



I Will Surely Return to You at This Time Next Year and Your Wife Sarah Will Have a Son Prior to the Birth of Yitzchak Avinu Sarah a Gilgul of Chava Modified the Name "חווה" to "חיה"

In honor of the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, parshas Vayeira, we will focus on the opening pesukim of the parsha (Bereishis 18, 1): **"וירא אליו ה' באלוני 'ממרא והוא יושב פתח האהל כחום היום'—Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.** Rashi comments: **"In the heat of the day"—HKB"H took the sun out of its sheath, so as not to trouble Avraham with his guests. Because He (Hashem) saw that he (Avraham) was distressed that no visitors were coming. Therefore, He brought the malachim to him in the form of men.**

This is indeed surprising and bewildering. After all, HKB"H foresees everything; so, He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Avraham—the paradigm of "chesed"—would be distressed by the absence of visitors. That being the case, why did HKB"H initially take the sun out of its sheath so as not to trouble Avraham with guests? And only afterwards, when He saw that Avraham was distressed, did He arrange for the three malachim to come visit him.

Taking the Sun Out of Its Sheath Is an Allusion to the Future Geulah

To comprehend the significance of this sequence of events, we will refer to the words of Chazal in the Midrash (B.R. 48, 8) expounding on the words: **"He was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day."** The Torah is alluding to the day of judgment associated with the future geulah after "Techiyas HaMeisim"—the resurrection of the dead.

At that time, HKB"H will judge all of mankind, as we are taught in the Gemara (R.H. 16b):

"שלש כתות הן ליום הדין, אחת של צדיקים גמורין ואחת של רשעים גמורין ואחת של בינוניים, צדיקים גמורין נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיי עולם, רשעים גמורין נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לגיהנם, שנאמר ורבים מישגי אדמות עפר יקיצו, אלה לחיי עולם ואלה לחרפות לדראון עולם, בינוניים יורדין לגיהנם ומצפצפין ועולין."

There are three groups for the Day of Judgment: One of complete tzaddikim, one of complete reshaim, and people with an intermediate status. The complete tzaddikim are written and sealed immediately for eternal life; the complete reshaim are written and sealed immediately for Gehinnom, as it is stated (Daniel 12, 2): **"And many of those who sleep in the dusty earth will awaken—these for everlasting life and these for shame, for everlasting abhorrence"; the intermediate people descend to Gehinnom screaming and then ascending.** Rashi explains that the intermediates cry out in pain for a brief period of time and then they leave Gehinnom.

Based on this premise, the Midrash expounds: **"He was sitting at the entrance of the tent"—le'asid la'vo, Avraham will sit at the entrance to Gehinnom and will not allow any Jew who has been circumcised to descend into it.** When will this occur? **"In the heat of the day"—when the day will come of which it is written (Malachi 3, 19): "For, behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven."** They are undoubtedly referring to the statement in the Gemara (Nedarim 8b):

"אין גיהנם לעולם הבא, אלא הקב"ה מוציא חמה מגרתיקה, צדיקים מתרפאין בה ורשעים נידונין בה, שנאמר וזרחה לכם יראי שמי שמש וגו', ולא עוד אלא שמתעדינן בה... והרשעים נידונין בה, שנאמר הנה יום בא בווער כתנור וגו'."

There is no Gehinnom in Olam HaBa! Rather, HKB"H will remove the sun from its sheath; the tzaddikim will be healed by it, while the reshaim will be punished by it. As it states (ibid. 20): "But a sun of righteousness will shine for you who fear My name with healing in its rays." And not only this, but furthermore, they (the tzaddikim) will actually delight in it (the unsheathed sun) . . . And the reshaim will be punished by it, as it is stated: "The day is coming, burning like an oven etc."

Thus, we learn an important concept. When HKB"H came to visit Avraham Avinu on the third day after his "Bris milah," He intentionally removed the sun from its sheath. He did so as a preparation and symbolic gesture for the future geulah. For, at that time, He will remove the sun from its sheath to reward the tzaddikim—who will be healed by it and enjoy it—and to punish the reshaim—who will be judged by it like a burning oven.

This raises the question: Why did HKB"H choose to perform this symbolic gesture of the future geulah specifically (on the third day) after Avraham's "Bris milah"? The simple answer is because, as we are taught by the Midrash, Avraham Avinu is destined to sit at the entrance to Gehinnom to rescue and prevent every circumcised Jew from entering. Hence, this is alluded to specifically after Avraham performed the mitzvah of "milah." Nevertheless, since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy diverse ways, we will suggest an explanation based on several precious teachings that will shed light on the subject for us.

