Avraham Avinu Married Keturah without a Kesubah so that Her Descendants Would not Have Any Claim to Kedushah

We read in this week’s parsha, Chayei Sarah (Bereishis 25, 5):

"ויתן אברהם את כל אשר לו ליצחק, ולבני הפילגשים אשר לאברהם נתן אברהם מתנות, וישלחו על יצחק בנו בעודנו חי קדמה אל ארץ קדם"

— Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak; but to the children of the concubines who were Avraham’s, Avraham gave gifts; then he sent them away from Yitzchak his son, while he was still alive, eastward to the land of the east. Rashi provides the following clarification based on the Midrash:

"הפלגשים חסר כתיב (++){" oranotim me’od rishtem (esh) ("heflasekim") yerem 'o veyir[)].

— the word פילגשים (concubines) is written in its incomplete form (missing two yuds), since there was only one concubine—Hagar, who is Keturah. Wives are married with a "Kesubah"; concubines ("pilagshim") are without a "Kesubah" . . . Avraham gave gifts: Our Rabbis explained that he gave over to them a name of impurity.

The Chizkuni is perplexed by this, since, according to tradition, the word "פלגשים" is written in the Torah in its complete form—with two yuds. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note the comment of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh on the passuk in parshas Nasso (Bamidbar 7, 1):

"ויהי ביום כלות משה — it was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Mishkan.

Rashi comments in the name of the Midrash: "כלת כתיב, יום הקמת המשכן היו ישראל ככלה הנכנסת לחופה — the word כלות is spelled defectively, without a vav, signifying that on the day the Mishkan was erected, Yisrael were like a bride (a "kallah") entering beneath the wedding canopy. Concerning this comment, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh writes (ibid.):

— the word פילגשמים (concupines) is written in its defective form (missing two yuds), since there was only one concubine—Hagar, who is Keturah. Wives are married with a "Kesubah"; concubines ("pilagshim") are without a "Kesubah" . . . Avraham gave gifts: Our Rabbis explained that he gave over to them a name of impurity.

Although Rashi and others state that the word is written as "כלת", without a vav, I see that it appears in the sefer Torah with a vav. In truth, not everyone is privy to the secrets of the Torah; for it could lead to heresy and disrespect. Our holy Torah with its words and letters is pure and precise. Our blessed sages knew—based on a tradition handed down from generation to generation from the time of Moshe Rabeinu—that even though the word appears in the Torah as "פלגשים", complete with a vav, HKB”H intended to convey the notion of "פלגשים", without the yud (negating the word’s plurality)—alluding to Hagar. In truth, the letter yud was added for a different reason altogether.

We can apply this insight to help us understand Rashi’s comment here in our parsha. In fact, the accepted tradition is to write the word פילגשים in our sifrei-Torah in its complete form, with the letter yud. Nevertheless, the scholars of Torah she’b’al peh were taught that the passuk actually conveys the meaning פילגשים, without the yud (negating the word’s plurality)—alluding to Hagar. In truth, the letter yud was added for a different reason altogether (to be explained later).

In the Heavenly Academy "פלגשים" Appears in Its Defective Form

As there are seventy different facets to the Torah, I would like to propose an explanation reconciling the discrepancy between Rashi and the "masores"—tradition. Rashi stated in the name of the Midrash that the word appears as "פלגשים" in its incomplete form; whereas, according to our "masores," it is written in its complete form, "פלגשים", with both yuds.

Let us introduce a comment from the divine kabbalist Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli, ztz”l, in Likutei Shoshanim. He cites a Midrash Pliah regarding the passuk in parshas Shelach

Parshas Chayei Sarah 5774 | 1
In the Heavenly Academy “ענבים” Is Spelled without a Yud

Now, in Devash L’Fee, the great Gaon Chida, ztz’l, cites the aforementioned words of Rabbi Shimshon. He is perplexed by the fact that in our sifrei-Torah, the tradition is to write “ענבים” in its complete form, including the yud, and not the incomplete form, “ענב”, lacking the yud. The Bnei Yissaschar reconciles the matter for us quite nicely (Tamuz-Av 2, 11):

According to a teaching from the Zohar hakadosh (Shemos 12a): הוה בא כהן לפניך פרעה לך תקח את תשעה יום כדי להשתתף בקצץ ארבעים יום. “[He] sent a messenger to Pharaoh, saying to him, ‘Take a seven-day Festival in order to complete forty days.’”

