

The Mitzvah of Milah Appears in the Torah Prior to the Passage Describing Afflictions Indicating that Milah Wards off Afflictions

In this week's parsha, parshas Sazria, the parsha opens with the mitzvah of "milah" (Vayikra 12, 1): **וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל בני ישראל לאמר אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר וטמאה שבעת ימים**—**Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male, she shall be impure for a seven-day period, as during the days of her menstrual infirmity shall she be impure. On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.**

Immediately after the first eight pesukim (corresponding to the eight days of "milah"), the Torah begins a new topic—the laws of afflictions, "nega'im" (Vayikra 13, 1): **וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר, אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת והיה בעור בשרו—Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying: If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a "se'eit" or a "sapachat" 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.** The remainder of the parsha, to its very end, deals with the subject of "nega'im."

If the main focus of this parsha is to teach us the laws of "nega'im," why did HKB"H choose to begin the parsha with eight pesukim dealing with the mitzvah of "milah"? Seemingly, the mitzvah of "milah" is unrelated to the subject of "nega'im." The Kli Yakar addresses this issue and provides the following explanation (ibid. 12):

"סמך פרשת נגעים לפרשה הקודמת המדברת במילה, לומר לך שהמילה דוחה את הנגעים, כי בכל מקום המצוה המוקדמת דוחה את המאוחרת, כמבואר למעלה פרשת ויקהל על אמרם ז"ל (רש"י שמות לה-ב), הקדים שבת למשכן לומר לך, שהשבת דוחה מלאכת המשכן."

The passage of "nega'im" was juxtaposed to the passage discussing "milah," to teach us that "milah" wards off the afflictions. For, in all places, the mitzvah discussed first wards

off the later mitzvah—as we explained above in parshas Vayakhel concerning Shabbas and the Mishkan.

We can understand his comment in light of what we have learned in the Gemara (Nedarim 31b): **גדולה מילה שדוחה את "הנגעים"—"Milah" is so great that it overrides the laws of "nega'im."** For, the Torah states explicitly (Devarim 24, 8): **"השמר בנגע הצרעת לשמור מאד ולעשות ככל אשר יורו אתכם הכהנים הלויים"—Take care with regards to the "tzara'as" affliction, to be very careful and to act in accordance with everything that the Kohanim the Leviim shall instruct you.** Rashi comments: **"You shall not tear away signs of impurity and you shall not cut off a "baheres."** It is with regards to this directive that the Gemara stated: **"Milah" is so great that it overrides the laws of "nega'im."** For if a lesion exists on the foreskin, it is permissible to perform the mitzvah of "milah," even though it means excising the lesion. It is for this reason that the mitzvah of "milah" precedes the passages describing the laws of "nega'im"—to teach us that the mitzvah of "milah" overrides the prohibition against excising an affliction.

One might have thought that this is self-evident seeing as the mitzvah of "milah" is a mitzvas "aseh" and the mitzvah prohibiting the excision of an afflicted lesion is a mitzvas "lo ta'aseh"; and we know that a positive commandment overrides a negative commandment—"aseh docheh lo ta'aseh." We learn from the Gemara (Shabbas 132b), however, that the prohibition against excising a "baheres" lesion is both an "aseh" and a "lo ta'aseh." In the words of Rashi: The word **"השמר"** in the passuk signifies a mitzvas "lo ta'aseh"; whereas the words **"ולעשות ככל אשר יורו"** constitute a mitzvas "aseh." This being the case, we know that an "aseh" does not have the power to override the combination of a "lo ta'aseh" and an "aseh."

The Gemara explains that even so the mitzvah of "milah" still overrides the prohibition against excising the lesion of an affliction, due to the superfluous word **"בשר"** appearing in the

passuk: “וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו”; it would have sufficed to write: “וביום השמיני ימול ערלתו”. This extra word comes to teach us that even if a lesion exists on the foreskin, we still proceed with the mitzvah of “milah.” Accordingly, the Kli Yakar points out that the Torah introduced the mitzvah of “milah” as a prelude to the passages describing the laws of “nega'im” to teach us that the mitzvah of “milah” overrides even the combination of the “aseh” and “lo ta'aseh” regarding the excision of an afflicted lesion.

