

The Arizal's Incredible Revelation

The Luz Bone at the Top of the Spinal Column Receives Its Life-force from the Knot in the Tefillin

In this week's parsha, parshas Ki Savo, we read (Devarim 28, 10): “וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך”—then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will revere you. Regarding this issue, we have learned in the Gemara (Menachos 35b): “אמר רבי אליעזר, אלו תפילין שבראש”—Rabbi Eliezer taught: These are the “tefillin shel rosh”. According to the Ba'al HaTurim, this is alluded to in the passuk as follows: “ש"ם”—the first letters of the words “ראשי תיבות שי"ן, פירוש שי"ן של תפילין”—spell “ש"ם”, a reference to the letter “shin” on the “tefillin shel rosh.” In fact, his comment was predated by the following from Rabeinu Bachayei: “כי נרשם בכאן אות שי"ן שהיא הלכה למשה מסיני, והוא כאילו אמר וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שי"ן עליך ויראו ממך”—this letter “shin” is dictated by a halachah given directly to Moshe at Sinai; it is as if he said, “All the peoples of the earth will see the “shin” on you and will revere you. In fact, the commentaries have dealt with this statement of Rabbi Eliezer's at length. Why are the peoples of the earth in awe specifically of the “tefillin shel rosh” and not the “tefillin shel yad”?

Let us begin with the illuminating words of Rashi (Menachos ibid.): “שם ה' נקרא עליך, אלו תפילין של ראש, שכתוב בו רוב השם שי"ן”—“the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you” refers to the “tefillin shel rosh,” which contains the majority of the holy name “shin-dalet-yud”; it contains the “shin” and the “dalet.” To understand Rashi's comment, let us refer to the following Gemara (Shabbat 62a): “אמר אביי שי"ן של תפילין הלכה למשה מסיני, ואמר אביי דל"ת של תפילין הלכה למשה מסיני, ואמר אביי יו"ד של תפילין הלכה למשה מסיני.” By dint of “halachah l'Moshe miSinai,” the letters “shin,” “dalet” and “yud” appear on the tefillin. The letter “shin” appears on both sides of the “tefillin shel rosh”; the knot of the “tefillin shel rosh” must be tied in the form of a “dalet”; the knot of the “tefillin shel yad” must be tied in the form of a “yud.” Together they spell the name “שד”.

Thus, the majority of the name “שד”—the two letters “shin” and “dalet”—appears in association with the “tefillin shel rosh.” Only the

letter “yud” from this holy name appears in association with the “tefillin shel yad.” Accordingly, Rashi comments that this is why the nations of the world fear the “tefillin shel rosh.”

Yet, Tosafos (Menachos, ibid.) disagree with Rashi. In their opinion, the other nations fear the head tefillin more than the arm tefillin, because the tefillin placed on the arm must be kept covered. The Gemara (Menachos 37b) derives this requirement from the passuk (Shemot 13, 9): “לך לאות ולא לאחרים - לך לאות על ירך” —“והיה לך לאות על ירך”—the passuk states: “and it shall be a sign for you on your arm”; in other words, it is a sign only “for you” and not for others. In summary, the other nations are only able to see the “tefillin shel rosh,” which are worn openly; consequently, they are only in awe of it.

The Name “שד” Wards off the External Forces

Clearly, Rashi was well aware of the Gemara's statement that the “tefillin shel rosh” are worn openly, whereas the “tefillin shel yad” are kept covered. For Rashi, this still posed a difficulty. For, it still fails to explain why the sight of the head tefillin strikes fear into the nations of the world. Therefore, Rashi provided his explanation. They are in awe of the “tefillin shel rosh,” because it contains the majority of the name “שד”.

It is well-known that the name “שד” wards off the “chitzonim”—the external, deleterious forces. It is precisely for this reason that we write the name “שד” on the outside of the mezuzah; it wards off the “chitzonim,” so that they will not enter the house. The Megaleh Amukos on Vaetchanan (195) writes: “ובשם שד” נבראת ארץ... שכן זה השם ומזוזה תוכיח שכותבים מבחוץ שם של שד” —“מבריה כל השדים, ומזוזה תוכיח שכותבים מבחוץ שם של שד” —the earth was created with the name “שד”; for this name wards off the evil spirits; the mezuzah is proof of this. The source for this fact is the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 251b): “דשדי דמזוזה דמבריה לשדים ומזיקים דתרעא”—the name “שד” on the mezuzah wards off the evil spirits and harmful forces from the doorway.

