

"גורל אחד לה' וגורל אחד לעזאזל"

The Lesson from the Two Identical He-goats Distinguishing between אל אח"ר and ה' אח"ר

In honor of Yom HaKippurim, which approaches auspiciously, it is fitting that we examine the sacred avodah performed by the Kohen Gadol involving the two "se'irim"--he-goats. One was designated for Hashem and one was designated for Azazel, as described in the Torah in parshas Acharei Mos (Vayikra 16, 5):

"ומאת עדת בני ישראל יקח שני שעירי עזים לחטאת... ולקח את שני השעירים והעמיד אותם לפני ה' פתח אהל מועד, ונתן אהרן על שני השעירים גורלות גורל אחד לה' וגורל אחד לעזאזל, והקריב אהרן את השעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לה' ועשהו חטאת, והשעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לעזאזל יעמד חי לפני ה' לכפר עליו לשלח אותו לעזאזל המדברה"

— from the assembly of Bnei Yisrael, he shall take two he-goats for a sin-offering . . . He shall take the two he-goats and stand them before Hashem at the entrance to the Ohel Moed. Aharon shall place lots on the two he-goats — one lot for Hashem and one lot for Azazel. Aharon shall bring near the he-goat designated by the lot for Hashem and make it a sin-offering; and the he-goat designated by the lot for Azazel, shall be stood alive before Hashem to provide atonement through it, to be sent to Azazel to the Wilderness.

It is essential to comprehend the significance of the two "se'irim" that HKB"H commanded us to bring on Yom HaKippurim—one for Hashem and one for Azazel. They teach us an important lesson even in these times when we no longer have a Beis HaMikdash, due to our countless sins, and, as a consequence, no longer have a Kohen Gadol actually performing the Yom Kippur service involving the two he-goats. Unfortunately, we can only perform this service today tangentially by reciting the appropriate passages found in our machzorim, in keeping with the dictum found in Hoshea (14, 3): "ונשלמה פרים שפתינו"—and let our lips substitute for bulls.

ז'ה ל'עומת ז'ה ע'שה א'לקים Is an Acronym for עזאזל"

Since we are dealing with the subject of the two "se'irim" (he-goats), it is worthwhile reviewing the tremendous chiddush learned in the Mishnah (Yoma 62a): "שני שעירי יום--it is mandatory that the two he-goats used in the Yom Kippur service be identical—in appearance, in height, in value and in their simultaneous purchase. We must endeavor to explain and understand the rationale for this requirement. In practice, one he-goat is designated for Hashem and one is designated for Azazel, so why must they be perfectly identical in all aspects?

Additionally, it is worth introducing the incredible allusion the great Rebbe Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna, zy"a, presents in Heichal HaBerachah (Bechukosai 295a) in the name of the great Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, zy"a. He teaches us that the Hebrew word "עזאזל" is an abbreviation for the phrase (Kohelet 7, 14) ז'ה ל'עומת ז'ה ע'שה א'לקים—indicating that the Almighty created the world with equal and opposite counterparts.

We shall begin our investigative journey with the words of Yisrael's sweet psalmist, David HaMelech (Tehillim 139, 16): "ימים יוצרו ולו אחד בהם"—though they will be fashioned through many days, to Him they are one. Rashi explains that HKB"H showed Adam HaRishon all of the future days of human history that were destined to be created; as his personal portion, he selected one particular day for forgiveness, Yom HaKippurim. Why Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim specifically as a day of forgiveness deserves further explanation. Additionally, it is essential to understand why there is a tradition that this passuk is read with the letter "vav"—"ולו אחד בהם"—but is written with the letter "aleph"—"ולא אחד בהם"; this phenomenon is referred to as a "kri u'chtiv."

Lastly, we shall address Yisrael's minhag related to the conclusion of the Ne'ilah service on Yom HaKippurim. The entire congregation proclaims out loud with great passion: **"שמע"** **"ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד"** once; then **"ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"** three times; and then **"ה' הוא האלקים"** seven times. Why did our blessed sages see fit to institute this declaration of Hashem's oneness at the conclusion of Yom HaKippurim?

