

#### Yaakov Avinu the Gilgul of Adam HaRishon Instituted Krias Shema to Rectify the Curse of "קוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך"

This week's parsha is parshas Vayechi. It chronicles Yaakov Avinu's parting words to his twelve sons, the heads of the holy shevatim (Bereishis 49, 1): יויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר, האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים, הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם". Then Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Gather together and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days; assemble and listen, sons of Yaakov, and heed Yisrael your father."

Chazal teach us that at this momentous gathering prior to his passing away, Yaakov Avinu laid the foundation for all future generations of the people of Yisrael to recite Krias Shema every morning and every night. With the words שמע" ישראל", we attest to our forefather Yisrael that we are fulfilling his legacy and parting wish. Here is the passage from the Midrash (B.R. 98, 3):

"Assemble and listen, sons of Yaakov." From here, Yisrael merited (the mitzvah of) Krias Shema. When Yaakov Avinu was about to depart from the world, he summoned his twelve sons and said to them, "Listen! The G-d of Yisrael, Who is in the heavens, is your Father. Do you have in your hearts perhaps any contention (personal grievance) with HKB"H?" They said to him, "Hear, O Yisrael, our father! Just as you have no contention in your heart toward HKB"H, so, too, we have not contention in our hearts; rather, (we attest that) Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only!" Thereupon, he, too, uttered with his lips and proclaimed, "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד" (blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity) . . . for this reason, the people of Yisrael recite daily, early in the morning and in the evening,

"Hear, O Yisrael our father from the Cave of Machpeilah, we still observe that which you instructed us, "Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only!"

Thus, we learn something remarkable! Every time we recite Krias Shema, we are informing Yaakov Avinu, who is also named Yisrael, who is buried in the Me'aras HaMachpeilah, that we are preserving the legacy that he instilled in us, proclaiming the unity of HKB"H—"ה' אלקינו ה' אחד". This concurs fabulously with Chazal's teaching (Ta'anis 5b): יעקב" אבינו לא מת"—Yaakov Avinu did not die. Thus, Yaakov Avinu is privileged to hear his myriads of offspring throughout the world proclaiming every evening and every morning: שממע "ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

We find a similar teaching from Chazal in the Gemara (Pesachim 56a):

"ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם. ביקש יעקב לגלות לבניו קץ הימין ונסתלקה ממנו שכינה, אמר שמא חס ושלום יש במיטתי פסול, כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל ואבי יצחק שיצא ממנו עשו. אמרו לו בניו, שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, אמרו כשם שאין בלבך אלא אחד כך אין בלבנו אלא אחד, באותה שעה פתח יעקב אבינו ואמר, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד".

Yaakov wished to reveal secrets pertaining to the final geulah to his sons; however, the Shechinah abandoned him, and he was deprived of divine inspiration. This led him to suspect that one of his sons might be unworthy; they reassured him unanimously with the response "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"—communicating the fact that just as he worshipped but one master, so, too, did they. To this, Yaakov Avinu replied, "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד".

# The Punishment: "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread"

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by examining the harsh punishment HKB"H imposed on Adam HaRishon and all of his descendants after he fell into the trap of the primeval serpent and ate from the Eitz HaDa'as. Here is the pertinent text (ibid. 3, 17): יולאדם אמר כי שמעת לקול אשתך" ותאכל מו העץ אשר צויתיד לאמר לא תאכל ממנו ארורה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חייך, וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את עשב השדה, בזעת אפיך תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה כי ממנה לקחת כי עפר אתה ."ואל עפר תשוב To Adam He said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree about which I commanded you saying, 'You shall not eat of it,' accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread. For you are dust, and to dust shall your return."

Now, when HKB"H admonished Adam HaRishon not to eat from the Eitz HaDa'as, he only mentioned the penalty of death (ibid. 2, 17): "ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות" but of the Eitz HaDa'as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof, for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. Yet, after the cheit, HKB"H saw fit to add an additional punishment: "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread. For you are dust, and to dust shall your return." Why?

