

By Performing the Mitzvah of Milah We Rectify the Three Orlahs of אֵלֶּיךָ -- אֵיזֶן לֵב פִּה

In this week's parsha, parshas Lech Lecha, we encounter a mitzvah that is one of the foundations of the Torah and Judaism—the mitzvah of "brit-milah." HKB"H gave Avraham Avinu and his descendants this essential mitzvah with the explicit intent of establishing a covenant with them for the duration of time. Let us examine a sampling of the pesukim related to this mitzvah (Bereishis 17, 1):

"וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתִשְׁעֵי שָׁנִים, וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי אֵל שְׁדֵי הַתֵּהֱלֵךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָמִיד, וְאַתָּה בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאַרְבָּעָה אוֹתָךְ בְּמֵאָד מֵאָד. וַיִּפּוֹל אַבְרָם עַל פָּנָיו וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ אֱלֹקִים לֵאמֹר, אֲנִי הֵנָּה בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לֵאב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם, וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אֲב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְתִּיךָ, וְהִפְרַתִּי אוֹתָךְ בְּמֵאָד מֵאָד וְנִתְתִּיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמַלְכִּים מִמֶּךָ יֵצֵאוּ, וְהִקְמוֹתִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זֶרַעְךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדוֹרוֹתֶם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לֵהָיוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹקִים וּלְזֶרַעְךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ."

"When Avram was ninety-nine years old, Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, 'I am Kel Shakkai; walk before Me and be perfect. I will set My covenant between Me and you, and I will increase you most exceedingly.' Avram fell upon his face, and G-d spoke with him saying, '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, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations; I will make you most exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you; and kings shall descend from you. I will uphold My covenant between Me and you and your offspring after you, throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be a G-d to you and to your offspring after you.'"

We learn a tremendous chiddush from one of the Tosafists in Shu"t Maharach Ohr Zarua (11). The mitzvah of milah—ritual circumcision—is not a once in a lifetime mitzvah. Rather, it is a mitzvah that is fulfilled continuously throughout a person's lifetime. For, the mitzvah of milah is defined by the fact that the person is circumcised and possesses the stamp of the King upon him at all times. Hence, so long as a person is circumcised, he is fulfilling the mitzvah of milah.

This fact is substantiated by the following teaching in the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **"בשעה שנכנס דוד לבית המרחץ וראה את עצמו עומד ערום, אמר אי לי שאעמוד ערום בלא מצוות, כיון שנזכר במילה שבבשרו נתייבשה דעתו. לאחר שיצא אמר עליה שירה, שנאמר (תהלים יב-א) למנצח על השמינית מזמור—upon entering the bathhouse and seeing himself standing naked, David said, 'Woe is me that I should stand naked, without mitzvos.' When he recalled the circumcision in his flesh, he was consoled. After exiting, he composed a song regarding this matter, as it states (Tehillim 12, 1): 'To Him Who grants victory, on the eight-stringed instrument, a psalm by David.' This song is about the milah, which was given on the eighth day.**

If we were to say that the mitzvah of milah is fulfilled only at the time of the actual circumcision, when the "orlah"—foreskin—is removed, why did David HaMelech rejoice upon recalling his milah in the bathhouse? Thus, we can conclude that the mitzvah of milah entails having the stamp of the King upon us constantly. Therefore, David HaMelech rejoiced upon recalling the circumcision in his flesh. For, even in the bathhouse, where he was unable to perform other mitzvos, he was still fulfilling the mitzvah of milah, by the mere fact that he was circumcised. This is the gist of his explanation.

Thus, it is only fitting that we examine this sacred mitzvah that we fulfill constantly—every second and hour of the day. Let us begin by presenting the following Midrash (S.R. 30, 12):

"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 ותורתו אמת, אמר לו ולמד תורתו ואל תמול. אמר לו עקילס, אפילו חכם שבמלכותך וזקן בן מאה שנה, אינו יכול ללמוד תורתו אם אינו מל, שכן כתוב (תהלים קמז-יט) מגיד דבריו ליעקב חוקיו ומשפטייו לישראל, לא עשה כן לכל גוי, ולמי לבני ישראל."