An Admonition Not to Substitute the "Dalet" of **"אח"ר** with the "Reish" of **"אח"ר**

I was inspired to explain this matter based on a wonderful introduction from the teachings of the Megaleh Amukos (Vayigash), based on earlier sources. There are two pesukim in the Torah which according to tradition ("mesorah") are written with an enlarged letter. One of them appears in Shemos (34, 14): **"כי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר"**—**for you shall not bow down to another god**. The word **"אח"ר**, meaning another, is to be written with a large "reish." The second passuk in question appears in Devarim (6, 4): **"שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"**—**Hear, O Yisrael, Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One**. The word **"אח"ר** is to be written with a large "dalet."

The explanation is simple. When children are learning to read, we write large letters for them, so that they will not get confused and substitute one letter for another. In similar fashion, HKB"H warned us to write these two letters bigger than usual so as not to confuse them and substitute one for the other, chas v'shalom. For, it would be blasphemy to replace the "reish" in **"אל אחר"** with a "dalet," or the "dalet" in **"ה' אחד"** with a "reish."

We should note that the source for this idea appears in the Midrash (V.R. 19, 2): **"שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, אם את עושה דל"ת: רי"ש, אתה מחריב את כל העולם כולו, כי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר, אם אתה עושה רי"ש, אתה מחריב את כל העולם כולו"**—making either of the above substitutions is tantamount to destroying the entire world. The Megaleh Amukot, however, adds that this is why the "mesorah" teaches us to write the "dalet" of **"אח"ר** and the "reish" of **"אח"ר** as large letters in the sefer Torah; this will eliminate the chance of confusing the two and making a fatal error.

One Who Serves Hashem for the Sake of Personal Honor Substitutes **"אחד"** with **"אחר"**

Now, let us introduce what the Agra D'Kallah writes (Bereishis) regarding the practical significance of

substituting the "dalet" of **"אח"ר** with the "reish" of **"אח"ר**. If a person is not careful, he could very easily, chas v'shalom, confuse the service of Hashem **"אח"ר** with the service of another god--**"אל אחר"**; instead of serving the one and only Hashem, he may actually be serving several human beings. Here is what he writes:

"דהנה משה כתב בתורה ד' דאחד רבתי, והרי"ש דלא תשתחוה לאל אחר גם כן רבתי. ואמרנו לפי פשוטו טעם לזה, דהנה עבודה זרה לא תיקרא דוקא בהולך ומשתחוה לצלם ודמות או זובח ומקטיר לו, דאם כן היום דבטל יצר הרע דעבודה זרה, יהיו כמה פסוקים למגנא [לחנם] בספר תורה ח"ו."

רק ידוע תדע שעבודה זרה מיקרי כל דבר אשר אדם עושה אפילו מצוה, וחשוב שלא לכבוד השם רק לשם איזה פנייה בעולם, כגון להתפארות בני אדם ועושר וכבוד, הנה הוא עובד את הדבר ההוא, היינו את הבן אדם או את הממונ. לך נא ראה בחובת הלבבות בשער יחוד המעשה [פרק ד], גורע ערך זה העובד [לשם התפארות בני אדם] יותר מגרעון עובד הצלמים... כי העובד הצלמים עובד בשיתוף אחד, וזה עובד שותפי אלפי אלפים [בני אדם], היום עובד לזה ולמחר לזה...

על זה ידוע כל הדוויים, וישים האדם נפשו בכפו לראות את מי הוא עובד, אם עבודתם עבודה שלימה ותמה רק לה' באמת, כי בקל יוכל לבוא לידי טעות, ויוכל להיות אפילו בעסקו בתורה ומצוות, שיהיה עושה מעשה [זמרי] ומבקש שכר כפנחס. והנה לפעמים הוא בהיפך (נזיר כג): גדולה עבירה לשמה... המשכיל יתבונן באלו הדברים על כל ענין ותנועה. והנה בשביל זה הגי תרי אתון [ד' של אח"ר] של אח"ר] ברבין בתורה, דבקל יוכל אדם לטעות ח"ו בין אח"ר לאח"ר רחמנא לשיזבן, דיסבור האדם שעובד את האחד והוא בהיפך."