To explain the matter, we will rely on a well-known principle: All the punishments HKB"H imposes on Yisrael are not for the sake of revenge but are for their own benefit—to educate them and to return them to the straight and narrow. This concept is articulated in the following passuk (Devarim 8, 5): "יודעת עם לבבך כי כאשר ייסר איש את בנו ה' אלקיך מיסרך"—you should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, your G-d, chastises you. Also, another passuk states (Yechezkel 18, 32): "כי לא אחפוץ במות המת "כי לא אחפוץ במות המת dead person; these are the words of Hashem G-d; repent and live! Hence, it stands to reason that the punishment of:

"By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" was also intended for the benefit of mankind.

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Now, during the narrative of creation, it is written (Bereishis 2, 15): "יקח ה' אלקים את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה" — Hashem Elokim took the man and placed him in Gan Eden to work it and to guard it. The Targum YoNasan provides the following rendering: "ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה – למהוי פלח באורייתא ולמנטר פקודהא". In other words, Hashem placed Adam in Gan Eden to serve Him by engaging in Torah-study and by observing His mitzvos. The source for this notion comes from the Sifri (Eikev 41): "לעבדה זה תלמוד ולשמרה אלו מצוות" "to work it" refers to Torah-study; "and to guard it" refers to the observance of mitzvos.

We find a slight variation of this interpretation in the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 27a): "לעבדה בפקודין דעשה ולשמרה" "to work it" with mitzvos aseh "and to guard it" with mitzvos lo ta'aseh. This latter interpretation also appears in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 21). But why didn't they rely on the simple, straightforward interpretation of the passuk—that "לעבדה ולשמרה" "to work it and to guard it—means to "work" the land by planting, plowing, and harvesting it, and to "guard it" means to protect it and the work from being damaged and ruined?

# Prior to the Cheit Eitz HaDa'as Physical Work Was Unnecessary

The reason Chazal opted to interpret "לעבדה ולשמרה" in terms of man's spiritual responsibilities—i.e., Torah and mitzvos—rather than the simple interpretation regarding working the land—is because prior to Adam's sin, it was not necessary to work the land; everything was done for him from above. This is taught explicitly in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 12):

What work was there to do in the garden for it to say "to work it and to guard it"? Perhaps... to trim the vines, to plow and clear the land... but all the trees grew of their own accord. Perhaps you might say that there was work in Gan Eden to irrigate the garden, but a river flowed through and emerged from Eden... Thus, "to work it and to guard it" can only refer to engaging in words of Torah and guarding the ways of the Eitz HaChaim—the Torah.

We find further clarification in the Gemara (Berachos 35b):

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"רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ודש בשעת דישה, וזורה בשעת הרוח, תורה מה תהא עליה. אלא בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום מלאכתן נעשית על ידי אחרים, שנאמר ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם וגו', ובזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום מלאכתן נעשית על ידי עצמן שנאמר ואספת דגנך". Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Is it possible that a man plows at the time of plowing, and sows at the time of sowing, and harvests at the time of harvesting, and threshes at the time of threshing, and winnows at the time of the blowing wind? What then will become of Torah-study? Rather, when Yisrael act in accordance with the Omnipresent's will, their work will be performed by others, as it is stated (Yeshayah 61, 5): "And strangers will arise and shepherd your flocks, etc." But when Yisrael neglect to act in accordance with the Omnipresent's will, their work is necessarily performed by them personally, as it is stated (Devarim 11, 14): "And you will gather in your grain."

Accordingly, we can characterize Adam HaRishon prior to the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as" as someone who abides by the will of the Omnipresent. As such, he did not have to bother himself with manual labor in the fields; all of his labor was performed for him from above. As it is written (Bereishis 2, 9): "ויצמה —and Hashem ה' אלקים מן האדמה כל עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל" —and Hashem Elokim caused to grow from the ground every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food. Along these lines, the Gemara teaches (Sanhedrin 59b): "אדם הראשון מיסב —Adam HaRishon would recline in Gan Eden; ministering angels would broil meat for him and strain wine for him. Thus, he was free to engage in Torah-study and to serve Hashem.

עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון, וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה עון" Torah-study combined with "derech eretz" (worldly endeavors and proper conduct) is good; for exertion in both eliminates wrongdoing. All Torah-study not accompanied by work ultimately fails and leads to sin. This is why HKB"H imposed on mankind the inconvenience of: "בזעת אפיך תאכל לחם".

## The Marvelous Tikun Accomplished by the Decree of "thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you"

But why did HKB"H find it necessary to add to Adam's punishment the decree of "זֹקוֹץ ודרדר תצמיח לך"? This meant that even after vegetation and plant-life sprouted forth from the earth, thorns and thistles would sprout alongside them. Man would then have to go to the trouble of removing them. It would seem that even without this decree, man had more than enough work to do tending to his land—such as plowing, sowing, harvesting, and threshing.

I believe that even this punishment concealed an element of chesed. It was designed to inculcate in mankind a deeper sense of emunah. On the one hand, it serves a vital purpose for man to occupy himself with matters of Olam HaZeh, as we learned from the Mishnah above: "יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ" On the other hand, it is also fraught with a significant risk. This is evident from the following admonition (Devarim 8, 11):

"השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת, ובקרך וצאנך ירביון וכסף וזהב ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה, ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' אלקיך המוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים... ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל".

Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His mitzvos . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase—and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery . . . And you may say in your heart, "My strength and the might of my hand made me all

this wealth!" Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.

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So, in a sense, HKB"H prepared the remedy for us in anticipation of the ailment. He combined the decree of "thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you" with the decree of "by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread." The fact that thorns and thistles sprout from the earth along with the desired plant life inculcates in man an awareness that the success of his own, personal handiwork is fraught with an inherent danger: the yetzer hara is liable to infect him with the false, misguided doctrine of "כוחי ועוצם ידי". Such misguided thoughts and beliefs are analogous to spiritual thorns and thistles that accompany true, proper thoughts. So, this teaches us that just like it is necessary to uproot thorns and thistles that ruin and interfere with the growth of desired, healthy vegetation, so, too, it is of the utmost importance to uproot the misguided doctrine of כוחי ועוצם ידי and deleterious thoughts arising from the influence of the yetzer hara. Conversely, it is vital to fortify our emunah in Hashem, in keeping with the conclusion of the admonition above: "וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא "הנותו לד כח לעשות חיל.

#### "וקוץ ודרדר"—Do Not Mix Up the "Dalet" and the "Reish"

Continuing on this sacred journey, we will now illustrate how HKB"H conveyed this vital lesson to Adam HaRishon and all of his descendants to follow. Let us refer to a valuable insight from the writings of the Megaleh Amukos (Vayigash) brought down in the name of earlier sources. There are two somewhat related pesukim in the Torah that tradition dictates be written with an enlarged letter, respectively. In the passuk (Shemos 34, 14): "בי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר"—you shall not bow down to another god—the "reish" of "מיל ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד" is enlarged. In the passuk (Devarim 6, 4): "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד" is enlarged. By dictating that these two letters be inscribed in the Torah larger than normal letters, HKB"H is impressing upon us a critical warning: Do not mix up or interchange these two letters, chas v'shalom! To do so is an abomination and heresy.

The Agra D'Kallah (Bereishis) provides clarification by explaining the disastrous consequences and implications of mixing up these two letters. If the "dalet" of "were" were

to be replaced with a "reish," we would be announcing that instead of serving one Hashem, we are also serving other gods, including many human beings, in order to find favor in their eyes, chas v'shalom. Unquestionably, this is tantamount to avodah-zarah! Alternatively, if the "reish" of "אחר" were to be replaced with a "dalet," that passuk would be admonishing us not to bow down to the one true G-d.

