



A Fascinating Revelation from the Chiddushei HaRim

"והיה עקב" Alludes to Rabbi Akiva Whose Neshamah Was Extracted from the Heel of Eisav in Preparation for the Coming of the Mashiach

This week's parsha is parshas Eikev. I would like to focus on the opening words of the parsha (Devarim 7, 12): **"והיה עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה ושמרתם ועשיתם אותם" — "ושמור ה' אלקיך לך את הברית ואת החסד אשר נשבע לאבותיך — and it will be because of your listening to these ordinances and your observing and performing them; then Hashem, your G-d, will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.** Based on the Midrash Tanchuma, Rashi comments that this opening passuk refers to the observance of the relatively simple, easy mitzvos that most people take for granted—**"that they trample with their heels."**

Yet, the commentaries on Rashi note that the word **"עקב"** appears several times in the Torah (Bereishis 22, 18; ibid. 26, 5; Bamidbar 14, 24), and it always appears in the context of providing an explanation for something. So, why here in relation to the words **"והיה עקב תשמעון"** does Rashi deviate from the norm and interpret it as referring to mitzvos that are not treated seriously enough?

These "Simple Mitzvot Trampled with Their Heels" Allude to the Generation Preceding the Coming of the Mashiach

Since it is the nature of Torah to be interpreted from seventy different perspectives, I have been inspired to suggest an interpretation based on the methodology of "remez." We will begin by exploring what the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"a, writes in his own sacred

handwriting in Sefer HaZikaron (Eikev). He relates the opening words of our parsha to the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva and provides various allusions employing the methodologies of פרי"ס.

It is apparent to all that his remarks are brilliant; however, they are often esoteric and beyond comprehension. For many years, I have longed and strived to comprehend at least a modicum of his brilliant remarks. Now, we are taught a fundamental principle in the Gemara (Megillah 6b) that applies to every single one of us: **"אם יאמר לך אדם... יגעת ומצאתי" — "תאמן" — if someone tells you . . . "I have labored, and I have succeeded," you may believe him.** In keeping with this notion, I would like to present to our royal audience my limited comprehension of his sacred remarks that I have intuited by the grace of Hashem. We will rely on genuine, true insights from our holy Rishonim and Acharonim and pray that HKB"H will guide us on the path of "emet."

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by focusing on the opening words of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"a, regarding the words **"והיה עקב תשמעון"**. As we learn from the Midrash (B.R. 42, 3), the term **"והיה"** connotes "simchah" before Hashem; he interprets the term **"עקב"** as an allusion to the generation preceding the coming of the Mashiach, referred to as **"ikvita d'mashichah"**; **"תשמעון"** — it is especially pleasing and important to Hashem when His will is performed in a lowly generation.

To achieve a better understanding of these remarks, we will introduce the teachings of the Arizal in Sha'ar HaGilgulim (Introduction 15). The Arizal teaches us that when Adam HaRishon was created, HKB"Y incorporated within him all of the holy neshamos of the people of Yisrael. The elite neshamos were located in his head; similarly, the remainder of the neshamos were located in his heart and the other parts of Adam's physical anatomy, based on their spiritual level; the lowliest neshamos were located in the heels of his feet.

Accordingly, the Arizal explains why these final generations are referred to in the nomenclature of Chazal as **"ikvita d'mashichah."** For, we are taught (Sotah 49b): **"בעקבות משיחא חוצפה יסגא"—in the period preceding the coming of the Mashiach, insolence will soar.** For, in those generations, only the lowliest neshamos, those associated with the heels of Adam HaRishon, will remain unrectified. Then, when the tikun of all the neshamos has been accomplished, the Melech HaMashiach will come. This is the significance of the depiction **"ikvita d'mashicha"** (often translated as the "footsteps of the Mashiach")—indicating that the neshamos of the last generation, the neshamos in the heels, will ultimately bring the Melech HaMashiach.