The Kedushah of “Milah” Overrides the Klipah of the “Nega'im”

It appears that we can take the Kli Yakar's point one step farther. In truth, the mitzvah of “milah” appears as a prelude to the passages of the “nega'im,” because the holy Torah wished to teach us a vital lesson. By performing the mitzvah of “bris milah”—which involves removing the foreskin and thereby enhancing the body's kedushah—we prevent the “nega'im” from afflicting the body. Let us present an explanation from the Maharal of Prague, zy”a, in Chiddushei Aggados (Nedarim ibid.), explaining the reason that the mitzvah of “milah” overrides the “nega'im”:

“גדולה מילה שהיא דוחה את הנגעים. רצונו לומר כמו שהמילה היא דוחה את השבת, כי המילה היא על השבת, כך המילה יש לה מעלה פנימית אלוקית ולכך היא דוחה הנגעים, כי הנגעים הם מצד כוחות החיצונים והם קליפות, ואלו המילה היא על [למעלה מן] הנגעים, כי המילה היא הסרת הקליפה, ומטעם זה המילה היא דוחה הנגעים.”

“Milah” is so great that it overrides the laws of “nega'im.” Just like “milah” supersedes the Shabbas, because it is superior to the Shabbas, similarly “milah” possesses a fundamental divine quality; therefore it supersedes the “nega'im.” For, the “nega'im” arise from the external forces, the klipot; whereas the mitzvah of “milah” is superior to the “nega'im.” The “milah” actually removes the klipah. Hence, the mitzvah of “milah” overrides the “nega'im.”

The Maharal's meaning can be explained very nicely based on the well-known words of the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim (Part 3, Chapter 49). There he explains that HKB”H commanded us to perform the mitzvah of “milah” in order to weaken the strength of one's lust and desire triggered by the yetzer hara. In the words of the Rambam: “כי בהסרת הערלה תחליש האבר, ויתמעט על ידי זה התאוה—the removal of the foreskin weakens the male organ; as a result, excessive desire, beyond the necessary, is minimized; we are left to suffice with just the required amount of desire without excesses.

This then is the Maharal's meaning. The kedushah of the “milah” overrides the “nega'im,” which arise from the domain of the klipot. The mitzvah of “milah” diminishes the yetzer hara's capacity to cause man to sin. Therefore, this mitzvah overrides the “nega'im,” which come as punishment for man's sins. In this light, the Kli Yakar's point is quite clear. The Torah presented the mitzvah of “milah” as an introduction to the laws of “nega'im,” in order to teach us a valuable lesson. In the merit of the mitzvah of “milah,” which weakens the capacity of the yetzer hara, the “nega'im” are warded off.

In the Merit of “Milah” It Is Possible to Sanctify One's Speech

I would like to propose another explanation as to why the Torah introduced the laws of “nega'im” by first presenting eight pesukim dealing with the mitzvah of “milah.” Let us refer to the sefer Lev Sameiach authored by the great Rabbi Chanoch Henich of Alesk, zy”a. He provides us with a beautiful explanation regarding the formula recited after the “bris milah.” After the bris, the child is given his name and we proclaim: “יהוה טוב כי לעולם חסדו”—thank Hashem for He is good, for His kindness endures forever.

He explains based on our holy sources that the sanctity of speech—“kedushat hadibbur”—and the sanctity of the “bris” are interdependent. So, if a person sanctifies himself with regards to one of the two, he also merits sanctification with regards to the other. The source for this incredible fact is the Sefer Yetzirah (1, 3). We learn there that “bris halashon”—the covenant of the tongue—is related to the “bris milah.” Additionally (ibid. 6, 4), HKB”H established two covenants with Avraham Avinu—“bris milah” and “bris halashon”:

“וכיון שצפה אברהם אבינו ע”ה, והביט וראה וחקר והבין וחקק וחצב וצרף וצר ועלתה בידו, אז נגלה עליו אדון הכל ברוך הוא והושיבהו בחיקו, ונשקו על ראשו וקראו אוהבי, וכרת לו ברית ולזרעו (בראשית טו-י) והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה, וכרת לו ברית בין עשר אצבעות רגליו והיא ברית המילה, ועשר אצבעות ידיו והוא הלשון, וקשר לו עשרים ושתים אותיות בלשונו וגלה לו את יסודן.”