Based on this understanding, the Agra D'Kallah interprets the phrase "וְקוֹץ ודרדר תצמיח לך"—the pronouncement HKB"H made to Adam HaRishon in the aftermath of the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as"—magnificently. Here is a concise translation of his sacred words:

Had Adam not sinned, he would not have been drawn to the Eitz HaDa'as Tov VaRa. Then we would not be confounded by decisions between evil and good, and good and evil; this confusion resulted as a consequence of his sin. Now, the difference between the words אח"ד and "אחר" is merely the small protrusion extending from the back of the "dalet." Conversely, the numerical value of the letter "reish" (200) exceeds the numerical value of the letter "dalet" (4) by the numerical equivalent of the word קו"ץ (196). This then is what Hashem informed Adam after the sin: קו"ץ ודרד"ר will result as a consequence of your sin-i.e., confusion (doubts) and mistakes resulting from mixing up the "dalet" and the "reish" that are only distinguishable by the "kotz," the protrusion on the back of the "dalet." [Translator's note: The word קו"ץ can refer to the tip or extension of a letter; the word דרד"ד is composed of the two letters "dalet" and "reish."]

Following this sublime path, we can now explain why Yaakov Avinu instituted the reciting of Krias Shema. In Sha'ar HaPesukim (Vayigash), the illustrious Arizal asserts that Yaakov Avinu was a gilgul and tikun of Adam HaRishon, The source for this notion is found in the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 35b). The Gemara expresses this phenomenon as follows (B.M. 84a): "שופריה דיעקב אבינו מעין שופריה דאדם הראשון" the radiance of Yaakov Avinu resembled the radiance of Adam HaRishon.

We can now suggest that by instructing all of his future offspring to declare "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד", Yaakov Avinu was rectifying the blemish caused by Adam HaRishon of "וקוץ

ודרדר תצמיח לך". He wished to impress upon them the critical importance of not interchanging the "dalet" of אד" with the "reish" of "אל אחר", chas v'shalom. In this manner, we are constantly reminded to uproot the spiritual thorns and thistles we may have accumulated.

# The Mezuzah Is Placed Strategically on the Right Side of the דל"ת

It now gives me immense pleasure to present to our esteemed readership, a novel rationale for the mitzvah of mezuzah that Hashem has graciously revealed to me. We have been instructed to inscribe the first two passages of Krias Shema on the klaf of the mezuzah we affix at the entrance to our homes. This is in keeping with that which is written in the first two passages of Krias Shema (Devarim 6,9 and 11, 20): "וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך"—and you are to inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Furthermore, the Gemara (Menachos 34a) teaches us that the mezuzah should be affixed on the right side of the entrance to the house. Our sages derived this from the term "ביתך" in the passuk: "זכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך". They expounded "ביאתך"—your house—to mean "ביאתך"—the way a person walks; and since most people begin to walk from a stationary position by moving their right leg first, this implies that the mezuzah should be affixed on the right side—the side on which a person enters his house. The Gemara (ibid. 33a) also teaches: "מצוה להניחה בתחילת שליש העליון"—it is a mitzvah to place it at the beginning of the upper third (of the doorpost).

We can now explain these requirements based on our current discussion. The Hebrew term for a door or doorway is דל"ה; we can interpret it as a wonderful remez to the letter אח"ד of דל"ה. We must take great care not to erase the protrusion at the top of its right leg, which would transform it into a "reish," and change the word אח"ד. With this in mind, we place the first passage of Krias Shema in the mezuzah, which we place on the right side of the "delet," in its upper third, at the entrance to our homes. The passage opens with the passuk: "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"—and concludes with the passuk: "וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך". Thus, we ensure that the message and declaration of Hashem's unity shines brightly within our homes.

