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colleagues. "וכל יקר ראתה עינו" refers to Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues. This teaches us that Rabbi Akiva was privileged to perceive even the tefillin shel rosh referred to as "יקר".

We will now combine the two interpretations of the Midrash. The kabbalists taught us that Rabbi Akiva was privileged to attain the Sha'ar Hanun, which Moshe Rabeinu did not attain. The Yoel Moshe asserts that Rabbi Akiva was privileged to perceive the entire tefillin shel rosh, whereas Moshe only perceived its knot. We can posit that the knot of the tefillin represents the forty-nine levels of tumah, whereas the actual tefillin shel rosh represents the Sha'ar HaNun. This explanation includes both teachings about Rabbi Akiva derived from the words: "וכל יקר ראתה עינו". The words "וכל יקר" allude to the fact that he attained the Sha'ar HaNun—since the gematria of the word "כל" equals fifty—and that he perceived the tefillin shel rosh, which is called "יקר".

The Yismach Moshe explains beautifully and in great depth the fact that Rabbi Akiva was privileged to perceive the actual tefillin itself, while Moshe Rabeinu only perceived its knot. This is clearly a divine enigma. Notwithstanding, I will make my own feeble attempt to shed some light on the matter based on several introductions from our sacred scholars and sefarim.

You May See My Back but Not My Countenance

We will begin by introducing what the brilliant author of the responsa Kol Aryeh says he heard from the sacred lips of his Rav, the Chasam Sofer, zy"a, regarding the passuk (Shemos 33, 23): "וראית את אחורי ופני לא יראו"—**you will see My back, but My face may not be seen.** To interpret the passuk, he refers to a marvelous explanation of the Tzlach of the Gemara (Pesachim 50a): "אמר רבי אחא ברבי חנינא, לא כעולם הזה העולם הבא, העולם הזה על: בשורות טובות אומר ברוך הטוב והמטיב, ועל בשורות רעות אומר ברוך דיין האמת." R' Acha bar Chanina said: **Olam HaBa is unlike Olam HaZeh.** In Olam HaZeh, upon hearing good tidings one says: Blessed are You. . . Who is good and does good; and upon hearing bad tidings one says: Blessed are You. . . the true Judge. But, in Olam HaBa, all of the blessings will be: Blessed are You. . . Who is good and does good.

The Tzlach takes issue with the Gemara's statement that **in the World to Come, all the blessings will be "hatov**

v'hameitiv." After all, evil will no longer exist in the world. He presents an explanation that he heard in his youth from the renowned Maggid, Rabbi Ephraim of Brad, ztz"l. In truth, we believe that HKB"H is the source of all good, mercy, and kindness; nothing bad or evil emanates from Him; all that the Merciful One does is for the best. This is reflected by the passuk (Tehillim 145, 9): **«טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו»—Hashem is benevolent to all, and His mercy encompasses all of His works.** What appears to us as evil or negative in the world is merely due to our limited perception and understanding. The material physical aspects of Olam HaZeh blind us; so we do not always appreciate the fact that everything the Merciful One does is for our good. Hence, when bad things happen, we utter the berachah **«ברוך דיין אמת»**—i.e., we accept the legitimacy of the negative decree. In the future, however, in Olam HaBa, we will comprehend, retroactively, that all the suffering and travails we endured were actually manifestations of the Almighty's benevolence. Then, even concerning negative events—over which we recited **«ברוך דיין האמת»** in Olam HaZeh—we will recite **«ברוך הטוב והמטיב»**. For, it will then be clear to us how everything that transpired was in our best interest.