In the Torah, Moshe wrote the word **"אח"ר** with a large "dalet" and also the word **"אח"ר** with a large "reish". "Avodah-zarah" does not refer only to bowing down to an idol or image or offering a sacrifice to it or burning incense for it. If that were the case, seeing as the yetzer hara of "avodah-zarah" has been abolished, several pesukim in the Torah would lack any significance, chas v'shalom.

Know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that anything a person does—even a mitzvah—that is performed not for the honor and sake of Hashem, but rather for some other purpose—such as self-aggrandizement, wealth or glory—is tantamount to serving and worshipping that other entity. That other entity could be another human being or money. In Chovas HaLevavos (Chapter 4), he finds one who seeks to show-off and glorify himself in the eyes of others more despicable than one who actually worships idols. For, an idol-worshipper serves only one entity; whereas such a person worships thousands of different entities (human beings); one day it is this one and tomorrow it will be someone or something else.

Therefore, every person should evaluate his own actions to see who he is truly serving. Is he truly serving sincerely and completely? For, it is very easy to fool oneself even when engaging in Torah-study and the performance of mitzvot. Every action must be scrutinized. This is why these two letters appear as large letters in the Torah. They remind us that a person can very easily confuse אה"ד with אה"ר, G-d save us, and believe that he is serving the one when he is really serving the other.

"Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you"

With this notion in mind, the Agra D'Kallah proceeds to provide us with a marvelous allusion in the following passuk, which was said by HKB"H to Adam HaRishon after the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as" (Bereishis 3, 18): "וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך" -- **thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.** Here is what he writes:

"והנה אם לא חטא האדם, לא היה נמשך אחר עץ הדעת טוב ורע, לא היו טועים בין רע לטוב ובין טוב לרע, והטעותם הללו נמשך בחטאו. והנה החילוק שבין אה"ד לאה"ר, הוא רק הקוץ של הד' שלאחריו, וכן בהיפוך מספר ר' הוא יותר על מספר ד' מגין קוץ. וזהו שאמר לו השם יתברך אחר החטא, וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך, שיומשך מחטאך ספיקות וטעותים בין ד' לר' ובין ר' לד', שהחילוק שביניהם הוא הקוץ, והבן היטב השי"ת יאיר פנים מסבירות."

Had Adam not sinned and not been tempted to partake of the "Eitz HaDa'as Tov VaRa," we would not be confounded by decisions between evil and good, and good and evil; this confusion is due to his sin. Now, the difference between the words אה"ד and אה"ר is merely the small protrusion extending from the back of the "dalet." On the other hand, the numerical value of the letter "reish" (200) exceeds the numerical value of the letter "dalet" (4) by the numerical equivalent of the word קוץ (196). [Translator's note: The word קוץ can refer to the tip or extension of a letter; the word דרדר in this passuk is composed of the two letters "dalet" and "reish."]

Let us take this idea one step further. The root of the sin involving the Eitz HaDa'as is a failure to recognize and accept Hashem's oneness. After all, the "nachash hakadmoni" persuaded Adam and Chava to partake of the Eitz HaDa'as with the following argument (ibid. 3, 4): "ויאמר הנחש אל האשה: לא מות תמותון, כי יודע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע" -- **the nachash said to the woman, "You will not surely die; for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it our eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad."**

Rashi comments: כל אומן שונא את בני אומנתו, מן העץ אכל -- **The nachash argued: "Every craftsman hates others of his craft; G-d ate from the tree and created the world.** So, by eating from the tree, **you will be like G-d, fashioners of the world."** We see that the nachash persuaded them with its blasphemous claim that they, too, could be like G-d—denying Hashem's oneness. In this manner, Adam HaRishon replaced the letter "dalet" in ה' "אל אחר" with the letter "reish" of "אל אחר"—by being swayed by the nachash's blasphemy that it was possible for them to be like G-d.

