

An Amazing Solution to the Zohar's Baffling Riddle:

The Luz Bone from which the Dead Will Be Resurrected
Is Called "Besuel HaArami" because It Is Very Deceptive!

In parshas Toldos, which we read this week, it states (Bereishis 25, 20): "ויהי יצחק בן ארבעים שנה בקחתו את רבקה בת בתואל הארמי מפרן ארם אחות לבן הארמי – Yitzchok was forty years old when he took Rivkeh, the daughter of Besuel the Aramean from Padan Aram, the sister of Lovon, to be his wife. We know that the Torah is elucidated on four different planes referred to as "PaRDeS" – referring to Pshat (the straightforward simple interpretation, Remez (allusions), Drush (more elaborate elucidations) and Sod (mystical, hidden meanings of the text).

The source for this concept is found in the teachings of the Arizal in Shaar HaGilgulim (Introduction 11), where he enumerates the items that we are all required to fulfill:

הששית, היא מצוה פרטית והיא לעסוק בתורה, והיא שקולה כנגד כל המצוות כמו שאמרו רז"ל תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, ויש בה ד' דרכים שסימנם פרד"ס פ"שט ר"מז ד'רוש ס'וד, וצריך לטרוח ולעסוק בכלם עד מקום שיר שכלו מגעת, ויבקש לו רב שילמדהו, ואם חסר אחת מארבעתם כפי השגתו יתגלגל על זה.

He adds that one must strive to engage in each of these four levels of Torah study, according to one's abilities; one should seek someone suitable to teach him; and if one lacks any of these four, he is sure to reincarnate as a consequence.

the Daughter of Besuel -- "בת בתואל"

Hence, it is fitting and worthwhile to examine the elucidation of this possuk found in the Zohar hakadosh, representing the planes of "remez" and

"sod." This possuk is seen as an allusion to the time of the future redemption. Forty years after the redemption, Yisroel will merit resurrection of the dead – the neshomeh will return to reenter the body and bring it back to life.

According to the Zohar, Yitzchok alludes to the neshomeh that will return and reenter the body; Rivkeh alludes to the physical body that will be resurrected. "בת בתואל הארמי" is an allusion to the fact that the physical body will rise and be revitalized in the merit of the single bone that does not decay in the grave and remains intact. This bone is referred to as "בתואל" "Besuel HaArami"; the body is destined to be rebuilt from this particular bone at the time of the resurrection. Therefore, the body is referred to as the "daughter of Besuel HaArami" -- "בת בתואל" -- since it regenerates from the bony entity known as "Besuel HaArami." In this manner, the Zohar elucidates the possuk:

"ויהי יצחק בן ארבעים שנה, שהמתין לגוף, בקחתו את רבקה, בהכנסתה בגוף המזומן לו... בת בתואל, בתו של אל. רב הונא אמר כך הוא, ואנא הוית בכרכי הים, ושמענא דהו קראן לההוא גרמא דשררה, ההוא דאשתאר בקברא מכל גופא, בתואל רמאה. שאלית עליה, אמרו דהוא כרישא דחויא דאיהו רמאה, וההוא גרמא הוא רמאה מכל שאר גרמי.

דתאנא אמר רבי שמעון, ההוא גרמא למה אשתאר בקיומא יתיר מכל שאר גרמי, משום דאיהו רמאה, ולית סביל טעמא דמזונא דבני נשא כשאר גרמי, ובגיני כך הוא תקיף מכל גרמי, והוא ליהוי עקרא דגופא אתבני מניה, הדא הוא דכתיב בת בתואל הארמי. ותאנא אמר רבי שמעון, הוא רמאי, ומעולם רמאי, ושכן יצר הרע דאיהו רמאי, הדא הוא דכתיב בת בתואל הארמי, גרמא רמאה.