Chava Should Really Have Been Name Chaya

We will begin our investigation with a fascinating insight from our master, the Arizal, with an additional clarification from his loyal disciple Rabeinu Chaim Vital, ztz"l. He addresses the mystical message the malach delivered to Avraham Avinu concerning the birth of Yitzchak (Bereishis 18, 9): **"ויאמרו אליו איה שרה אשתך ויאמר הנה באהל, ויאמר שוב אשוב אליך כעת חיה והנה בן לשרה אשתך, ושרה שומעת**

They (the malachim who came to visit Avraham) asked him, "Where is Sarah, your wife?" He replied, "She is here in the tent." And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year, there will be life ('chaya'), and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son." Now Sarah heard at the entrance of the tent, and it was behind him. The commentaries struggle to interpret the meaning of the malach's words **"כעת חיה"—there will be life.** It seems obvious that if the malach was bringing tidings that Sarah was going to give birth to a son, he was referring to a **live** child—"chaya"—and not to a dead one.

In Sefer HaLikutim (Melachim II, 4), Rabbi Chaim Vital presents a wonderful interpretation based on the teachings of his mentor the Arizal. Here is a partial translation of his sacred teaching:

Prior to the sin, Chava Imeinu, the mother of all living beings, was called Chaya ("חיה"); she merited an exalted name spelled with the letters ח"י. After the sin, however, she dropped from her prestigious status and was named Chava ("חווה") spelled with the letters ו"ה (in descending order). She became susceptible to the external forces of evil, and Kayin was born from the contamination; he murdered Hevel, and he ceased to live.

It was Sarah Imeinu's mission to rectify the sin of Chava and Avraham's (mission to rectify) that of Adam. Therefore, Sarai ("שרי") was privileged to take the "yud" of "חיה". As a consequence, she was barren—because the "yud" (gematria of 10) is from the masculine realm—until it was split into two "heis" (5 and 5)—one for her and one for Avraham. This caused the "yud" to go up and complain to HKB"H. Ultimately, HKB"H appeased her as follows: Previously, you were the last letter of the woman's name "שרי"; you will now be the first letter of a man's name, as it is written (Bamidbar 13, 16): "Moshe called 'הושע' the son of Nun 'יהושע'." (Translator's note: In Hebrew, masculine terms usually end with a "yud," whereas feminine terms usually end with a "hei.")

With this introduction, the statement **כעת חיה** "can be understood. He meant to say, "Know that the son that will be given to you is not like (the son you were given) when Chaya was called Chava, because that son was not viable. Rather, he will be compatible with her name being Chaya. Had she been meritorious and not sinned, she would have given birth to viable children that would not die. He was informing Sarah that her son would live and endure as per the inherent (concealed) meaning of the name **יצחק**, which is an anagram for **ק"ץ ח"י** –the end of life. (Translator's note: Here, it seems to imply "endless life.")

Why Did Adam Name His Wife Chava rather than Chava

We will now elaborate on these sacred words of wisdom. After Adam was given a wife, it says (Bereishis 3, 20): **וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הִיא הִיְתָה אִם כָּל** "the man called his wife by the name Chava, because she was the mother of all living things. Rashi provides clarification: "Chava" is related to the term for "living," since she gives life to her children. The commentaries wonder what prompted Adam HaRishon to name her **חווה** with a **"vav"** rather than **"חיה"** with a **"yud,"** seeing as she was the mother of all life (**"חי"**). The Kli Yakar provides us with an answer in his unique, sacred way:

"ונראה כי קודם החטא נקראת חיה על שם אם כל חי, ואחר החטא שגרמה מיתה לדורות, הוחלף שמה מן חיה לחווה, כי חווה נגזר מן לשון חויה דהיינו נחש, ובא הכתוב לתרץ למה לא קראה נחש בפירוש, אלא לפי שקודם זה היתה אם כל חי ונקראה חיה, על כן בהחליפו שמה לא הוצרך להחליף כי אם יו"ד בוי"ו, כדי שישאר רושם שם ראשון במקומו."