The Arizal provided his devoted disciple, Rabeinu Chaim Vital, words of "chizuk" that deserve to be publicized throughout the Jewish world. He emphasizes how important even the smallest of good deeds performed in the latter generations are in the eyes of HKB"Y. Rabeinu Chaim Vital describes this in Sha'ar HaGilgulim (Introduction 38):

I once asked my teacher of blessed memory: How could he tell me that my soul was so special? After all, even the smallest in previous generations was a tzaddik and chassid that I do not even reach his heels. He answered me: Know that the greatness of a soul does not depend on a man's deeds but only on the respective time and generation. Thus, a very minor deed in this generation is equivalent

to many major mitzvos in other generations. Because in these generations, the klipah is extremely strong, immeasurably so. That was not the case in earlier generations. Had I been in the earlier generations, my deeds and wisdom would have surpassed several of the early tzaddikim.

The Entire Body of Neshamot Stands on the Neshamot in the Heels of the Feet

We will now delight in the marvelous "chizuk" written by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy"a, in the commentary Ateret Tzvi on the Zohar hakadosh (Shemos 10a). He presents what he related to the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy"a, the author of the Ohev Yisrael, regarding the neshamos of our generation. While it is true that they are lowly neshamos in comparison to those of previous generations, since they are the neshamos of the heels; nevertheless, they possess a unique attribute; the entire body and universe of neshamos stand on them and are supported by them—just like the entire body stands on its heels. Furthermore, they complete the process of refinement of the entire body of kedushah, from the soles of the feet to the head. Furthermore, they are praiseworthy in that HKB"Y gave them the strength and courage to endure the suffering and decrees of the galus, to accept them with ahavah, and to trust in the salvation of Hashem.

It appears that based on these words of the great Rabbi of Zidichov, his disciple, the great Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, zy"a, wrote in Divrei Chaim (Ki Sisa) lofty things about the generations of "ikvita d'mashichah." He explains that the people of Yisrael are part of a complete, intact body. Although there are within the community great tzaddikim, they cannot be complete without connecting with the rest of Yisrael. It is analogous to a human being without legs; this is not his ideal situation. Similarly, even tzaddikim are only complete as part of the entire body of Yisrael.

With this understanding, we can suggest that the holy Rashi intended to provide us with a marvelous “remez” inherent in the words “והיה עקב תשמעון את” “המשפטים האלה”. They allude to the lowly neshamos of “**ikvita d’mashichah**,” who are incapable of performing mitzvos with the exalted, more spiritual intents—“kavanot”—with which our earlier generation performed them. In the words of Rashi, all the mitzvos that they fulfill fall into the category of “מצוות קלות”—**simple, easy mitzvos**.

As Rashi expresses so eloquently: “אם המצוות קלות” **אדם** דש בעקביו תשמעון”—he is referring to **Adam HaRishon**, whose being contained all of the neshamos of Yisrael. Thus, included in his being were the last generations, the “**ikvita d’mashichah**,” who were “דש בעקביו”—they were located in the heels of **Adam HaRishon**; and all the mitzvos that they perform are categorized as “מצוות קלות **אדם** [הראשון] דש בעקביו”—simple mitzvos that **Adam HaRishon** tramples with his heels. Nevertheless, “והיה”—they provide HKB”H with simchah “**when they heed these statutes**.” As the Arizal told Rabbi Chaim Vital: **Even an extremely minor deed in this generation is equivalent to many major mitzvos of previous generations**.

Yaakov Avinu Grasped onto Eisav’s Heel to Extract the Neshamah of Rabbi Akiva

Continuing along this glorious path, we will now address the continuation of the Chiddushei HaRim’s remarks based on a precious teaching presented by the brilliant Gaon Chida, ztz”l, in Dvash L’Fee (70, 23) citing the Arizal’s Sefer HaGilgulim: **Rabbi Akiva was located in the heel of Eisav, because he was mired in the depths of the klipah. Yaakov elevated him from there with his hand. This is the implication of the passuk (Bereishis 25, 26): “And his hand was grasping onto Eisav’s heel.”**

