Ratner Family Edition

פרקי דרבי אליעזר

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer

עם פירושי פר אחד, הרר"ל ואחרים

With the commentaries of
Par Echad, HaRadal, and others

With intralinear
English translation
and elucidation

Kesser Shem Tov
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Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer — The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer

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A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The Nature of this Work

This volume presents an original English elucidation and commentary, prepared through a combination of advanced language and translation technology and experienced human editorial oversight. The methods employed were carefully configured to adhere to Orthodox Jewish *hashkafa* and to preserve fidelity to the original Hebrew text, and portions of the work were reviewed by an experienced translator and editor of Torah literature. Even so, this edition does not carry the authority of a translation prepared and certified by a full team of rabbinic scholars.

Usage and Limitations

This translation is intended as a tool to help advanced learners access the depth of the original work. It is **not** intended to replace the original Hebrew source, nor to serve as a substitute for study under a qualified teacher.

Because the nuance of Torah study often transcends any single method of preparation, we ask the reader to keep two things in mind:

1. **Verification:** Any novel insight, ruling, or conclusion drawn from this translation should be checked against the original Hebrew.
2. **Consultation:** All practical questions or derived lessons should be discussed with and verified by a qualified rabbinic authority before being relied upon.

The goal of this edition is to make these teachings accessible to a wider audience, but the responsibility for accurate understanding and practical application remains with the reader.

וְהַמַּשְׂכִּילִים יַזְהִרוּ כְּזֹהַר הָרָקִיעַ וּמַצְדִּיקֵי הָרַבִּים כַּכּוֹכָבִים לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

(דניאל יב:ג)

And the wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who bring the multitudes to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

This work is dedicated to those who continue to learn and teach Torah. Without learners and teachers partnering to expand our knowledge and insight into Torah, our tradition would fade. Midrashic texts like *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* grip my mind and imagination. My family has been blessed to be involved with this project, and we are so thankful for the opportunity to participate in its publication and expanded reach with this new Hebrew-English edition with elucidation.

In Honor of our Children and their families,

Natan & Alexa Szegedi

Myles & Shira Ratner

Rabbi Mordechai & Brooke Blau

Benjy & Sela Aryeh

With love for Torah and Yiddishkeit, and a true fulfillment of
כשיפוצו מעינותיך חוצה.

Carol and Ian Ratner

כְּאִלּוּ לֹא בָּא לָעוֹלָם". **And if You do not extend Your patience with him, it would be fitting as though he had never come into the world."** *Par Echad* notes the careful phrasing: the Torah says "as though he never came," not "that he should not come," echoing the Talmudic principle "it would have been more comfortable for man had he not been created" (*Eruvin* 13b) — a judgment that can only be made retrospectively. **אָמַר לָהּ: "וְעַל חִנָּם נִקְרֵאתִי אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חֶסֶד?"** **He said to her: "And is it for nothing that I am called 'Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness'?"** God's response, the Radal explains, means that the divine attribute of *erech apayim* was not revealed in vain; it was emanated precisely so that it would be exercised in the world on behalf of fallible human beings. As stated in Chapter 3, God's names and attributes were established in anticipation of the creatures yet to be created. **הִתְחִיל מְקַבֵּץ עֲפָרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן מֵאַרְבַּע פִּנּוֹת הָעוֹלָם: אָדֹם, שָׁחֹר, לָבָן, יָרֹק.** **He began to gather the dust of Adam HaRishon from the four corners of the world: red, black, white, and green.** The word *pinos* (corners) is equivalent to "directions" (*ruchos*), as in Chapter 3 above; the *Tanchuma* (Pekudei §3) reads "from the four winds of the world." *Targum Yonasan* (*Bereishis* 2:7) similarly records that dust was gathered "from the place of the *Beis HaMikdash* and from the four winds of the world." **אָדֹם – זֶה הַדָּם, שָׁחֹר – אֵלּוּ הַקְּרָבִים, לָבָן – אֵלּוּ עֲצָמוֹת וְגִידִין, יָרֹק – זֶה הַגּוּף.** **Red — this is the blood; black — these are the innards; white — these are the bones and sinews; green — this is the body.** These four colors of earth correspond to four fundamental components of the human body. The Radal identifies them with the four humors and the four colors *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes*, and *malchus*. The "green" (*yarok*) denotes a yellowish complexion, like an egg yolk or wax — the natural hue of human skin, which blends redness and whiteness.[6]

וְלָמָּה כִּנֵּס אֶת עֲפָרוֹ מֵאַרְבַּע פִּנּוֹת הָעוֹלָם? **And why did He gather his dust from the four corners of the world?** **אֶלָּא אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁאִם יָבֹא אָדָם מִן הַמִּזְרָח לַמַּעֲרָב אוֹ מִן הַמַּעֲרָב לַמִּזְרָח וְיַגִּיעַ קִצּוֹ לְהִפָּטֵר מִן הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא תֹּאמַר הָאָרֶץ "אֵין עֲפַר גּוּפְךָ מִשֶּׁלִּי, חֲזֹר לַמָּקוֹם שֶׁנִּבְרֵאתָ".** **Rather, the Holy One said: If a man should come from east to west, or from west to east, and his time arrives to depart from the world, the earth shall not say, "The dust of your body is not of mine — return to the place where you were created."** The Radal explains that the concern is not merely burial, but that the earth might refuse to dissolve and reabsorb man's body. This decomposition is essential: it purifies the body of contamination and produces the *tarvad rekev* (spoonful of decay) that serves as leaven for the resurrection of the dead, as discussed in Chapter 34. **אֶלָּא לְלַמֶּדְךָ שֶׁבְּכָל מָקוֹם וּמָקוֹם שֶׁאָדָם הוֹלֵךְ וּבָא וְהִגִּיעַ קִצּוֹ לְהִפָּטֵר מִן הָעוֹלָם, מִשָּׁם הוּא עֲפַר גּוּפוֹ, לְשָׁם הוּא חוֹזֵר לֶעָפָר,** **Rather, this teaches you that in every place where a man goes and comes and his time arrives to depart from the world, from there is the dust of his body, and there it returns to dust.** Because Adam's dust was gathered from the four corners, every patch of earth on the globe contains the primal matter of man's body and will accept his remains. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כִּי עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל עָפָר תָּשׁוּב".** **As it says, "For you are dust, and to dust you will return" (*Bereishis* 3:19).** The verse addresses not merely the fact of mortality but the universality of burial: wherever man dies, the earth receives him as its own. *Bereishis Rabbah* 20