After Avraham Avinu, a”h, saw, searched and questioned, he ultimately understood and perceived the true reality. This prompted the Master of the Universe to reveal himself to Avraham, to embrace him and to love him. The Almighty entered into a “bris” with Avraham and his offspring. He established the “bris” between the ten toes of his feet—the “bris milah”—and between the ten fingers of his hands—the

tongue. And He attached twenty-two letters to his tongue and revealed to him their essence.

We learn from here that in the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of “bris milah,” we also merit the sanctity of “bris halashon.” The latter enables us to thank and praise HKB”H with a clean and pure mouth. Accordingly, in the formula recited immediately after the performance of the “milah” on the young child, the child’s name is pronounced publicly and we proclaim: **הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו**. For, precisely at that moment, after having undergone the mitzvah of “bris milah,” the young, circumcised child acquires the ability to express his gratitude to Hashem, throughout his life, with a pure mouth—because the “bris halashon” is associated with the “bris milah.” This concludes his explanation. We should add that the numerical value of **מיל"ה** (85) is the same as the numerical value of **פה** (mouth)—alluding to the fact that in the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of “milah,” one merits the sanctification of the mouth.

Now, it is well known that the “nega'im” come as a result of “lashon hara”—improper speech. This is stated in the Gemara (Arachin 15b): **“כל המספר לשון הרע נגעים באים עליו”—anyone who speaks “lashon hara” is stricken with “nega'im.”** It follows, therefore, that in order to prevent “nega'im,” it is necessary to sanctify the speech that emerges from one’s mouth.

Having established that it is impossible to adequately sanctify the “bris halashon” without the merit of “bris milah,” we can better appreciate why the Torah introduces the mitzvah of “milah” as a preface to the laws of “nega'im.” The Torah is conveying the message that in the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of “bris milah,” we merit sanctifying the “bris halashon”—refraining from speaking ill of our fellow man. As a result, we are spared from “nega'im,” which come as punishment for the sin of “lashon hara.”

The Affliction of “Tzara’as” in One’s “עור” Is a Result of the Defect in Kusnos “אור”

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us explain in greater depth why the mitzvah of “milah” is written in the Torah as an introduction to the laws of “nega'im.” Let us introduce the commentary of the Shelah hakadosh on the passuk in our parsha: **“וזהיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת”—and it will become a “tzara’as” affliction on the skin of his flesh.** The “nega'im” are the result of Adam HaRishon’s sin involving the Eitz HaDa’as. Prior to the sin, his entire body resembled a

garment of “light”—kusones “ohr” spelled with an aleph. In the aftermath of the sin, his body took on a more physical nature and appearance, resembling a garment of “skin”—kusones “ohr” spelled with an ayin. As a consequence, the “nega'im” affect the skin of his flesh--**“עור בשרו”**—because he caused the transformation of the body into **“כתנות עור”** with an “ayin” instead of the original, desired **“כתנות אור”** with an “aleph.”

Let us expand upon his explanation based on the passuk (Bereishis 3, 21): **“ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם”—and Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them.** It states in the Midrash (B.R. 20, 12): **“בתורתו של רבי מאיר מצאו כתוב כתנות אור”—in Rabbi Meir’s Torah, they found “Kusnos ohr” (with an “aleph”) written.** This is indeed baffling. It seems unimaginable that Rabbi Meir would have written the words **“כתנות אור”** in his Torah with an “aleph” instead of an “ayin.” After all, that would have invalidated his sefer-Torah.

We find a wonderful explanation concerning this matter in the Arizal’s Sefer Likutim (Bereishis). Prior to Adam HaRishon’s sin with the Eitz HaDa’as, his body was very pure; it reflected the supreme light from above; it resembled **“כתנות אור”**. This is expressed in the Midrash as follows (V.R. 20, 2): **“תפוח עקיבו של אדם הראשון היה מכהה גלגל חמה, קלסתר פניו על אחת כמה וכמה”—the sun paled in comparison to the radiance of Adam HaRishon’s heel; how much more so was the radiance of his countenance.** In the aftermath of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” his body became corporeal, resembling a garment of skin—**“כתנות אור”** with an “ayin.”