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.

We see here that it is impossible to attain Torah knowledge without the mitzvah of milah. As long as the "orlah" has not been removed from a person's body, he is prevented from attaining Torah knowledge. It is incumbent upon us to explain why, in fact, the mitzvah of milah differs from all of the other mitzvos—that failure to fulfill this mitzvah precludes attaining Torah knowledge.

It is also worthwhile examining the words of the Bnei Yissaschar in Derech Pikudecha (Mitzvah 2; Machashavah 10), presented in the name of the kabbalists and deriving from the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 11a). He writes that the foreskin contains three layers of skin akin to the layers of an onion. They correspond to the three klipot of tumah mentioned in the prophet's "merkavah" (Yechezkel 1, 4): **"a stormy wind," "a great cloud" and a "flashing fire."** Here are the words of the prophet: **וַיֹּאמֶר וְהִנֵּה רוּחַ—then I looked and behold! A stormy wind was coming from the north—a great cloud with flashing fire.** By performing the mitzvah of milah, and thereby removing the "orlah," the force of these three klipot is diminished, preventing them from overwhelming and controlling a Jew.

Removing the Orlah Constitutes a Tikun for the Letter Aleph of "כתנות אור"

We shall begin our explanation by presenting a tremendous chiddush found in the immaculate teachings of the Chatam Sofer (Lech Lecha). He writes that the mitzvah of milah represents a tikun for the sin of Adam HaRishon. As a consequence of the sin, HKB"H made **"kutnot or"—"garments of skin"**—for Adam and Chava, as it is written (Bereishis 3, 21): **"וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹקִים לָאָדָם וּלְחָוָה כְּתָנוֹת עוֹר, וַיַּלְבִּישֵׁם—and Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin (כתנות עור), and He clothed them.** By performing the mitzvah of milah and removing the "orlah," the matter of "kutnot or" is rectified. [Women rectify this defect by purifying themselves of "dahm niddah."]

To better comprehend the words of the Chatam Sofer, it is essential to comprehend why the fact that HKB"H clothed Adam and Chava in "kutnot or" constituted a flaw. Let us refer to the following excerpt from the Zohar hakadosh (Pekudei 229b) translated into "lashon hakodesh":

"אדם הראשון כשהיה בגן עדן, היה מלובש בלבוש כדמיון של מעלה והוא הלבוש של אור העליון, כיון שנתגרש מגן עדן והיה צריך כעין הלבשים של העולם הזה, מה כתיב ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם. בתחילה היו כתנות אור, אור של אור העליון המשמש בגן עדן... כיון שנתגרש משם היה צריך למלבוש אחר, אז ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולחווה כתנות עור."

When Adam HaRishon was in Gan Eden, he was dressed in garb appearing like a heavenly creature; it was the garb of heavenly light. When he was evicted from Gan Eden, and he required garments appropriate for Olam HaZeh, it is written: "Hashem G-d for Adam and his wife garments of skin (כתנות עור), and He clothed them." At first, they were garments of light (אור)—light from the heavenly light which served Gan Eden . . . When he was evicted from there, he required a different garment; then Hashem G-d made for Adam and Chava garments of skin (עור).