It appears that prior to the cheit, she was called Chaya, indicating that she was the "mother of all life." After the cheit, since she brought death to all future generations, her name was changed from Chaya to Chava, because Chava is derived from the term **"chivya,"** meaning serpent. The Torah wished to teach us why she was not called "serpent" explicitly. It is because she was previously the "mother of all life" and was called Chaya. Therefore, when her name

was changed, it was only necessary to change the **"yud"** into a **"vav,"** so that an impression of her original name would remain.

In fact, this explanation was provided earlier by the Tosafists in Moshav Zekeinim. They also ask why Adam named his wife Chava instead of Chaya and suggest that it was because she followed the advice of the **"nachash,"** which in Aramaic is **"chivya."** Therefore, he chose not to call her by the Hebrew name for **"nachash"** but rather by the Aramaic name, because the malachim do not understand Aramaic, and they would not be aware of its negative implications.

Now, returning to the explanation that Rabbi Chaim Vital brings down from the Arizal in Sefer HaLikutim, we learn that before sinning by partaking of the Eitz HaDa'as, the first woman was indeed called by the more prestigious name **"חיה,"** emphasizing the fact that she was the "mother of all **'chai.'**" Had she not sinned, all living creatures would have lived eternally, and she would have truly been the "mother of all living beings." Unfortunately, she sinned and caused Adam HaRishon to sin also. Consequently, the death sentence was imposed on all of creation. Therefore, she fell from her lofty status, and instead of being called **Chaya**, her name was modified to **Chava**. The former contains the two letters **"yud-hei,"** which promote eternal life; whereas the latter contains the letters **"vav-hei,"** symbolizing that she had fallen from her previous status and was no longer the mother providing eternal life; on the contrary, all living creatures were now destined to die on her account.

Avraham and Sarah Were Reincarnations and Tikuns of Adam and Chava

We will continue to elaborate on this fascinating insight provided by Rabbi Chaim Vital in the name of his mentor, the Arizal. He goes on to explain that Sarah Imeinu came to rectify the sin of Chava, while Avraham came to rectify the sin of Adam. Therefore, she was rewarded with the **"yud"** from **"חיה"**; hence, her original name was **"שרי"** with a **"yud."** This can be better understood in light of what we are taught in the Zohar hakadosh (Behar 111b). Avraham Avinu was a gilgul of Adam HaRishon; he provided a tikun for

the fact that Adam HaRishon was guilty of a form of “avodah-zarah.” For, when Chava was persuaded by the nachash to eat from the Eitz HaDa’as, it persuaded her with the following argument (ibid. 3, 5): **“כי יודע—אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע”** **for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad.** Rashi explains that the nachash argued: **“Every craftsman hates others of his craft; G-d ate from the tree and created the world. So, by eating from the tree, you will be like G-d, fashioners of the world.”** Clearly, this was blatant heresy consistent with “avodah-zarah.”

Just as Avraham was the gilgul of Adam HaRishon and his tikun, similarly Sarah was the gilgul and tikun of Chava. The Arizal explains in Likutei Torah (Shmuel I), that this is why Sarah instituted the three special mitzvos designated for women—the mitzvah of challah, the mitzvah of lighting candles, and the mitzvah of nidah—because they are the tikun for the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as.” Let us refer to the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 1):

Why were women enjoined to perform these three mitzvos? . . . Concerning Eve, it is written (ibid. 6): “And when the woman saw etc., she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Thus, she caused his death and shed his blood. And it is written in the Torah (ibid. 9, 6): “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.” Therefore, her blood should be shed (flow), and she should observe the mitzvah of “nidah” to atone for the blood of Adam that she shed. What is the rationale for the mitzvah of “challah”? It is because she defiled the “challah” of the world. What is the rationale for the mitzvah of lighting the candles? It is because she extinguished the light of Adam (by causing his death), as it is written (Mishlei 20, 27): “A man’s neshamah is the candle of Hashem.” Therefore, she is obliged to observe the mitzvah of lighting the (Shabbas) candles.