Rav Huna states that he was in a city by the sea and heard them referring to the bone in the spinal column that remains in the grave after the rest of the body is gone, as "Besuel the Fraud." After inquiring, he was told that this bone has the shape of a snake's head. Just as the snake is deceptive and fraudulent, this bone is the most fraudulent bone in the body. As Rabbi Shimon taught, this bone remains in existence long after the other bones, because it deceptively does not partake from human consumption as the other bones do. As a consequence, it remains strong and is the essential building block for the resurrection of the body. Then Rabbi Shimon taught us that it is a fraud and was always a fraud, and was the neighbor of the deceptive and fraudulent yetzer hora.

Of course, all of the commentaries on the Zohar are baffled by the fact that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai chooses to refer to this unique bone, the basis for the resurrection of the dead, as "Besuel HaArami" — "it is a fraud, and was always a fraud." Why is it a fraud? Furthermore, if, indeed, it is a fraud, how does it merit remaining intact and constituting the building block from which resurrection of the dead will begin? Additionally, the Zohar initially interprets: "בת" — "the daughter of Besuel," as the granddaughter of G-d. The Hebrew name Besuel, spelled "בתואל" is broken down into the two words "בתו אל", meaning the daughter of G-d; hence, "the daughter of Besuel" is the granddaughter of G-d, which is certainly an honorable title. Why, then, does the Zohar conclude by referring to the bone as "Besuel HaArami" — "it is a fraud, and was always a fraud"?

Resurrection of the Dead Starts from the Luz Bone in the Vertebral Column

Before revealing the precious gem concealed in the words of the divine Tanne, RaShB"Y, let us indulge in the marvelous statements of our blessed sages in the Talmud and Midrash concerning the nature of this unique bone. Why, in fact, does this single bone merit to remain intact and unscathed and, as a consequence, is able to

serve as the seed, so to speak, for man's resurrection from the dead? We find a source for this phenomenon in the Midrash on parshas Bereishis (B.R. 28, 3):

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אִמְחָה אֶת הָאָדָם. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יְהוֹצָדָק אָמַר, אֲפִילוּ לֹוּז שֶׁל שְׂדֵרָה, שֶׁמִּמֶּנּוּ הַקֶּבֶ"ה מְצִיץ אֶת הָאָדָם לְעֵתִיד לָבוֹא נִמְחָה. אֲדַרְיָאנוֹס שְׁחִיק עֲצָמוֹת שֶׁאֵל אֶת רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנִינְיָא, אָמַר לִיה מֵהֵיכָן הַקֶּבֶ"ה מְצִיץ אֶת הָאָדָם לְעֵתִיד לָבוֹא, אָמַר לִיה מִלֹּוּז שֶׁל שְׂדֵרָה, אָמַר לִיה מִנִּין אֶתָּה יוֹדֵעַ, אָמַר לִיה אֵיִתִּיתִיה לִידֵי וְאֵנָּה מוֹדֵעַ לָךְ, [הֵבִיאוּ לִידֵי וְאֵנִי אוֹכִיחַ לָךְ], טַחְנוּ בְּרַחִיִּים וְלֹא נִטְחָן, שְׂרַפּוּ בְּאֵשׁ וְלֹא נִשְׂרַף, נִתְּנוּ בְּמֵיִם וְלֹא נִמְחָה, נִתְּנוּ עַל הַסֵּדֶן וְהַתְּחִיל מִכָּה עָלָיו בְּפִטְיֵשׁ, נִחְלַק הַסֵּדֶן וְנִבְקַע הַפִּטְיֵשׁ וְלֹא חָסַר כְּלוּם."

This Midrash appears at the end of parshas Bereishis and concerns the generation of the flood. We learn from this Midrash that the bone from which HKB"H will resurrect the dead in the future is called "לוז של שדרה" — "Luz" of the spinal column; it is invulnerable — whether you attempt to grind it, burn it, dissolve it, or pulverize it, it remains intact. The Chidushei Radal commenting on the Midrash states (ibid.): "לוז של שדרה, פירוש הרוקח שהיא חוליא קטנה: שבשדרה שבברכות". He makes reference to the Gemoreh (Beroches 28b) discussing the institution by the Members of the Great Assembly of the blessings of the Shemoneh Esreh: "...הני שמונה עשרה כנגד מנין... אמר רבי תנחום אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, כנגד שמונה אמר רבי תנחום — עשרה חוליות שבשדרה" — Rabbi Tanchum states in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that the eighteen blessings correspond to the eighteen vertebra in the spine.