Concerning this matter, we learn in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 58 92b) that the garments of skin that HKB"H made for Adam and Chava after the sin, were made from the skin of the nachash: **"וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹקִים לָאָדָם וּלְחָוָה כְּתָנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּישֵׁם, בְּקִדְמֵיטָא כְּתָנוֹת אֹר, וּלְבַתֵּר דְּחָאבוּ כְּתָנוֹת עוֹר, מְעוֹר דְּאִיהוּ מִשְׁכַּא דְּחֻוּיָא—at first, they were garments of light; and after they sinned, they were garments of skin—from skin that was the skin of the nachash.**

This helps us understand what the Shela hakadosh writes (Maseches Pesachim; Drush 6, 33):

"כי כאשר חטא אדם הראשון ונתפתה לנחש, שעליו נאמר (משלי טז-כח) נרגן מפריד אלוף כאשר כתבו המקובלים. וסוד הדבר כי הנחש שהיה נקרא נרגן, והוציא שקר מפיו לאמור מן העץ הזה אכל וברא עולמו הפריד הא' מן אמת, וכשתפריד הא' מן אמת נשאר מ'ת כי גרם מיתה לעולם, והא' זו שהופרד היא הא' דכתנות א'ור באל"ף."

According to the kabbalists, when Adam HaRishon sinned and was swayed by the nachash, this is the subject of the passuk (Mishlei 16, 28): "And a trouble-maker estranges a ruler." The secret of the matter is that the nachash is referred to as a "nirgan" (trouble-maker); he uttered a lie stating that G-d ate from the tree and created His world; he separated the "aleph" from the word אמת. When the "aleph" is removed from אמת, what remains is מ'ת, because he caused death in the world. The "aleph" that was removed is the "aleph" of "kutnot oh" (כתנות א'ור) spelled with an "aleph."

The Body Was Created to Serve as a Loyal Garment for the Neshamah

To better understand the matter, let us explore why HKB"H created man as an amalgamation of a physical body and a spiritual neshamah. The passuk states (Bereishis 2, 7): **"וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת אָדָם מִפֶּחַ אֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאָפִיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה" and Hashem G-d formed man of soil from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul.** The intent is that the body serve as an outer garment, loyal and devoted to the neshamah—which is man's essence. For, the neshamah alone is incapable of performing any mitzvah without the aid of the body's limbs—the implements necessary to perform any action.

In truth, before Adam HaRishon sinned with the "Eitz HaDa'at Tov VaRa," his body was so pure and refined that it reflected the heavenly light accurately—all for the good without any inclination toward evil. In this manner, the body fulfilled its task faithfully, assisting the neshamah to serve Hashem. As a result of the sin of partaking from the Eitz HaDa'at, the nachash succeeded in introducing its contamination and perversion into Adam and Chava; the yetzer hara entered their bodies. Rashi provides us with the following insight (Bereishis 2, 25): **"וַיֹּאף עַל פִּי שְׁנִיתָנָהּ בּוֹ" and דְּעָה לְקִרְוַת שְׁמוֹ, לֹא נָתַן בּוֹ יֵצֶר הָרַע עַד אֲכָלוֹ מִן הָעֵץ וּנְכַסּ בּוֹ יֵצֶר הָרַע" and although man was given the knowledge to name the animals, he was not endowed with a yetzer hara until he ate from the tree; then the yetzer hara entered his being.**

Due to this contamination injected by the nachash—the yetzer hara—the body rebelled against the neshamah. Instead of acting as a loyal garment helping the neshamah serve Hashem, it transformed its skin—possessing its own agendas to satisfy its heart's desires. From that moment on, the epic struggle between the body and the neshamah began. On the one hand, the neshamah draws a person to the good; while, on the other hand, the body draws him toward evil.

This then is the significance of the fact that prior to the sin, Adam HaRishon possessed "kutnot ohr" (with an "aleph")—garments of light. In other words, his body accurately reflected the heavenly light, acting as a loyal garment for the neshamah—assisting it to fulfill Hashem's mitzvos. After the sin, however, the body became more material and physical. It transformed into a garment of skin ("kutnot or" with an "ayin")—from the skin of the nachash that had contaminated it. Instead of acting as a loyal garment assisting the neshamah to serve Hashem, it rebelled against the neshamah and began opposing it.

