



An Amazing Insight from the Bris Kehunas Olam

Transforming the Word ענ"ג to Its Anagram נג"ע by Substituting Physical Pleasures with the Joy of Torah Study

Next Shabbas kodesh, we will read from the Torah the two parshiyos **Sazria and Metzora**; this is the usual practice in a non-leap year. Both of them relate to the subject of afflictions. Regarding the tumah associated with afflictions, it states in parshas Sazria (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. Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying: If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a "se'eit," or a "sapAchas," or a "baheret," 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.**

In reality, 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 affecting human-beings? And what is the spiritual process required to purify ourselves of them?

"לא הפך הנגע את עינו" **Failure to Move the "Ayin"** **to Transform ענ"ג into נג"ע**

To begin to shed some light on the subject, let us refer to a passuk in parshas Sazria (ibid. 13, 55): **וראה הכהן אחרי: הוכבס את הנגע והנה לא הפך הנגע את עינו והנגע לא פשה טמא הוא.**—**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.** Translated literally, the passuk says that **"the ענ"ג did not change its "ayin."** What does this mean? 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, based on the teaching in Sefer Yetzirah (2, 4): **אין בטובה למעלה מענג ואין ברעה למטה מנגע**—**there is nothing good superior to "oneg" and there is nothing bad inferior to "nega."**

Let us explain. The words ענ"ג and נג"ע are combinations of the same letters; they are anagrams. Now, if a person serves Hashem, it is an **"oneg"**—ענ"ג; this is the proper, correct form of pleasure. If he sins, however, deriving pleasure improperly, these letters are rearranged to form the acronym נג"ע. Then, it is incumbent upon the sinner to perform teshuvah in order to transform the letters of נג"ע back into the auspicious anagram ענ"ג.

Note that the difference between the two anagrams is the position of the letter **"ayin."** In the word **"נגע"**, 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 **"נגע"**; it has not moved to the beginning of the word; this is a clear-cut sign that he is still tamei—"טמא הוא"—he has yet to perform proper teshuvah. This is the gist of his sacred remarks.

It is now incumbent upon us to scrutinize these remarks more closely. They imply that the difference between **נג"ע** and **ענ"ג**—suffering an affliction versus experiencing pleasure—depends on the letter **"ayin."** Why must the letter **"ayin"** be located specifically at the beginning of the word to form **ענ"ג** rather than at the end of the word forming the inauspicious anagram **נג"ע**, chas v'shalom?

Creation Was Designed to Benefit Its Creatures by Delighting in Hashem through the Joy of Torah

We will begin by presenting a practical approach to the matter. Our sacred sefarim emphasize the fact that HKB"H created the world in order to benefit its creatures and do good for them. The source for this notion is found in the writings of the Arizal (Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar HaKelalim, Chapter 1): **When HKB"H decided to create the universe, He did so with the intent of benefitting His creatures and for them to recognize His greatness.**

To comprehend the nature of this benefit, we need only examine the opening passuk of the Torah (Bereishis 1, 1): **"בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ"—in the beginning (Bereishis), G-d created the heavens and the earth.** Rashi comments: **"בראשית ברא, אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני, כמו שדרשוהו רבותינו ז"ל, בשביל התורה שנקראת (משלי ח-כב) ראשית דרכו, ובשביל ישראל שנקראו (ירמיה ב-ג) ראשית תבואתו."** Rashi is telling us that this passuk cannot be taken literally; it is linguistically incorrect; it begs to be expounded. Therefore, our Rabbis of blessed memory expound the verse as teaching us that the world was created for the sake of two (the gematria of the letter **"beis"**) **"Reishis"s**—for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisrael, both of whom are referred to by this term.

Now, the Torah is the only genuine good in creation, as we are taught in the Mishnah (Avos 6, 3): **"ואין טוב אלא תורה, שנאמר כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתי אל תעזובו"—and only Torah is truly "tov," as it states (Mishlei 4, 2): "For I have given you a good teaching ('lekach tov'), do not forsake My Torah."** This statement implies that if a person's life lacks Torah, he has nothing of value.

Let us introduce the marvelous comments of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh related to the passuk (Devarim 26, 11): **"ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך"—you shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you.** This is a command to rejoice and enjoy the study of Torah. He views the phrase **"בכל הטוב"** as a reference to the Torah, in keeping with the statement: **"There is no "tov" (true good) other than the Torah."** He writes: **If people would sense the sweetness and pleasing quality of the Torah, they would pursue it fanatically; a world full of silver and gold would be meaningless in their eyes, because the Torah encompasses all the good in the world.**

So, when our illustrious teacher, the Arizal, says that **"G-d created the world to benefit His creatures and for them to recognize His greatness,"** he meant that they should be privileged to study Torah and acquire its wisdom. It was for this express purpose that HKB"H created the world, as per Rashi's comment: **"בראשית ברא אלקים"—for the sake of the Torah, which is called "the beginning of His way."** For, it is through the study of Torah and its wisdom that we come to recognize the greatness of HKB"H.

