

HKB”H Sent Only Three Malochim — Michael Gavriel and Rephael -- because Avraham Substituted for Uriel

In this week’s parsha, parshas Vayeiroh, we read (Bereishis 18, 1): **“וירא אליו ה’ באלוני ממרא והוא יושב פתח האהל כחום היום, וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו, וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה”** — 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. He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold! Three men were standing before him. He saw, and he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent, and bowed toward the ground. Here Rashi comments: **“כחום היום, הוציא הקב”ה חמה מנרתיקה שלא להטריחו באורחים, ולפי שראהו מצטער שלא היו אורחים באים, הביא המלאכים עליו בדמות אנשים** — HKB”H took the sun out of its sheath, so as not to trouble him with guests; however, upon seeing that he was distressed by the lack of guests, He brought the malochim to him in the form of men.

Rashi continues: **“והנה שלשה אנשים, אחד לבשר את שרה, ואחד להפוך את סדום, ואחד לרפאות את אברהם, שאין מלאך אחד עושה שתי שליחות”**. — and behold! Three men — one to bring tidings to Sarah, one to overturn Sedom, and one to heal Avraham; for one malach does not perform two missions. We learn from the Gemoro (B.M. 86a) that the three messengers were none other than Michael, Gavriel and Rephael. Michael was assigned to bring news to Sarah; Rephael was assigned to heal Avraham; Gavriel was sent to destroy Sedom.

Why Did HKB”H Send the Three Malochim to Avraham?

The purpose of the three malochim’s missions definitely deserves further examination and explanation. Indeed each of the three was assigned a specific mission; yet, as we shall see, it was not really necessary to send malochim for the purposes just mentioned.

Let us begin with the malach Michael who was sent to bring tidings to Sarah concerning the future birth of Yitzchak. Was it inconceivable for her to give birth without receiving the message from the malach? All of the holy Matriarchs were barren, including Rivkah and Rachel, and merited giving birth due to the power of their prayers. Regarding the other Matriarchs, we do not find that HKB”H sent a malach to inform them of their upcoming births.

Next, let us examine the mission of Rephael, who was sent to heal Avraham. We find in the Zohar hakadosh (3, 304b) that whenever HKB”H heals an infirmed person himself — without the intervention of a malach — the healing lasts forever. Now, clearly, if Avraham Avinu merited a personal visit from HKB”H, he was certainly worthy of being healed by HKB”H even without the intervention of the malach Rephael. Let us have a look at the passage from the Zohar translated into Hebrew:

“פתח רבי אלעזר ואמר, רפאני ה’ וארפא הושיעני ואושעה, מאחר שאמר רפאני ה’ מהו וארפא, מאחר שאמר הושיעני מהו ואושעה, כיון שכבר נתרפא מי הוא זה שיכה אותו. אלא כל רפואות העולם בידו של הקב”ה, אבל יש מהן על ידי שליח, ויש מהן שלא נמסרו בידי שליח, ואלו שנמסרו בידי שליח רפואות הן אבל לפעמים [המחלות] חוזרות, אך אותן שהקב”ה מרפא אינן חוזרות לעולם, ולכן הרפואה שלו היא רפואה שאין בה שום רע, ולכן רפאני ה’ וארפא ודאי בלא קטרוג כלל”.

Although healing is often entrusted to messengers, illnesses cured by messengers may recur. Illnesses treated by HKB”H, however, never recur. HKB”H’s remedies are pure and untainted. This duality explains the seemingly superfluous language: “Heal me Hashem, so that I will be healed.” When the healing process is performed by Hashem, it lasts forever; otherwise, it may not.

If we have difficulty understanding why HKB”H sent Avraham the first two malochim — Michael and Rephael — it is even more difficult to comprehend why Gavriel was sent to Avraham. In fact,

the commentaries deal with this latter difficulty at length. Gavriel's mission was to destroy Sedom; he could have accomplished that mission by going directly to Sedom. There was seemingly no need for Gavriel to visit Avraham along with Michael and Rephael.

Isn't He the One You Visited and Dined with?

Let us begin our explanation by introducing the revealing words of our blessed sages in the Midrash (S.R. 28, 1). They teach us that as a result of the meal the malochim ate while guests of Avraham, HKB"H was able to refute their opposing arguments when He chose to give the Torah to His holy nation of Yisroel. According to the Midrash when Moshe ascended to the Almighty to receive the Torah, the ministering angels attempted to harm him. HKB"H transformed his facial features into those of Avraham and then rebuked the malochim: "Aren't you embarrassed to treat him this way? Isn't he the one you went down to visit and whose house you dined at?"