[6] Radal §§24–31; *Par Echad* §2. The consultation with the Torah parallels *Zohar* vol. 3, 35b (§24). The Torah's protest echoes *Iyov* 14:1 (§25). On *erech apayim*, cf. *Zohar*, Vayigash and Shemini (§26). On the four corners: cf. *Tanchuma parshas Pekudei* §3; *Targum Yonasan*, *Bereishis* 2:7; *Zohar* vol. 1, 205b (§§27–28). On the four colors and their bodily correspondences, see Radal §§29–31.

and Tanna d'Vei Eliyahu 31 also read this verse as alluding to the resurrection.[7]

וּשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר שָׁעוֹת הַיּוֹם. The day consisted of twelve hours. This tradition of the twelve hours of Adam's first day appears in *Sanhedrin* 38b, *Avos DeRabbi Noson*, ch. 1, and *Vayikra Rabbah* 29. The version here largely matches the Talmudic account but reverses the eighth and ninth hours. *Par Echad* observes that the twelve equal hours point to a creation in Tishrei, when day and night are balanced — consistent with Rabbi Eliezer's own view (*Rosh Hashana* 8a) that the world was created in Tishrei. **בְּשָׁעָה רִאשׁוֹנָה הוּצְבַּר עֲפָרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם, בַּשְּׁנִיָּה גִּבְּלוֹ, בַּשְּׁלִישִׁית רִקְמוֹ, בָּרְבִיעִית נִזְרְקָה בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה, בַּחֲמִישִׁית קָם עַל רַגְלָיו, בַּשִּׁשִּׁית קָרָא שֵׁמוֹת, In the first hour his dust was gathered, in the second it was kneaded, in the third it was shaped, in the fourth a soul was cast into him, in the fifth he stood on his feet, in the sixth he called the creatures by their names.** The term *giblo* ("kneaded") corresponds to "he was made into a shapeless mass (*golem*)" in the Talmud; *rikmo* ("he was shaped") echoes the language of *Tehillim* 139:15, "I was woven (*rukamti*) in the depths of the earth," referring to the formation of limbs and features. **בַּשְּׁבִיעִית נִזְדַּמְּנָה לוֹ חַוָּה, בַּשְּׁמִינִית נִצְטַוּוּ עַל פֵּרוֹת, בַּתְּשִׁיעִית עָלוּ לַמִּטָּה שְׁנַיִם וְיָרְדוּ אַרְבָּעָה, בָּעֲשִׂירִית עָבַר עַל צִוּוּיוֹ, בְּאַחַד עָשָׂר נִדּוֹן, בִּשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר נִתְגָּרֵשׁ, In the seventh hour Chavah was matched to him, in the eighth they were commanded concerning the fruits, in the ninth they went up to the bed as two and descended as four, in the tenth he transgressed His command, in the eleventh he was judged, in the twelfth he was expelled.** The phrase "went up as two and descended as four" means that Adam and Chavah begat Kayin and Hevel (or their twins) in that hour. In *Sanhedrin* 38b the eighth and ninth hours appear in reverse order; the *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*'s arrangement places the command before procreation. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם". As it says, "And He drove out the man" (*Bereishis* 3:24).** The expulsion from Gan Eden concluded the events of the sixth day. The entire sweep of Adam's creation, sin, judgment, and exile was encompassed within a single day of twelve hours — a parable, the Talmud says, for man's having been created last so that everything would be ready for him, like a guest who enters a prepared banquet.[8]

וְגִבֵּל גּוּשׁ עֲפָרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּמָקוֹם טָהוֹר בְּטַבּוּר הָאָרֶץ. And He kneaded the clump of dust of Adam HaRishon in a pure place, at the navel of the earth. The "navel of the earth" is Eretz Yisrael, as in *Yechezkel* 38:12, "those who dwell on the navel of the earth." The "pure place" is likewise Eretz Yisrael, which is called "pure" (*Mikvaos* 8:1). More precisely, the Radal identifies the site as the location of the future *Beis HaMikdash*, as stated explicitly in Chapter 12. *Targum Yonasan* on *Bereishis* 2:7 combines both traditions: "dust from the place of the *Beis HaMikdash* and from the four winds of the world." **רִקְמוֹ וְתִכְּנוֹ, וְרוּחַ נְשָׁמָה לֹא הָיְתָה בּוֹ. He shaped him and prepared him, but spirit and soul were not yet in him.** The Radal explains *tikno* ("prepared") either as a gloss on *rikmo* (shaped), or as a reference to *Bereishis* 2:7's *va'yitzer* — the "fashioning" and fine-tuning of the body on its foundation. Although the body was complete, it had no life, for the human soul was not drawn from the earth as with animals, but given directly

[7] Radal §§32–33. The dissolution of the body in the earth purifies it and prepares the *tarvad rekev* for the resurrection (§32; cf. Chapter 34). In *Tanchuma parshas Pekudei* §3, the parallel reads "and that dust shall receive him" (§33).