The Gemara (Taanis 29a) relates that the meraglim left to spy on the land on the twenty-ninth of Sivan. The passuk attests to the fact that their mission lasted forty days (Bamidbar 13, 20): וישובו מתור הארץ מקץ ארבעים יום ו TimeUnit נحوا תמוז אב. “Their return from the land was forty days; they hid him for three months.”

Rabbi Shimshon explains the meaning of the Midrash based on a teaching from the Zohar hakadosh (Shemos 12a): ביכורים ענבים, שלשה ירחים, אלין תלת ירחין דדינא קשיא שריא בעלמא, ומאן נינהו תמוז אב. “Bikkurim unbenis, these three months. Hence, one must hide and safeguard oneself during these three months.”

According to the Gemara (Taanis 29a), the meraglim left to spy on the land on the twenty-ninth of Sivan. The passuk attests to the fact that their mission lasted forty days (Bamidbar 13, 20): וישובו מתור הארץ מקץ ארבעים יום ו.TimeUnit נحوا תמוז אב. “Their return from the land was forty days; they hid him for three months.”

We learn from the Arizal the reason for the phenomenon of “kri u’chisiv”—the discrepancy between how a word is written and how it is pronounced. For, the Torah is elucidated by two distinct Yeshivos—the heavenly academy and the academy down on earth. There is no Satan in the heavenly academy, causing harm and confusion; hence, a word is pronounced as it is written. . . However, in the academy down below, the Torah’s secrets must not be presented openly, such that they can be grasped readily by the masses.

This applies to all matters expounded by Chazal in a somewhat indirect fashion and which differ slightly from the “masoreis.” He cites as an example the discrepancy regarding the word המלך. Although, according to tradition, it is written with a vav; in the heavenly academy it is written without a vav. We can suggest that the same holds true regarding the spelling of the word ענבים. In the heavenly academy, there is no fear of corruption and harm from the external forces—the “chitzonim”—therefore, it is written incompletely, without a yud—alluding to the name טבת.

We now make sense of the Midrash Pliah’s statement. The meraglim failed, because they went out during “the days of the ripening of the grapes”—during the reign of the “samech-mem.” Therefore, the passuk states: She hid him for three months”—referring to the months of Tamuz, Av and Tevet, during which the “samech-mem” reigns. This is why the word unbenis is spelled deficiently, without the yud—providing us with the allusion to טבת.
Now, it would seem that this explanation presented by the Bnei Yissaschar applies to the passuk in this week’s parsha, as well: “הפלגשם חסר כתיב, שלא היתה אלא פילגש אחת, היא הגר היא גבירתה המלכותית.” We saw that Rashi stated in the name of the Midrash that the word “הפלגשם” is written incompletely. We can suggest that he is referring to the sefer Torah in the heavenly academy; there “הפלגשם” is spelled deficiently, without the yuds. Yet, the academy down below follows the “masores” to write “הפלגשם” in our sifrei-Torah—the complete form, including the yuds. Nevertheless, it is still incumbent upon us to explain why there is a fear and inherent danger in the academy down below to write “הפלגשם” in its incomplete form.

The Word “הפלגשם” Can Be Broken down to Spell מפלג-שם

I would like to propose an explanation based on an illuminating teaching presented in Kol Eliyahu (Chayei Sarah) in the name of the Gaon from Vilna, zy”a. He addresses Rashi’s statement: “‘הפלגשם חסר כתיב, שלא היתה אלא פילגש אחת, היא הגר היא גבירתה המלכותית.’”—that “הפלגשם” was spelled deficiently to teach us that Avraham had, in truth, only one concubine, Keturah—Hagar. If so, why didn’t the passuk simply write the word “מפלגשם”, in the singular? Why go to the trouble of adding the final mem—“מ”—forcing the deletion of the letter yud in order to arrive at the elucidation above—that Hagar was the only concubine?

The matter can be explained based on the following Gemara (Sotah 17a): “רבי עקיבא איש ואשה זכו שכינה ביניהן, שהרי חלך את שמו ושיכנו ביניהן.”—Rabbi Akiva expounded: If a husband and wife are meritorious, the Shechinah is present between them. Rashi provides the following clarification: מפלגשם חסר כתיב—“מפלגשם” is employed, which is formed by the letters י”ה באישה וה”י באיש. This allusion appears specifically here regarding Avraham Avinu in the passuk: “ולבני הפילגשים נתן אברהם מתנות.”—the relationship with a concubine involves “kiddushin” without a “Kesubah.” Therefore, the man and woman become an singular? Why go to the trouble of adding the final mem—“מ”—forcing the deletion of the letter yud in order to arrive at the elucidation above—that Hagar was the only concubine?