The source for this introduction is the Zohar hakadosh--in parshas Bereishis (36b) and then in greater detail in parshas Pekudei (229b). Here is a loose translation of the passage:

In Gan Eden, Adam HaRishon was dressed like a heavenly creature; his garment was that of a heavenly light. After being evicted from Gan Eden, he required clothes appropriate for this world. This is expressed by the passuk: **“Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them.”** In Gan Eden prior to that, they had garments of light.

According to this understanding, the Arizal explains that the Tanna Rabbi Meir achieved an incredible level of kedushah, due to his Torah studies. As a result, he managed to purify his body to such a degree that it was transformed back again to a semblance of **“כתנות אור”**. Chazal were alluding to this fact

with their statement: “בתורתו של רבי מאיר מצאו כתוב כתנות אור”--
in Rabbi Meir’s Torah, they found “Kusnos ohr” (with an “aleph”) written. In other words, through his diligent Torah-study, he succeeded in purifying his body to the state of Adam HaRishon prior to the sin. Hence, it was as if the words “כתנות אור” with an “aleph” were written, since he purified his body to the degree that it radiated the light from above. This concludes his explanation.

This clarifies for us a statement in the Gemara (Eiruvim 13b) concerning the immensity of Rabbi Meir’s kedushah. In fact, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, Rabeinu HaKadosh, attests that he owed his greatness in Torah to the fact that he merited seeing Rabbi Meir from the back; this merit enabled him to outshine his colleagues. The Gemara states:

“אמר רבי, האי דמחדדנא מחבראי דחזיתיה לרבי מאיר מאחוריה. ואילו **Rebbe said: The reason that I am sharper than my colleagues is because I saw Rabbi Meir from behind.** Rashi explains: “כשלמדתי לפניו ישבתי בשורה של אחריו”—when I attended his lectures, I sat in the row behind him. **Had I merited seeing him from the front, I would be even sharper, as it is written: “And your eyes shall behold your teachers.”** Here we have clear-cut evidence that the Tanna Rabbi Meir had purified his body to such a degree that anyone who set eyes on him achieved higher levels of Torah knowledge.

We find a similar phenomenon involving Moshe Rabeinu in parshas Ki Tisa (Shemos 34, 29): “ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני” ושני לוחות העדות ביד משה ברדתו מן ההר, ומשה לא ידע כי קרן עור פניו בדברו אתו, וירא אהרן וכל בני ישראל את משה והנה קרן עור פניו וייראו—**and it was when Moshe descended from Har Sinai—with the two Tablets of the Testimony in the hand of Moshe as he descended from the mountain—Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant when He had spoken to him. Aharon and all Bnei Yisrael saw Moshe and behold!—the skin of his face had become radiant; and they feared to approach him.** The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh draws the comparison to Rabbi Meir. Just as Chazal state that in Rabbi Meir’s Torah, the words “כתנות אור” were written with an “aleph”—indicating that he radiated a heavenly light—so, too, the skin of Moshe’s countenance radiated light.

Prior to the Cheit Eitz HaDa’as Man’s Body Was Purified by an Immense Light

To better comprehend the matter, let us consider why HKB”H created man as a combination of a body and a soul—neshamah. The neshamah alone is purely spiritual, a piece of the divine from above. As such, it is incapable of actually performing any mitzvos without assistance from the physical limbs of the body—the instruments of action. Therefore, HKB”H created the body to loyally clothe the neshamah—which is the essence of man. This partnership allows the neshamah to serve Hashem by fulfilling mitzvos in actual deed, with the help of the 248 bodily limbs.

The body, on the other hand, is an entirely material and physical creation. As such, it is incapable of serving Hashem by itself. Therefore, it is dependent on the neshamah—the intense, divine light from above which HKB”H breathed into man—to establish residence within the body. Clothed by the physical body, the neshamah sustains the body and illuminates it with Hashem’s light, as it is written (Mishlei 20, 27): “נר ה’ נשמת אדם” —**a man’s soul is the lamp of Hashem, which searches throughout one’s inner bodily chambers.** Another passuk states (Iyov 32, 8): “ונשמת שדי תבינם”—**and the soul given by G-d provides them with insight**—for, the neshamah illuminates man’s body with its tremendous light, enabling him to comprehend spiritual matters.

According to this understanding, man’s physical body is merely a “kusones” and outer casing for the holy neshamah. Now, prior to the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” Adam HaRishon’s body was so pure and permeated with spirituality—“ruchniyut”—that it did not obscure the divine light of the neshamah within Adam whatsoever. As a result, the physical body which encased the neshamah was truly a “כתנות אור”—**a garment of light**; it faithfully transmitted the incredible radiance of the neshamah.