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate on this idea by explaining why Yaakov Avinu made such an effort to extract the

neshamah of Rabbi Akiva from Eisav’s heel. In Likutei Torah (Vayechi), our master, the Arizal, teaches us that Rabbi Akiva was a “nitzotz”—a spark from the neshamah of—Yaakov Avinu. This is alluded to in the passuk (ibid. 49, 24): “**מידי אביר יעקב**”—**from the hands of the mighty power (Protector) of Yaakov**. Now, the two words **אביר יעקב** are an anagram of **רבי יעקב**. This explains the phenomenon of Yaakov’s birth. As he was emerging, he made a herculean effort to grab onto Eisav’s heel to retrieve the holy “nitzotz” of Rabbi Akiva that belonged to him. This is consistent with Rashbi’s statement (Kiddushin 2b): “משל לאדם”—**it is analogous to a man who lost an item. Who searches for whom? Clearly, the owner of the lost item searches for his item**. Similarly, here, Yaakov sought to return his lost nitzotz—the holy neshamah of Rabbi Akiva—to the domain of kedushah.

Now, consider how magnificently HKB”H orchestrated this event. We have learned in the Gemara that the three Batei Mikdash correlate with the three Avos. The first was in the merit of Avraham; the second was in the merit of Yitzchak; the third will be built in the merit of Yaakov. Hence, HKB”H arranged specifically for Yaakov Avinu to extract the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva from Eisav, as we will explain. Here is the pertinent passage in the Gemara (Pesachim 88a):

מאי דכתיב והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו, לנו ונעלה אל הר ה’ אל בית אלקי יעקב וגו’, אלקי יעקב ולא אלקי אברהם ויצחק? אלא לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר, שנאמר אשר יאמר היום בהר ה’ יראה, ולא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה, שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה, אלא כייעקב שקראו בית, שנאמר “ויקרא את שם המקום ההוא בית אל”. **What is the meaning of the passuk (Yeshayah 2, 3): “Many nations will go and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem, to the House (Temple) of the G-d of Yaakov, etc.’?” Why specifically the G-d of Yaakov and not the G-d of Avraham and Yitzchak? Not like Avraham, who called it a “mountain” (Bereishis 22, 14) . . . And not like Yitzchak, who called it a “field” (ibid. 24, 63) . . . Rather, it is like Yaakov, who called it (ibid. 28, 19) a “house” (“בית”) . . .**

Now, it is well known that there are four principal galuyos—namely, **Bavel, Madai, Yavan** (Greece), and **Edom** (Rome). Accordingly, the last and final galus that we are currently experiencing is the galus of Edom, associated with Eisav HaRasha. This is derived from the passuk (ibid. 25, 30): “וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂו אֶל יַעֲקֹב הִלְעִיטֵנִי נָא” —Eisav said to Yaakov, “Give me to taste, now, some of that very red stuff; for I am exhausted.” Therefore, he was named Edom (Red).

Seen from this perspective, we can begin to glimpse Hashem’s magnificent plan! He arranged for the neshamos of Yaakov and Eisav to be united as twins in the womb of Rivkah Imeinu. Their quarreling began in utero, as it is written (ibid. 22): “וַיִּתְרוּצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרֶב” —and the boys clashed inside her. Rashi comments: **When she would pass by doorways of places of Torah-study of Shem and Eiver, Yaakov would run and kick, trying to exit (the womb); when she would pass by doorways of places of idol-worship, Eisav would kick, trying to exit.**

Let us elaborate. Yaakov and Eisav embody the principle of (Koheles 7, 14): “זֶה לַעֲוֹמֶת זֶה עֲשָׂה” —G-d created the world with corresponding equal and opposite forces. So, whereas Eisav is the klipah of Edom and is the underlying force of the final galus, Yaakov, his counterpart, represents the force of kedushah preparing for the geulah from galus Edom and the building of the third Beis HaMikdash. Therefore, HKB”H joined Yaakov and Eisav in utero to teach us that they represent two opposite extremes—the force of kedushah versus the force of tumah.

The Future Geulah Will Come in the Merit of Rabbi Akiva’s Torah She’b’al Peh

Based on this introduction, we can now explain why HKB”H arranged for Yaakov Avinu to extract the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva from the heel of Eisav. We learn from the Megaleh Amukos on Va’etchanan (72, 78) that Rabbi Akiva is the lynchpin of Torah she’b’al

peh. This is evident from the following Gemara (Megillah 2a): “זו דברי רבי עקיבא סתימתא” —this is the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, the anonymous one. Rashi provides the following clarification: **All of the rulings stated anonymously represent the opinions of his students, as it is recorded in Sanhedrin (86a): The anonymous Mishnah is Rabbi Meir; the anonymous Tosefta is Rabbi Nechemiah; the anonymous Sifra is Rabbi Yehudah. All of the anonymous rulings accord with Rabbi Akiva.** In other words, all of Torah she’b’al peh is attributable to Rabbi Akiva; he arranged it and passed it on to his students.

