



Skin Afflictions Result from a Failure to Enjoy Torah-Study the Failure to Transform ענ"ג to נג"ע

This Shabbas, we will read a double-parsha—**Sazria-Metzora**. These parshas are usually read together in non-leap years. Both parshas deal with the topic of skin lesions. Hence, it is fitting for us to focus in this essay on the condition known as “tzara’as.” In parshas Sazria, the Torah informs us of the tumah associated with skin-afflictions (Vayikra 13, 1): **“וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר, אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד מבניו הכהנים.”** **If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a “se’eis,” or a “sapachas,” or a “Baheres,” and it will become a “tzara’as” affliction on the skin of his flesh, he shall be brought to Aharon HaKohen or to one of his sons the kohanim.** Whereas parshas Metzora teaches us the purification process for these afflictions (ibid. 14, 1): **“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן—Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: This shall be the law of the “metzora” on the day of his purification; he shall be brought to the kohen.**

Notwithstanding, since the churban of the Beis HaMikdash, the tumah of skin-afflictions has no practical significance. Here is a statement found in the Midrash Lekach Tov (Sazria): **“אמר רבי יוחנן מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין טהרה ממת ואין טומאה ממצורע”—Rabbi Yochanan teaches us that corpse-tumah and “tzara’as” do not exist today; hence, the purification process—“taharah”—is not practiced. Nevertheless, these are mitzvos taught by the Torah, and every Jew must strive to understand the message and lesson they are meant to convey. In other words, what is the spiritual significance of “tzara’as-lesions”? And what is the spiritual process required to purify ourselves from them?**

Failure to Fulfill the Mitzvah of “Oneg Shabbas” Transforms the Word ענ"ג into נג"ע

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a teaching from Chazal in the Midrash (V.R. 15, 4): **Upon hearing the passage dealing with skin-afflictions, Yisrael became terrified. Moshe consoled them, “Do not be afraid! These are meant for the nations of the world, but you are intended to eat, drink, and be merry!”** The commentaries go to great lengths to explain Moshe Rabeinu’s response. Undoubtedly, the passage of the holy Torah dealing with afflictions was given only to Yisrael; it was not given to the nations of the world. So, how could Moshe say that this was **“meant for the nations of the world”?**

In Pri Tzaddik (Sazria 1), the great Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen provides an explanation based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh in the Raiya Mehemna (Eikev 273a). A **“נגע”**, the affliction of “tzara’as,” comes as a punishment for not fulfilling the mitzvah of **“ענג”** Shabbas by eating three meals. The mitzvah to eat three meals on Shabbas Kodesh is derived from the passuk (Bereishis 2,10): **“ונגהר יוצא מעדן להשקות את הגן—a river emerges from Eden to irrigate the garden.** The term **“ענג”** is an acronym for the three entities mentioned in this passuk: **ע'דן נ'הר ג'ן**. The Rabbis instituted the **“oneg”** of the three Shabbas meals to correspond to these three entities. One who fails to fulfill the mitzvah of **“ענג”** Shabbas—corresponding to the three entities of **ע'דן נ'הר ג'ן**—causes the **ענ"ג** to be transformed into the **נג"ע** of “tzara’as.”

With this understanding, let us now interpret the Midrash: **When Yisrael heard the passage of the Torah dealing**

with afflictions, they became terrified, because they did not comprehend how they could transform the configuration of נג"ע into the configuration of ענ"ג. Hence, Moshe consoled them as follows: **"Do not be afraid! These are meant for the nations of the world, but you are intended to eat, drink, and be merry!"** In other words, the goyim are incapable of transforming the configuration of נג"ע into the configuration of ענ"ג via the mitzvah of "oneg Shabbas." For, we have learned in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 58b): "גוי ששבת חייב מיתה"—**a goy who observes Shabbas deserves the death penalty. "But you are intended to eat, drink, and be merry!"** You, Yisrael, are supposed to derive pleasure and be joyful on Shabbas by consuming three festive meals. Thus, you will succeed in transforming the configuration of נג"ע into the configuration of ענ"ג. This is his sacred insight.