However, after Adam HaRishon sinned by partaking from the Eitz HaDa’as Tov Va’Ra, the yetzer hara entered his physical body, causing it to become corporeal. Rashi makes this point as follows (Bereishis 2, 25): **“The yetzer hara was not placed in him until he ate from the tree.”** Consequently, instead of the body being a “כתנות אור”, it descended spiritually to become a “כתנות עור”. Rather than illuminating and purifying the body with Hashem’s light, it now obscured and impeded the incredible light of the neshamah. This is the deeper significance of the

passuk: **“Hashem --ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם”** **G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them.**

Since then, every human being is obligated to make amends for his own personal involvement in the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as.” He must purify his physical body and transform it from a “garment of skin”--“כתנות עור” —back into a “garment of light”--“כתנות אור”. Concerning this obligation, the Shela refers to the passuk in parshas Tetzaveh (Shemos 28, 2): **“ויעשית בגדי”** “אהרן קודש לאהרן אחיך לכבוד ולתפארת” Aharon HaKohen merited his splendid, priestly garments, because he helped rectify the sin of Adam HaRishon through his incredible sanctity. In effect, he transformed the “כתנות עור” back into “כתנות אור”. His priestly garments represented his “garments of light”--“כתנות אור”.

This, then, is the meaning of the passuk: **“אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו”** **“אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו”** --if a person will have on the skin of his flesh a “s’eit,” or a “sapachat,” or a “baheres,” and it will become a “tzara’as” affliction on the skin of his flesh. For, the cause of the affliction of “tzara’as” is indicated by the words: **“בעור בשרו”**—on the skin of his flesh. In other words, he failed to correct the defect represented by his “garment of skin” by purifying it and transforming it back into a “garment of light.” This concludes his explanation.

The Kohanim Who Rectified the “Garments of Light” Are Responsible for Rectifying the Nega'im

In the Chasam Sofer’s Toras Moshe, he introduces the commentary of the Shelah hakadosh in order to explain the continuation of the passuk: **“אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת”** או בהרת, והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת, והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד **“אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת”** --if a person will have on the skin of his flesh a “s’eit,” or a “sapachat,” 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.

As explained, every Jew is obligated to make amends for his involvement in the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as”; he must transform the corporeal nature of his body from a garment of “עור”--skin—to a garment of “אור”--light. Therefore, Aharon HaKohen and his sons, the Kohanim, who purified their bodies into garments of “אור”, merited the splendid “bigdei kehunah,” as conveyed by the passuk (Shemos 28, 2): **“ויעשית בגדי קודש לאהרן אחיך לכבוד”** “ויעשית בגדי קודש לאהרן אחיך לכבוד ולתפארת”--**you shall make sacred garments for Aharon your**

brother, for glory and for splendor. This passuk alludes to the fact that they purified their physical bodies to the point that they were elevated and transformed into **“sacred garments for glory and for splendor.”**

The sinner, however, not only failed to purify his body and transform it into a “garment of light,” but he actually harmed his body. As a consequence, he was punished: **“והיה בעור בשרו”** “והיה בעור בשרו”--the affliction of “tzara’as” reigned over his body and specifically affected the skin of his flesh--“עור בשרו”. This affliction is designed to make him understand that he is being punished for failing to transform his garment of “עור” into a garment of “אור”. Therefore, to remedy the situation: **“והובא אל”** “והובא אל”--**he shall be brought to Aharon HaKohen, or to one of his sons, the Kohanim.** They merited the “bigdei kehunah” for successfully purifying their bodies into semblances of garments of “אור”. Therefore, they will guide him and show him how to cure and transform even the **“skin of his flesh”** into a garment of “אור”. Here are the words of the Chasam Sofer:

“והנה זה הרשע לא מיבעיא שלא עשה מכתנות עור כתנות אור, אלא אפילו עור בשרו הוכה בצרעת, על כן יקח מוסר מאהרן הכהן ויראה מה בינו לאהרן, הוא זלזל בעור בשרו וטימא אותו, ואהרן היה הדיוט ונתעלה ונתקדש עד שזכה ללבושי יקר, או לכל הפחות לאחד מבניו הכהנים, אף על גב שהם זכו לזה רק על ידי אהרן בקדושתו, מכל מקום קדושתו עומדת ולא נתלכלכו, וזה לכלך עור בשרו.”