The Gra explains that the sages instituted that a man write a “Kesubah” for his wife in order to provide the missing letters necessary to complete the holy name. The word “חתימה” is composed of the root כתב—“to write”—indicating the act of writing—with the addition of the missing letters נון, א, and ש, necessary to complete the holy name. Thus, it turns out that by means of “kiddushin,” a man and a woman become an kapıים, potentially supplying the letters נון, א, and ש, completing the four letters of the holy name ש”ה א.

Now, we can comprehend the significance and connection between the beginning and end of Rashi’s comment. He begins by stating that “הפלגשם” is spelled without a yud, indicating that Hagar was Avraham’s only concubine. Yet, this still doesn’t explain why the word “הפלגשם” appears with a final mem rather than the singular “הפלגש.” To answer this question, Rashi immediately adds: "(ffטט מכתובה פילגשים אלו מכתובה, ו”ה פילגשים מתנה "מאחר שהיחס עם מצויה involkes "kiddushin" without a “Kesubah.” Therefore, the man and woman become an singular? Why go to the trouble of adding the final mem—“מ”—forcing the deletion of the letter yud in order to arrive at the elucidation above—that Hagar was the only concubine?

Why Do We Only Find This Allusion Regarding Avraham?

Let us build upon the Gra’s explanation. We find that the term for a concubine, מפלגשם—meaning split-name), indicating that this couple only possesses half of the holy name. This completes the Gra’s explanation.

It appears that we can resolve this issue based on a query posed by the great author of the Shu”t Noda B’Yehudah in Doresh L’Tziyon. The Gemara teaches (Yoma 28b): “אף אם אברך את אשתך וכתובה, ו”ה פילגשים מתנה ו”ה פילגשים מתנה—Avraham Avinu observed all the precepts of the Torah.” According to the Rambam (Melachim 4, 4) only the King of Yisrael is permitted to take concubines; it is prohibited for an ordinary citizen to take a concubine. This falls under the general prohibition (Devarim 23, 18): “לא תהי קדושה מבטאת”—there shall not be a promiscuous woman among the daughters of Yisrael. So, how did Avraham transgress this precept by taking Hagar as a concubine?

I found a very nice idea in the sefer Mayim Yechezkel, authored by the great Rabbi Yechezkel Katzenbogen, ztz”, which provides us with a reasonable explanation, based on what the Rambam writes concerning the laws of a king (ibid.): “(ffטט מכתובה פילגשים אלו מכתובה פילגשים, ט”ו מסתובבות ו”ה פילגשים מתנה, ו”ה פילגשים מתנה—meaning split-name), indicating that this couple only possesses half of the holy name. This completes the Gra’s explanation.

Now, we can comprehend the significance and connection between the beginning and end of Rashi’s comment. He begins by stating that “הפלגשם” is spelled without a yud, indicating that Hagar was Avraham’s only concubine. Yet, this still doesn’t explain why the word “הפלגשם” appears with a final mem rather than the singular “הפלגש.” To answer this question, Rashi immediately adds: "ffטט מכתובה פילגשים אלו מכתובה, ו”ה פילגשים מתנה "מאחר שהיחס עם מצויה involkes "kiddushin" without a “Kesubah.” Therefore, the man and woman become an singular? Why go to the trouble of adding the final mem—“מ”—forcing the deletion of the letter yud in order to arrive at the elucidation above—that Hagar was the only concubine?

Why Do We Only Find This Allusion Regarding Avraham?

Let us build upon the Gra’s explanation. We find that the term for a concubine, מפלגשם—meaning split-name), already appears in the Torah at the end of parshas Vayeirah in connection with Avraham’s brother Nachor (Bereishis 22, 24): “מפלגשים מתייחס אליה."—and his concubine whose name was Reumah. So, why does this allusion appear specifically here regarding Avraham Avinu in the passuk: “ולבני הפילגשים נתן אברהם מתנות”? Specifically here the word מפלגשים המיהו מדברם מתנה—“מפלגשים” is spelled incompletely, teaching us that since they were married without a “Kesubah,” they only possessed half of the holy name—“מפלגשים”—the two letters א, ים—only represent the first half of the holy name; the letters ד, ש are still absent.