[8] Radal §34; *Par Echad* §3. The hour-by-hour account parallels *Sanhedrin* 38b, *Vayikra Rabbah* 29, and *Avos DeRabbi Noson*, ch. 1, with variant orderings (§34). The Radal suspects this list may be a later addition harmonized from the Talmudic source. *Par Echad* notes the twelve equal hours support Rabbi Eliezer's view that the world was created in Tishrei. In Chabad tradition, the variant reading of the eighth hour (the command) is noted for its bearing on astronomical *molad* calculations (*Igros Kodesh* vol. 2, §233).

from heaven. **מָה עָשָׂה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא? נָפַח בּוֹ רוּחַ נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים. What did the Holy One do? He breathed into him the spirit of the breath of life.** This corresponds to *Bereishis* 2:7, "And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The Radal notes that the word "cast" (*zarik*) used in the hour-by-hour account (paragraph 7) implies force and distance: although the verse says "He breathed into his nostrils," the soul was projected forcefully throughout all of Adam's limbs, as *Zechariah* 12:1 states, "He forms the spirit of man within him" — the spirit is bound up throughout the entire body.[9]

וְעָמַד אָדָם וְהָיָה מִסְתַּכֵּל כְּלַפֵּי מַעְלָה וּמַטָּה, וְרָאָה כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, וְהָיָה תָּמֵהַּ בְּלִבּוֹ. Adam stood and gazed upward and downward, and he saw all the creatures that the Holy One had created, and he was filled with wonder in his heart. Adam's immense stature (described below as spanning from east to west) enabled him to survey all of creation — both the celestial beings above and the terrestrial creatures below — from one end of the world to the other. **הִתְחִיל מְשַׁבֵּחַ וּמְפָאֵר לְיוֹצְרוֹ וְאָמַר: "מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ ה'!" He began to praise and glorify his Creator and said: "How many are Your works, Hashem!" (*Tehillim* 104:24).** The Radal notes that the preceding verse in *Tehillim* 104, "Man goes forth to his work," is read by *semuchim* (juxtaposition): when Adam "went forth" — that is, when his creation was complete — he fulfilled the very purpose of creation by declaring God's praise. In Chassidic teaching, Adam's recognition of the Creator through contemplating the upper and lower realms illustrates the perception of God as *memalei kol almin* — the divine vitality that fills and sustains all created beings. **קָם עַל רַגְלָיו וְהָיָה בְּתֹאַר כִּדְמוּת אֱלֹהִים, וְהָיְתָה קוֹמָתוֹ מִן הַמִּזְרָח לַמַּעֲרָב, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי". אָחוֹר – זֶה מַעֲרָב, וָקֶדֶם – זֶה קִדְמָה מִזְרָחָה. He stood on his feet and his appearance was in the likeness of God, and his height was from east to west, as it says, "You have formed me behind and before" (*Tehillim* 139:5). "Behind" — this is the west; "before" — this is eastward.** The Radal explains that "from east to west" is identical in measure to "from the earth to the sky," as stated in *Chagigah* 12a. His upright stature, unique among creatures, gave him the appearance of the ministering angels (*Chagigah* 16a), so that all beings perceived in him the "likeness of God." **וְרָאוּ אוֹתוֹ כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת וְנִתְיָרְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו, סְבוּרִין שֶׁהוּא בּוֹרְאָן, וּבָאוּ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹות לְפָנָיו. All the creatures saw him and were filled with fear of him; they supposed that he was their Creator, and they came to prostrate themselves before him.** The *Zohar* vol. 1, 221b; vol. 3, 107b states that when Adam stood on his feet, all creatures beheld him and trembled, because the radiance of the ten *sefiros* shone from his countenance.[10]

אָמַר לָהֶם אָדָם: "לָמָּה בָּאתֶם לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹות? בּוֹאוּ, אֲנִי וְאַתֶּם, וְנֵלֵךְ וְנִלְבֹּישׁ גְּאוּת וָעֹז, וְנַמְלִיךְ עָלֵינוּ לְמִי שֶׁבָּרָאָנוּ. Adam said to them: "Why have you come to prostrate yourselves? Come — I and you — let us go and clothe in majesty and might, and let us crown as King over us the One who created us. The Radal and the *Zohar* vol. 1, 221b connect this address to the

[9] Radal §§35–39. On the kneading: *Targum Yonasan* records the dust was mixed "with all the waters of the world" (§35); cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 14, where God kneads like a woman kneading dough. The "navel of the earth" = Eretz Yisrael / the *Beis HaMikdash* (§36; cf. Yerushalmi *Shabbos* 2:6). On the soul being cast into all the limbs: cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 14; *Koheles Rabbah* 8 (§39).

[10] Radal §§40–43. Adam's height from east to west equals from earth to sky (§40; cf. *Chagigah* 12a). His upright stature caused all creatures to fear him as one resembling the angels (§43; cf. *Chagigah* 16a). The *Zohar* vol. 1, 221b and *Tikkunei Zohar* 56 describe the divine radiance on his face. In Chassidic teaching, this contemplation of creation illustrates the level of *memalei kol almin* — the immanent divine light accessible through contemplation of the created world (*Toras Menachem* vol. 73, p. 250).