Not only did this evildoer fail to transform his “garment of skin” into a “garment of light,” he was even stricken with lesions of “tzara’as.” Therefore, he needs to learn a lesson from Aharon HaKohen and examine the differences between himself and Aharon. Whereas he acted shamefully and contaminated the skin of his flesh, Aharon rose from simple, mundane origins to achieve great levels of sanctity—eventually meriting the esteemed priestly garments. Whereas Aharon and his sons maintained their sanctity and remained untainted, this evildoer sullied his corporeal garment.

It can be suggested, that HKB”H alludes this fact to us in the following passuk (Vayikra 13, 55): **“וראה הכהן אחרי הכבס את”** “וראה הכהן אחרי הכבס את”--**the Kohen shall look, after the affliction has been washed, and behold!—the affliction has not changed its appearance.** The passuk specifically employs the term **“עיניו”** to communicate the fact that the lesion’s appearance remains unchanged. Literally, this word can be interpreted as meaning its “ayin.” In other words, the root of the physical affliction of “tzara’as” is that the afflicted person

failed to transform the “ayin” of his garment of “עור” into an aleph, making it a garment of “אור”. Rather than reflecting the divine light from above, he has sullied and obscured the light. Rather than elevating himself and becoming more spiritual, he has become more corporeal.

The Mitzvah of Milah Represents the Tikun for “כתנות אור”

Now let us examine a tremendous chiddush found in the teachings of our master the Chasam Sofer (Lech Lecha). He teaches us that in the merit of removing the foreskin by performing the mitzvah of “milah,” we effectively correct the defect caused by Adam HaRishon—the transformation of “כתנות אור” into “כתנות עור”. Here are his actual words:

“נראה לי דאחר שהלבישם הקב”ה כתנות עור על כל גופם, ובניהם אחריהם נולדו בלי מלבוש כתנות עור ההוא, אבל השאיר הקב”ה בכל גוף ערלת הגיד שהוא שיור מכתנות עור שהיה על כל הגוף, והשאיר בהם שריד הזה לעולם, לזכר חטאם נגד פניהם לבושה וכלימה ולחרפת עולם. אמנם מי שרוצה לתקן חטא עץ הדעת והסיר זוהמת הנחש, יסיר חרפתו וימול בשר ערלתו לאות ברית בינו לבין אלוקיו, וזה מצות מילה בבני אברהם אבינו ע”ה וכו’, ומשום הכי נקרא אברהם אבינו ע”ה תמים, בהסר הערלה וגילוי העטרה.”

It appears to me that HKB”H covered Adam and Chava entirely with garments of “עור”; their children after them, however, were born without that same extensive covering of “עור”. Nevertheless, HKB”H left a remnant in every

body of the original “כתנות עור” in the form of the foreskin. It constitutes an eternal reminder of their sin and their shame. Nevertheless, whoever wishes to correct the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” and eliminate the contamination of the “nachash,” should remove the reminder of his disgrace and circumcise his flesh, removing the foreskin, as a sign that he is entering into a covenant with his G-d. This is the significance of the mitzvah of “milah” practiced by the descendants of Avraham Avinu, a”h. This is why Avraham Avinu, a”h, was called תמים—perfect and flawless—because he removed his foreskin . . .

We have now successfully shed some light on the matter and have achieved a better understanding as to why the Torah opened with the mitzvah of “milah” as an introduction the laws of “nega’im.” The Torah is teaching us that in the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of “milah,” we are able to correct the defect of “כתנות עור”—garments of skin—and transform our bodies into “כתנות אור”—garments of light. As a result, “nega’im” will no longer afflict “בעור בשרו”—the skin of his flesh—which are due to the defect of “כתנות עור”. If in spite of this, he is stricken with “nega’im,” it is a sign that he has breached the kedushah of the “bris milah”—and has returned to the defective state of “כתנות עור”. To remedy this situation, it is recommended that he perform teshuvah in order to reinstate the kedushah of the “bris.” In this merit, he will rectify his body and it will radiate the divine light as a form of “כתנות אור”—assisting him to serve Hashem.



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