Now, it is not so far-fetched to conjecture that this was all part of HKB"H's grand scheme. He sent these three malochim to Avraham in anticipation of future events; He wished to refute any arguments they might contrive regarding Yisroel's lack of worthiness to receive the Torah. Yet, so as not to tip them off that they were destined to forfeit the Torah as a result of this mission, HKB"H sent them on the pretext of these other missions — to notify Sarah, to heal Avraham and to overturn Sedom.

Seen in this light, we can explain why HKB"H chose to send the three malochim to Avraham specifically after he had fulfilled the mitzvoh of "milah," and why this was the opportune time to begin preparations for giving the Torah to Yisroel. The Midrash teaches us that only one who has been circumcised — who has fulfilled the mitzvoh of "milah" — is able to attain the wisdom and knowledge of the Torah (S.R. 30, 12):

"ואלה המשפטים, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קמז-יט) מגיד דבריו ליעקב, פעם אחת אמר לו עקילס [אונקלוס] לאדריינוס המלך, רוצה אני להתגייר ולהעשות ישראל, אמר לו לאומה זו אתה מבקש, כמה בזיתי אותה, כמה הרגתי אותה, לירודה שבאומות אתה מבקש להתערב, מה ראית בהם שאתה רוצה להתגייר.

אמר לו, הקטן שבהם יודע היאך ברא הקב"ה את העולם, מה נברא ביום ראשון ומה נברא ביום שני, כמה יש משנברא העולם ועל מה העולם עומד ותורתן אמת, אמר לו ולמד תורתן ואל תמול, אמר לו עקילס, אפילו חכם שבמלכותך וזקן בן מאה שנה, אינו יכול ללמוד תורתן אם אינו מל, שכן כתוב מגיד דבריו ליעקב חוקיו ומשפטיו לישראל, לא עשה כן לכל גוי, ולמי לבני ישראל."

Here Onkelos explains to the emperor Hadrian that he wishes to convert to Judaism. Hadrian is surprised and professes that they are a lowly people; he has subjected them to countless abuses and has killed many of them. He wants to know why Onkelos is attracted to the Jews.

Onkelos replies that even the youngest among them and the least learned knows how the Almighty created the world; they know what was created on each day; they know what sustains the world; and their Torah represents the truth. In response, Hadrian suggests that Onkelos study their Torah without undergoing circumcision and conversion. To which Onkelos replies that even the wisest man in Hadrian's kingdom and even a one-hundred year old elder is incapable of learning and comprehending their Torah without undergoing circumcision first.

In the Merit of the Mitzvoh of Milah We Are Able to Attain the Wisdom of Torah She'b'al Peh

Now, when Onkelos explains that only in the merit of "milah" does one merit to attain the Torah, he was referring to Torah she'b'al peh — that which is not explained and specified in Torah she'b'chsav. Proof of this can be found in the Gemoroh, where we have learned (Gittin 60b): **"לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר (שמות לד-כז) כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל"** — HKB"H only established a covenant with Yisroel for the sake of the oral teachings. As proof, the Gemoro cites the possuk (Shemos 34, 27): **"for according to these words have I entered a covenant with you and with Yisroel."** One might question this source of proof seeing as the Gemoro (Nedorim 32a) elucidates this possuk as a reference to **"גדולה מילה"** — **ששקולה כנגד כל המצות שבתורה, שנאמר כי על פי הדברים האלה"** — based on this possuk the Gemoro establishes that the mitzvoh of "milah" is equivalent to all the other mitzvos in the Torah.

Nevertheless, based on what we have learned, both elucidations complement each other. We have seen that it is impossible to attain Torah she'b'al peh without the merit of "bris milah"; hence, the Gemoro teaches us: **"לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל"** — HKB"H established a covenant with Yisroel through the performance of "bris milah," literally the covenant of circumcision; **"אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה"** — so that they would be able to attain and comprehend Torah she'b'al peh; **"שנאמר כי על פי הדברים האלה"** — for the possuk states that for the sake of the oral teachings -- **"כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל"** — we were commanded to enter into

the covenant by means of the mitzvoh of “milah.” A nice allusion to this fact can be derived from the following numerical values: the word **מִילָה**, meaning circumcision, has the same numerical value as the word **פִּה**, meaning mouth — alluding to the fact that in the merit of the “bris milah” one eventually merits attaining the wisdom of Torah she’b’al peh.

