

### A Fantastic Idea Based on the Kli Yakar

## Three Types of Nega'im: Human, Garment and Dwelling to Rectify the Three Coverings of the Neshamah

In this week's parsha, parshas Metzora, HKB"H completes the discussion regarding the three-stranded subject of nega'im. In parshas Tazria, we learned about human afflictions (Vayikra 13, 2): "אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו בהרת או ספחת או והיה בעור בשרו לנגע: לנגע" — **If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a "se'eit" or a "sapachat" 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.** We also learned about lesions of afflictions that appear on garments (ibid. 13, 47): "והבגד כי יהיה בו נגע צרעת בבגד צמר או בבגד פשתים" — **if there shall be a "tzara'as" affliction in a garment, in a woolen garment or a linen garment.**

In contrast, we learn in this week's parsha about nega'im that affect a person's dwelling (ibid. 14, 34): "כי תבואו אל ארץ כנען" — **when you arrive in the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I will place a "tzara'as" affliction upon a house in the land of your possession.** Hence, it is only fitting that we examine Hashem's magnificent wonders, designed to arouse a person to perform teshuvah via the three categories of nega'im visited upon the sinner: **human afflictions appearing on the skin, lesions appearing on garments and lesions appearing on dwellings.**

### Three Forms of Nega'im on Three Forms of Covering

Let us begin with the illuminating commentary of the Kli Yakar in parshas Tazria (Vayikra 13, 47). He notes that the three forms of nega'im occur on three types of covering which protect mankind. The nega'im occur on the skin—which covers the human flesh; they occur on garments—which cover the skin; lastly, they occur on the houses which shelter the entire person as well as the first two coverings—the skin and the garments. Here is his amazing insight:

"ותדע ותשכיל כי ג' מיני צרעת באים על ג' דברים, שהם כיסוי לאדם זה לפנים מזה, מכסה ראשון הוא עורו לבשרו, למעלה מעורו, בגדיו שהם כיסוי לעורו, למעלה מהם ביתו, כי הוא מכסה לו להצילו ממטר ומזרם. ומי שהוסר מעליו כל מכסה נקרא פרוע ומגולה... על כן הזכיר תחילה נגעי עורו, ואחר כך נגעי בגדיו, ואחר כך נגעי בתים, להסיר מכסהו אחת אחת, עד שיהיה פרוע ומגולה מכל וכל.

אמנם לדעת רז"ל (ויק"ר יז-ד) הסדר הפוך, כי אמרו אין בעל הרחמים נוגע בנפשות תחילה כו', לכך מביא תחילה נגע על ביתו, לא חזר בו מביא גם על בגדיו, לא חזר בו מביא גם על גופו כו'. ומה שהזכיר תחילה נגעי הגוף, לפי שהקב"ה מתרה במכה אחרונה הגדולה תחילה, כמו שאמר לפרעה (שמות ד-כג) הנה אנכי הורג [את] בנך בכורך, וכמו שפירש רש"י שם, כך הזכיר כאן נגעי הגוף בראשונה, לאיים על האדם ממה שהוא מתירא ביותר, אבל לעולם אין בעל הרחמים נוגע בנפשות תחילה כי אל רחום וחנון הוא."

**You should recognize that the three forms of "tzara'as" occur on three things that cover mankind—one within the other. The first layer of covering is the skin covering his flesh. Next, are his garments, which cover his skin. Beyond these two is his dwelling; it protects him from rain and external forces. A person deprived of these coverings is uncovered and exposed . . . Therefore, skin afflictions are mentioned first, then lesions appearing on garments, and lastly lesions appearing on dwellings. Thus, the layers are removed one by one, until the person is uncovered and totally exposed.**

According to our blessed Rabbis (V.R. 17, 4), however, the order is reversed. For, the Merciful One does not touch the human-being directly first. Rather, He first visits the affliction on the dwelling. If he fails to perform teshuvah, He also visits afflictions on the person's garments. If he still fails to perform teshuvah, the afflictions are also visited upon his body. In the Torah, the skin lesions are mentioned first, because HKB"H starts by warning the person with regards to the harshest and most feared consequence. An example of this is seen regarding Pharaoh (Shemos 4, 23)—as pointed out by Rashi. In similar fashion, He mentions

**here skin afflictions first to threaten a person with that which he dreads most. In reality, however, the Merciful One never visits afflictions directly on the human being first; for He is a merciful and kind G-d.**

The Kli Yakar teaches us that HKB”H created man and provided him with three levels of protection. The first layer of protection is the skin, which protects the flesh from the damaging effects of the sun and winds. The second layer of protection is a person’s garments which shield the skin from harm. The third layer of protection is the house which covers the entire person, including the first two layers of protection.