Now, Moshe Rabeinu beseeched HKB"H (ibid. 13): **«ועתה: אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך הודיעני נא את דרכיך ואדעך»—now, if I have indeed found favor in Your eyes, please let me know Your ways, so that I may know You.** In other words, since it will ultimately be revealed to everyone in Olam HaBa that everything the Merciful One did was for our benefit, please reveal this awareness and knowledge to me now in Olam HaZeh—**«הודיעני נא את דרכיך»**. To which HKB"H responded: **«וראית את אחורי»—you will see My back.**

According to the explanation of the Kol Aryeh, **"You will see My back"** means: When you see retroactively how everything was done benevolently for the good, know full-well: **"My face may not be seen"**—it is not possible to recognize ahead of time that this was in fact the case. Rather, it will presently appear as if what transpired was the execution of justice.

The Knot of the Tefillin Represents "You will see My back"

Returning to the fascinating insight of the Kol Aryeh, we will now try to understand the connection between **"the knot of the tefillin"** and Hashem's remark to Moshe: **"You will see My back"**—which we have learned means that only after a deed

has been done will a person be able to scrutinize it retroactively and realize that it was done entirely for one's good.

Here is the explanation. If we examine the tefillin shel rosh, we find that it is a single, central structure. This represents the fact that the way everything is controlled and managed in Olam HaZeh—whether it appears to us to reflect midas hachesed, from the right, or midas hadin, from the left—they are one and the same at their heavenly source—i.e., everything is total “rachamim” (divine mercy and compassion).

When this divine management descends to Olam HaZeh, it splits into two manifestations—midas hachesed and midas hadin. This division is symbolized by the two straps that exit the central housing of the tefillin shel rosh—the one going to the right symbolizes midas hachesed and the one going to the left symbolizes midas hadin. For, to our material eyes, it appears that there is an enormous difference between midas hachesed and midas hadin.

In the back of the head, however, the two straps are united and tied together into a knot. This indicates that ultimately, in the end of days, these two manifestations of divine supervision will be united. It will become apparent to all human beings that everything HKB”H did for us in galus was total chesed without any din, at all. This is the implication of: “וּרְאִיתָ אֶת אַחֲרֵי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרָאוּ”. We will ultimately be able to comprehend retroactively that even what appeared to us to be a manifestation of midas hadin actually emanated from the source of chesed and rachamim—everything was an expression of divine benevolence.

We can now truly appreciate the exposition of Chazal: “וּרְאִיתָ אֶת אַחֲרֵי, מִלְּמַד שֶׁהִרְאָה הַקֹּב”ה לְמוֹשֶׁה קֶשֶׁר שֶׁל תְּפִלִּין”. HKB”H demonstrated to Moshe this fascinating phenomenon—“**you will see My back**”—by showing him the knot of the tefillin shel rosh. Just as the two straps are united and tied together in a knot, similarly, all human beings will ultimately recognize that everything was a manifestation of complete chesed. Hence: **In Olam HaBa, all the Berachos will be “hatov v’hameitiv.”**

The Intent of the Declaration

«ה' אלקינו ה' אחד»

Further on, the Kol Aryeh addresses Chazal's statement (Berachos 14b): «כל הקורא קריאת שמע בלא תפילין כאילו מעיד עדות»

“שקר בעצמו”—**anyone who recites Krias Shema without tefillin, it is as if he has borne false testimony against himself.** What is the relationship between the mitzvah of Krias Shema and the mitzvah of tefillin? We can suggest an answer based on the commentaries' interpretation of the declaration of unity: “שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד” in keeping with the intriguing insight from Rabbi Ephraim of Brad that le'asid la'vo, everyone will recognize and understand how everything HKB”H did for us was benevolent and good.

We express this wonderful reality in the passuk declaring Hashem's unity. For, we believe wholeheartedly that both midas harachamim associated with the name Havaya and midas hadin associated with the name Elokim are both actually manifestations of total rachamim without any component of din. Presently, however, this is not apparent to us. This is the meaning of the passuk: “שמע ישראל”—believe, O Yisrael, that “ה' אלקינו”—whether it is the supervision of rachamim from the name **Havaya** or the supervision of din from the name **Elokim**, in reality “הו"ה אחד”—they are one and the same; they are both manifestations of complete rachamim emanating from the name **Havaya**. Unfortunately, currently, in galus, we are blinded and unable to perceive and appreciate how everything is total rachamim.