In this light, we can begin to appreciate the statement in the Midrash (B.R. 20, 12): **"בְּתוֹרַתוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי מֵאִיר מֵצְאוֹ כְּתוּב כְּתוּב אוֹר"—in Rabbi Meir's Torah, they found "kutnot ohr" written with an "aleph" (instead of an "ayin").** The Arizal explains in Sefer HaLikutim (ibid.) that Rabbi Meir succeeded in sanctifying his body while yet alive to such a degree that it was transformed from a **"כְּתוּב אוֹר"—a garment of skin--to a "כְּתוּב אוֹר"—a garment of light.**

This now provides us with a better understanding of the Chatam Sofer's sacred insight. HKB"H provided Adam and Chava with garments of skin to clothe their entire bodies. Yet, for the generations of human beings that followed them, He did not create garments of skin to cover their entire bodies. HKB"H left the contamination of the nachash of garments of skin only in the form of the "orlah"—the foreskin—related to the brit milah. By performing the mitzvah of milah, which removes the "orlah"—the nachash's contamination—we prepare the body to be sanctified by the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos. By this process, it can resume being a loyal garment for the neshamah, described as **"כְּתוּב אוֹר".**

There Are Four "Orlah"s: In the Ear in the Mouth in the Heart and in the Body

I was struck by a wonderful idea, delighting in the words of the Chatam Sofer. As we have learned, by performing the mitzvah of milah and removing the "orlah," we eliminate the garment characterized as **"כְּתוּב אוֹר"** with an "ayin," and prepare to sanctify the body as a **"כְּתוּב אוֹר"** with an "aleph." Now, we find a tremendous chiddush in the Midrash (B.R. 46, 5). In essence, there are actually four forms of "orlah": the "orlah" of the ear, the "orlah" of the mouth, the "orlah" of the heart and the "orlah" of the body. We fulfill the mitzvah of milah by removing the latter "orlah"; the Midrash refers to it as the "orlah of the body," because its removal rectifies the entire body. The Midrash provides several sources substantiating the fact that the mitzvah of milah is accomplished by removing the "orlah" of the body:

"רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל אוֹמֵר, אֲבָרְהָם כָּהֵן גָּדוֹל הָיָה, שְׁנֵאמַר (תְּהִלִּים קי-ד) נִשְׁבַּע ה' וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם אֶתְּהָ כָהֵן לְעוֹלָם וְגו', וְנֵאמַר לְהֵלֵךְ (בְּרָאשִׁית יז-יא) וְנִמְלַתָּם אֶת בָּשָׂר עֶרְלָתְכֶם, מֵהֵיכָן יִמּוֹל, אִם יִמּוֹל מִן הָאָזְנוֹ, אִינוֹ כָּשֶׁר לְהִקְרִיב [כִּי הוּא בָעַל מוֹם], מִן הַפֶּה אִינוֹ כָּשֶׁר לְהִקְרִיב, מִן הַלֵּב אִינוֹ כָּשֶׁר לְהִקְרִיב, מֵהֵיכָן יִמּוֹל וַיְהִי כָּשֶׁר לְהִקְרִיב, הוּא אוֹמֵר זֶה עֶרְלַת הַגּוֹף.

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר ד' עֶרְלוֹת הֵן, נֵאמְרָה עֶרְלַת בְּאָזְנוֹ (יְרֵמְיָה ו-י) הִנֵּה עֶרְלַת אֲזָנוֹ, וְנֵאמְרָה עֶרְלַת בֶּפֶה (שְׁמוֹת ו-ל) הֵן אֲנִי עֶרַל שְׁפָתַיִם, וְנֵאמַר עֶרְלַת בֶּלֶב (יְרֵמְיָה ט-כֵה) וְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶרְלֵי לֵב, וְנֵאמַר עֶרְלַת בְּגוֹף (בְּרָאשִׁית יז-יד) וְעֶרַל זָכָר, וְנֵאמַר לוֹ (שִׁם ש-א) הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וַיְהִי תַמִּים, אִם יִמּוֹל מִן הָאָזְנוֹ אִינוֹ תַמִּים, מִן הַפֶּה אִינוֹ תַמִּים, מִן הַלֵּב אִינוֹ תַמִּים, וּמֵהֵיכָן יִמּוֹל וַיְהִי תַמִּים, הוּא אוֹמֵר זֶה עֶרְלַת הַגּוֹף."