To Be Saved from the Yetzer HaRa One Must Eat and Drink L'shem Shamayim

In this manner, we will proceed to explain the significance of the letter **"ayin,"** which determines the difference between the anagrams **נג"ע** and **ענ"ג**. As mentioned, this is alluded to by the passuk: **"לא הפך הנגע את עינו"—which literally means that the lesion did not switch its "ayin."** We will refer to the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b): HKB"H said to Yisrael, **"My son, I created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand."**

Indeed, while a man is studying Torah, he is afforded protection from the yetzer hara; however, he must also perform functions related to his physical existence in Olam HaZeh, such as eating and drinking. What protects him from the yetzer hara at those times? Clearly, it is advisable that he should perform those functions with Hashem in mind, as well. As we are taught in the Mishnah (Avos 2, 12): **"וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים"—let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.** Thus, even worldly functions will be considered like Torah-study and service of Hashem. This is expressed in the Shulchan Aruch as follows (O.C. 231, 1): **Whatever a person derives pleasure from in Olam HaZeh, he should not do so for his own pleasure but rather for the service of the blessed Creator . . . Even optional matters, such as eating, drinking, walking, sitting, rising, talking, and all bodily needs, they should all be for the sake of serving your Creator or for something related to His service.** The michaber concludes: **And whoever behaves this way is serving his Creator at all times.** Along these lines, the Tur writes: **It turns out that whoever possesses these qualities (behavior) serves Hashem throughout his life—even when he is sitting, rising, walking, engaged in his business activities, and even when he is eating and drinking.**

Accordingly, if a person performs optional activities also l'shem shamayim, so that he will have the strength and energy to study Torah, it is considered as if he is studying Torah and serving Hashem nonstop, without interruption. As a result, he is constantly protected against the yetzer hara, in keeping with HKB"H's guarantee: **"I created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand."**

The "Ayin" of עי"ג Represents the Seventy Aspects of Torah

We can now shed some light on the significance of the letter **"ayin,"** which should ideally be located at the beginning of the word **עי"ג**. Let us introduce an exposition

in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 13, 16) related to the donations of the princes for the inauguration of the mizbeiach (Bamidbar 7, 13): **"Seventy shekels in the sacred shekel"—Why did the basin weigh this amount? Just as the numerical value of "י" is seventy, similarly, there are seventy faces (approaches) to the Torah.**

This then is the significance of the letter **"ayin,"** whose gematria is seventy, corresponding to the seventy ways in which the Torah can be elucidated. If a person eats and drinks with the exalted purpose of gaining strength to study Torah, this illustrates that the letter **"ayin"** is primary in his mind. Even before he begins to eat and drink, he has in mind that he will do so l'shem shamayim—to enable himself to study Torah with greater focus and energy. Seeing as the letter **"ayin"** is first and foremost in his mind, it is also the first letter of the anagram **עי"ג**, since he is fulfilling the wishes of the blessed Creator, Who created the world to benefit His creations, and prevent the yetzer hara from prevailing over them.

Notwithstanding, if the letter **"ayin"**—representing the seventy facets of the Torah—is located primarily at the end of the anagram, this indicates that the Torah is not this man's primary concern. His primary desire is to eat and drink to satisfy his body's cravings; clearly, his intent is not l'shem shamayim. As such, the word **עי"ג** is transformed into its anagram **ג"ע**.

This is the lesson taught by the Mishnah in Sefer Yetzirah: **There is nothing good superior to "oneg" and there is nothing bad inferior to "nega."** For, when a person studies Torah, described as **"tov": There is nothing good superior to "oneg"**—since he is fulfilling the purpose of creation, and he is rendering the yetzer hara powerless and ineffective. Conversely, if, chas v'shalom, a person opts to pursue the meaningless pleasures of Olam HaZeh instead of the pleasures associated with Torah-study: **There is nothing bad inferior to "nega"**—since the **עי"ג** has been transformed into its anagram **ג"ע**, and the yetzer hara has gained control over him, since he lacks the protection of the Torah.