Based on this, the Kol Aryeh presents a wonderful rationale for the minhag prescribed by the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 61, 5) to place one's hand over the eyes when saying “Shema Yisrael.” Since this passuk is a declaration that we believe that even what appears outwardly to be absolute din, in truth, it is total rachamim. Hence, we cover our eyes when reciting this passuk to demonstrate that we will not be led astray by external perceptions and appearances. Even if something appears to be negative and bad, we will dismiss this superficial perception and believe wholeheartedly that “ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”—that everything is really complete rachamim associated with the blessed name Havaya without any trace of din.

This explains very nicely the marvelous relationship between the mitzvah of Krias Shema and the mitzvah of tefillin. We have already explained that the knot of the tefillin represents our sincere belief that ultimately, at the end of days, the two perceptions represented by the right and left straps will be united. We will then become aware that what appears to us to be din is actually complete rachamim. We express this

belief with the utterance of Krias Shema: «שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד»—that there is actually no difference between the name Havaya and the name Elokim; they are both total rachamim. Therefore, Chazal's statement makes perfect sense: **"Anyone who recites Krias Shema without tefillin, it is as if he has borne false testimony against himself."**

Thus, we learn from the Kol Aryeh that the reason we cover our eyes when reciting Krias Shema is to emphasize the importance of not being led astray by what our eyes perceive to be midas hadin. Instead, we must believe wholeheartedly that «ה' אלקינו ה' אחד»—that even midas hadin associated with the name Elokim is midas harachamim emanating from the name Havaya.

The Sight of the Tefillin shel Rosh Instills Fear in the Goyim

So, why are the wicked people among the goyim, who constantly scheme to harm Yisrael and perpetrate malice, not afraid of retribution and punishment? It is because they believe erroneously that since Yisrael transgressed and were exiled from their land, HKB"H is angry with them, and they are being subjected to midas hadin. In that case, they can do whatever evil things to Yisrael that their hearts desire without suffering any consequences.

If they realized, however, midas hadin is actually also midas hachesed, they would be overwhelmed with fear and hesitate before causing Yisrael any harm. For, they would understand beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are going to pay severely. Even when Yisrael were exiled from their land, it was for their own good; it allowed them to refine themselves and make amends for all of their wrongdoings.

For example, we are taught in the Gemara (Gittin 56a) that when Nero Caesar the Emperor of Rome came to destroy Yerushalayim, he shot arrows in all four directions, and they all fell on Yerushalayim. Thus, he understood that HKB"H wanted him to destroy Yerushalayim. When he found a young boy returning from his Rav's house, he said to him, **"Recite for me a passuk that you learned in the Beis Midrash."** The boy repeated the following passuk (Yechezkel 25, 14): «ונתתי את נקמתי באדום ביד עמי ישראל»—**and I will wreak My vengeance upon Edom by the hand of My people Yisrael.**

Nero wisely understood that HKB"H intended to punish Yisrael on account of their sins; however, after purifying themselves of their sins in the iron crucible of galus, He would take out His vengeance from Edom. He remarked, **"HKB"H wishes to destroy His house, and (afterwards) to wipe His hands clean with me."** This caused Nero to flee and convert; the renowned Tanna, Rabbi Meir, descended from him. Clearly, if the goyim understood how much HKB"H loves Yisrael, and that even when He punishes them, He does so for their own benefit solely with midas hachesed, they would not dare harm Yisrael. That is precisely what happened with Nero Caesar.

In this light, let us interpret the passuk: «וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך». Upon seeing that the name Havaya manages what happens to Yisrael, and everything HKB"H does for Yisrael, even what appears superficially to be midas hadin from the name Elokim, is really midas harachamim from the name Havaya, they will be overcome with fear and hesitate to harm Yisrael. Rabbi Eliezer the Great explains how the nations of the world are able to recognize «כי שם ה' נקרא עליך»—that everything done on behalf of Yisrael is midas harachamim. He explains: «אלו תפילין שבראש»—it is by means of the tefillin shel rosh. For, there, the two straps, the right and the left, unite to form a knot. Thus, they will finally realize that at the end of days, it will be revealed to everyone that for Yisrael even midas hadin is midas harachamim.