verse "Come, let us bow down and kneel; let us kneel before Hashem our Maker" (*Tehillim* 95:6). Rather than accepting their worship, Adam redirected it to God — the very act that, in Chassidic teaching, represents the paradigm for the annual coronation of God on Rosh Hashana. **וְאִם אֵין עַם מַמְלִיכִים אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ, הוּא מַמְלִיךְ עַצְמוֹ, וְאִם אֵין עַם מְקַלְּסִים אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ, הַמֶּלֶךְ מְקַלֵּס אֶת עַצְמוֹ". And if there are no people to crown the king, he crowns himself; and if there are no people to praise the king, the king praises himself."** Adam argues from the lesser to the greater: since God would reign even without subjects to proclaim Him, how much more so should all creatures join in acknowledging Him. The duty to crown God as King falls upon creation. **בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה פָּתַח אָדָם אֶת פִּיו וְעָנוּ כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת אַחֲרָיו, וְהִלְבִּישׁוּ גֵּאוּת וָעֹז וְהִמְלִיכוּ עֲלֵיהֶן לְיוֹצְרָן, וְאָמְרוּ: "ה' מָלָךְ גֵּאוּת לָבֵשׁ". In that hour Adam opened his mouth, and all the creatures answered after him; they clothed in majesty and might and crowned their Creator as King over them, and they said: "Hashem reigns, He is clothed in majesty" (*Tehillim* 93:1).** The Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 31a) identifies this psalm as the song of the sixth day, when God completed His work and reigned over creation. In Chassidic thought, Adam's proclamation drew all creatures into a state of *bitul* (self-nullification) before the divine light of *memalei kol almin*, binding creation to its Creator and establishing the world as a dwelling-place for the divine Presence. This act, renewed each Rosh Hashana, is the spiritual template by which every Jew accepts God's kingship and draws all of creation into that recognition.[11]

עֲשָׂרָה מְלָכִים מָשְׁלוּ מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ. Ten kings ruled from one end of the world to the other. A similar list appears in the *Targum Rishon* of Esther, with some variations. The Talmud (*Megillah* 11a) counts only three such universal monarchs; the Midrash here offers a broader enumeration spanning all of human history, from the beginning of creation to the messianic era and beyond. **מֶלֶךְ רִאשׁוֹן זֶה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁהוּא מוֹשֵׁל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ, וְעָלָה בְמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ לְהָקִים מְלָכִים עַל הָאָרֶץ, The first King is the Holy One who rules in the heavens and on the earth, and it arose in His thought to establish kings on the earth.** The Radal notes the use of the present tense *moshel* (rules) — even after delegating sovereignty to human beings, God's own kingship remains undiminished. At the very time of creation, God already conceived the plan to raise up these ten kings over the earth. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הוּא מְהַשְׁנֶא עִדָּנַיָּא וְזִמְנַיָּא, [מְהַעְדֵּה מַלְכִין וּמְהָקֵים מַלְכִין]". As it says, "He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings" (*Daniel* 2:21).** The verse in Daniel attributes the rise and fall of all earthly sovereigns to divine decree. *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1 derives from this same passage that God revealed the sweep of history from the very beginning of creation.[12]

הַשֵּׁנִי זֶה נִמְרוֹד שֶׁמָּשַׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁהָיוּ כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת יוֹשְׁבִין בְּמָקוֹם אֶחָד יְרֵאִים מִמֵּי הַמַּבּוּל, וְנִמְרוֹד הָיָה עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלֶךְ, The second is Nimrod, who ruled from one end of the world

[11] Radal §§44–46. The address echoes *Tehillim* 95:6, "Come, let us bow and kneel before Hashem our Maker" (§44; cf. *Zohar* vol. 1, 221b). *Tehillim* 93:1 is the song of the sixth day (§45; *Rosh Hashana* 31a). This passage is central to Chabad teaching on Rosh Hashana: Adam's coronation of God on the day of his creation is the paradigm for the annual acceptance of divine sovereignty. See *Igros Kodesh* vol. 1, §104; vol. 2, §§240, 249, 395; *Toras Menachem* vol. 6, p. 46 — each cites this passage as the foundational act of *hamlochus* (coronation), explaining that Adam's call elevated all creatures to recognize God's kingship and that each Jew renews this act every Rosh Hashana.

[12] Radal §§47–50. The Talmud in *Megillah* 11a counts only three universal monarchs and provides reasons for excluding the others (§47). The Radal explains why each king omitted from the Talmud's list does not qualify by the Talmud's strict criteria: Shlomo's kingship was not permanent; Koresh was merely boasting; Alexander's name appears only obliquely in Daniel; Nimrod had rivals; Mashiach has not yet reigned. Achashveirosh ruled only half the world.

to the other, for all the creatures were dwelling in one place, fearful of the waters of the Flood, and Nimrod was king over them. The Radal explains that because the survivors of the Flood all settled together in the plain of Shinar out of fear of another deluge, Nimrod became king over the entire populated world by default. It was under his leadership that they built the Tower, as described in Chapter 24. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַתְּהִי רֵאשִׁית מַמְלַכְתּוֹ בָּבֶל" וְכוּ' הַמֶּלֶךְ. As it says, "The beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (*Bereishis* 10:10), etc.** Bavel is Shinar, where all of humanity first resettled — and where Nimrod reigned over them as one people before the dispersion.