As we learn from Rashi’s commentary, Sarah Imeinu instituted all three of these mitzvos (Bereishis

24, 67): **As long as Sarah was alive, a candle burned continuously from Erev Shabbas until Erev Shabbas, and a berachah was present in the dough.** Thus, we have evidence for the mitzvos of “hadlakat neiros” and “challah.” The mitzvah of “nidah” is alluded to in relation to Sarah Imeinu by the following passuk (ibid. 18, 11): **“חדל להיות לשרה אורח”** **—the natural course of women had ceased to be with Sarah.** In other words, her blood ceased to flow. Hence, she instituted all three of these mitzvos, because she was a gilgul of Chava and intended to make amends for the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” through these mitzvos. This is the significance of the Arizal’s assertion: **Sarah Imeinu rectified the sin of Chava and Avraham the sin of Adam.**

Sarah Imeinu Merited Giving Birth to Yitzchak ק"ץ ח"י

In this manner, we will proceed to explain the remainder of the insight of Rabbi Chaim Vital cited above. Recall that he focused on the significance of the malach’s remark to Avraham: **“שוב אשוב אליך כעת חיה והנה”** **בן לשרה אשתך”**. He purports that the words “כעת חיה” signify that Sarah Imeinu rectified and restored the name **Chava** to **Chaya**. This assertion is easy to understand, since she rectified the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” committed by Chava. What he goes on to say afterwards, however, is not so straightforward: **And Sarah will have a son, because he will endure, which is the inherent significance of the name יצחק, which is an anagram for ק"ץ ח"י.** This suggests that through **Yitzchak**, eternal, enduring life will be restored. Yet, we know that Yitzchak passed away, as per the passuk (ibid. 35, 29): **“ויוגע יצחק וימות ויאסף אל עמיו זקן ושבע ימים”** **—and Yitzchak expired and died, and he was brought in to his people, old and fulfilled of days.**

So, as a loyal servant in the presence of his master, with the utmost reverence, I would like to latch onto his coattails and clarify the meaning of this tzaddik, the esteemed Rabbi Chaim Vital. Let us refer to a passage in the Gemara (Shabbas 89b) related to the future geulah:

"לעתיד לבוא יאמר לו הקב"ה לאברהם בניה חטאו לי, אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם ימחו על קדושת שמך, אמר אימור ליה ליעקב דהוה ליה צער גידול בנים אפשר דבעי רחמי עלייהו אמר ליה בניה חטאו, אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם ימחו על קדושת שמך. אמר לא בסבי טעמא ולא בדרדקי עצה.

אמר לו ליצחק בניה חטאו לי, אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם בני ולא בניה, בשעה שהקדימו לפניך נעשה לנשמע קראת להם בני בכורי, עכשיו בני ולא בניה. ועוד כמה חטאו, כמה שנותיו של אדם שבעים שנה, דל עשרין דלא עגשת עלייהו, פשו להו חמשיין דל כ"ה דלילותא, פשו להו כ"ה, דל תרתי סרי ופלגא דצלווי ומיכל ודבית הכסא, פשו להו תרתי סרי ופלגא אם אתה סוכל את כולם מוטב, ואם לאו פלגא עלי ופלגא עליך, ואם תמצא לומר כולם עלי, הא קריבית נפשי קמך."

Le'asid la'vo, HKB"H will say to Avraham, "Your children have sinned against Me." He will respond to Him, "Master of the Universe, let them be wiped out for the sake of the kedushah of Your name." Hashem will say to Himself: "I will speak to Yaakov, since he experienced pain in raising his children. Perhaps he will ask Me to have mercy upon them." So, He will say to Yaakov, "Your children have sinned." He will respond to Him, "Master of the Universe, let them be wiped out for the sake of the kedushah of Your name." Hashem will say, "There is neither reason among the elders nor counsel among the youth." (Neither Avraham, the elder, nor Yaakov, the younger, proposed a reason or way to spare Yisrael.) So, Hashem will say to Yitzchak, "Your children have sinned against Me." He will respond to Him, "Master of the Universe, are they my children and not Your children?! When they pronounced 'na'aseh' prior to 'nishma,' You called them: 'My son, My firstborn.' Now, they are my children and not Your children?! Furthermore, how much have they sinned? How many are a man's years? Seventy years. Deduct twenty, since You do not punish for them. This leaves fifty. Deduct twenty-five, which are nights. This leaves twenty-five. Deduct twelve and a half for praying, eating and going to the bathroom. Twelve and a half remain. If You will tolerate them all, fine; and if not, then half should be on me and half on You. And if You wish to say that all of them should be on me, behold! I have already sacrificed myself before You." In other words, Yitzchak states that he is willing to shoulder

all of their sins in the merit of the fact that he offered himself to Hashem during the Akeidah. In my merit, you should forgive all of my children's sins.