It appears that we can provide support for the Agra D'Kallah's explanation from the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 13): והיה סמאל השר הגדול שבשמים... ולא מצא חכם להרע כנחש שנאמר (שם ג-א) והנחש Samael היה ערום מכל חית השדה, והיה דמותו כמין גמל ועלה ורכב עליו. **Samael was the great ministering angel in heaven . . . He could find no creature more adept at evil than the nachash, as it states: "And the nachash was more cunning than any beast of the field."** Its form resembled a type of camel; he mounted it and rode on it. According to this explanation, the "samech-mem" rode on the nachash and toppled Adam and Chava with its trap. Now, the Zohar hakadosh (Ki Teitzei 286a) states: אל -- **the term "אל אחר" refers to Samael.** This coincides beautifully with the explanation of the Agra D'Kallah. For, in the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as," the "samech-mem" -- "אל אחר" -- succeeded in causing Adam to sin by causing him to substitute the "dalet" of ה' אחר with the "reish" of אל אחר.

In the "Cheit HaEigel" Yisrael Damaged the Letters ר"ד

Continuing on, the Agra D'Kallah proceeds to address HKB"H's statement to Moshe when Yisrael sinned with the "eigel" (Shemos 32, 7): "וידבר ה' אל משה לך רד כי שחת עמך אשר העלית" -- **Hashem spoke to Moshe: "Go, descend (ר"ד) — for your nation that you have brought up from Mitzrayim has degenerated.** We find the following elucidation in the Gemara (Berachos 32a): מאי לך רד, אמר רבי אלעזר אמר לו הקב"ה: למשה, משה רד מגדולתך -- **what is the significance of the words (go, descend)? Rabbi Elazar said: HKB"H said to Moshe: "Moshe, step down from your greatness."**

HKB"H alluded to Moshe to step down from his greatness by means of the two letters ר"ד. Moshe wrote these two letters as large letters in the Torah so that they would not be substituted for one another. Now, however, Yisrael committed the "cheit

haeigel," which was a form of "avodah zarah"; they proclaimed (Shemos 32, 4): "אלה אלהיך ישראל"—**this is your god, Yisrael**. Thus, they damaged the "dalet" of אה"ד by replacing it with the "reish" of אה"ר. As a result of this damage, Moshe was instructed: "רד מגדולתך"—step down due to the damage caused as a result of the exchange of the two large letters you wrote in the Torah (ר"ד). This concludes his remarks. [Translator's note: The word "גדולתך", meaning "your greatness," is related to the word "gadol," meaning large; thus the connection between stepping down from greatness and the two large letters.]

Now, we can shed some light on Adam HaRishon's choice of Yom HaKippurim as a day of forgiveness as his special portion. Rashi explains (Devarim 9, 18) that the reason Yom HaKippurim was established as a day of forgiveness and atonement was due to the events that occurred in the aftermath of the "cheit haeigel." Moshe Rabeinu went up onto Har Sinai three times—forty days and forty nights each time—to pray on behalf of Yisrael. Finally, HKB"H was appeased and agreed to give Yisrael the second set of luchos. The third time he ascended the mountain was on the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul; he remained on the mountain for forty days; he descended with the second luchos on Yom HaKippurim and gave them to Yisrael.