In the sefer Shem Ephraim (Sazria), the brilliant Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margaliot, ztz"l, presents a fascinating "remez" in the name of the divine kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Koritz, zy"a, the author of Bris Kehunas Olam, regarding the passuk (Vayikra 13, 55): "וראה הכהן אחרי הוכבס"—**the kohen shall examine it after the affliction has been washed, and behold, the affliction has not changed its color and the affliction has not spread, it is impure.**

In his own sacred way, he interprets the passuk based on a teaching in Sefer Yetzirah (2, 4): "אין בטובה למעלה מענג ואין"—**there is nothing good superior to "oneg" and there is nothing bad inferior to "nega."** Let us explain. The words נג"ע and ענ"ג are combinations of the same letters; they are anagrams. Now, when a person serves Hashem, it is an "oneg"—ענ"ג; when he sins, however, it is a "nega"—נג"ע. Then, it is incumbent upon the sinner to perform complete, sincere teshuvah in order to transform the letters of נג"ע back into the favorable anagram ענ"ג.

Note that the difference between the two anagrams is the position of the letter "ayin." In the word "ינגע", the "ayin" appears at the end of the word; in the word "ענג", the "ayin" appears at the beginning of the word. This then is the allusion inherent in the passuk: "וראה הכהן אחרי הכבס את הנגע"—the kohen will examine the affliction after the sinner has performed teshuvah to cleanse himself of the affliction; "והנה לא הפך הנגע"—"and if he finds that the position of the "ayin" has not

changed; it remains at the end of the word "ינגע"; it has not moved to the beginning of the word; this is a clear-cut sign that he is still tamei—"טמא הוא".

"From there it splits into four primary divisions" the Four Components of פרד"ס in the Merit of Shabbas

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated from seventy different vantage points, I would like to embellish the holy words of the Raiya Mehemna—which is the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu that descended to reveal the mystical, esoteric meanings of the Torah to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his entourage. The Raiya Mehemna explains that the ע'דן נ'הר ג'ן allude to the three Shabbas seudot. But then how are we to interpret the remainder of the passuk: "ומשם יפרד"—**from there it splits into four primary divisions (headwaters).** What four divisions emanate from the kedushah of Shabbas?

To explain the matter, we will refer to the Gemara (Shabbas 87a). On the Wednesday prior to Matan Torah, HKB"H said to Moshe Rabeinu (Shemos 19, 10): "לך אל העם וקדשתם היום ומחר... ויהיו נכונים ליום השלישי כי ביום השלישי ירד ה' לעיני כל העם על הר סיני"—**go to the people and prepare them today and tomorrow. . . Let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day Hashem shall descend before the eyes of all the people onto Har Sinai.** Accordingly, the Torah was supposed to be given to Yisrael on the third day, which was Friday. As we know, however, Moshe Rabeinu added a day of his own accord, an extra day of preparation. This is evident from the passuk (ibid. 15): "ויאמר אל העם היו נכונים לשלשת ימים אל תגשו אל אשה"—**he said to the people, "Be ready for a three-day period; do not approach a woman."** We are taught that HKB"H acquiesced to Moshe's decision and did not descend onto Har Sinai until Shabbas, after the third day of preparation.

To explain Moshe's rationale for adding a day, so that the Torah would be given to Yisrael on Shabbas, let us introduce the words of the Tur (O.C. 290): **The Torah laments to HKB"H, "Master of the Universe, when Yisrael enter the land, this one will hurry to his vineyard and this one will hurry to his field. What will become of me?" He responds to her, "I have a mate that I have chosen to be your partner; its name is Shabbas. On it, they neglect their work and are free to occupy themselves with you."**

This deserves further clarification. Clearly, it does not suffice to only study Torah on Shabbas; we must study Torah every day, even on the weekdays. In fact, the Gemara (Shabbas 31a) teaches us that when a person is judged after he passes away, he is asked: "קבעת עתים לתורה"—**did you designate set times for Torah-study?** Thus, HKB"YH appeased the Torah by telling her that Yisrael would study Torah on Shabbas after entering the land.

In the Merit of Studying Torah on Shabbas We Are Privileged to Study Torah throughout the Week

It appears that we can explain the matter based on that which is written in the Aseres HaDibros (ibid. 20, 8): "זכור את יום השבת לקדשו"—**remember the Shabbas day to sanctify it.** The Ramban comments in the name of the Mechilta that it is a mitzvas-asei to mention the day of Shabbas on every one of the weekdays. Thus, it will never be confused or replaced by any of the other days:

In line with the plain meaning of Scripture, the Rabbis have said that it is a mitzvah for us to always remember the Shabbas every day, so that we should neither forget it nor confuse it with the other days. By always remembering it, it will remind us of the creation at all times; and we will acknowledge at all times that the universe has a Creator, and that He commanded us regarding this sign (the Shabbas), as He has said: "For it is a sign between Me and you." This is a fundamental principle in the belief in G-d.