The Shela hakadosh in his commentary on this week's parsha points out that this passage defies logic. After all, Avraham represents the attribute of "chesed," whereas Yitzchak represents the attribute of "din"; and Yaakov is an amalgamation of the two—"chesed" and "din." Hence, it seems implausible that the ultimate good and defense of Yisrael will be negotiated and accomplished by Yitzchak. Therefore, he concludes definitively that this is a misconception. Yitzchak represents the true, exacting aspect of "din." As such, he elicits in the heavens our true destiny—that we should be superior, heavenly people, the children of the Almighty.

Specifically Yitzchak Avinu the Paradigm of "Midas HaDin" Will Shift the Force of "Din" from Yisrael to the Heads of the Reshaim

Let us embellish this sacred thought further. Why did HKB"H orchestrate it that specifically Yitzchak Avinu, whose midah is "din," would be the one to defend Yisrael's merit? We learn in the Zohar hakadosh (Part 3, 304a) that when "din" prevails in the world, it cannot be completely annulled until it finds a legitimate target. Once it has been authorized to act, it does not return empty-handed. Therefore, HKB"H directs it toward the other nations of the world, the goyim.

Now, le'asid la'vo, HKB"H will remove the sun from its sheath to punish the reshaim with the intense fire of Gehinnom and to reward the tzaddikim—who are healed by it and derive pleasure from it. However, since they are not guilt-free, they are also targets for "midas hadin." Therefore, specifically Yitzchak, the representative of "midas hadin," will stand up to defend Yisrael from the accusations of the forces of "din" and will exonerate them. Furthermore, as the representative of "din," he possesses the power to redirect the "din" from Yisrael to the reshaim who harass Yisrael.

This explains very nicely the remark Sarah made when Yitzchak was born (ibid. 21, 6): "ותאמר שרה צחוק" —**Sarah said, "G-d (Elokim) has made laughter for me; whoever hears will laugh for me."** She foresaw through nevuah that specifically and only Yitzchak, the embodiment of "din," would exonerate Yisrael le'asid la'vo. Therefore, she specifies that **Elokim**, the source of Yitzchak's "din," will cause her to laugh and rejoice. Furthermore, **"whoever hears will laugh for me"** — when everyone hears that specifically Yitzchak will exonerate Yisrael, they will all laugh and rejoice with me for giving birth to such a child.

I was delighted to find a source for this explanation in the Zera Kodesh (Mo'adim, second day of Succos) authored by the great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy" a. He quotes the passuk (Mishlei 27, 5): "טובה תוכחת מגולה" —**open rebuke is good if it stems from hidden love**—and interprets it as a reference to the midah of Yitzchak. He notes that Yitzchak will be the advocate le'asid la'vo on account of his great love of the G-d and Yisrael. Sarah foresaw this via her "ruach hakodesh." This prompted her to say: "צחוק עשה" —**לי אלקים**—implying that she rejoiced on account of the "din," because she was privileged to give birth to such a son that would be a source of joy.

We now have cause to rejoice! We have illuminated and achieved a better understanding of the sacred insight of Rabbi Chaim Vital. He established a

connection between the fact that Sarah rectified and restored the name **Chava** to **Chaya** and the fact that she was privileged to give birth to Yitzchak: "וזוהו שאמר: כעת חיה ולשרה בן, כי יהיה בן קיימא, בסוד יצחק ק"ץ ח"י." In summary, by making amends for the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as" that brought death to the world, she also rectified the name **Chava**, transforming it back to **Chaya**. As we have learned, the name **Chaya** indicated that she was **"אם כל חי"**—**the mother of all living creatures**. She was supposed to be the mother of all human beings who would live for all eternity. For this reason, she was privileged to give birth to **יצחק**, whose name is an anagram for **ק"ץ ח"י**. This alludes to the fact that **בקרץ הימים**—**at the end of days**—Yisrael will be granted **"בחיים נצחיים"**—**eternal life**—on account of Yitzchak. For, as we learned in the Gemara, he will defend them and exonerate them when HKB"H says to him, **"Your children have sinned."** As a result, the death sentence imposed on creation will be repealed, and Yisrael will once again be granted eternal life.

We can now begin to appreciate why HKB"H took the sun out of its sheath when the malachim came to inform Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu of the birth of Yitzchak Avinu. They were laying the foundation and performing a symbolic gesture for the future geulah. At that time, HKB"H will remove the sun from its sheath to reward and heal the tzaddikim while punishing the reshaim with its brutal, burning heat, once and for all. In other words, the future geulah will be realized in the merit of Yitzchak.

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