הַשְּׁלִישִׁי זֶה יוֹסֵף שֶׁמָּשַׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְכָל הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ מִצְרַיְמָה". **The third is Yosef, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "And all the earth came to Egypt" (*Bereishis* 41:57).** The Radal reads "all the earth" as encompassing the entire world, not merely the land of Egypt. **"בָּאוּ מִצְרַיִם" אֵין כְּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלָּא "מִצְרַיְמָה". "They came Egypt" is not written here, but rather "Egypt-ward."** The directional suffix (*hei ha'megiamah*) on "Mitzraymah" indicates that nations from outside Egypt traveled toward it — proving that the whole world came to Yosef, not merely the Egyptians themselves. **הָיוּ הַמַּס שֶׁלָּהֶם וּמִנְחוֹתֵיהֶם לִשְׁבֹּר בַּר מִיוֹסֵף, They brought their taxes and their tribute to buy grain from Yosef.** The Radal derives this from the parallel language used for Shlomo: "And all the earth sought... and each man brought his tribute" (*Melachim I* 10:24–25). Just as all nations brought tribute to Shlomo, so they brought tribute to Yosef alongside their purchases of grain. **שֶׁאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה הָיָה מִשְׁנֶה לַמֶּלֶךְ וְאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה מָלַךְ לְעַצְמוֹ, For forty years he was viceroy to the king, and for forty years he ruled on his own.** Yosef stood before Pharaoh at age thirty and died at one hundred ten — eighty years in power. The Radal divides these into two forty-year periods: the first as *mishneh* (viceroy), the second as sovereign in his own right, as independently attested in *Sefer HaYashar*. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ עַל מִצְרָיִם". As it says, "A new king arose over Egypt" (*Shemos* 1:8).** The verse says "arose" without first recording a prior king's death, implying that the "previous king" was Yosef himself. The "new king" who "did not know Yosef" succeeded Yosef's own reign, as the Talmud in *Sotah* 11a derives from the juxtaposition of this verse with the death of Yosef.[13]

הַמֶּלֶךְ הָרְבִיעִי זֶה שְׁלֹמֹה, שֶׁמָּשַׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וּשְׁלֹמֹה הָיָה מוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל הַמַּמְלָכוֹת", **The fourth king is Shlomo, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "And Shlomo ruled over all the kingdoms" (*Melachim I* 4:21).** While Shlomo exercised direct dominion over the territory from the River Euphrates to the border of Egypt, the Radal explains that the surrounding kingdoms also submitted tribute to him, placing him in effective sovereignty over the whole earth. **וְאוֹמֵר: "וְהֵמָּה מְבִיאִים אִישׁ מִנְחָתוֹ". And it says: "And each of them brought his tribute" (*Melachim I* 10:25).** The second verse confirms that all the earth — not merely the territories under Shlomo's direct rule — sent tribute, just as subjects bring gifts to their sovereign.[14]

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[13] Radal §§52–54; *Par Echad* §4. The reading of "all the earth" as universal follows *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*'s usage for Shlomo as well (§51–52). The derivation of Yosef's independent kingship rests on *Tehillim* 105:21–22 (§54) and the juxtaposition in *Shemos* 1:6–8 (cf. *Sotah* 11a). *Par Echad* acknowledges the difficulty of this interpretation, since all Egyptian kings bore the title "Pharaoh" and the monarchy was hereditary.

[14] Radal §§54–55. The first verse describes Shlomo's direct rule over a defined territory; the second shows that all other kingdoms also brought tribute. The Radal further connects this to *Tehillim* 72:8, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea," reading *yam* as the Dead Sea in the east and the Mediterranean in the west, and "from the river to the ends of the earth" as from the Euphrates southward.

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחֲמִישִׁי זֶה אַחְאָב, שֶׁמָּלַךְ מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "חַי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִם יֵשׁ גּוֹי וּמַמְלָכָה" וְכוּ'. **The fifth king is Achav, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "As Hashem your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom..." (*Melachim I* 18:10), etc.** Ovadiah's words to Eliyahu prove that Achav sent emissaries to every nation and kingdom demanding they swear under oath that Eliyahu was not among them — implying that he exercised authority over them all. **וְהָיוּ כָּל שָׂרֵי אִפַּרְכְיוֹת כְּבוּשִׁים תַּחְתָּיו, וְהָיוּ מְשַׁלְּחִין וּמְבִיאִין הַמַּס שֶׁלָּהֶם וּמִנְחוֹתֵיהֶם לְאַחְאָב.** **And all the provincial governors were subject to him, and they sent and brought their taxes and their tribute to Achav.** **וְהָיוּ כָּל שָׂרֵי אִפַּרְכְיוֹת שֶׁל עוֹלָם אֵינָם אֶלָּא מָאתַיִם וּשְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּפְקֹד אֶת נַעֲרֵי שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת וַיִּהְיוּ מָאתַיִם שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים".** **And the total number of provincial governors in the entire world was only two hundred and thirty-two, as it says, "He mustered the young men of the provincial governors, and they numbered two hundred and thirty-two" (*Melachim I* 20:15).** This number establishes the total count of the world's provinces in Achav's time. In *Esther Rabbah*, the number is given as 252; the Talmud in Megillah counts only 127 in Achashveirosh's era.[15]

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַשִּׁשִּׁי זֶה נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר, שֶׁמָּשַׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ. וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שֶׁמָּשַׁל אֲפִלּוּ עַל חַיּוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְלֹא הָיוּ יְכוֹלִין לִפְתֹּחַ אֶת פִּיהֶם חוּץ מֵרְשׁוּתוֹ שֶׁל נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר, **The sixth king is Nevuchadnetzar, who ruled from one end of the world to the other. Moreover, he ruled even over the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and they could not open their mouths without the permission of Nevuchadnetzar.** *Par Echad* asks what distinction this confers over Shlomo, who also commanded animals and employed the *shamir* worm. Shlomo's dominion over creatures derived from his wisdom; Nevuchadnetzar's dominion was so absolute that no bird could even open its beak without his leave — a far more total form of control, which explains why his ultimate humiliation was to dwell among the beasts (*Daniel* 4:29). **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וּבְכָל דִּי דָיְרִין בְּנֵי אֲנָשָׁא חֵיַת בָּרָא וְעוֹף שְׁמַיָּא יְהַב בִּידָךְ" וְכוּ'.** **As it says, "And wherever people dwell, He has given into your hand the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven" (*Daniel* 2:38), etc.** The verse explicitly extends Nevuchadnetzar's dominion beyond mankind to encompass the animal kingdom.[16]