Now, when Moshe came down with the second set of luchos on Yom HaKippurim, HKB"H agreed to forgive Yisrael and said to Moshe (Bamidbar 14, 20): "סלחתי כדברך"—**I have forgiven as per your request**. Since then, it has been established as a day of atonement for all future generations. Rashi expresses this notion as follows (Devarim 9, 18): "בו ביום נתרצה הקב"ה לישראל ואמר למשה בסל לך שני לוחות, עשה עוד מ' יום נמצאו כלים ביום הכיפורים, בו ביום נתרצה הקב"ה לישראל בשמחה ואמר לו למשה סלחתי כדברך, לכך הוקבע." **On that very day, HKB"H was reconciled toward Yisrael. He said to Moshe, "Carve for yourself two luchos." Moshe spent another forty days; hence, they ended on Yom HaKippurim. On that day, HKB"H was reconciled toward Yisrael joyously, and He said to Moshe, "I have forgiven as per your request." Therefore, it was established for pardon and forgiveness.**

Based on what we have discussed, we can appreciate why Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim for pardon and forgiveness. When he committed the "cheit" involving the Eitz HaDa'as, he became the first person in history to damage the letter "dalet." As a consequence, HKB"H issued the decree: "וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך". They represent the root of all sins, which constitute a rebellion against Hashem and damage to the letter

"dalet" of אה"ד. Therefore, when he saw that HKB"H was destined to forgive Yisrael on Yom HaKippurim for the "cheit haeigel"—involving damage to the letter "dalet" of אה"ד—he deliberately chose that day for forgiveness for all future generations to make amends for this damage.

This provides us with a very nice understanding of the allusion in David HaMelech's statement: "ימים יוצרו ולו אחד בהם"—**though they will be fashioned through many days, to Him they are one**. In other words, the reason Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim as his portion was: "ולו אחד בהם"—because it constitutes a tikun for the ideal of "אחד"—which he damaged when he sinned with the Eitz HaDa'as. This is the message conveyed by Rashi's comment: "שהראה הקב"ה לאדם הראשון כל הימים העתידים להיבראות, ולחלקו בירר 'יום אחד' שהוא יום הכיפורים לסליחה"—HKB"H showed Adam HaRishon the future of mankind and he chose as his portion this one particular day, Yom HaKippurim—representing the ideal of "אחד"—to make amends for the damage he inflicted to the letter "dalet" of אה"ד.

With this understanding, we can comprehend the "kri u'chtiv" in this passuk. We read the passuk as: "ולו אחד"—conveying the fact that Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim as a day of forgiveness, because on this day HKB"H reveals Himself as "אחד"—the one and only force in the universe. The passuk is written, however, as: "ולא אחד"—explaining why Adam HaRishon required atonement; because in the matter of the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as," he failed to establish HKB"H's sovereignty as the "אחד". For, he followed the advice of the nachash, believing that by partaking of the Eitz HaDa'as: "והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע"—they would become G-d-like. Therefore, to correct this matter, Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim as his portion; for it represents the tikun for the ideal of "אחד".

We Passionately Cry Out "שמע ישראל" on Yom HaKippurim to Repair the Damage We Caused to the "אחד"

In this manner, let us rise to the occasion and explain the prevalent minhag in Yisrael to recite on Yom HaKippurim the pesukim related to Hashem's oneness: "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה'—**Listen, Yisrael: Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One**; ברוך—**Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever**; and ה' הוא האלקים—**Hashem is G-d**. We find, according to the Midrash (B.R. 98, 3), that Yaakov Avinu established the institution of "krias shema," morning and night.

The Midrash derives this fact from the words he addresses to his sons just prior to his death (Bereishis 49, 2):

"הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב, מכאן זכו ישראל לקריאת שמע. בשעה שהיה יעקב אבינו נפטר מן העולם קרא לשנים עשר בניו, אמר להם שמעו אל ישראל שבשמים אביכם, שמא יש בלבבכם מחלוקת על הקב"ה. אמרו לו, שמע ישראל אבינו, כשם שאין בלבך מחלוקת על הקב"ה, כך אין בלבנו מחלוקת אלא ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, אף הוא פירש בשפתיו ואמר ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד... הדא הוא שישאל משכימים ומעריבים בכל יום ואומרים, שמע ישראל אבינו ממערת המכפלה, אותו דבר שצויתנו עדיין הוא נוהג בנו, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד."