### The Seven Mentions of Havaya in the Mezuzah Allude to Yaakov Avinu

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We will now point out something truly remarkable. In parshas Bo, it is written (Shemos 12, 22): "ולקחתם אגודת אודב אוד אובר ה' לגגוף וטבלתם בדם אשר בסף והגעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות... ועבר ה' לגגוף וטבלתם בדם אשר בסף והגעתם אל המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות, ופסח ה' על הפתח את מצרים וראה את הדם על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות, ופסח ה' על הפתח ולא יתן המשחית לבוא אל בתיכם לנגוף". You shall take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood that is in the basin and touch the lintel and the two doorposts... Hashem will pass through to smite Egypt, and He will see the blood that is on the lintel and the two doorposts; and Hashem will skip over the entrance and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your homes to smite. They expounded on this in the Midrash (S.R. 17, 3): "And touch the lintel" in the merit of Avraham; "and the two doorposts" in the merit of Yitzchak and Yaakov; and in their (combined) merit, He will see the blood "and He will not permit the destroyer."

We learn from this Midrash that the two doorposts at the entrance correspond to Yitzchak Avinu and Yaakov Avinu. But this raises an interesting and provocative question: Which doorpost corresponds to Yitzchak, and which one corresponds to Yaakov? Based on this determination, we can ascertain whether the mitzvah of mezuzah, which is affixed to the right doorpost, is associated with Yitzchak Avinu or Yaakov Avinu.

After researching the matter, I found an answer in the sacred teachings of the Ma'aseh Rokeiach (Korach). He cites the aforementioned Midrash and comments: Most certainly the fact that the mezuzah is affixed to the right side corresponds to Yaakov; for, it is known to kabbalists that Yaakov's midah is "Tiferes," which tends to the right; whereas Yitzchak corresponds to the left doorpost, representing "gevurah." Thus, we have a definitive answer that the placement of the mezuzah on the right doorpost is associated with Yaakov Avinu.

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I can substantiate this conclusion with a marvelous remez. In Likutei Torah (Vayeira), the Arizal points out the deeper significance of the name Yaakov: **The gematria of seven Havayas** (7x26)

equals יעק"ב (182); these seven Havayas are alluded to in the passuk (ibid. 28, 10): "And Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva" ("sheva" is the Hebrew word for seven).

Now, if we examine the two passages of Krias Shema in a mezuzah, we find that they contain precisely seven mentions of the name **Havaya**. In the first passage of "שמע ישראל", the name a הוי" appears three times; in the second passage-"יוהיה אם—it appears four times. Thus, we can suggest that they correspond to **Yaakov**, whose name in Hebrew equals seven multiples of הוי"; and we have compelling corroboration for the assertion of the Ma'aseh Rokeiach that the mitzvah of mezuzah is associated with Yaakov Avinu.

With immense joy, we have shed light on the glorious connection between the institution of the mitzvah of Krias Shema—declaring a Jew's sincere belief in Hashem's unity—by Yaakov Avinu and the punishment of "thorns and thistles"—"קוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך"—resulting from the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as. Since Yaakov was a gilgul of Adam HaRishon, it was incumbent upon him to correct the blemish of "הוץ ודרדר"—interchanging

the "dalet" of אח"ד—by erasing its "kotz"—with the "reish" of אח"ד—which is heresy and has catastrophic implications.

For this same reason, Yaakov Avinu was also privileged to be associated with the mitzvah of mezuzah, which HKB"H also transmitted to Yisrael in the first paragraph of Krias Shema. As we have explained, the mezuzah is affixed on the right doorpost of a house, on the upper third of the דל"ד. Thus, both mitzvos—Krias Shema and mezuzah—go together hand in hand, in the merit of Yaakov Avinu, to make amends for the faulty condition of "קוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך" caused by Adam HaRishon.

In summary, when we say "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד" twice daily, in Shacharis and Arvis, we should have in mind the oneness of Hashem throughout the universe. Additionally, we should have in mind to correct the flaw in creation caused by Adam HaRishon—who contained all future human beings within him when he sinned with the Eitz HaDa'as. Specifically, we want to preserve the integrity of the "dalet" of אח"ד and not substitute it, chas v'shalom, with the "reish" of אח"ד.



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