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַשְּׁבִיעִי זֶה כּוֹרֶשׁ שֶׁמָּשַׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כֹּה אָמַר מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס". **The seventh king is Koresh, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "This is what the king of Persia says" (*Divrei HaYamim II* 36:23).** The full verse reads: "All the kingdoms of the earth has Hashem, the God of heaven, given me." The Talmud (*Megillah* 11a) suggests Koresh was merely boasting, but *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* takes his claim at face value. **וַאֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ מָלַךְ בְּחֶצְיוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם. וַהֲלֹא אֵין חֶצְיוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם אֶלָּא מֵאָה וְשֵׁשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה אִפַּרְכְיוֹת,** **Achashveirosh ruled over half the world. Is not half the world only one hundred and sixteen provinces?** Based on the total of 232 provinces established in Achav's time, half the world comprises 116. Achashveirosh therefore did not qualify for the list of universal monarchs. **וּבִזְכוּתָהּ שֶׁל**

[15] Radal §§56–57. *Esther Rabbah* gives 252 provinces; one opinion there explains that Ben Hadad conquered the additional 20 from Achav (§57). The Talmud (*Megillah* 11a) holds that only 127 provinces existed in Achashveirosh's time.

[16] Radal §58; *Par Echad* §6. The Radal notes that the phrase about birds being unable to open their mouths echoes *Yeshayahu* 10:14, which actually describes Sancheiriv; the Midrash applies the image analogically to Nevuchadnetzar. *Par Echad* explains that Shlomo's command of animals operated through wisdom, whereas Nevuchadnetzar's amounted to absolute tyrannical control.

אֶסְתֵּר נִתּוֹסְפוּ אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה אַפַּרְכְיוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הַמּוֹלֵךְ מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמְאָה מְדִינָה".
And in the merit of Esther, eleven provinces were added, as it says, "He reigned from Hodu to Kush, over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces" (*Esther* 1:1). The 127 provinces of Achashveirosh's empire represent the original 116 (half the world) plus 11 added through Esther's merit. This is why Achashveirosh is not counted among the ten kings: he never ruled the whole world, only slightly more than half.[17]

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַשְּׁמִינִי הוּא אֲלֶכְסַנְדֶּר מוּקְדוֹן שֶׁמָּלַךְ מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַאֲנִי הָיִיתִי מֵבִין וְהִנֵּה צְפִיר הָעִזִּים בָּא מִן הַמַּעֲרָב עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ".
The eighth king is Alexander of Macedon, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "As I was watching, a he-goat came from the west over the face of all the earth" (*Daniel* 8:5). "עַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ" אֵין כְּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלָּא "עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ".
"Over the face of the earth" is not written here, but rather "over the face of all the earth." The word "all" (*kol*) signifies that Alexander's dominion extended over the entire earth, not merely a portion of it. **וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שֶׁרָצָה לַעֲלוֹת לַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֵידַע מַה בַּשָּׁמַיִם, וְלֵירֵד בַּתְּהוֹמוֹת וְלֵידַע מַה שֶּׁבַּתְּהוֹמוֹת. וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שֶׁבִּקֵּשׁ לֵילֵךְ לִקְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ וְלֵידַע מַה שֶּׁבִּקְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ.**
Moreover, he wished to ascend to the heavens and know what is in the heavens, and to descend to the depths and know what is in the depths. Moreover, he sought to go to the ends of the earth and know what is at the ends of the earth. The Radal interprets "ascending to heaven" not literally but as soaring high into the air, as in the Yerushalmi (*Avodah Zarah* 3:1), which relates that Alexander ascended until he saw the world as a sphere and the sea as a bowl. Similarly, "descending to the depths" refers to plunging into the ocean's abyss. **וְחָצָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת מַלְכוּתוֹ לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת הָעוֹלָם.**
And the Holy One divided his kingdom into the four winds of the world. After Alexander's death, God divided his empire among four successors, as prophesied: "When he arises, his kingdom will be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven" (*Daniel* 11:4). The *Yalkut* reads "God divided his kingdom," emphasizing that this was a divine act, not Alexander's will.[18]

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַתְּשִׁיעִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ, שֶׁהוּא עָתִיד לִמְשֹׁל מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְכָתוּב אַחֵר אוֹמֵר: "וְיֵרְדְּ מִיָּם עַד יָם", "וְאַבְנָא דִי מְחַת לְצַלְמָא הֲוָת לְטוּר רַב וּמְלָאת כָּל אַרְעָא".
The ninth king is Melech HaMashiach, who is destined to rule from one end of the world to the other. As it says, "He will rule from sea to sea" (*Tehillim* 72:8). And another verse says: "The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (*Daniel* 2:35). Two scriptural proofs are adduced: the first from the messianic psalm of Shlomo, the second from Nevuchadnetzar's dream as interpreted by Daniel, where the stone that shatters the statue of the four kingdoms grows to fill the earth — symbolizing the universal dominion of Mashiach's kingdom.

הַמֶּלֶךְ הָעֲשִׂירִי חוֹזֶרֶת הַמְּלוּכָה לִבְעָלֶיהָ. מִי שֶׁהָיָה רִאשׁוֹן מֶלֶךְ הוּא יִהְיֶה אַחֲרוֹן מֶלֶךְ,
The tenth King — sovereignty returns to its Owner. He who was the first King will be the last King. The circle closes: God, who was the first King before all earthly monarchs, will be the last —

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[17] Radal §§55–59; *Par Echad* §5. The Radal suspects the word "vahalo" ("is it not") may be a scribal error; "v'eileh" ("and these are") fits better (§55). The calculation 232 ÷ 2 = 116 + 11 = 127 follows *Esther Rabbah* (§56). *Par Echad* notes this does not align with *Megillah* 11a's reckoning.