The Neshamah Emanates from the World of Pleasure

Therefore It Is Man's Nature to Seek Pleasure

With this understanding, it behooves us to reflect on our sacred obligation to study Torah in order to satisfy the true desire and pleasure of the neshamah. We will refer to what the esteemed Rabbi Avraham of Slonim, zy"a, presents in Yesod HaAvodah (Part 2, 7), in the name of the esteemed Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin, zy"a. He explains that it is man's nature to constantly pursue the pleasures of Olam HaZeh, because the Jewish neshamah emanates from the world of pleasure. Therefore, even after being born into this world, a person continues to seek that pleasure. If he fails to find pleasure that satisfies the neshamah, he will seek pleasure that satisfies the body. He writes something similar in his sefer Beis Avraham (Likutim p. 301a): **It is known that every Jew's neshamah comes from the world of pleasure. Therefore, it is his nature to seek pleasures; if he does not find pleasure in service (of Hashem), he is liable to resort, chas v'shalom, to material pleasures.**

We can explain his sacred message based on a teaching in the Gemara (Berachos 17a): **"העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה ולא פריה ורביה ולא משא ומתן ולא קנאה ולא שנאה ולא תחרות, אלא צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה."** In Olam HaBa, there is no eating, no drinking, no procreation, no business negotiations, no jealousy, no hatred and no competition. Rather, tzaddikim sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the radiance of the Shechinah. Now, we are familiar with the concept taught in our sacred sefarim based on the Maggid Meisharim (Bereishis). The malach who appeared to the Beis Yosef revealed to him the reason that the neshamos descend to this world, even though they enjoy being in the world of the neshamos. It is because they do not wish to eat "bread of shame"—i.e., receiving something that they did not earn. Therefore, they descend to this world to earn the pleasure through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvos.

Accordingly, the esteemed Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin explains that since a Jew's neshamah comes from the world of pleasure, where the neshamos delight in the radiance

of the Shechinah, a Jew continues to long for that pleasure even after he is born into this world. If he succeeds in finding this pleasure for his neshamah, he will be at peace. But if he fails to do so, the yetzer hara intervenes and replaces the true spiritual pleasure the neshamah seeks with the fake, bogus material pleasure of the body.

One Should Pray that Earthly Delights Do Not Enter One's Body

Undoubtedly, the genuine, true pleasure of the neshamah is the study of Torah, in keeping with the passuk (Tehillim 19, 9): **"פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב"—the orders of Hashem are upright, gladdening the heart.** Hence, it urges a person to study Torah. Yet, as the wisest of all men teaches us (Koheles 7, 14): **"זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים"—G-d created the world with corresponding equal and opposite forces.** As such, the yetzer hara wages a trying, incessant battle to the bitter end against the neshamah. It substitutes the pleasures of Olam HaZeh for the pleasure of studying Torah. Once it succeeds in luring a person to pursue physical pleasures, it has the upper hand and controls that person; the person can no longer resist those temptations. In the words of the Midrash (Koheles Rabbah 1, 13): **"אין אדם יוצא מן העולם וחצי תאוותו בידו"—a person does not leave this world with only half of his craving in his hand.** If he has one hundred dollars, he wants two hundred; if he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.

This explains magnificently what the Gemara (Kesubos 104a) relates concerning Rabeinu hakadosh: **"בשעת פטירתו של רבי זקף עשר אצבעותיו כלפי מעלה, אמר רבונו של עולם גלוי וידוע לפניך שיגעתי בעשר אצבעותי בתורה, ולא נהייתי אפילו באצבע קטנה."** As Rebbe was departing from this world, he straightened his ten fingers upwards toward the heavens and declared, **"Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known to You that I toiled with my ten fingers in Torah, and I did not derive pleasure even from my little finger!"** Tosafos comment in the name of the Midrash that they learned a vital lesson from this: **While a person prays that Torah should permeate his being, he should pray that earthly delights should not permeate his being.**

Let us explain this based on our current discussion. The pleasures of the body are diametrically opposed to the pleasures of the neshamah. As we learn in the Mishnah (Avos 6, 4): **כך היא דרכה של תורה פת במלח תאכל ומים במשורה** (Avos 6, 4): **תשתה, ועל הארץ תישן וחיי צער תחיה, ובתורה אתה עמל, ואם אתה עושה** **כן אשריך וטוב לך, אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא.** **This is the way of the Torah: To eat bread with salt, to drink water in small amounts, to sleep upon the ground, to live a life of hardship, and to toil in the Torah. If you do so, you are praiseworthy, and it will bode well for you. You will be praiseworthy in Olam HaZeh, and it will bode well for you in Olam HaBa.**