The Gemoreh goes on to ask: "הני תמני סרי תשסרי" — "הוויין" — why do you state that there are eighteen blessings when, in reality, there are nineteen blessings. In response, the Gemoreh continues: "אמר רבי לוי, ברכת הצדוקים [ברכת ולמלשינים] ביבנה" — Rabbi Levi teaches that the nineteenth blessing, "V'lamalshinim," was instituted in Yavneh because of the Tzedukim, the heretics. Nevertheless, since there are only eighteen vertebrae, what does this berocheh correspond to? To which the Gemoreh answers: "כנגד חוליא קטנה שבשדרה" — in addition to the eighteen known vertebra, there exists

one, more, small vertebra. The berocheh "Let there be no hope for the informers," "ולמלשינים אל תהי תקוה", was instituted to correspond to this small vertebra.

Concerning this matter, the Radal enlightens us, in the name of the Rokeach, that this small spinal vertebra mentioned in the Gemoreh — corresponding to the nineteenth berocheh — is none other than the Luz bone located in the spinal column. Concerning this bone, the Midrash stated: "שממנו הקב"ה מציץ את" "HKB" will resurrect man from this bone in future times. In a similar vein, the Oruch writes: "לזו של שדרה, פירוש חוליא קטנה שבסוף י"ח" חוליות, וכל גופו של אדם נרקב חוץ מאותה חוליא ודומה "לשקד" — there is a tiny vertebra at the end of the vertebral column, after the eighteen vertebrae; the entire human body decays except for this one bone; it resembles an almond.

According to this explanation, however, why were only eighteen blessings instituted to begin with? Furthermore, if it was unnecessary to institute a berocheh corresponding to this tiny bone, why was the berocheh V'lamalshinim added — corresponding to this tiny vertebra — after heresy became so prevalent? What is the connection between the Luz bone and the berocheh addressing the heretics?

The "Niskoi" Does Not Derive Benefit from One's Food except on Motzaei Shabbes

Let us continue on our journey to uncover one more vital fact concerning this bone that remains intact and from which HKB" will initiate the resurrection process. Based on the Gemoreh (Shabbes 119b), the Tur and the Shulchan Oruch write (O.C. 300, 1): "לעולם יסדר אדם שלחנו במוצאי שבת כדי ללוות את" "one should always set his table on Motzaei Shabbes to accompany out the Shabbes, even if he only requires the amount of a "K'zayis." The Beit Yosef explains the reason for this practice, in the name of the Shiblei HaLeket (130): "אבר יש באדם ונסכויו שמו, ואינו נהנה באכילה"

— אלא במוצאי שבת" — there is a human limb known as "niskoi"; it does not derive any benefit from one's meals except on motzaei Shabbes.

The Match Moshe clarifies that this is a reference to the very same Luz bone mentioned in the Midrash above:

"ונראה לי טעמא דמילתא, כי ידוע שאותו עצם לזו שמיה, והוא עיצומו ועיקרו ושרשו וממנו נתהוה האדם בעצם הטיפה, וכאשר ימות האדם העצם ההוא אינו נימוח ולא נפחת, ואילו יכניסו אותו באש אינו נשרף, ברחיים אינו נטחן, בפטיש אינו מתפוצץ, והוא העצם שיש בו קיום נצחי, וממנו יחיה האדם לעת התחייה, והוא המקבל עונג ועונש אחר מיתת אדם, ועצם הזה שרשו ועקרו מעצם השמים."