Rabbi Yishmael teaches that Avraham was a Kohen Gadol; yet, it states that we must perform circumcision by removing the "orlah" from our flesh. What organ can be circumcised without disqualifying the kohen from performing ritual services? It must certainly be the male foreskin, for removal of any of the other "orlah"s would deem the kohen physically flawed—a "ba'al mum."

Rabbi Akiva teaches that there are four "orlah"s in the human body: in the ear, the mouth, the heart and the male organ. Avraham is told to walk before G-d and be perfect. If either the ear or the mouth or the heart were to be circumcised, he would no longer be perfect. Thus, he concludes that circumcision must involve the removal of the male foreskin—referred to as "the orlah of the body."

The Yifat Toar is perplexed by this Midrash. He asks how is it even conceivable that a person would circumcise his heart—doing so would certainly kill the person. Other commentaries ask: If removing the "orlah" in the performance of a brit milah does not make a person a "ba'al mum," why would removing the "orlah" of the ear or the mouth make a person any more of a "ba'al mum" than the removal of the "orlah" of the body?

Removing the "Orlah" of the Milah Corrects the Ear the Mouth and the Heart

It appears that we can reconcile the matter by referring to the sefer Tefilat Moshe, authored by Rabbi Moshe Almoshino of Saloniki. He provides us with an extraordinary interpretation of the Midrash. To appreciate the impact and beauty of his interpretation, we shall present his exact words:

"והנה רבי ישמעאל אמר דרך כלל, כי להיות אברהם עליו השלום כהן לאל עליון קונה שמים וארץ, לבו ראה בהשקפה צרופה איזה דרך ישכון אור בתיקון טבע החומר שיהיה תיקון כולל, ואמר אם ימול מן האוזן אינו כשר, כלומר אם יתוקן הרע אשר אפשר שימשך מהשמיעה, הנה בזה לא יתוקן כי אם המדות הנמשכות מן האוזן, ויתוקן בזה שלא ישמע לשון הרע וכיוצא באלה הדברים התלויים בחוש השמע, ואם ימול מן הפה אינו כשר, כי לא יתוקן גם בזה אלא הדברים התלויים בפה, והוא הדיבור הרע והאכילה והשתיה וכיוצא באלה, ואם ימול מן הלב אינו כשר, כי גם בזה לא יתוקן רק המחשבה לא הפועל, הוי אומר זו ערלת הגוף, והוא רמז לתיקון כל הגוף."

והנה בא רבי עקיבא לפרש דברי רבי ישמעאל ולא כחולק עליו, ואמר ד' ערלות הן, כלומר בד' מקומות צריך תיקון, אם יתוקן האוזן אינו תמים, כי עדיין חסר תיקון הג' הנשארים, וכן מן הפה, וכן מן הלב, הוי אומר זו ערלת הגוף והוא כולל לארבעתם. ופירש הענין למה לא יהיה תמים, ואמר כי אם ימול מן האוזן אינו שומע, כלומר לא יתוקן כי אם השמיעה אשר לא ישמע לקול מלחשים, ואם מן הפה אינו יכול לדבר, ובזה יתוקן גם כן הדיבור הרע והבלתי נאות, ואם מן הלב אינו יכול לחשוב מחשבות רעות, אך אמנם יפעל הפעולות הפחותות והמגונות, הוי אומר זו ערלת הגוף, וזהו תיקון כל כללות הכוחות החומריות, ולזה הוסכם להיות באבר המיוחד ההוא, אשר הוא סיבת תיקון כל הגוף כאמור."