The Arizal (Sha'ar HaKavanos) teaches us that at the conclusion of Shacharis every day, when a Jew recites the psalm of the day—"today is the first day of the Shabbas," "today is the second day of the Shabbas," etc.—he should have in mind that he is fulfilling the mitzvas aseis of: "זכור את יום השבת לקדשו". By doing this, he extends the kedushah of Shabbas to all of the following six weekdays. This is the implication of the statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 88a): "כל ברכאן דלעילא ותתא ביומא שביעאה תליין"—**all heavenly (spiritual) and earthly (material) Berachos depend on the seventh day.**

We can now truly appreciate the tremendous wisdom of Moshe Rabeinu. He decided on his own to add a day of preparation, so that the Torah would be given to Yisrael on

Shabbas. He wanted to establish the cornerstone of Judaism for all future generations—that Jews would study Torah on Shabbas. Thus, they would merit extending the kedushah of Shabbas and enable them to also study Torah on the six weekdays. For, in the merit of Shabbas and its kedushah, the day on which they are able to engage in Torah-study unencumbered by worldly chores and responsibilities, they are able to designate fixed times for Torah-study during the week.

This enlightens us with regards to the exposition of the Raiya Mehemna—the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu—related to the passuk: "ונהר יוצא מעדן להשקות את הגן". He taught us that the first letters of the three entities mentioned in this passuk— ע'דן נ'הר ג'ן – spell ענ"ג, thereby alluding to the three seudot of Shabbas, which are aimed at enhancing our joy and pleasure on Shabbas. In that merit: "ומשם יפרד"—we extend the incredible kedushah of Shabbas to the other six days of the week; "וזהיה לארבעה ראשים"—which enables us to study Torah and attain insights based on the four methods of exegesis symbolized by the term פ'רד"ס—**pshat, remez, drush, sod.**

"Tzara'as" Results from the Failure to Transform the Yetzer HaRa into a Good Inclination

Continuing along this enchanting path, we will not explain in greater depth how the "nega" of "tzara'as" afflicts a Jew's body as a consequence of his failure to transform the configuration of ע"ג into ענ"ג. Toward the end of the "tochachah" in parshas Ki Savo, it says (Devarim 28, 47): "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרוב כל, ועבדת את אויביך אשר ישלחנו ה' בך ברעב ובצמא ובעירום ובחוסר כל, ונתן עול ברזל על צוארך. Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and goodness of heart, due to an abundance of everything, you will serve your enemies whom Hashem will sent against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lacking everything. He will place an iron yoke upon your neck until He destroys you.

It is worth noting that this passuk: "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה"—**because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with "simchah"**—is the only explicit source in the entire Torah stating that it is imperative to serve Hashem with "simchah." In fact, it is on the basis of this passuk that David HaMelech, Yisrael's sweet psalmist, says (Tehillim 100, 2): "עבדו את ה' בשמחה בואו לפניו ברננה"—**serve Hashem with**

“simchah” (joy and gladness); **come before Him with joyous song.** This gives us cause to ponder: It seems implausible that if a Jew fulfills all of the precepts of the Torah solely with “yirah”—i.e., without “simchah”—that he will be punished so severely (as indicated by the terrible things enumerated in the “tochachah”).

Hence, to shed some light on the subject, we will begin by introducing a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh, in the Midrash HaNe’elam (Toldos 138a): **“אצטריך יצר הרע לעולם כמטרא לעולם, דאלמלא יצר הרע חדוותא דשמעתא לא ליהוי”**—**the yetzer hara is as indispensable to the world as rain is to the world; were it not for the yetzer hara, the “simchah” associated with studying passages of the Torah would not exist.** Thus, we learn an incredible chiddush: It is impossible to derive joy from Torah-study without a yetzer hara.

Both in Pri Tzaddik (Bereishis 15), authored by the illustrious Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen, zy”a, and also in the sefer Ben Yehoyada on the allegorical passages in Sha”s, authored by the illustrious author of the Ben Ish Chai (Kiddushin 30b), they apply this concept to explain the following statement in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b): **“אם פגע בך מנוול זה משכהו לבית—המדורש—if this despicable character engages you, draw him into the Beis Midrash.** The despicable character they are referring to is the yetzer hara who entices us with all sorts of worldly desires. To thwart its efforts, we are advised to **draw it into the Beis Midrash,** where we can transform the “simchah” associated with an aveirah into the “simchah” of Torah-study.