This bone survives for all eternity; it is the seed for man's resurrection; it receives man's reward and punishment after his death; this bone has heavenly origins.

After discussing the matter at length, he concludes: "ובכן כל הזהיר בסעודה זו ומשביע לעצם הזה, יזכה שישיביע בצחצחות נפשו בתענוגי רב טוב הצפון לצדיקים ולשבוע שמחות, אשר עליהם התפלל המשורר (תהלים טז יא) תודיענו אורח חיים שובע שמחות את פניך. Therefore, whoever is careful to observe this practice — the "Melaveh Malkeh" meal-and nourish this bone, will enjoy the rewards and delights in store for the righteous.

Let us summarize what we have established up until this point. (a) The Zohar refers to this special bone as "Besuel HaArami," because of its fraudulent, deceptive behavior. (b) The Midrash refers to it as the "Luz bone in the spine," because it is indestructible. (c) The Gemoreh refers to it as "a small vertebra in the spine," the nineteenth vertebra corresponding to the nineteenth berocheh, V'lamalshinim. (d) Our early scholars refer to it as "niskoi"; it does not derive benefit from any of a person's meals except from the Melaveh Malkeh meal at the conclusion of the Shabbes.

Thus far, we have also posed two questions. (a) What about this bone is fraudulent, earning it the title "Besuel HaArami"? (b) Why was the berocheh concerning the heretics specifically instituted corresponding to this

vertebra? Additionally, it behooves us to add one more question: (c) how do we explain the incredible fact that this bone does not derive benefit from any food other than that eaten at the Melaveh Malkeh meal on motzaei Shabbes?

The Fantastic Explanation of the Great Yavetz ztz"l

Let us begin by introducing a wonderful explanation from the illuminating writings of the great Yavetz — Yaakov Emden the son of Tzvi, ztz"l — found in his siddur concerning motzaei Shabbes. It is imperative for every Torah scholar to be aware of and to review what he writes, in order to understand, to some small degree, the significance of the Luz bone located in one's body. To serve our purpose we will present a summary of his explanation with some additional elaboration.

During the process of Creation, HKB"H created man's physical form, his body, as it is written (Bereishis 2, 7): **”ויוצר ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפו — and Hashem G-d formed the man of soil from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul.** In truth, after the sin involving the Tree of Knowledge, the reality of death was decreed and imposed upon all living creatures. Nevertheless, since man does utilize his physical body to perform mitzves and good deeds, it is Hashem's will to resurrect that very same body rather than to create an entirely new body.

For this reason, HKB"H prepared the remedy prior to the malady by creating a unique entity within the physical body — the Luz bone. It stands apart from all of the other physical parts and structures of the body in that it is composed of a unique material not made up of the four basic elements. It does not derive benefit from any food substance, so that its existence will not depend on any physical nourishment or sustenance. Consequently, it exists for all eternity, does not decay and cannot be consumed by fire; it will serve as the building block from which HKB"H will build the body anew at the time of "Tehiyas HaMeisim," resurrection of the dead.

In this manner, the Yavetz explains why the Zohar hakadosh refers to this bone as "Besuel HaArami — Besuel the Fraudulent One," giving two reasons: (1) it fools the body into thinking that it is being nourished physically along with the rest of the body, while, in reality, it does not derive any physical benefit from one's food and drink, and (2) it deceptively appears to die along with the rest of the body, while, in reality, it continues to live and exist long after the person has died. A numerical allusion to this fact can be found in the name Besuel. The numerical equivalent of the name 439) (בתוא"ל) is one less than the numerical equivalent of the word 440) (ב"ת), meaning dead. This gimatriah alludes to the fact that this bone only appears to die but, in reality, continues to live on completely intact.