The Megaleh Amukos adds that the letters in the aleph-beis that follow “שד” are תכ. This is a powerful, holy name that is able to strike a blow against the chitzonim, as explained in the Arizal’s Pri Etz Chaim: “כי לא עזבת דורשיך ה’ סופי תיבות תכ”ה, והוא השם אשר—there is a powerful name, תכ, derived from the final letters of the words ה’ עזבת דורשיך; the passuk states that Hashem has not abandoned those who call upon Him; Moshe used this name to kill the Egyptian; anyone who focuses on this name is spared from evil people all day long. This name is also alluded to in the passuk (Tehillim 47, 2): “כ’ל:” “ה’ עמים תקעו”—join hands, all you nations; the first letters of these three words spell תכ. This name subdues and subjugates other nations; therefore, immediately afterwards, it states (ibid. 4): “ידבר” “עמים תחתינו”—He gathers the nations together beneath us. This concludes the comment from the Megaleh Amukos.

This, then, is the meaning of Rashi’s comment concerning Rabbi Eliezer’s statement that the nations of the world will revere you upon seeing that the name of Hashem is upon you in the form of “tefillin shel rosh.” He stated that the majority of the name “שד” appears in association with the head tefillin. Now, we have an important principle (Nazir 42a): “רובו ככולו מדאורייתא”—according to Torah law, a majority possesses the status of a whole. Hence, when all of the nations of the world see the “tefillin shel rosh” with the name “שד”, which wards off the forces of tumah: “ויראו ממך”—they will revere you.

This explains very nicely why HKB”H juxtaposed the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah in the first paragraph of “krias shema” (Devarim 6, 8): “וקשרתם לאות על ירך והיו לטוטפות בין עיניך, וכתבתם על מזוזות” “ביתך ובשעריך—bind them as a sign upon your arm and let them be “totafos” between your eyes; and write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. As stated, the name “שד” inscribed on the mezuzah on the doorpost of the house affords protection against all sorts of damaging influences. Thus, we are taught that the tefillin afford us similar protection. The “tefillin shel yad” sits opposite the heart, while the “tefillin shel rosh” sits opposite the brain. Together they act to suppress the negative influences of the dangerous forces of the yetzer on a Jew’s heart and brain. As a result, a Jew can serve Hashem with his heart and mind without interference.

The “Luz” Bone Is Located at the Back of the Neck

As we know, the Torah is multi-faceted and is elucidated in seventy distinct ways. So, let us reexamine the statement above from the divine Tanna Rabbi Eliezer: “וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה’ נקרא עליך”

“all the nations of the world will see that the name of Hashem is upon you and they will revere you,” this is a reference to the “tefillin shel rosh.” Firstly, where do we find an allusion in this passuk to “tefillin shel rosh”? Secondly, why to the goyim fear the “tefillin shel rosh” specifically and not the “tefillin shel yad”? Let us present a statement from the Midrash (B.R. 28, 3) addressing the passuk (Bereishis 6, 7): “ויואמר ה’ אמחה את האדם”—and Hashem said, “I will erase man.” The Midrash teaches:

“רבי יוחנן בשם רבי שמעון בן יהוצדק אמר, אפילו לוז של שדרה, שממנו הקב”ה מציץ את האדם לעתיד לבוא נמחה. אדריאגוס שחיק עצמות שאל את רבי יהושע בן חנניא, אמר ליה מהיכן הקב”ה מציץ את האדם לעתיד לבוא, אמר ליה מלוז של שדרה, אמר ליה מנין אתה יודע, אמר ליה איתיתיה לידי ואנא מודע לך, [הביאו לידי ואני אוכיח לך], טחנו ברחיים ולא נטחון, שרפו באש ולא נשרף, נתנו במים ולא נמחה, נתנו על הסדן והתחיל מכה עליו בפטיש, נחלק הסדן ונבקע הפטיש ולא חסר כלום.”

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” “Luz” of the spinal column. It is invulnerable; whether you attempt to grind it, burn it, dissolve it, or pulverize it, it remains intact.

It is worth investigating precisely where this remarkable bone is located? We find an answer to this question in the teachings of the great luminary, our teacher, the Arizal. He teaches us that the “luz” bone is located at the top of the vertebral column, in the neck—opposite the knot of the tefillin. This accords with what the Ohr HaChamah comments on the Zohar hakadosh (Noach 69a) in the name of Rabbi Chaim Vital:

“והענין כי תחיית המתים היא בסוד אותו העצם הנשאר בקרקע, וביארו בזוהר כי הוא עצם שמניח בו קשר תפלה של ראש, והטעם כי הוא גבוה מכל הגוף ואינו נהנה מן המאכל, ולכך אין שולט בו ריקבון ומשם נבנה הגוף.”