The assertion of the Megaleh Amukos is substantiated by another teaching in the Gemara (Menachos 29b). Rabbi Akiva perceived and understood the secret meanings of the projections and crowns adorning the letters in a sefer Torah; even Moshe Rabeinu did not perceive their significance. This prompted Moshe Rabeinu to utter his astonishment: “רבוננו של עולם יש” —לך אדם כזה ואתה נותן תורה על ידי, אמר לו שתוק כך עלה במחשבה לפני —“Master of the Universe, You have someone like this, and You give the Torah through me?!” He said to him, “Quiet! This is part of My plan.”

Additionally, they expounded in the Gemara (B.B. 8a) on the passuk (Hoshea 8, 10): “גַּם כִּי יִתְּנוּ בְּגוֹיִם... עֵתָּה” —אֶקְבָּצֵם, פֶּסוּק זֶה בִּלְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִית נֹאמֵר, אִי תִּנּוּ כֹּלְהוּ עֵתָּה אֶקְבָּצֵם.” **“Although they pay tribute to the goyim, I will gather them in now.” ... Part of this passuk is stated in Aramaic.** It conveys the following message: **If they all study (Torah in exile among the goyim), I will gather them in now.** The term “יתנו” is the Aramaic equivalent of “ישנו”, meaning they study or teach. Also, the Matnos Kehunah points out that it is related to the word Mishnah; thus, this statement can be seen as referring specifically to the study of **Mishnah**. We also find the following statement in the Midrash (V.R. 7, 3): **All of the galuyos will be gathered in solely in the merit of the study of Mishnayos. What is the reason?** Because it says: “גַּם כִּי יִתְּנוּ בְּגוֹיִם עֵתָּה אֶקְבָּצֵם”.

It is fitting to introduce a fabulous “remez” that we have introduced many times before from the esteemed Rabbi Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, ztz”l, related to the passuk (Yeshayah 1, 27): “ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה”—**Tziyon will be redeemed through justice and those who return to her through righteousness.** The gematria of the phrase “ציון במשפט תפדה” equals “תלמוד” and “ושביה” whereas the gematria of the phrase “ושביה” equals “תלמוד בבלי”. In other words, in the merit of the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Talmud Bavli—the main components of Torah she’b’al peh—the geulah will come and we will return to Tziyon.

With great joy, we can now truly appreciate the wondrous ways of Hashem. He orchestrated for Yaakov Avinu to extract the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva from the heel of Eisav. As mentioned, the galus of Edom is related to the klipah of Eisav, and Yisrael will be redeemed from it in the merit of studying Torah she'b'al peh. Therefore, immediately, as he was being born, Yaakov Avinu cleverly **“grabbed the heel of Eisav with his hand”** to salvage the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva, the source and keystone of Torah she'b'al peh. In its merit, all of Yisrael will succeed in exiting the galus of Edom—the **“heel of Eisav”**—in the generation of “ikvita d’mashichah”!

Eisav's Guardian Angel Fought to Trip Up Yisrael with Minor Mitzvos

It is now fitting to provide another explanation for what Yaakov Avinu did as he was emerging into this world—grabbing onto Eisav’s heel to extract the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva. Let us refer to the following incident (Bereishis 32, 25): “ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו.” And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. Upon realizing that he could not overcome him, he struck a blow to the ball of Yaakov’s thighbone, and it became dislocated, as they wrestled. The Megaleh Amukos asserts that the focus of the struggle

between Eisav's guardian angel and Yaakov concerned the minor mitzvos that Jews do not take seriously.

