבו תריסר ירחי שתא אמרי משפט רשעים בגיהנם שנים עשר חדש יצתה בת קול ואמרה צאו ממערכתכם נפקו כל היבא דהוה מחי רבי אלעזר הוה מסי רבי שמעון אמר לו בני די לעולם אני ואתה

*Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son [fled from the Romans and] hid in the Bais Medrash. Every day, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's wife would bring them bread and a pitcher of water. When the decree became more severe, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said to his son, "Women are light-minded. They may torture her, and she will reveal our hiding place."*

*They went to hide in a cave. A miracle occurred, and a carob tree and a stream of water were created to sustain them. All day, they would sit up to their necks in sand and involve themselves in learning. When it was time to daven, they would put on their clothes.*

*They remained in the cave for twelve years. One day, Eliyahu came to the mouth of the cave and said, "Who will inform Bar Yochai that the Caesar has died and the decree has been annulled?"*

*When they left the cave, they saw a man plowing and planting. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said, "They leave eternal life for momentary life." Whatever the two would look at would be destroyed. A heavenly voice came out and said, "Have you come out to destroy My world? Go back to your cave."*

*They returned to the cave and remained there for twelve more months. A heavenly voice came out and said, "Leave your cave." When they left, whatever Rebbe Elazar would destroy, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai would repair. Rabbi Shimon said to his son, "My son, you and I are enough for the world."*