[18] Radal §§60–63. Alexander's aerial ascent is attested in Yerushalmi *Avodah Zarah* 3:1 (§61). On the phrase "over the face of," the Radal suggests *al penei* may be read as "in the air above" (§61). The division of the kingdom alludes to *Daniel* 11:4; the *Yalkut* reads "God divided" (§62).

when human sovereignty is superseded by the manifest kingship of heaven. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וַאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן וּמִבַּלְעָדַי אֵין אֱלֹהִים", As it says, "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me" (*Yeshayahu* 44:6).** The verse's opening, "Thus says Hashem, the King," establishes the context: God speaks as King — first and last in His sovereignty over the world. **וְכָתוּב: "וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ". And it is written: "Hashem will be King over all the earth" (*Zechariah* 14:9).** Not over Yisrael alone, as in the earlier verse from Yeshayahu, but over all the nations — universal kingship. **וְתַחֲזֹר הַמְלוּכָה לְיוֹרְשֶׁיהָ, וְאָז הָאֱלִילִים כָּלִיל יַחֲלֹף וְנִשְׂגָּב ה' לְבַדּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא. And sovereignty shall return to its heirs, and then "The idols will utterly pass away, and Hashem alone will be exalted on that day" (*Yeshayahu* 2:18, 17).** "Its heirs" are all the inhabitants of the world, who will acknowledge God's kingship. When every form of idol-worship vanishes, God alone will be recognized as sovereign. **וְיִרְעֶה אֶת צֹאנוֹ וְיַרְבִּיצֵם, כְּדִכְתִיב: "אֲנִי אֶרְעֶה צֹאנִי וַאֲנִי אַרְבִּיצֵם". And He will shepherd His flock and cause them to lie down, as it is written: "I will feed My flock and I will let them lie down" (*Yechezkel* 34:15).** God Himself, not through any human intermediary, will tend to Yisrael and to all of humanity in the ultimate era. **וְנִרְאֶה עַיִן בְּעַיִן כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: "עַיִן בְּעַיִן יִרְאוּ בְּשׁוּב ה' צִיּוֹן". אָמֵן. And it shall be seen eye to eye, as it is written: "Eye to eye they will see when Hashem returns to Tzion" (*Yeshayahu* 52:8). Amen.** In that time the divine Presence will be perceived directly and universally — "eye to eye" — not through prophetic vision or mediated revelation, but with the immediacy of sight. The chapter closes with "Amen," affirming the certainty of this eschatological promise.[19]

[19] Radal §§65–68. The Radal notes that "first and last" in *Yeshayahu* 44:6 explicitly refers to God's kingship (§65). "The sovereignty returns to its heirs" (*yorsheiha*) refers to all peoples who will accept divine kingship (§68). The Radal also discusses the relationship between Mashiach's reign (the ninth king) and God's direct sovereignty (the tenth): once Yisrael fully returns to God, the Mashiach will be designated *nasi* (prince) while God Himself reigns as King (§64; cf. *Yechezkel* 34:24, 37:25, 44–46).

Chapter 12

Adam in Gan Eden: his placement, the creation of Chavah, and the first wedding

Summary

Chapter 12 of *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* narrates the sequence of events following Adam's creation on the sixth day: his placement in Gan Eden, the institution of sleep, the creation of Chavah, and the wedding celebrations that accompanied the first couple's union.

Narrative: The chapter opens by identifying the site of Adam's formation as the *Beis HaMikdash*, from which God transported him to His "palace" — Gan Eden. The Midrash interrogates the meaning of "to work it and to guard it" (*Bereishis* 2:15), dismissing all physical labor in the Garden and concluding that these terms refer to Torah study and the keeping of commandments. God then observes that Adam's solitary state could lead the creatures to mistake him for their Creator, prompting the need for a mate. The earth, hearing that mankind will multiply, trembles in fear of being unable to sustain them. God reassures the earth by establishing a division of labor: by night He sustains man through the gift of sleep; by day the earth provides food. The chapter then recounts the creation of Chavah from Adam's bone and heart-flesh, the naming of *ish* and *ishah* — each containing the letters of fire (*eish*) tempered only by the *yod* and *hei* of God's Name — and culminates in the first wedding: ten canopies of precious stones and gold, angelic musicians, and God Himself pronouncing the blessings.

Torah Basis: The chapter draws principally upon *Bereishis* 2:7–25, focusing on 2:15 ("to work it and to guard it"), 2:18 ("It is not good for man to be alone"), and 2:21–23 (the creation of Chavah), with the wedding blessings grounded in 1:28. Supporting verses are drawn from *Yechezkel* 28:13 (the precious stones of Eden), *Hoshea* 6:6 ("loving-kindness I desire, not sacrifice"), *Tehillim* 91:11 (angelic guardianship), and *Mishlei* 3:18 ("She is a tree of life").

aggadic Elaboration: The Midrash substantially expands the biblical narrative: it identifies Adam's origin as the *Beis HaMikdash*; reinterprets "working and guarding" as Torah and *mitzvos*; dramatizes the earth's anxiety about feeding humanity; introduces the institution of sleep as a covenantal mechanism for sustaining mankind; transforms the creation of Chavah into a wedding narrative modeled on Jewish custom — complete with canopies, attendants, and blessings; and embeds the teaching that God's Name dwells between husband and wife only when they follow His ways.

Thematic Significance: The chapter establishes foundational principles: that mankind originates at the intersection of the holy and the earthly; that human purpose is Torah and *mitzvos*; that marriage is a divine institution in which God's Name itself dwells between the couple; and that *gemilus chasadim* — exemplified first by God Himself at the wedding of Adam and Chavah — surpasses even the sacrificial service as the pillar upon which the world stands.