Thus, we have shed some light on the matter of the malochim’s visit to Avraham Avinu. As a preparation for Yisroel to receive the Torah, HKB”H arranged for them to visit Avraham precisely after he had just fulfilled the mitzvoh of “milah” — which he accepted upon himself and all of his future descendants. Only after fulfilling this mitzvoh are Yisroel able to ascertain the secrets of Torah she’b’al peh. Prior to accepting upon himself and his descendants the mitzvoh of “milah,” there was no purpose in receiving the Torah; for they would have been unable to fathom its depths.

Wherever You Go Build Me a Dwelling

I have pondered the matter of the association between the mitzvoh of “milah” and the ability to comprehend the Torah. I would like to suggest an explanation as to why only someone who has been circumcised can attain the Torah. Additionally it is necessary to clarify the significance of HKB”H’s statement to the malochim arguing against giving the Torah to Yisroel: **“אִי אַתֶּם -- מִתְבַּיִשִּׁין הַיְמִנּוּ, לֹא זֶה שִׁירְדַתֶּם אֲצִלוּ וְאִכַּלְתֶּם בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ”** — “Aren’t you embarrassed to treat him this way? Isn’t he the one you went down to visit and whose house you dined at?” At first glance, this is a surprising counter-argument. Should they have to forego their immense desire to receive the Torah merely because they dined in Avraham’s house?

It appears that we can resolve these issues based on a wonderful passage found in the Midrash. This Midrash describes the incredible love that HKB”H has for the holy Torah — to the point that He cannot tolerate being separated from it (S.R. 33, 1):

“משל למלך שהיה לו בת יחידה, בא אחד מן המלכים ונטלה, ביקש לילך לו לארצו וליטול לאשתו. אמר לו [המלך], בתי שנתתי לך יחידית היא, לפרוש ממנה איני יכול, לומר לך אל תטלה איני יכול לפי שהיא אשתך, אלא זו טובה עשה לי, שכל מקום שאתה הולך קיטון אחד עשה לי שאדור אצלכם - שאיני יכול להניח את בתי. כך אמר הקב”ה לישראל, נתתי לכם את התורה, לפרוש הימנה איני יכול, לומר לכם אל תטלוה איני יכול, אלא בכל מקום שאתם הולכים, בית אחד עשו לי שאדור בתוכו, שנאמר ועשו לי מקדש.”

When Bnei Yisroel acquired the Torah, it was as if they acquired HKB”H along with it. It is analogous to a king who married off his only daughter to another king. When the second king came to take his new bride to his land, the first king, the father, made a small request. Wherever you take her, please make a small dwelling for me, so that I may be near her. I cannot bear being separated from her. HKB”H made a similar request of Yisroel. So as not to be separated from the Torah, He asked that they build Him a house to live in — as it is written: **“they shall make Me a sanctuary.”**

Now, this analogy is easily understood when referring to a human king. For, if the king’s daughter leaves his home, he will no longer be able to see her. HKB”H, however, is omnipresent; there is no place devoid of His presence. So what is the meaning of the statement: **“נתתי לכם את התורה, לפרוש ממנה איני יכול”** — I have given you the Torah; I cannot bear being separated from it? Who could possibly dare to force HKB”H to abandon the Torah — to the point that it is necessary to build a Beit HaMikdash so that His Presence may dwell among us?

Let us explain the matter as follows. Without HKB”H’s Presence assisting us, it is impossible for a meager creature of flesh and blood to comprehend the depths of the Torah — which is divine wisdom. For this reason, the Torah teaches us (Berachos 6a): **“שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה שכינה עמו”** — even if one is sitting alone learning Torah, the Shechinoh accompanies him. This, then, is the meaning of HKB”H’s statement: **“נתתי לכם את התורה, לפרוש ממנה איני יכול”** — I have given you the Torah; I cannot bear being separated from it. For, if I leave the Torah, you will not be able to attain the wisdom and secrets contained within the Torah.

Next, let us introduce a statement from our blessed sages presented by the Menoras HaMaor: **“גדולה מילה שבזכותה ישראל מקבלין פני שכינה, שנאמר (איוב יט-כו) ומבשרי אחזה אלוה. רצונו לומר בזכות המילה שבבשרי אחזה אלוה.”** The mitzvoh of “milah” is so important, because only in its merit are Yisroel able to receive the Shechinoh — the Divine Presence. We can now begin to appreciate why only someone who has fulfilled the mitzvoh of “milah” is able to attain the wisdom of the Torah. It is impossible to merit the presence of the Shechinoh without first fulfilling the mitzvoh of “milah.” Additionally, it is impossible to comprehend the Torah without the presence of the Shechinoh. Therefore, only someone who has fulfilled the mitzvoh of “milah” and merits the presence of the Shechinoh is able to acquire the intricate knowledge of the Torah.

ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל א'וריאל Is an Acronym for: גמרא

Continuing along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain why HKB"H chose to send to Avraham, from all the myriads of malochim, specifically these three: Michael, Gavriel and Rephael. These three were specifically chosen to prepare the way for Yisroel to receive the Torah. In *Torat Moshe HaShalem* -- authored by our teacher the Chasam Sofer -- he writes in the name of the *Sefer HaChaim* — authored by Rabeinu Chaim, the brother of the Maharal of Prague — that the word **גמרא** is an acronym for the names of the four malochim: **ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל א'וריאל**.

Elsewhere, Rabeinu Chaim writes in his *sefer Iggeret HaTiyul*: **גמרא נוטריקון ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל א'וריאל, מגיד שכל מי שעוסק בגמרא, הנה מלאכי ה' סביב לו לשמרו מכל רע, מימינו מיכאל, ומשמאלו — גבריאל, ומלפניו אוריאל, ומאחוריו רפאל** — this acronym indicates that anyone who studies Gemoro is surrounded by these four malochim to protect him from all evil. Michael stands to his right, Gavriel to his left, Uriel in front of him and Rephael behind him.

Concerning this matter, it is worth noting the following from *Divrei Torah* (1, 19): **מקובל בידינו בשם זקני הגה"ק מהרצ"א זי"ע: בעל בני יששכר, כי ילמדו גמרא קודם כל תפלה בבוקר, ועל ידי זה יש עליה לתפלתו למרום על ידי מלאכים נושאי הכסא, ומעלים תפלותינו — מיכאל ג'בריאל ר'פאל א'וריאל ראשי תיבות גמרא** — he writes in the name of his elder the author of the *Bnei Yissaschar* that it is a worthwhile practice to study Gemoro before davening in the morning. For this practice allows one's prayers to ascend to the heavens — carried by the malochim that bear the heavenly Throne — Michael, Gavriel, Rephael and Uriel — who are represented by the acronym **גמרא**.

The Chasam Sofer explains why these malochim specifically protect one who engages in Torah study. He bases his explanation on the following *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (Chapter 4):

ד' כתות של מלאכי השרת מהלכין ומשרתין לפני הקב"ה, מחנה ראשונה של ימינו מיכאל, מחנה שנייה של שמאלו גבריאל, מחנה שלישית מלפניו אוריאל, מחנה רביעית של אחריו רפאל, ושכינתו באמצע והוא יושב על כסא רם ונשא.

Four groups of ministering angels attend and praise HKB"H: First, Michael on His right; second, Gavriel on His left; third, Uriel in front of Him; fourth, Rephael behind Him; HKB"H's Divine Presence rests in the middle; and He sits atop His lofty Throne.

This is the basis for the formula of the "Krias Shema" recited at bedtime: **בשם ה' אלקי ישראל מימיני מיכאל, ומשמאלי גבריאל, — מלפני אוריאל, ומאחורי רפאל, ועל ראשי שכינת אל** — in the name of Hashem, the G-d of Yisroel, may Michael be at my right, Gavriel at my left, Uriel in front of me, Rephael behind me, and above my head the Presence of G-d. Due to the presence of HKB"H's Shechinoh above one's head, he merits protection from these four malochim that attend the Shechinoh on all sides. Likewise, one who engages in Torah study merits the protection of these four malochim.

We can expand on this idea based on the Gemoro's teaching that (*Berachos* 6:1): **שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה שכינה — עמו** -- even if one is sitting alone learning Torah, the Shechinoh accompanies him. As we know, the essence of Torah study is engaging in the study of Torah she'b'al peh — which requires diligent labor. Hence, one who studies Gemoro, the essence of Torah she'b'al peh, is accompanied by the Shechinoh. As a result, the four malochim that escort the Shechinoh — represented by the acronym **גמרא - ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל א'וריאל** — protect one who engages in the study of Gemoro so that he may succeed in his endeavors.