As Yaakov Avinu prepared to depart from this world, he gathered together his twelve sons. He asked whether any of them had any quarrels with their Father in Heaven. They replied to their father Yisrael, "Just as you are at peace with HKB"H, so, too, are we; in our hearts there is only one—Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One." He responded in kind with the words: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever" . . . Thus, Yisrael proclaim every day and every night, "Listen, Yisrael, our father, from the Mearas HaMachpelah, that which you commanded us is still being practiced--Hashem is our G-d Hashem is One."

We can explain the matter of Yaakov Avinu establishing the institution of "krias shema" based on that which is explained in Shaar HaPesukim (Vayigash). Yaakov Avinu represents the "gilgul"—reincarnation—and tikun of Adam HaRishon. The source for this notion comes from the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 35b): "דהא יעקב דוגמא דאדם הראשון הוה דיעקב שופריה דאדם הראשון הוה"—**Yaakov resembled Adam HaRishon; the radiance of Yaakov Avinu resembled the radiance of Adam HaRishon.**

In similar fashion, our blessed sages allude to this fact in the Gemara (B.M. 84a): "שופריה דיעקב אבינו מעין שופריה דאדם הראשון"—**the magnificence of Yaakov Avinu was a semblance of the magnificence of Adam HaRishon.** Now, seeing as Yaakov was a "gilgul" of Adam HaRishon, and all Jewish neshamot were contained within his being at the time of the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as"—when he damaged the "dalet" of אה"ד—Yaakov desired to make amends. He did so by instituting that every Jew recite lovingly, twice daily, Shacharit and Arvit: "שמע ישראל" ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

Based on what we have learned, we can understand Yaakov's response to his sons. When they said to him: "שמע ישראל אבינו, כשם שאין בלבך מחלוקת על הקב"ה, כך אין בלבנו מחלוקת אלא ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, אף הוא פירש בשפתיו ואמר ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם

ועד"—he responded: "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד". According to the halachah, as stated in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 206, 6), if a person utters a berachah in vain—"berachah l'vatalah"—he should say: "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד"—to atone for uttering G-d's name in vain.

Thus, when Yaakov heard all of his sons accepting upon themselves the sovereignty of Heaven—"ol malchut shamayim"—with the declaration: "ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"—**Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One**—he felt the necessity and urge to make amends for the damage inflicted to the letter "dalet" of אה"ד by all of the neshamot during the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as." So, his lips formed the response: "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד"—atoning for the damage caused by Adam HaRishon.

Now, consider the scenario at the conclusion of the "Ne'ilah" service on Yom HaKippurim. With passion and inspiration, the entire congregation cries out: "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד". As we have learned, Adam HaRishon chose this day as a tikun for the damage wrought by all of the neshamot incorporated within his being to the letter "dalet" of אה"ד. Therefore, it is fitting that we honor Yaakov Avinu's request; for, he represents the magnificence and "gilgul" of Adam HaRishon. As such, he instituted the recitation of "krias shema" to rectify this damage by expressing our emunah that: "ה' אלקינו ה' אחד".

It is for this very same reason that we also proclaim out loud three times: "ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד". We are requesting that HKB"H pardon us and forgive us for the "chilul-Hashem" we caused regarding the oneness of Hashem, when we sinned with the Eitz HaDa'as, after being convinced by the nachash: "והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע"—that we would become G-d-like. Immediately afterwards, we declare seven times: ה' הוא האלקים—to strengthen and reemphasize our emunah not only on Yom HaKippurim but throughout the seven days of the week, throughout the entire year—that HKB"H is the one and only and there is no other.

The Identical Appearance of the Two "Se'irim" Corresponds to the Two Letters ד' and ר'

At this point, we can shed some light on the subject of the two "se'irim," which HKB"H commanded us to bring on Yom HaKippurim—one designated for Hashem and one designated for Azazel. As mentioned above, Chazal reveal to us in Torah she'b'al peh: שני שעירי יום הכפורים מצוותן שיהיו שוין במראה -- ובקומה ובדמים ובליקחתן כאחד" it is imperative that the two

he-goats used in the Yom Kippur service be identical—in appearance, in height, in value and in their simultaneous purchase. Based on what we have been discussing, we can suggest that the two "se'irim" represent the two letters ד' and ר'—which are identical in shape, appearance and height.