חִבָּה יִתְרָה חִבַּב הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, שֶׁבְּרָאוֹ בְּמָקוֹם טָהוֹר, בְּמָקוֹם בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְהִכְנִיסוֹ לְאַפַּדְנוֹ. **With an exceeding love did the Holy One love Adam HaRishon, for He created him in a pure place, in the place of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and brought him into His palace.** The Radal explains that this "exceeding love" surpassed what God showed all other creatures, which were brought forth by impersonal commands — "let the waters swarm," "let the earth bring forth" — drawing upon water and earth everywhere. Adam alone was fashioned from one particular, holy site. The dual description "pure" (*tahor*) and "holy" (*kadosh*) distinguishes two concentric zones of sanctity: *tahor* encompasses all of Eretz Yisrael, while *kadosh* designates the *Beis HaMikdash* in particular. The term *apadano* (palace) casts Gan Eden not as a mere orchard but as a royal residence — a *palatin* — with chambers for habitation, echoing the usage in *Daniel* 11:45: "he shall plant the tents of his *apadano*." שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן". מֵאֵי זֶה מָקוֹם לְקָחוֹ? מִבֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְהִכְנִיסוֹ לְפַלְטִין שֶׁלּוֹ – זֶה גַּן עֵדֶן. **As it says, "Hashem**

Elokim took the man and placed him in Gan Eden" (*Bereishis* 2:15). From which place did He take him? From the *Beis HaMikdash*, and He brought him into His palace — this is Gan Eden. The word *vayikach* ("and He took") implies a transfer from one location to another: God took Adam from the site where He had formed him — the *Beis HaMikdash* — and conveyed him to Gan Eden. The word *vayannicheihu* ("and He placed him") connotes rest and ease, indicating that Adam's placement in the Garden was an act of benevolent repose, not an assignment to labor. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ". וְשָׁמָּא תֹּאמַר כִּי יֵשׁ מְלָאכָה בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְפַתֵּחַ וּלְשַׁדֵּד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה. וְלֹא כָל הָאִילָנוֹת נִצְמָחִין מֵאֲלֵיהֶן? As it says, "He placed him in Gan Eden to work it and to guard it" (*Bereishis* 2:15). Perhaps you will say there was work in Gan Eden — to plow and to harrow the ground. But did not all the trees grow on their own?** The verbs *lefateach* (to plow) and *lesaded* (to harrow) echo the agricultural language of *Yeshayahu* 28:24. The Midrash dismisses such labor because the Torah states not only that God planted Gan Eden (*Bereishis* 2:8) but that He "caused to grow from the ground every tree" (*Bereishis* 2:9), endowing them with a perpetual power of growth. The present-tense form *nitzmakin* ("are growing") — rather than a past tense — indicates an ongoing, self-sustaining capacity.[1]

אוֹ שֶׁמָּא תֹּאמַר: יֵשׁ מְלָאכָה בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת הַגָּן? וַהֲלֹא כְּבָר נָהָר יוֹצֵא מֵעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת הַגָּן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְנָהָר יֹצֵא מֵעֵדֶן" וְכוּ'. Or perhaps you will say: there was work in Gan Eden — to water the garden? But a river already goes out from Eden to water the garden, as it says, "A river goes out from Eden" (*Bereishis* 2:10) and so forth. The present tense *yotzei* ("goes out") indicates that the river flowed continuously of its own accord, drawing itself from tree to tree without human intervention. Neither plowing, harrowing, nor irrigation was required in Gan Eden — eliminating every form of physical labor as the meaning of "to work it."[2]

וּמַה הַלָּשׁוֹן הַזֶּה "לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ"? לֹא אָמַר "לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ" אֶלָּא לַעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתֶיהָ What then is the meaning of this expression "to work it and to guard it"? It says "to work it and to guard it" only in the sense of occupying oneself with the words of Torah and guarding all of its commandments. Having eliminated all physical labor, the Midrash concludes that *le'ovdah* (to work it) refers to Torah study, and *uleshomrah* (to guard it) to keeping the *mitzvos*. *Targum Yonasan* renders this verse: "to labor in the Torah and to guard its commandments." The *Sifrei* (Eikev §41) likewise interprets *le'ovdah* as Torah study and *uleshomrah* as the commandments. **שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "לִשְׁמֹר אֶת דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים", וְאֵין עֵץ חַיִּים אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ". As it says, "To guard the way of the Tree of Life" (*Bereishis* 3:24), and the Tree of Life is nothing other than the Torah, as it says, "She is a tree of life to those who hold fast to her" (*Mishlei* 3:18).** The prooftext is drawn from the end of the Gan Eden narrative, where the *keruvim* and the flaming sword are set "to guard the way of the Tree of Life" (*Bereishis* 3:24). The Midrash connects this later verse to the earlier command "to work it and to guard it," reading both instances of "guarding" as referring to Torah and its *mitzvos*. The identification of the Tree of Life with the Torah is a widespread rabbinic equation.[3]

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1 Radal §§1–8; cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 14:8, which derives Adam's creation "from the place of his atonement" from "You shall make for Me an altar of earth" (*Shemos* 20:21); *Bereishis Rabbah* 13:1, which distinguishes Gan Eden's self-growing vegetation from the inhabited world's dependence on rain. *Par Echad* §1 notes the apparent tension with Chapter 11, where Adam's dust was gathered from the four corners of the earth; the reconciliation is that the dust was gathered broadly but the forming took place at the site of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

2 Radal §9; cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 16, which describes the river as dividing into four heads.

3 Radal §10; cf. *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabbah* 1:1; *Berachos* 32b; *Arachin* 15b.