—the secret to “techiyas hameisim” is this bone that remains intact in the ground. The Zohar explains that the knot in the “tefillin shel rosh” is placed opposite this bone. It is located above the rest of the body; it is superior in that it refuses to derive benefit from our daily food intake. Consequently, it is not subject to deterioration and decay; hence, it is the starting point for rebuilding the body.

Without a doubt, he learned this fact from his teacher and master, the Arizal. In fact, in Likutei Torah (Shoftim), the Arizal provides the exact same explanation:

“ואמרו רבותינו ז”ל עצם יש באדם במקום קשר תפילין שאינו מתרקב, וממנו יתגדל הגוף לעתיד ונקרא לוז”

The Luz’s Power to Resurrect the Dead Stems from the Knot in the Tefillin

Now, we shall see that concerning this subject, we find a tremendous chiddush in Rabbi Chaim Vital’s Etz HaDa’as Tov (Vayeitzei). HKB”H created the luz-bone at the top of the vertebral column, in the neck, so that it should receive its sustenance from the knot in the tefillin—thus allowing it to rise at the time of “techiyas hameisim.” Therefore, if a person fails to put on tefillin, chas v’shalom, the “luz” fails to receive its sustaining force from the knot and is unable to rise with “techiyas hameisim.” Additionally, he writes (ibid. Terumah):

”ובזה יתבאר לך גודל מצות התפילין, אשר עם שאינה רק מצות עשה בלבד, כל המבטלה נקרא קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין, ואין לו חלק בעולם הבא ובתחיית המתים, והענין כי... קשר של ראש הוא בעורף, אשר שם התחלת חוליות השדרה הנקרא עצם הלז, שהיא שאור אל עיסה גוף האדם בתחיית המתים כנודע, ולכן המזולזל בהם אינם קם בתחיית המתים.”

Thus, we can comprehend the great importance of the mitzvah of tefillin. It is not merely a mitzvah aseh. One who is negligent in the performance of this mitzvah is called **קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין**—a head that did not wear tefillin; and he does not have a place in the World to Come and in “techiyas hameisim. We can understand the matter as follows: The knot of the “shel rosh” is at the back of the neck; that is where the first spinal vertebra is located; it is known as the “luz” bone. It initiates the process of the body’s resurrection at the time of “techiyas hameisim.” Therefore, those who are negligent in this mitzvah will not rise with “techiyas hameisim.”

It seems obvious that Rabbi Chaim Vital received this precious bit of information from his teacher, the Arizal, as well. In fact, we find this idea expressed as follows in the Arizal’s Likutei HaShas (Rosh HaShanah): **”ודלת ראשך וגו’, הנה ד’ של תפילין היא על עצם הלז, והתפילין הם חיים, ומושכים בלז חיים על ידי הב’ רצועות, ולכן משם היא התחייה.”** The “dalet” of the tefillin is over the “luz” bone; the tefillin represent life; by means of the two straps, they draw life into the “luz.” Therefore, the resurrection begins from there.

This is what he means. The four passages located in the four compartments of the “tefillin shel rosh” represent life. By means of the two straps emerging from the tefillin—from the right and the left—they provide life and sustenance. They join together in the knot of the tefillin—which is in the shape of the “dalet” from the name **”שד”**—in order to sustain and vitalize the “luz” bone located there.

A Head that Did Not Wear Tefillin— Their Body Is Consumed and Their Soul Is Burned

We learned that Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote concerning a person who fails to put on tefillin: “He is called ‘a head that did not wear tefillin,’ and he does not have a place in the World to Come or in ‘techiyas hameisim.’” His source is the Gemara (R.H. 17a): **”פושעי ישראל בגופן ופושעי אומות העולם בגופן, יורדין לגיהנם ונידונין בה שנים עשר חודש, לאחר שנים עשר חודש גופן כלה ונשמתן נשרפת, ורוח מפזרתן תחת כפות”** **”פושעי—רגלי צדיקים”**—sinners of Yisrael with their body and sinners of the nations of the world with their body, descend to Gehinnom and are punished there for twelve months; after twelve months, their body is consumed and their soul is burned; and a wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the tzaddikim. The Gemara proceeds to explain (ibid.): **”פושעי ישראל בגופן מאי ניהו, אמר רב קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין”**—what are “sinners of Yisrael with their body”? Rav said: A head that did not wear tefillin. Here we find it stated explicitly that sinners of Yisrael who neglect to wear tefillin: **”גופן כלה ונשמתן נשרפת”**--their body is consumed and their soul is burned. In other words, they will not be resurrected.

Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Vital explains in Shaarei Kedushah (Part 2, 8): **”מצות עשה להניח תפילין, אם היה קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין”** **”מְעוֹלָם, אינו קם בתחיית המתים, ונקרא מפושעי ישראל בגופן”**—it is a mitzvah aseh to put on tefillin; if a person was a “head that never put on tefillin,” he will not be resurrected at the time of “techiyas hameisim”; he is referred to as a sinner of Yisrael in body. The reason for this, according to what he taught us above, is that if a person does not wear tefillin, his “luz” bone does not draw life from the knot of the tefillin. As a consequence, he is incapable of being resurrected.

Incredibly, we can begin to appreciate why the Gemara refers to the sinners of Yisrael who will not be resurrected by the description: **”קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין”**—a head that did not wear tefillin. We must endeavor to explain why the Gemara mentions the skull or head but makes no mention of the arm. Yet, the reason is quite clear according to what we have learned. They will not be resurrected, because they did not wear tefillin on their heads. As a consequence, the “luz” did not receive sustenance and life from the knot in the tefillin. Furthermore, we can also appreciate the Gemara’s statement: “After twelve months, the body is consumed.” In other words, the entire body is consumed, even the special “luz” bone; “and their soul is burned”—because the soul will have no place to return to at the time of “techiyas hameisim.”

“ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה'” Alludes to Two Separate Creations —the “Luz” and the Body

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us address the passuk in this week’s parsha: **ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה'**—then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will revere you. Elucidating this passuk, Rabbi Eliezer taught: “This is a reference to the ‘tefillin shel rosh.’” As we have seen, the name **שד** is revealed through the “tefillin shel rosh” and “tefillin shel yad.” Why then does the passuk specifically mention the name Havaya? Additionally, where do we find an allusion here to the “tefillin shel rosh” only and not to the “tefillin shel yad”?

Let us begin by introducing a precious gem presented in Shemeinah Lachmo (Part 2, Drush 11) in the name of the great Rabbi Yitzchak Segal of Belzitz, ztz”l. Concerning the creation of man, the passuk states (Bereishis 2, 7): **“ויעצרו ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה”**—and Havaya Elokim formed man of soil from the earth. Rashi comments: **“ויעצרו, שתי יצירות יצירה לעולם הזה ויצירה לתחיית המתים”**—the two “yud”s indicate two formings, a forming for this world and a forming for “techiyas hameisim.” The Zohar Chadash in the Midrash Ne’elam (Bereishis page 9, column 4) questions why the special name Havaya is not mentioned throughout the entire text concerning creation. Only the name Elokim appears in the text. The Zohar answers as follows:

“אין נאה למלך הכבוד להזכיר שמו על המתים ועל דבר הנאבד, כדי שלא יאמרו כשם שכל הבריות שבראם הם כלים ונאבדים כך שמו ח”ו, ולא הזכיר שמו המיוחד עד שנבראו כל הבריות שהם כלים ונאבדים, ולאחר כן הזכיר שמו על דבר שהוא קיים לעולם ולעולמי עולמים, שנאמר (בראשית ב-ד) ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים.”

It is not appropriate for the Almighty to associate His name with the deceased and things that are destined to perish. For, some might claim that just as the creatures He created perish, so, too, His name, chas v’shalom, is perishable. Hence, He does not mention the unique name until all the creatures that die and perish were created. Subsequently, He mentions His name in association with a lasting creation, as it states (Bereishis 2, 4): **“On the day Havaya Elokim made earth and heavens.”**

According to this explanation, Rashi found it difficult to understand why HKB”H mentioned the name Havaya in association with the creation of man: **“ויעצרו ה' אלקים”**—and Havaya Elokim formed. After all, man does not exist forever, and HKB”H does not associate His name with something that does not persist. Thus, Rashi felt compelled to explain: **“ויעצרו, שתי יצירות יצירה לעולם הזה ויצירה לתחיית המתים”**—the two “yud”s indicate two formings, a forming for this world and a forming for “techiyas hameisim.”