The Gra explains that the sages instituted that a man write a “Kesubah” for his wife in order to provide the missing letters necessary to complete the holy name. The word מפלגשים is composed of the rootכתב—“to write”—indicating the act of writing—with the addition of the missing lettersא, ש, necessary to complete the holy name. Thus, it turns out that by means of “kiddushin,” a man and a woman become an kapıים, potentially supplying the letters א, ש, the writing of the “Kesubah” supplies the letters ד, ש, completing the four letters of the holy name ש”ה א.
It is explicitly clear that the prohibition for an ordinary citizen is only: "בלא כתובה ובלא קידושין,"—under those circumstances she is considered a promiscuous woman and is prohibited to all of Yisrael. Avraham, however, took Hagar by means of "kidushin," allBeis without a "Kesubah." According to Jewish law this makes her a married woman in all regards. Hence, there is no tinge of prohibition even for an ordinary citizen vis-a-vis the negative command: "בלא תחת קדשין".

Based on this notion, he explains the juxtaposition of Rashi's comments. First, he states that Avraham took Hagar as a concubine. Addressing the issue of how Avraham, who was not a king, could take a concubine, Rashi goes on to explain: "תשמיש vườnית". In other words, there are two types of concubines. A concubine without "kidushin" and without a "Kesubah" is prohibited to a non-king. A concubine with "kidushin" but without a "Kesubah" is permitted to a non-king. Avraham married Hagar with "kidushin" without a "Kesubah." This concludes his explanation.

Now, we can suggest that all of the concubines prior to Avraham fell into the category of no "kidushin" and certainly no "Kesubah." For, at that time, prior to the giving of the Torah, taking a concubine in that manner was not prohibited. On the other hand, Avraham Avinu, who observed all the precepts of the Torah, was the first person in history to innovate the concept of a concubine with "kidushin" but without a "Kesubah." Hence, he was the only one where the taking of a concubine was associated with one half of the holy name. This explains why the Torah presents the allusion specifically in association with Avraham: "ללא כתובה ובלא קידושין"—written in an incomplete form—indicating that they only possessed a "Kesubah."
they deserve to have the entire name among them from the onset of their married life; and in the merit of the complete name existing between them, they would eventually merit the birth of a son and daughter. Therefore, he explains that even before a son and daughter are born, the holy name is completed temporarily by means of the “Kesubah”—the anagram for \textit{י"ה}.

Nevertheless, the primary and main completion of the name occurs only after the couple have successfully fulfilled the mitzvah of “pru u’rvu”—after a son and a daughter are born to them.

Thus, the “Kesubah” only acts as a temporary measure to supply the absent \textit{י"ה}. As to why it is still necessary to maintain the “Kesubah” even after a son and daughter are born, and the name has already been completed, we have learned from the Gemara: “

שלא תהא קלה בעיניו להוציאה eso, that a husband should not view his wife lightly and dismiss her without cause.

This coincides very nicely with an idea found in the sefer Ktov L’Chaim. This work, which discusses matters related to the “Kesubah,” states that writing a “Kesubah” according to halachic guidelines acts as a segulah for the man and his sons after him. This is alluded to by the following passuk (Devarim 12, 28):

“שמרו תשמעו את הבאים על ראש האומות ושאכלו מנするのは יין הגלrito, and its equivalent of eleven (6+5). As for the first two letters of the holy name, which are complete, they would have the light and kedushah is too great and powerful; therefore, the “chitzonim” have no hold on them. Consequently, the two letters \textit{י"ה}—which are the sanctity of the two letters \textit{י"ה}—will remain absent from the name Havaya, leaving only the letters \textit{י}. The deeper significance of this matter is provided by the Arizal in his discussion of the “kadish.” The “chitzonim”—the external negative forces—possess a hold on the last two letters of the holy name, the \textit{י"ה}. For this reason, the eleven spices of the ketores were burned every day in the Beis HaMikdash. They were meant to abolish the chitzonim’s ability to draw from the sanctity of the two letters \textit{י"ה}, which possess a numerical equivalent of eleven (6+5). As for the first two letters of the holy name, the \textit{י"ה}, their light and kedushah is too great and powerful; thus, the “chitzonim” have no hold on them. Consequently, so long as the name of Amalek exists, the holy name remains incomplete, due to the absence of the letters \textit{י"ה}—which are within the grasp of the Klipos.