Now, we have learned that Adam HaRishon chose Yom HaKippurim as his portion, in order to atone for the damage he caused by switching the letters "dalet" and "reish," as reflected by the decree: "וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך". We have also learned that HKB"H pardoned Yisrael for committing a similar sin with the "eigel"; they also switched these two letters, as reflected by HKB"H's command to Moshe: "לך רב כי שחת עמך". Therefore, HKB"H commanded us to bring two "se'irim" identical in appearance, height and monetary value; He is teaching us a vital lesson—beware not to confuse the two letters ד' and ר' and not to switch them.

HKB"H is conveying this message as a merciful father, warning his son lovingly not to be fooled. While these two letters seem identical in appearance and height; in reality, there is a huge difference between them—the small protrusion—"kotz"—from the back of the "dalet." For, the "שעיר אחד לה"—the he-goat designated for Hashem—corresponds to the letter ד' of ד"א; it is designated for Hashem, our G-d, "ה' אחד". On the other hand, the "שעיר אחד לעזאזל"—the he-goat designated for Azazel—is a pretender and a liar. It represents itself as the letter ד' of ד"א; in reality, however, it is merely the letter ר' without the protrusion of the letter ד'.

Accordingly, we can now better appreciate the incredible allusion provided by the great Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, zy"a: לעזאזל is an acronym for עשה אלקים ז'ה לעומת ז'ה--indicating that the Almighty created the world with equal and opposite counterparts. The "sa'ir la'Azazel" represents the equal and opposite counterpart of the "sa'ir la'Hashem"; it is the letter ר' of "אל אחר"—the representatives of tumah--the counterpart of the letter ד' of ד"א--the representative of kedushah.

And now, my brothers and colleagues, this is the crucial lesson we are obligated to learn from the two "se'irim" that

were brought on Yom HaKippurim—one for Hashem and one for Azazel. This message applies and is vital even today, despite the fact that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed—due to our countless sins—and we no longer have a Kohen Gadol to perform the service involving the two "se'irim." Nevertheless, at every step and juncture in our lives, when we are faced with an important decision—whether to perform a certain act or not to—we can consider the valuable lesson learned from the two "se'irim," identical in appearance, height and monetary value.

Like a young school-child being shown by his teacher the differences between each letter, similarly we must always consider the difference between the two letters ד' and ר'. On the one hand, we have the letter "dalet" of "ה' אחד"; it reminds us to dedicate everything we do solely to Hashem. On the other hand, we have the letter "reish" of "אל אחר"; it represents the yetzer hara. It portrays itself as if it also aims to serve Hashem, but it is being false and deceptive. One must scrutinize its appearance carefully; for it lacks the small protrusion on the back of the letter "dalet." This difference may seem small, but it is huge—like the distance between heaven and earth, between kedushah and tumah, and between Gan Eden and Gehinnom.

We need only pray—especially when uttering the passuk expressing the oneness of Hashem morning and night: שמע ישראל—**that Hashem guide us in distinguishing between the two—to distinguish between those who serve Hashem ד"א, with the "kotz" of the letter "dalet," and those who serve other gods, represented by ד"א, with the letter "reish"; we must distance ourselves from the latter as much as possible, and must avoid them at all costs. By doing so, we will rectify the damaged caused by the "cheit Eitz HaDa'as" as reflected by the words of the passuk: "וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך". In the merit of our teshuvah, we will merit the fulfillment of the navi's prophetic promise (Zechariah 14, 9): "והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה"—then Hashem will be King over the entire world; on that day, Hashem will be One (ד"א) and His name will be One (ד"א); swiftly, in our times. Amen.**

Donated by Dr. Ralph and Limor Madeb
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