Now, after “techiyas hameisim,” the eventuality of death will cease to exist; man will then live forever. Therefore, it was fitting for HKB”H to associate the unique name with the creation of man, with regards to “techiyas hameisim.”

After giving the matter some thought, I would like to propose an explanation. When HKB”H created man, he created him in two parts. First of all, He created the “luz”—from which the creation of the body began. It always remains intact without any defects; it never dies or deteriorates. Secondly, He created the body; it perishes and returns to the soil, as it is written (Bereishis 3, 19): **“כי עפר אתה: כי עפר תשוב”**—for you are dust and to dust shall you return.

Incredibly, we can deduce this from the text. The word **ויעצרו** appears with two “yud”s. As Rashi explains, this alludes to two distinct formations; the formation for this world is the body, which perishes, returns to the soil and is consumed; the formation for “techiyas hameisim” is the “luz.” It endures; from it man will be resurrected at the time of “techiyas hameisim.” Hence, HKB”H associated two separate names with these two distinct formations, alluded to by the word **ויעצרו**: **“ויעצרו ה' אלקים את האדם”**. The name **הוי”ה** corresponds to the formation of the “luz” that endures forever. The name **אלקים** corresponds to the formation of the rest of the body, which returns to the soil from where it came.

Drawing Life from the Name הוי”ה in the Four Passages into the “Luz”

I was struck by a wonderful idea. I would like to explain the Arizal’s teaching in Likutei HaShas which we presented above: **“הנה ד’ של תפילין”** היא על עצם הלז, והתפילין הם חיים, ומושכים בלז חיים על ידי הב’ רצועות, ולכן **משם היא התחייה**. The “dalet” of the tefillin is over the “luz” bone; the tefillin represent life; by means of the two straps, they draw life into the “luz.” Therefore, the resurrection begins from there.

Let us refer to the Zohar hakadosh (Introduction 13b): **“ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך - אליו תפילין דרישא דאינון שמה קדישא”** This passuk refers to the “tefillin shel rosh,” which represents the holy name.

Let us explain. The four passages contained in the “tefillin shel rosh” correspond to the four letters of the holy name Havaya. **“קדש לי”** corresponds to the “yud.” **“והיה כי יביאך”** corresponds to the first “hei.” **“שמע ישראל”** corresponds to the “vav.” **“והיה אם שמוע”** corresponds to the last “hei.” Thus, we can interpret the passuk as follows: **“ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם הוי”ה נקרא עליך ויראו ממך”**—the nations of the world will

see upon you the four letters of the name Havaya, which illuminate via the four passages of the tefillin; this will cause them to revere you.

Now, let us return to the topic of the “luz” bone. It is created with the name Havaya; this allows it to endure eternally, so that man can rise with “techiyas hameisim.” Therefore, the “luz” must be sustained by the name Havaya in the four passages via the knot of the tefillin, which sits opposite the bone. The two straps emerging from the right and left of the “tefillin shel rosh” serve as two conduits. They carry life and sustenance from the four letters of the holy name emanating from the four passages. When the two straps join to form the knot in the tefillin, they project an intense light stemming from the four letters of the holy name.

We can suggest that this is why the knot in the “tefillin shel rosh” is shaped like a “dalet”—which possesses a numerical value of four. It alludes to the fact that there is a huge concentration of light stemming from the four letters of the name Havaya in the four passages. Thus, when a man puts on “tefillin shel yad” and “tefillin shel rosh,” he is supplying the “luz” bone—which is located opposite the knot in the

tefillin—with the force of life. As a result, it endures forever and can rise at the time of “techiyas hameisim.” Yet, if a man does not don tefillin, chas v’shalom, he is merely a: “קרקפתא דלא מנח תפילין”—“a head that does not wear tefillin.” His “luz” bone does not receive sustenance and life from the name Havaya; consequently, it is not resurrected, chas v’shalom.

Now, we can truly appreciate the depth of Rabbi Eliezer’s elucidation: “ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך, אלו תפילין שבראש”—this passuk is a reference to the “tefillin shel rosh.” For, the four passages in the “tefillin shel rosh” correspond to the four letters of the holy name Havaya. They provide the “luz” bone with its life-force via the knot of the tefillin—allowing it to endure eternally. This imparts to Yisrael the power to persist and endure eternally—in the merit of the name Havaya coursing through the “luz.” When all the other nations of the world witness this phenomenon and realize Yisrael’s awesome power: “ויראו ממך”—they will be overwhelmed with fear and trepidation.



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