This is also the message conveyed by the following Gemara (Berachos 63b): **מנין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שאין דבריו עומדים עליו, שנאמר זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל.** **From where do we learn that words of Torah can only be retained by someone who is willing to sacrifice himself on its behalf? For, it says (Bamidbar 19, 14): “This is the Torah of a man who dies in a tent.”** This prompted Rabeinu hakadosh to attest to the fact that he abstained from the pleasures of Olam HaZeh, so that he would be able to delight in the pleasures of the Torah. To which the Midrash states: **While a person prays that Torah should permeate his being, he should pray that earthly delights should not permeate his being—because bodily pleasures destroy the pleasures of the Torah.**

Prior to Its Birth a Malach Transports the Neshamah to the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden

It appears that we can corroborate the assertion of the esteemed Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin, zy”a, based on a fascinating passage in the Midrash Tanchuma (Pekudei 3):

Rabbi Yochanan said: Why is it written (Iyov 9, 10): “Who performs great deeds that are beyond comprehension, and wonders beyond number”? You should know that all of the neshamos that were from Adam HaRishon and will be until the end of the world, were created during the six days of creation; they were all in Gan Eden, and they were all at Matan Torah, as it says (Devarim 29, 14): “But with whoever is

here, standing with us today before Hashem, our G-d, and with whoever is not here with us today.” And the statement: “Who performs great deeds that are beyond comprehension”—refers to the great deeds HKB”H performs in the formation of the fetus.

Further on, the Midrash details the wonders HKB”H performs related to the formation of the fetus. When it is time for the neshamah to descend and be born into Olam HaZeh:

Without delay, HKB”H would summon the malach in charge of the spirits and say to him: Bring Me a particular spirit which is in Gan Eden, whose name is so-and-so, and whose form is such-and-such . . . Immediately, the malach would go and bring the soul to HKB”H. When the soul arrived, it immediately prostrated and bowed before the King of Kings, HKB”H . . . Thereupon HKB”H responded to the neshamah, “The world I am placing you in will be better for you than the one in which you have dwelt” . . .

The malach took him from there and led him to Gan Eden; he showed him the tzaddikim sitting honorably with crowns on their heads. Then the malach would say to that spirit, “Do you know who these are?” And the spirit would reply, “No, my master.” Whereupon the malach would tell him, “These that you see were initially formed like you in the wombs of their mothers; then they went out into the world and observed the Torah and the mitzvos. Therefore, they were deserving and were selected for this beautiful place that you see. Know that you will ultimately leave this world, and if you are deemed worthy and observe HKB”H’s Torah, you will merit this and sitting like these.

Now, the Sefas Emes (Bereishis 5644) teaches us that HKB”H sends the neshamah to Gan Eden before it is born into this world to receive tremendous powers of kedushah to help it fulfill its task in Olam HaZeh. It appears that we can spice this notion up based on a teaching in the Gemara (ibid. 17a): **העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה... אלא צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה שנאמר ויחזו את האלקים ויאכלו וישתו.”** **In Olam HaBa, there is no**

eating, no drinking . . . Rather, tzaddikim sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the radiance of the Shechinah, as it states (Shemos 24, 11): “They gazed at G-d, and they ate and drank.” What does it mean to delight in the radiance of the Shechinah? I believe that we can explain this based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Chayei Sarah 132b): Every night at midnight, HKB”H descends and delights in the Torah with the tzaddikim in Gan Eden. Thus, when the neshamah enters Gan Eden and witness the incredible joy the tzaddikim experience from the study of Torah, it is inspired to delight in the study of Torah in Olam HaZeh. The yetzer hara, however, tries to substitute the pleasures of Olam HaZeh for the pleasure associated with Torah-study. So, it is necessary for Jews to reinstate the true pleasure of Torah-study.

Thus, we have achieved a better understanding of the fantastic allusion presented by the Bris Kehunas Olam interpreting the passuk: **וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי הוֹכֵבֶס אֶת הַנֶּגַע וְהִנֵּה** “**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי הוֹכֵבֶס אֶת הַנֶּגַע וְהִנֵּה**” **וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי הוֹכֵבֶס אֶת הַנֶּגַע וְהִנֵּה**. We have learned that the source of skin lesions and afflictions is related to the failure to transform the term **נֶגַע** into its favorable anagram **עֵינַי**. In other words, the Jew failed to switch the location of the letter “**ayin**,” which alludes to the seventy faces of the Torah. This should be a Jew’s primary focus and, as such, it should be the first letter of the anagram. The tikun is for a Jew to have his every action aimed at fulfilling the will of HKB”H, Who created the world for the sake of the Torah. If we delight in Hashem by enjoying the pleasure of Torah-study, we will transform the ominous term **נֶגַע** into its auspicious anagram **עֵינַי**.



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