Rabbi Yishmael provided us with a general principle. To serve the Almighty as a kohen, Avraham a"h sought the ultimate tikun for his material being. He figured that if he were to circumcise the ear, he still would not be fit; for, that would only correct matters associated with the sense of hearing, such as not listening to lashon hara. If he were to circumcise the mouth, he would still not be fit; for that would only rectify matters related to the mouth, such as improper speech, eating and drinking. If he were to circumcise the heart, he would still not be fit; for that would only rectify his thoughts but not his actual deeds. Thus, he concluded that he must circumcise the "orlah" of the body in order to afford the entire body a tikun.

Rabbi Akiva came to explain Rabbi Yishmael's words, not to dispute them. He explained that four "orlah"s exist. In other words, there are four locations that require tikun. If the ear is rectified, the person will still not be complete, because the remaining three, still lack tikun. The same holds true regarding the mouth and the heart. Hence, we must conclude that the tikun must be performed on the "orlah" of the body; it includes all four of the "orlah"s. He explains why circumcising any of the first three is insufficient—as Rabbi Yishmael did. The overall tikun accomplished by circumcising this unique organ is an all-encompassing tikun for all of a person's physical and material powers and faculties.

He proceeds to explain why the "orlah" associated with the milah is referred to as the "orlah of the body." For, by removing this "orlah," we achieve tikun for all of the body's four "orlah"s. This coincides very nicely with what the Rambam writes in Moreh Nevuchim (3, 49) regarding the mitzvah of milah. By removing the milah, the body's overall yetzer—which is located in this organ—is significantly weakened. As a result, we are spiritually removing the three "orlah"s associated with the ear, mouth and heart, as well—so that they will not be used for prohibited acts but will be restricted to the service of Hashem.

How nicely this explains for us the kabbalists' statement that the "orlah" of the milah consists of three layers of skin corresponding to the three klipot that must be removed. So, based on what we have just learned, we can postulate that these three layers of skin contained in the "orlah of the body," correspond to the "orlah"s of the ear, mouth and heart—which are removed together with the "orlah" of the milah. This alludes to the fact that by performing the mitzvah of milah with the removal of the "orlah," we are also removing the three klipot of the "orlah"s of the ear, mouth and heart. In this manner, we merit to sanctify them and employ them in the service of Hashem.

א'זון ל'ב פ'ה Is an Acronym for א'ל"ף

Continuing onward along this path, let us now address the Chatam Sofer's contention that by fulfilling the mitzvah of milah, we rectify the flaw of Adam HaRishon. By following the advice of the nachash, he caused the transformation of garments of "אור" with an 'א' to "עור" with an 'ע'. Now, regarding Adam HaRishon, we find the following statement from Chazal (Sanhedrin 38b): "מושך בערלתו היה"—he would pull on his "orlah" (foreskin). Let us suggest an explanation for this statement. Prior to the sin, his entire body was kadosh, in keeping with the designation of "כתנות אור"; it did not contain the four types of "orlah." After the sin, however, and the yetzer hara invaded his being: "מושך בערלתו היה"—he would pull on his "orlah" (foreskin)—he caused the four "orlah"s to enter his body. How so?

The "orlah" of the ear entered when he listened to Chava, who listened to the nachash hakadmoni and followed his malicious advice, as it is written (Bereishis 3, 17): "ולאדם אמר כי 'שמעת' לקול: —to Adam He said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree about which I commanded you saying, 'You shall not eat of it.'"

The "orlah" of the mouth entered when he spoke improperly and impudently. Instead of confessing orally and admitting to his wrongdoing, he denied the favor HKB"H had shown him and blamed Chava for his actions. This is evident from his statement to HKB"H (ibid. 12): "האשה אשר נתתה עמדי היא נתנה לי מן העץ ואוכל"—the woman whom You gave to be with me — she gave me of the tree—and I ate. Here Rashi comments: "כאן כבר בטובה"—here he demonstrated that he was ungrateful. Furthermore, according to the Midrash (B.R. 19, 12), he intended to oppose and contradict HKB"H: "ואכלתי אין כתיב כאן אלא ואוכל ואוכל אכלתי ואוכל"—the passuk doesn't say "I ate," but rather "I will eat"—Adam is stating defiantly that he will continue to eat.