As it relates to our current discussion, here is how the Megaleh Amukos interprets the passuk related to Yaakov's birth (ibid. 25, 26): "ואחרי כן יצא אחיו וידו" **"אוחזת בעקב עשו ויקרא שמו יעקב"**—**after that, his brother emerged with his hand grasping onto the heel of Eisav; and he called his name Yaakov.** Yaakov Avinu perceived that Eisav's ability and strategy to trap Yaakov's descendants in his evil web would be to begin by causing them to be remiss in performing the minor mitzvos. Since one aveirah leads to another—like a domino effect—little by little, they would come to commit more serious aveiros. Due to this perception, as soon as he was born, **Yaakov grabbed onto Eisav's heel**, so as not to be remiss and treat the mitzvos that people trample with their heels lightly.

Based on the insight of the Megaleh Amukos, we can interpret this momentous event in the following light: Eisav's guardian angel—who is the “samech-mem” that incessantly attempts to accuse Yisrael of wrongdoing—wrestled with Yaakov that night, so that he could accuse Yaakov and his descendants of being remiss in the performance of the minor mitzvos. If he was successful, he could then cast aspersions on Yaakov's character and argue that Yaakov was not worthy of fathering the holy people. However, **“he realized that he could not overcome him”**—that Yaakov's character was unassailable; Yaakov took care to observe all of Hashem's mitzvos meticulously—minor ones and major ones alike.

Therefore, the “samech-mem” was forced to adopt an alternative tactic: **“He struck a blow to the ball of Yaakov’s thighbone”**—he decided to attack the product of his loins, Yaakov’s progeny, Bnei Yisrael. He would cause them to be lax and remiss with regards to the simple, easy mitzvos **“that people trample with their heels.”** This is the deeper significance of the text further on (ibid. 32, 32): **“והוא צולע על ירכו”**—and

he was limping on his hip—Yaakov’s progeny had been affected. This is the gist of his sacred remarks with some additional clarification.

רבי עקיב"א versus רבי עקיב"ה

We can now conclude our explanation of the teaching of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"a. He explains why Rabbi Akiva's name is spelled in the Talmud Yerushalmi with a "hei"—"עקיבה"; whereas in the Talmud Bavli, it is spelled with an "aleph"—"עקיבא". Now, in the text related to the battle with Amalek, it is written (Shemos 17, 16): "כי יד על כס יה מלחמה לה" "בעמלק מדור דור". Rashi comments there that so long as Amalek exists, the sacred four-letter name Havaya remains incomplete; the letters ו"ה are missing.

Accordingly, when the third Beis HaMikdash will be built in the merit of Yaakov Avinu, the holy name Havaya will once again be complete with all four of its letters. This will be attributable to the "nitzotz" of Yaakov Avinu, Rabbi Akiva. This is alluded to by the words "אבי"ר יעק"ב, which are an anagram for "רבי עקיב"א. For this reason, we find two different spellings for the name Akiva in the Talmud. Spelled with a "hei," we have the letters "עקב ו"ה". This alludes to the fact that Yaakov Avinu elevated Rabbi Akiva from the heel (עק"ב) of Eisav to the two letters ו"ה of the name

Havaya. Spelled with an "aleph," we have the letters "עקב י"א", alluding to the letters ו"ה, whose numerical value is eleven, י"א.

We now have cause to rejoice, since we have shed some light on the profound insight of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"a. He teaches us that the opening words of this week's parsha "והיה עקב"—the word עק"ב with the letters ו"ה and ו"ה—allude to Rabbi Akiva spelled both with a "hei"—"עקיב"ה—and with an "aleph"—"עקיב"א. We know that Rabbi Akiva sacrificed his life to study Torah, and he passed away while uttering the word "echad" in the first passuk of Krias Shema. Thus, he paved the way for all Jews to withstand the trials and tribulations of the generations of "ikvita d'mashicha."

We can now begin to comprehend the incredible message concealed in the comment of Rashi on the words "והיה עקב תשמעון"—**if you heed the simple mitzvos that a person tramples with his heels.** As we have learned from the Chiddushei HaRim, these words allude to Rabbi Akiva in whose merit the name **Havaya** will be restored to its complete form at the time of the future geulah. The lesson for us is clear; we must fulfill all of the mitzvos properly, even the minor ones that a person tramples with his heels. This will rescue us from the heel of Eisav with the coming of the righteous redeemer—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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