We can now posit that this is why HKB"H came to visit Avraham after he performed the mitzvoh of "milah" — meriting Avraham the presence of the Shechinoh. Since HKB"H came to visit him, the malochim who always escort the Shechinoh came along with Him: Michael, Gavriel and Rephael. Their presence constituted a symbolic gesture — a "poel dimyon" — to make Torah she'b'al peh accessible to him. For one who engages in its study merits the protection of the four malochim signified by the acronym **גמרא - ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל א'וריאל**.

The Name אברהם Shares the Same Numerical Value as אוריאל

The obvious question, of course, is why did HKB"H only bring three malochim with him — represented by the acronym **גמ"ר - ג'בריאל מיכאל ר'פאל**? Why didn't he also bring Uriel along — represented by the letter "aleph" of **גמרא**? To answer this question, I searched our sacred texts and did not relent until I was satisfied and rewarded for my efforts. Both a student of the Arizal's, the Sifsei Kohen (*Vayeiroh*), and the Imrei Noam (*Vayeiroh*) write that Avraham himself filled the place of the malach Uriel. In fact, the names Avraham (**אברהם**) and Uriel (**אוריאל**) share the same numerical value (248). Thus, it turns out that Avraham provided the letter "aleph" of the acronym **גמרא** in Uriel's stead.

Notwithstanding, we must endeavor to explain what prompted HKB”H to substitute Avraham for Uriel rather than bring the malach Uriel along with the other three. Furthermore, what similarity and connection exists between Avraham and Uriel other than the fact that their names share the same numerical value?

To resolve these issues, let us point out a significant difference between the malach Uriel and the other three malochim. While the other three malochim — Michael, Gavriel and Rephael — surround the Shechinoh on each side — Michael on the right, Gavriel on the left and Rephael behind — the Malach Uriel walks in front of HKB”H. As we saw in the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer: **”מחנה שלישית”** — **”מלפניו אוריאל”** — the third camp proceeds before Him, that of Uriel. We need to explain why the malach Uriel, specifically, merited going before HKB”H. Additionally, is it proper protocol for a servant escorting HKB”H, the King of the Universe, to go in front of Him?

The Malach Uriel Is the Delegate of the Torah

With the utmost reverence and love, I have been inspired to propose an explanation for this matter based on an astonishing passage in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 70, 127b). This passage is the source for the Sifsei Kohen’s and the Imrei Noam’s statements that **”אברהם”** and **”אוריאל”** possess the same numerical value. Here, however, we find an additional explanation regarding the connection between them. We learn that the malach Uriel is the Delegate of the Torah, in charge of the secrets of the Torah. As such, **”אוריאל”** also possesses the same numerical value as **”אוריאל”** — alluding to the fact that he is in charge of **”אוריאל”** — HKB”H’s secrets concealed in the Torah. Avraham is also associated with this aspect of the Torah. For, his attribute is **”chesed”** — kindness — associated with the right side. This alludes to the Torah which was given from the right side, as it is written (Devorim 33, 2): **”מימינו אש דת למו”** — from His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them.

We can now appreciate why, of the four groups of malochim that surround the Shechinoh, the malach Uriel, specifically, goes before HKB”H. For, we have learned that he is in charge of the mysteries of the Torah. It is well-known how much HKB”H adores and values the Torah and those that study the Torah. Therefore, HKB”H honors Uriel by letting him go in front of Him, so to speak; while the other malochim accompany Him at His sides or behind Him.

Avraham Was Appointed Delegate of the Torah in Place of Uriel

Having established the nature and position of Uriel, we must now address the issue of why HKB”H chose Avraham to fill in for the malach Uriel. As we have learned, due to the mitzvoh of **”milah,”** Avraham and his descendants merited to receive the Torah. Hence, HKB”H arranged for him to substitute for Uriel, the Delegate of the Torah. This substitution conveyed the message that in this world, Avraham is the Delegate of the Torah; for Avraham and his descendants merited to be in charge of the Torah and its secrets for the rest of time.

This coincides very nicely with the text in this week’s parsha: **”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 on this possuk: **”ישב כתיב, ביקש לעמוד, אמר לו הקב”ה, שב ואני אעמוד, ואתה סימן לבניך שעתיד אני להתייצב בעדת הדיינים והן יושבין, שנאמר (תהלים פב-א) אלקים נצב בעדת אל”** — the word for **”he was sitting,”** **ישב**, is spelled here without the letter **”vav.”** This suggests that he wished to stand out of respect for the Shechinoh, but was instructed to remain seated. This was intended to signify that in the future, Avraham’s children would sit and judge, while HKB”H, as it were, would stand; as the possuk states, **”G-d stands in the divine assembly.”**

We see that HKB”H authorized Avraham and his offspring to judge and teach the entire body of laws and precepts contained in the Torah she’b’al peh. Due to the importance of this role, HKB”H stands over the assembly of judges while they sit and clarify the laws of the Torah.