Rabbi Akiva Perceived during His Lifetime that Everything Is הטוב והמטיב

We will continue our sacred journey by introducing a related teaching from Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen, zy"a, in Pri Tzaddik (Vayechi 10) on the subject. He says that even though HKB"H informed Moshe with the remark **"You will see My back, but My face may not be seen"** that he would not be able to recognize from the start that everything HKB"H does is for our benefit—only after the event has occurred, would it be possible to comprehend this truth; nevertheless, Rabbi Akiva was granted this perception in Olam HaZeh, i.e., the ability to recognize ahead of time, prior to the event, that everything is done truly for the good of Yisrael.

Hence, it was specifically Rabbi Akiva who taught (Berachos 60b): «לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר, כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד»—

person should always be accustomed to say: “Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the best.” Because he made this statement based on his own personal experience. Chazal had this in mind when they said (Bamidbar Rabbah 19, 6): **Things that were not revealed to Moshe Rabeinu were revealed to Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues.** “And His eye saw all precious things” refers to Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues. In other words, Rabbi Akiva perceived from the onset that everything is done benevolently, whereas Moshe Rabeinu did not perceive this truth.

Based on this intriguing insight from Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen, zy”a, we can shed some light on the esoteric, transcendental dialogue between Rabbi Akiva and his entourage recorded in the Gemara (Makkos 24a):

“וכבר היה רבן גמליאל ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי יהושע ורבי עקיבא מהלכין בדרך, ושמעו קול המונה של רומי מפלטה ברחוק מאה ועשרים מיל, והתחילו בוכין ורבי עקיבא משחק. אמרו לו, מפני מה אתה משחק, אמר להם, ואתם מפני מה אתם בוכים, אמרו לו, הללו כושיים שמשותחוים לעצבים ומקטרים לעבודת כוכבים יושבין בטח והשקט, ואנו בית הדום רגלי אלקינו שרוף באש ולא נבכה. אמר להן לכך אני מצחק, ומה לעוברי רצונו כך לעושי רצונו על אחת כמה וכמה.

שוב פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים, כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו בגדיהם, כיון שהגיע להר הבית ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי הקדשים, התחילו הן בוכין ורבי עקיבא מצחק, אמרו לו, מפני מה אתה מצחק, אמר להם, מפני מה אתם בוכים, אמרו לו, מקום שכתוב בו והזר הקרב יומת, ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו ולא נבכה.

אמר להן, לכך אני מצחק... באוריה כתיב לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש וגו', בזכריה כתיב עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים, עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה, הייתי מתיירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה, עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה, בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת. בלשון הזה אמרו לו, עקיבא נחמתני עקיבא נחמתני.

Once, Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva were traveling on the road, and they heard the sound of the Roman crowds in its plaza (in Rome), one hundred and twenty mil away, and they started to weep. But Rabbi Akiva was smiling. They asked him: Why are you smiling? He replied to them: And you, why are you weeping? They answered him: These heathens who bow down to idols and burn incense to idolatry live in security and calm, and we, the Temple which is the footstool of our G-d is consumed by fire, should we not weep? He said to them: This is why I am smiling. If this

is the reward for those who transgress His will, then for those who do His will, how much more so!

On another occasion, they were going up to Yerushalayim. When they reached Har HaTzofim, they tore their garments. When they came to Har HaBayis, they saw a fox emerging from Kodesh HaKodashim, and they began to cry; however, Rabbi Akiva smiled. They said to him, “Why are you smiling?” He responded to them, “Why are you crying?” They answered him, “A place about which it is written (Bamidbar 1, 51): ‘The non-kohen who comes close shall be put to death,’ and now (Eichah 5, 18) ‘foxes are walking about there,’ should we not cry?”