Therefore, when a person sins against Hashem and violates the precepts of His Torah, in effect, he damages these three coverings designed to protect him. As a consequence, HKB”H visits upon him three forms of nega’im. Firstly, house afflictions, hinting to the fact that he harmed the third layer of protection. If he fails to react by performing teshuvah, HKB”H visits lesions upon his garments, conveying the message that his second layer of protection is no longer present. If he still fails to perform teshuvah, HKB”H visits upon him, chas v’shalom, human skin afflictions, targeting his first layer of defense. At this point, he should realize that he is no longer protected by any of these three coverings. So, now, it is incumbent upon us to explain the significance of these three types of covering with which HKB”H covers mankind: **skin, garments and dwellings.** Furthermore, how do transgressions damage these three forms of covering?

### **Afflictions of the Body Garments and Dwellings Correspond to Tefillin Tzitzis and Mezuzah**

I would like to propose my own addendum to the Kli Yakar’s explanation regarding the three types of nega’im corresponding to the three levels of human covering and protection. Let us refer to the Megaleh Amukos’s explanation regarding the three types of nega’im: human, garment and dwelling. Here are his exact words: **“ענין נגעי בתיים, בגדים, גוף, כי צריך האדם ג’ תיקונים, (מנחות מג:): תנו רבנן חביבין הם ישראל, שסבבן הקב”ה במצוות וכו’, תפילין תיקון גוף, מנחות—ציצית תיקון בגד, מזוזה תיקון הבית”** he explains that man requires three types of tikun. He cites the Gemara in Menachos (43b) which states that Yisrael are so dear to HKB”H that he surrounds them with mitzvos. The mitzvah of tefillin affords tikun for the body; tzitzis affords tikun for garments; the mitzvah of mezuzah affords tikun for one’s dwelling.

To better appreciate and comprehend his explanation, let us examine the passage that he cites from the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **“תנו רבנן, חביבין ישראל שסיבבן הקב”ה במצוות, תפילין בראשיהן, ותפילין בזרועותיהן, וציצית בבגדיהן, ומזוזה לפתחיהן, ועליהן אמר דוד (תהלים the Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: Beloved are Yisrael, for HKB”H has surrounded them with mitzvos: Tefillin upon their heads and tefillin on their arms, tzitzis upon their garments, and a mezuzah upon their doorways. Concerning these David said: “Seven times a day I have praised you for your righteous ordinances.”** Rashi explains David’s accounting: **“שבע ביום, תפילין בראש ובזרוע—הרי שתיים, וארבע ציציות ומזוזה הרי שבע”** the “tefillin shel rosh” and “tefillin shel yad” count as two; a garment has tzitzis on each of its four corners; the mezuzah counts as one; thus, we arrive at a total of seven. Let us endeavor to explain why David HaMelech praised and thanked HKB”H for these mitzvos specifically.

It appears that we can explain the matter based on the following Gemara (ibid.): **“רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, כל שיש לו תפילין בראשו ותפילין בזרועו, וציצית בבגדו, ומזוזה בפתחו, הכל בחיזוק שלא יחטא, שנאמר (קהלת ד-יב) והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק, ואומר (תהלים לד—Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: Whoever has tefillin upon his head and upon his arm, tzitzis upon his garment and a mezuzah upon his doorway, there is a complete presumption that he will not sin—for it is stated: “And a three-ply cord is not easily severed!” And it states further: “Hashem’s malach encamps around his reverent ones and he rescues them.”** Thus, we see that a person who fulfills these three mitzvos—tefillin, tzitzis and mezuzah—is protected from transgressing.