This is why this bone only derives benefit from the Melaveh Malkeh meal on motzaei Shabbes. Seeing as HKB"H created it in such a manner that it does not require physical sustenance for its continued existence, it only derives benefit from food that is consumed for the sole purpose of serving Hashem, without any physical pleasure. Therefore, it only derives benefit from the Melaveh Malkeh meal which a Jew eats after he is fully satiated by the preceding three Shabbes meals. His sole reason for partaking of this motzaei Shabbes meal is to fulfill the mitzveh of accompanying out the Shabbes; he does not do so for the sake of physical pleasure.

Notwithstanding the Yavetz's wonderful explanation, it is still perplexing why the Luz bone is referred to as "Besuel HaArami" — which the Zohar hakadosh interprets as "Besuel the Fraudulent One." Does the fact that it appears to be benefitting from one's food, when it in fact is not, or that it appears to die along with the rest of the body, when in fact it does not, justify referring to it by such a derogatory name — "Besuel the Fraud"?

Either way, if its appearances are merely deceptive but it does not intentionally deceive, it is not truly a fraud. On the other hand, if it intentionally deceives the body into thinking that it is benefitting from the food the body consumes or that it also dies along with

the body, we must explain what benefit accrues to it from this deception. Additionally, how does all of this coincide with RaShBY's statement: "הוא רמאי, ומעולם" "הוא רמאי, ושכן יצר הרע דאיהו רמאי" "was always a fraud, and the neighbor of the yetzer hora, which is also a fraud?"

The Luz Did Not Partake of the Tree of Knowledge and Was Not Sentenced to Die

I have been inspired and moved to propose a novel interpretation concerning this passage in the Zohar hakadosh — as to why this special bone, from which man is destined to be resurrected, is referred to as "Besuel the Fraud." Let us recall the words of the Shiblei HaLeKet that the reason one should strive to eat even as little as a kizayis for the Melaveh Malkeh meal on motzaei Shabbes is because the "niskoi" does not benefit from any other meal all week long except for the meal on motzaei Shabbes. Concerning this matter, the Eliyahu Rabba writes (300, 3): "אם" "if so, it did not partake of the Tree of Knowledge; therefore, it does not decay."

Yisroel's Rav, the great possek and author of the Pri Megodim quotes the Eliyahu Rabba in Mishbetzot Zahav and elaborates: "עיינן אליהו רבא להכי אבר זה אין נפסד וממנו יברא לעתיד לבוא, דאדם הראשון אכל מעץ הדעת ונהנו כל האברים, נגזר עליהם לעפר תשוב, מה שאין כן אבר זה אין לו הנאה כי אם מסעודת When מוצאי שבת, ובערב שבת לא נהנה לכך קיים." Odom HaRishon ate from the Tree of Knowledge, all of his limbs benefitted; as a consequence, they were doomed to return to dust. This bone, however, which only benefits from the motzaei Shabbes meal, did not partake of what was consumed on erev Shabbes; consequently, it continues to exist without decay. We should note that the Eliyahu Rabba's source is the great Rabbi Heschel of Cracow, zy"l; his words are brought down by his students in Chanukas HaTorah (Likutim 209).

Now, let us examine the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and why the Luz bone refrained from partaking of the

forbidden fruit. The Torah states (Bereishis 3, 1): "והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה אשר עשה ה' אלקים" — Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that Hashem G-d had made. Targum Onkelos explains: "וחויה הוה חכים מכל חות ברא" — and the serpent was more cunning than every beast of the wild. We see that the primeval serpent, the source of deception and lies, cleverly plotted to trap Odom and Chava in his net. This is why the Tikunei Zohar refers to the serpent as: "נחש רמאי" — the fraudulent serpent.

This fact is evident from the brazen lie the serpent tells Chava (Bereishis 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. Here Rashi comments: "כי יודע, כל אומן שונא את בני אומנתו, מן העץ אכל וברא יודע, כל אומן שונא את בני אומנתו, מן העץ אכל וברא" — the serpent said that every craftsman hates others of his craft; G-d ate from the tree and created the world. We see clearly that the serpent spoke words of heresy and lies in order to deceive and trap Odom and Chava.