Based on this understanding, the Arizal explains the purpose of the “kadish.” It is designed to eliminate the ability of the Klipos to draw from the two letters \textit{י"ה}. This is implicit in the formula of the “kadish”: \textit{“יתגדל ויתקדש שמיה רבא”—that is good and right in the eyes of Hashem.}

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us endeavor to explain the matter in greater depth. Concerning the battle with Amalek, it is written (Shemos 17, 16): “י"ה יאמר ישיא ויאמר י"ה אני אbrate קדשה ליבית מדור דורות ו"ה—and he said, “For there is a hand on the throne of \textit{י"ה}; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation. Rashi provides the following clarification:

“יתגדל ויתקדש שמיה רבא, and he said, “For there is a hand on the throne of \textit{י"ה}; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation. So long as Amalek exists, the two letters \textit{י"ה} will remain absent from the name Havaya, leaving only the letters \textit{י}. The deeper significance of this matter is provided by the Arizal in his discussion of the “kadish.” The “chitzonim”—the external negative forces—possess a hold on the last two letters of the holy name, the \textit{י"ה}. For this reason, the eleven spices of the ketores were burned every day in the Beis HaMikdash. They were meant to abolish the chitzonim’s ability to draw from the sanctity of the two letters \textit{י"ה}, which possess a numerical equivalent of eleven (6+5). As for the first two letters of the holy name, the \textit{י"ה}, their light and kedushah is too great and powerful; thus, the “chitzonim” have no hold on them. Consequently, so long as the name of Amalek exists, the holy name remains incomplete, due to the absence of the letters \textit{י"ה}—which are within the grasp of the Klipos.

Based on this understanding, the Arizal explains the purpose of the “kadish.” It is designed to eliminate the ability of the Klipos to draw from the two letters \textit{י"ה}. This is implicit in the formula of the “kadish”: \textit{“יתגדל ויתקדש שמיה רבא”—that is good and right in the eyes of Hashem.}

The two words \textit{י"ה} contain eleven letters, equal to \textit{י"ה}; it is our intent and desire to expand them and return them entirely to the realm of kedushah. Thus, when we utter these
gave all of his possessions to Yitzchak, but to the sons of the
women—written in its incomplete form to convey the
circumstance of "Malachim—translated—"half-name"
prevailed in their home, since they were conceived from a
marriage with "kiddushin" but without a "Kesubah"; hence,
then he sent them away from Yitzchak his son, while he was still
alive, eastward to the land of the east—so that they would not have any claim or part of his kedushah.

At this point, we can shed some light on a point raised earlier. We learned that in the academy down below in this
world, a world where the "chitzonim" reign, especially during
times of galut, the "masores" dictates that we write in our
sifrei-Torah: "Malachim hamalchusim"—in its complete form, with both
yuds. For, in this world, there is some concern and fear to
write: "Malachim hamalchusim"—lest it become public knowledge that
they are the offspring of a relationship with "Malachim—translated—"chitzonim" are powerless, there is no fear of writing in a sefer
Torah: "Malachim—translated—"where the word "Malachim—translated—"appears incomplete without the yuds, indicating that those
children were the product of a relationship possessing
"Malachim—translated—"For, they were born to Avraham and Hagar, who married with
"kiddushin" but without a "Kesubah." Avraham did so, to insure
that only the letters ה"י would be present among them without
the letters י. He knew that the "chitzonim" have no grasp on
that half of the holy name. For this reason:
—he sent them eastward, far away
from Yitzchak, to insure that they had no entitlement or access
to his kedushah.

As a result, Avraham cleverly married Hagar—Keturah—by
means of "kiddushin" without a "Kesubah." In this manner, the
name ה"י alone would rest upon them as man and woman; for,
there was no fear that her children, who did not originate from
the realm of kedushah, would be able to derive any benefit from
the letters ה"י, due to the immensity of their light. On the other
hand, as we have learned, they were able to draw from the force
of the letters ה"י. Hence, a concern existed that if he would write her a "Kesubah," any sons she would bear would have access to
the letters ה"י supplied by the "Kesubah." This is why he married her merely with "kiddushin" and without a "Kesubah."

This then is the interpretation of the passuk: "ויתן אברהם
—translated—"and Avraham