The Simchah of Serving Hashem Transforms the Yetzer HaRa into a Force for Good

We will now introduce another wonderful principle gleaned from the sacred teachings of the Ma’or Einayim (Bereishis). When a person serves Hashem with “simchah” that originated with the yetzer hara, he is able to transform the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov. In this manner, he interprets the passuk in the first paragraph of Krias Shema beautifully (Devarim 6, 5): **“ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך”—you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart.** Our blessed sages expound (Berachos 54a): **“ככל לבבך בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר הרע—with all your heart means with both of your yetzers, with the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara.** Because through the love of Hashem, which leads to “simchah,” it is possible to

serve Hashem even with the yetzer hara and to transform it into a good inclination.

In a similar vein, in Zohar Chai (Part 4, page 152), the great Mahari of Komarna, zy”a, writes that by serving Hashem with sincere, pure “simchah,” one is able to transform the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov which will help one to better serve Hashem. Further on, he presents a fascinating idea in the name of his uncle and mentor, the divine kabbalist Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a: **“וכן היה רגיל מורי דודי הקדוש, כשהיה רואה איזה מתפלל בלא חיות ותשוקה אש קדוש אלא כמת, היה דרכו לומר, זה מתפלל בלא יצר הרע כלל—when he would see someone davening without feeling and fervent desire but rather like a dead person, he used to say, “This person is davening without a yetzer hara at all.”** In other words, had he davened with the lively, enthusiastic fervor that stems from the yetzer hara, he would have used it and transformed it into a yetzer tov.

We can now begin to comprehend the harsh punishment of: **“Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and goodness of heart, due to an abundance of everything, you will serve your enemies whom Hashem will sent against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lacking everything. He will place an iron yoke upon your neck until He destroys you.”** For, in reality, the yetzer hara yearns for people to transform it into a good inclination, so that it, too, will be associated with the service of Hashem emanating from kedushah.

This can be substantiated from the following elucidation by Rabbi Levi in the Gemara (B.B. 16a): The Satan that presented accusations against Iyov intended l’shem Shamayim. Why? **“כיון דחזיא להקב”ה דנטיה דעתיה בתר איוב, אמר חס ושלום מינשי ליה לרחמנותיה דאברהם—when the Satan saw that HKB”H was partial to Iyov, it said (to itself), “G-d forbid that He will forget the mercy of Avraham (the mercy with which He treats Jews on account of His love for Avraham).”**

Another elucidation from that Gemara: **“דרשה רב אחא בר יעקב—Rav Acha bar Yaakov taught this elucidation (of Rabbi Levi) in the town of Papunia, and the Satan came and kissed his foot (in appreciation).** This incident demonstrates that the Satan yearns to join the forces of kedushah and to assist them. Thus, it is evident that the Satan wants a person to serve Hashem with the “simchah”

that comes exclusively from the yetzer hara, so that, in the process, he, too, will be transformed into a yetzer tov helping a person to serve Hashem.

However, when a Jew fails to serve Hashem with “simchah,” the yetzer hara remains an evil force. This causes it to get very angry with that person for not rectifying it by transforming it into a good, positive force. It retaliates by preventing that person from being good and from ascending spiritually. It then uses all of its tricks and strategies to trap that person and cause him to fail. It uses the very same evil net that the person failed to transform into a positive device via the “simchah” of performing a mitzvah.

We can now interpret the passuk under discussion as follows: **“Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and goodness of heart.”** Had you served Hashem with “simchah,” you would have transformed the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov, and you would not have ended up committing an aveirah. Based on this understanding, the language of the passuk makes perfect sense: It specifically says **“בשמחה ובטוב לב”** rather than **“ובטוב לב”**. Thus, it is teaching us that by serving Hashem with **“simchah,”** we achieve the status of **“טוב לב”**—having both sides of our hearts, both the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara, working in concert, without any trace of evil or negativity, to serve Hashem.