He said to them, “This is why I am smiling . . . In the prophecy of Uriah, it is written (Michah 3, 12): ‘Therefore, because of you, Tziyon will be plowed like a field etc.’ In the prophecy of Zechariah, it is written (Zechariah 8, 4): ‘Old men and old women will yet sit in the streets of Yerushalayim.’ As long as the nevuah of Uriah had not been fulfilled, I feared that the nevuah of Zechariah would not be fulfilled. Now, that the nevuah of Uriah has been fulfilled, it is apparent that the nevuah of Zechariah will be fulfilled.” They responded to him in these words, “Akiva, you have consoled us; Akiva, you have consoled us!”

The commentaries find this perplexing. It seems unimaginable that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, and Rabbi Yehoshua would doubt the fulfillment of Zechariah’s nevuah. Surely, they believed that the words Hashem, our G-d, spoke to His servants, the neviim, would be fulfilled fully. So, what novel lesson did Rabbi Akiva teach them by convincing them that the navi’s prophecy would come true?

In light of Rabbi Tzaddok’s insight, it makes perfect sense. Without a doubt, these holy Tannaim also believed wholeheartedly that the future geulah would become a reality. Notwithstanding, seeing the devastation of the churban with their own eyes, they were distressed by the sight of foxes roaming around freely in the holiest of sites, they felt obliged to abide by the halachah of mourning the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and the desecration of Hashem’s name in the world. They understood that people in Olam HaZeh are oblivious to the fact that everything is done with benevolence.

Rabbi Akiva, however, yearned throughout his life to sacrifice his life for the kedushah of Hashem. In this merit, he was granted the ability to recognize that everything is for our own good, even while he was still alive. Therefore, upon seeing the devastation of the churban, he laughed, since he was wise enough to realize that it did not reflect any din whatsoever. Thus, each of these renowned Tannaim acted in accordance with his level of perception. The other Tannaim, who were not on the madreigah to recognize that everything is for the good in Olam HaZeh, wept upon witnessing the destruction and desecration. Rabbi Akiva, on the other hand, who understood that **"everything is הטוב והמטיב"**, laughed, since he did not perceive any element of din.

This illuminates for us the explanation of the Yoel Moshe of the teaching in the Midrash: **"דברים שלא נגלו למשה נגלו לרבי"** **"עקיבא וחביריו, וכל יקר ראתה עינו, זה רבי עקיבא וחביריו"**. As we have learned, Moshe Rabeinu was not granted the perception of recognizing ahead of time that everything is truly for our

good. HKB"H informed him of this with the remark: **"וראית את אחורי לפני לא יראו"**. This means that HKB"H showed Moshe the knot of the tefillin shel rosh implying that only afterwards would he see how the right and left straps united as a knot, and that everything is a manifestation of total chesed. He was not privy to the sight of the tefillin shel rosh itself, where the two straps are intimately united at their source—indicating that before the abundant influence descends, everything is a manifestation exclusively of chesed. In other words, Moshe did not perceive this reality.

In contrast, Rabbi Akiva was privileged to perceive not just the knot of the tefillin but also the tefillin itself. He saw that even before the divine abundance descends, it is actually all benevolence. This prompted Chazal to apply the following passuk to Rabbi Akiva: **"וכל יקר ראתה עינו"**. They wanted to teach us that he was privileged to see the entire tefillin she rosh, which is referred to as **"כל יקר"**.

This ma'amar is dedicated לעילוי נשמת my father, Gershon ben Yitzchak, a"h, who passed away last week on the tenth of Elul 5785. He had tremendous yirat shamayim, put on tallis and tefillin every day, and opened up the shul for the first minyan every day until he was no longer able to go to shul. He passed away at the age of 98. He provided all of his children with the best Jewish educations available. His sons Barry and Ted both went to yeshivot in Eretz Yisrael.

He will be missed dearly by his family, friends, and congregation!

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