The "orlah" of the heart entered his being when the urge to defy Hashem penetrated his heart due to the nachash's persuasive arguments (ibid. 5): "כי יודע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם"—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. Here Rashi comments: 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."

The "orlah" of the body entered his being when he actually ate from the Eitz HaDa'at and all of his 248 limbs and 365 sinews

enjoyed the prohibited consumption. As a consequence, the yetzer hara entered his being and it was decreed that his body must die. This is how the general "orlah" of the body came into existence.

Therefore, in order to rectify the four forms of "orlah" that became part of Adam HaRishon and his offspring, HKB"H gave Avraham and his offspring, the people of Yisrael, the mitzvah of milah. In the performance of this mitzvah, the "orlah of the body," the all-encompassing "orlah," is removed. This "orlah" contains three layers of skin corresponding to the three "orlah"s of the ear, the mouth and the heart. So, by removing this general "orlah," we achieve tikun for all four "orlah"s. Thus, the body is sanctified and the letter "aleph" of "כתנות אור" is restored. This fact is alluded to by the name of the letter "aleph"—א'ל"ף, which is an acronym for א'זון ל'ב פ'ה, the sites of the three minor "orlah"s. The reason, the "aleph" only alludes to the other three "orlah"s and not the "orlah of the body," is because this all-encompassing "orlah" requires no allusion; for, it is actually removed along with the three layers it includes.

Now, during the Galus in Mitzrayim, Yisrael were unable to fulfill the mitzvah of milah, due to the severity of the labor and enslavement. Rashi notes this fact in the name of the Mechilta (Shemos 12, 6): "היה רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר, הרי הוא אומר (יחזקאל טז) - (ח) ואעבור עליך ואראך והנה עתך עת דודים, הגיעה שבועה שנשבעתי לאברהם שאגאל את בניו, ולא היו בידם מצות להתעסק בהם כדי שיגאלו, שנאמר (שם ז) ואת ערומ ועריה, ונתן להם שתי מצות דם פסח ודם מילה שמלו באותו הלילה, שנאמר Rabbi Matya ben Charash used to say: The prophet Yechezkel says, "And I (Hashem) passed over you, and I saw you, and behold, your time was a time of loving." The time has arrived to fulfill the oath I swore to Avraham, that I would redeem his children. But they did not possess any mitzvos with which to occupy themselves warranting their redemption, as it states: "And you were bare and naked." So, He gave them two mitzvos—the blood of the korban Pesach and the blood of milah. For, they circumcised themselves on that night, as it states: "Wallowing in your bloods," insinuating two bloods.

Consequently, during the Galus in Mitzrayim, the four "orlah"s returned to hamper them and control them. The "orlah of the body" was evident by the fact that they did not perform the mitzvos with their bodily limbs. The "orlah" of the ear prevented them from listening to Moshe when he came to inform them about the geulah, as it is written (Shemos 6, 9): "וידבר משה כן אל בני ישראל ולא 'שמעו': —thus did Moshe speak to Bnei Yisrael; but they did not listen to Moshe, due to a shortness of breath and the difficult labor.