The Neshamah in the Brain Is the Yetzer Tov It Combats the Physical Body that Is the Yetzer HaRa

In keeping with this sublime journey and discussion, we will now return to the subject of the affliction of “tzara’as.” We learned that it results from a person’s failure to transform the configuration of **נגע** into **עניג**. Our sacred sefarim explain that the yetzer hatov is a person’s neshamah. It wages a constant war against the yetzer hara—the physical, material, human body. The physical body draws a person to the worldly delights and desires of Olam HaZeh; whereas the neshamah in the brain, which is a piece of G-d from above, draws a person exclusively to Torah, mitzvos, and all matters of kedushah.

This is the message conveyed by the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh (Bereishis 20): **“ויאמר אלהים יהי אור, שולח אל האדם עזר נגד יצרו, וזה יהיה בהגיעו ליד שנה יופיע עליו ממעון קדשו רוח אלהין קדישין נשמה קדושה וטהורה... והוא אומרו ויאמר אלקים יהי אור, שהיא הנשמה שאורה רב, להיותה**

יצובה מתחת כסא כבודו יתברך חלק אלוך ממעל, שלחה ה' להאיר על האדם.” The Almighty’s declaration, **“Let there be light”** is a reference to the neshamah. Upon entering the fourteenth year of life, it appears from its heavenly abode to assist man in his travails and struggles against the yetzer hara. It is holy and pure and possesses an intense light, since it is hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory; it is a portion of G-d from above. Hashem sends it to man to prevent him from drowning in the mire and succumbing to the yetzer hara.

According to what we have learned, had a person succeeded in studying Torah with “simchah,” he would have transformed the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov. In that case, the body would not have functioned as a deterrent impeding him from studying Torah and serving Hashem, because it would have become a yetzer tov. When he fails to do so, however, the yetzer hara remains an evil inclination, and, as a consequence, he is punished with bodily afflictions; he succumbs to “tzara’as.”

But why indeed did this person fail to study Torah with “simchah”? We learned from the Raiya Mehemna—the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu, who added a day of preparation at Har Sinai, so that the Torah would be given to Yisrael on Shabbas—that it is because this person did not fulfill the mitzvah of **עניג** Shabbas properly; he did not consume the three festive seudot corresponding to **עידן נהר גן**. As explained above, they are the source of the kedushah and understanding of the Torah associated with the four methods of Torah interpretation symbolized by **פרד”ס**.

Let us elaborate. We are commanded to enjoy the Shabbas by having three seudot associated with **עניג**. This enables us to derive pleasure from studying the Torah that we were privileged to receive on Shabbas. Hence, within the purview of the mitzvah of “oneg Shabbas” is the requirement to enjoy the study of Torah with great “simchah.” In that merit, we will also study Torah on the six weekdays with “simchah.” After all, the kedushah of the weekdays stems from the kedushah of the Shabbas day. In this manner, we will succeed in transforming the bodily yetzer hara into a yetzer tov. Yet, if a person fails to enjoy the three seudot of Shabbas, he will not engage in Torah-study characterized by “simchah” on Shabbas. As a consequence, he will fail to transform the yetzer hara of the body into a yetzer tov.

We can suggest that this is alluded to by the passuk: "ונהר יוצא מעדן להשקות את הגן". The three entities mentioned in this passuk—עידן ניהר גין - allude to the three seudot of Shabbas that provide a Jew with עני"ג. Their purpose is: "והיה לארבעה ראשים". Now, we learn from the Midrash Tanchuma (Shemini 9) that whenever the term "והיה" is used, it is associated with "simchah." Thus, when the passuk says: "והיה לארבעה ראשים"—it implies that in the merit of "oneg Shabbas," a Jew will be able to study Torah with the four methods of interpretation with "simchah." By so doing, he will transform the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov.

This explains fantastically why there are four appearances of skin affliction, as we have learned in the Mishnah (Nega'im

1, 1): "מראות נגעים שנים שהן ארבעה, בהרת עזה כשלג, שניה לה כסיד". The appearances of "nega'im" (skin afflictions) are two, which are divided into four. "Baheres" is bright white like snow; secondary to it is (an appearance that is white) like the lime of the Temple. "Se'et" is like the membrane of an egg; secondary to it is (a lesion appearing) like white wool. We have learned that when a Jew learns Torah with "simchah," he merits the privilege of studying with the four methods of Torah exegesis. Failure to do so results in the transformation of the configuration נג"ג into נג"ע. As a consequence, he is stricken correspondingly with the four forms of "nega'im."



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