In this light, we can begin to comprehend Avraham’s statement to HKB”H (18, 3): **”ויואמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבור מעל עבדך”** — and he said, **”My lords, if it please you that I find favor in your eyes, please pass not from before your servant.”** According to Rashi, Avraham requested HKB”H to wait while he welcomed his guests. From where did Avraham learn that it was permissible for him to ask HKB”H to wait for him?

Let us propose an answer based on what we have discussed above. Upon seeing that HKB”H only brought three malochim to visit him from the four groups that attend the Shechinoh, he realized that he was chosen to fill the role of Uriel. Out of respect for Uriel’s Torah, HKB”H allows Uriel to go ahead of Him. In like

fashion, Avraham requested permission to go before HKB”H in order to welcome the guests while HKB”H waited for him.

This also enlightens us with regard to the timing of HKB”H’s visit. He came to visit Avraham after he had performed the mitzvoh of “milah,” and brought with him the usual escort of malochim — with one significant exception. Avraham was chosen to replace Uriel. Seeing as he now merited to attain the wisdom of Torah she’b’al peh — as a result of his “bris milah” — HKB”H wished to make a symbolic gesture, a “poel dimyon.” Including Avraham among the four malochim symbolized by the acronym - **גמרא** - **גבריאל מיכאל רפאל אוריאל**, HKB”H conveyed the message that whenever a Jew engages in the study of Gemoro, he merits the protection of these four malochim.

“Walk before Me and Be Perfect”

Now, let us point out something amazing! Based on what we have learned, we can begin to understand why HKB”H added the letter “hei” to the name Avram precisely after he was circumcised. The possuk states (Bereishis 17, 4): **אני הנה בריתי אתך והיית לאב** — “As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be a father of a multitude of nations; your name shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham . . .” We have already explained that it is impossible to merit significant Torah achievement until a person has fulfilled the mitzvoh of “milah.”

Consequently, before fulfilling the mitzvoh of “milah,” Avraham was unable to substitute for Uriel — who functioned as Raziel, the Delegate of the Torah. After performing the mitzvoh of “milah,” however, HKB”H saw fit to add the letter “hei” to his name. This act signified that he merited a spiritual elevation to the name Avraham -- **אברהם** — which possesses the same numerical equivalent as the names Uriel and Raziel respectively -- **אוריאל, רזיאל**. For, in

the merit of his “milah,” he was now worthy to substitute for Uriel, the Delegate of the Torah, in charge of the secrets of the Torah.

In this manner, we can explain quite nicely HKB”H’s directive to Avraham, when He commanded him to perform the mitzvoh of “milah” (Bereishis 17, 1): **“התהלך לפני והיה תמים”** — walk before Me and be perfect. Here HKB”H alluded to Avraham that as a result of the mitzvoh of “milah,” he would merit Torah achievement and the addition of the letter “hei” to his name. Thus, he would become Avraham possessing the numerical equivalent of Uriel. As such, he would ascend spiritually to function as the Delegate of the Torah and, in this capacity, would merit to walk “in front” of HKB”H -- just as the malach Uriel walks in front of HKB”H.

Seen in this light, we can also better understand HKB”H’s remark to the malochim that wished to criticize Yisroel and prevent HKB”H from giving them the Torah: **אי אתם מתביישין הימנו, לא זהו שירדתם אצלו ואכלתם בתוך ביתו** — “Aren’t you embarrassed to treat him this way? Isn’t he the one you went down to visit and whose house you dined at?” In other words, this was HKB”H’s rebuke to the three malochim — Michael, Gavriel and Rephael — that accompanied HKB”H when He visited Avraham and, at that time, dined in Avraham’s dwelling.

Now, at that very encounter, it was revealed to the malochim that Avraham’s status was actually greater than theirs. For, they only escort HKB”H at His sides or behind Him; Michael stands to His right, Gavriel to His left and Rephael behind Him. In contrast, Avraham, substituting for Uriel, the Delegate of the Torah, walked in front of HKB”H. Seeing this made them realize that as a consequence of his “milah,” Avraham already merited to receive the Torah — both for himself and his future descendants. Hence, the malochim were no longer in a position to argue against giving the Torah to Avraham’s offspring.



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