Evidence that the "orlah" of the mouth returned can be deduced from what the Agra D'Pirka writes (307): **"כי במצרים לא התפללו בפועל אל השי"ת כי היה הדיבור בגלות, ולא נאמר שם רק (שמות ב-כג) ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו, אנחה בלב, וגם הזעקה הוא בשפתים בלי חיתוך אותיות, ותעל שועתם הוא בהרמת קול, אבל גם כן בלא חיתוך אותיות—they did not actually pray to Hashem in Mitzrayim, because the faculty of speech was in Galus; the Torah merely states there (Shemos 2, 23) that "Bnei Yisrael groaned as a result of the work, and they cried out." A groan is from the heart; similarly, a cry comes from the lips without the enunciation of letters. "Their outcry ascended" expresses the fact that they raised their voices; but this was also without articulating the letters of speech.**

Evidence that the "orlah" of the heart returned can be seen from Rashi's comment (Bereishis 47, 28): **"שכיון שנפטר יעקב אבינו—נסתמו עיניהם ו'לבם' של ישראל מצרת השעבוד שהתחילו לשעבדם—the passing of Yaakov Avinu, the eyes and heart of Yisrael were obstructed due to the misery of the enslavement; for they had started to enslave them.**

Thus, we have explicit proof that as a result of not performing the mitzvah of milah in Mitzrayim, the four "orlah"s affected their actions and behavior. As a result, they sank to the forty-ninth level of tumah, until HKB"H took Yisrael out of the Galus in Mitzrayim—both physically from the strenuous labor and spiritually from the tumah of Mitzrayim. In the process, He gave them the blood of the korban Pesach and the blood of milah, in order to remove the four "orlah"s from them and to sanctify them with the divine kedushah. Thus, they were worthy of receiving the Torah on Har Sinai. As we learned from Onkelos' remark to the Emperor Hadrian, only those who have fulfilled the mitzvah of milah are capable of acquiring the Torah, as we shall explain.

Acquisition of the Torah via the Tikun of the Ear Mouth and Heart

Based on what we have discussed, we have been enlightened as to why it is impossible to attain Torah knowledge without first fulfilling the mitzvah of milah. For, it is apparent that it is

impossible to comprehend and observe the tenets of the Torah without the aid of the ear, mouth, heart and body, in general. The ear is required to hear the words of Torah she'b'al peh, which is transmitted from generation to generation. The mouth is essential for the study of Torah. The heart is essential to comprehend the meaning of the Torah. The limbs of the body are indispensable for the actual performance of the Torah's mitzvos.

In the berachot of the morning "kriat shema" (Ahavat Olam), our prayers address these four forces—the heart, ear, mouth and body. We say: **ותן בלבנו בינה להבין ולהשכיל [הרי לב], לשמוע [הרי אוזן], ללמוד וללמד [הרי פה], לשמור ולעשות ולקיים את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך באהבה [הרי כל הגוף]—instill in our hearts the intuition to understand and comprehend (with the heart), to listen (with the ear), to learn and teach (with the mouth), to observe, perform and fulfill (with the body) all the words of the teaching of Your Torah with love.** Yet, as we have explained, each of these four entities is shrouded by an "orlah"—each in its own way preventing a person from acquiring and fulfilling the Torah. Therefore, HKB"H instituted the remedy to precede the malady. The mitzvah of milah is performed on the eight day old infant, removing the "orlah of the body," which encompasses the other three forms of "orlah." In this manner, a person rectifies these four essential forces, so as to enable him to acquire and fulfill the entire Torah.

If we look, we will find that at the time of "kabbalat haTorah," Yisrael utilized all four of these forces to receive the Torah. Regarding the ear, it states (Shemos 19, 9): **ויאמר ה' אל משה הנני: Hashem said to Moshe, "Behold! I come to you in the thick of the cloud, so that the people will hear as I speak to you."** Regarding the mouth, they received the Torah with the famous declaration (ibid. 24, 7): **"ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה' נעשה ונשמע"—everything that Hashem has said, we will do and we will obey!** Regarding the heart, let us refer to Rashi's comment (ibid. 19, 2): **ויהיו שם ישראל: "Yisrael encamped there" as one man, with one heart.** Regarding the body, they obligated themselves to perform all the mitzvos of the Torah with their bodily limbs: **"Everything Hashem has said, we will do!"**



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