The primeval serpent, who is the yetzer hora, and is also the Malach HaMaves, had one goal in mind. He wished to impose the death decree on Odom and Chava and all of their future descendants. He figured that if they ate from the Tree of Knowledge and all of their bodily limbs benefitted from the forbidden fruit, they would die a lasting, eternal death and would never be resurrected. HKB"l, however, thwarted his plans by introducing the remedy prior to the illness — by creating the Luz bone from which man would ultimately be resurrected.

The Luz Deceived the Serpent into Believing that It Benefitted from the Tree of Knowledge

The Luz was certainly well aware that if the serpent knew that it did not participate in eating from the Tree of Knowledge, it would assault him with all its negative and impure forces in order to corrupt it with heresy. This, in fact, is what happened with the

generation of the flood. They were so corrupt that HKB"H wiped out even the Luz bone, as we learned earlier in the Midrash:

”ויאמר ה' אמחה את האדם. רבי יוחנן בשם רבי שמעון בן יהוצרק אמר, אפילו לוז של שדרה, שממנו הקב"ה מציץ את האדם לעתיד לבוא נמחה“.

Hashem decided to wipe out all of mankind, including even the Luz of the spine, from which HKB"H planned for man to sprout forth in the future.

Therefore, when the Luz witnessed the deceit and lies of the serpent, it decided to follow the guidelines of the possuk (Tehillim 18, 26): **”עם חסיד תתחסד, עם גבר תמים תתם, עם נבר תתברר, ועם עקש תתפתל“** — **with the devout You act devoutly; with the wholehearted man You act wholeheartedly; with the trustworthy You act trustingly and with the crooked You act perversely.** Just as the serpent acted cunningly and dishonestly with Odom and Chava, so, too, the Luz bone acted cunningly and dishonestly with the serpent. It pretended as if it partook from the Tree of Knowledge, and it fooled the serpent into believing that it died along with the rest of the body.

In truth, our holy sources teach us that this is the proper method one should adopt in dealing with the yetzer hora. In a similar vein, the Kedushas Levi writes in parshas Noach the following elucidation of the possuk (Tehillim 119, 98): **”מאויבי תחכמני מצוותיך“** — **your commandments make me wiser than my enemies.** My enemies refers to the wicked, including the yetzer hora; from them I cleverly ascertain the best ways to serve Hashem and to eagerly fulfill the mitzves.

Alas, we can truly appreciate the praise the Torah attributes to the Luz bone by referring to it as “Besuel

HaArami” — which the Zohar interprets as “Besuel the Fraud.” For, the Luz adopted the ways of the serpent — deceiving the serpent into thinking that it also partook and benefitted from the Tree of Knowledge. This, then, is the meaning and praise ascribed to the Luz bone by RaShB"Y: **”הוא רמאי, ומעולם היה רמאי, -- it is a fraud, and was always a fraud, and the neighbor of the yetzer hora, which is also a fraud.** In other words, he acted as a neighbor and colleague of the yetzer hora, learning from it how to act deceitfully, in keeping with the tenet: **”עם עקש תתפתל“** - **with the crooked You act perversely.**

In a similar fashion, we can proceed to explain the reason a blessing was not originally instituted corresponding to the small vertebral bone known as the Luz. Initially, beroches were only instituted corresponding to the eighteen vertebra in the spine that were damaged by the sin of the Tree of Knowledge — in order to heal and purify them of the serpent's contamination. Seemingly, the small vertebral Luz bone, which was not affected by that sin, did not require healing.

As we have established, the reason the Luz was not harmed by the sin of the Tree of Knowledge is because it resisted the serpent's heresy; however, when heresy became prevalent and widespread among Yisroel, the Members of the Great Assembly feared that their corruption might affect the Luz bone, as well. To address this possibility, they instituted an additional, special berocheh to counteract the heretics — the berocheh of V'lamalshinim. Thus, this berocheh serves to protect the small vertebra located in the spine known as the Luz bone.

[We will continue this amazing journey next week]