Now, we can better understand this statement based on the Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 6, 13). The malachim generated by these three mitzvos—tefillin, tzitzis and mezuzah—are the ones who guard a person from transgressing. This is the implication of the passuk: **“Hashem’s malach encamps around his reverent ones and he rescues them.”**

This explains very nicely why David HaMelech expressed his gratitude to Hashem for these three mitzvos which are composed of seven elements with his utterance: **“Seven times a day I have praised you.”** For, the malachim generated by these three mitzvos protect a person from falling into the yetzer hara’s net. This enables a person to fulfill all the mitzvos of the Torah. We can even suggest that this is why these mitzvos have seven components. For, they are designed to combat and nullify the yetzer hara’s seven forces of tumah, as described in the



house. Therefore, the Torah commanded him to show the lesion to the kohen on duty in the Beit HaMikdash. For, he fulfills these mitzvos properly with mind and body, as it is written (Malachi 2, 7): “כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת”—**for the lips of the kohen should safeguard knowledge**—he joins his lips with his mental faculties to perform the mitzvah with proper intent. As a result: “ותורה יבקשו מפייהו”—**and guidance they should seek from his mouth**—they should learn from him how to properly perform the mitzvos. After all: “כי מלאך ה' צבאות הוא”—**he is an agent of Hashem, Master of Legions.**

At this point, we can better appreciate the impact and significance of the Kli Yakar's commentary. He stated that the three types of nega'im are visited on the three types of covering which protect man. The nega'im appear on the skin—which covers the flesh—on garments—which cover the skin—and on dwellings—which cover the entire person, as well as the two previous coverings. This coincides very nicely with the explanation of the Megaleh Amukos. These three coverings encompass all that man must rectify in this world.

### Soul Body Garments and Dwellings Correspond to the Four Realms of אבי"ע

Let us continue on along this exalted path and endeavor to explain the matter in greater depth. We find a precious and enlightening concept in the incredible teachings of our teacher the Arizal. It is well-known that HKB"ח is known by the ineffable four-letter name Havaya. With these four letters, he created the universe consisting of four universes represented by the acronym אבי"ע (ABIYA)-- א'צילות (Atzilut), ב'ריאה (Briah), ע'שיה (Asiyah). [In the universe of Atzilut, the highest and most spiritual universe, HKB"ח adorns Himself, so to speak, to manage all of the universes. In the universe of Briah, He sits upon His Throne of Glory, Kisei HaKavod, as it were; the neshamos of Yisrael are carved out from beneath the Kisei HaKavod. In the universe of Yetzirah, we find all of the heavenly malachim. In the universe of Asiyah, this world, we find human beings, creatures made of flesh and blood.]

Correspondingly, HKB"ח created man with the four letters of the holy name; man also incorporates four aspects corresponding to the four universes—ABiYA. The first aspect is man's inner self, his spiritual neshamah. The second aspect is the physical body which clothes and covers the neshamah. The third aspect is the garments which cover the physical body. The fourth aspect is the house within which man dwells.

Thus, we learn from the Arizal that man's physical body represents the first covering; it covers the neshamah, which is man's essence—the true man. This coincides wonderfully with what Rabeinu Chaim Vital writes in Sha'arei Kedushah (1, 1):

“גודע אל בעלי מדע, כי גוף האדם איננו האדם עצמו מצד הגוף, כי זה נקרא בשר האדם, כמו שכתוב (איוב י-יא) עור ובשר תלבישיני ובעצמות וגידים תשוככני, ועוד כתיב (שמות ל-לב) על בשר אדם לא ייסך וגו', נמצא האדם הוא הפנימיות, אבל הגוף הוא ענין לבוש אחד תתלבש בו נפש השכלית אשר היא האדם עצמו.”

**Even scientists recognize that the physical body is not the essence of man; it is merely his flesh. . . The true man is the inner self; the body is only one of its coverings, housing the intellectual soul, representing the man himself.**

Now, the physical body is the first covering; it covers man's inner-self, the neshamah. On top of the body is a second covering, the clothes which provide the body with a degree of modesty. In Sha'ar HaKavonos (2b), the Arizal explains that the garments a person wears on his body represent an “ohr meikif”—a surrounding light; they protect him from the influence of the klipot. There is also an “ohr penimi”—an inner light—contained within the body.

On top of these first two coverings is a third covering—the house within which a person dwells. Within the confines of this latter covering, he and his family are protected from the undesirable influences of the outside world. Thus, man and his three coverings correspond to the four universes. The true, inner man corresponds to the universe of Atzilut. The body housing the neshamah corresponds to the universe of Briah. The garments which cover the body correspond to the universe of Yetzirah. Lastly, the house which covers them all corresponds to the universe of Asiyah.

### The Three Coverings Require Special Protection

Now, it is well-known that the neshamah is a portion of the divine from above, as it is written (Bereishis 2, 7): “וייצר ה' אלקים—and Hashem G-d formed man of soil from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul. Hence, the neshamah itself is pure in the most perfect sense, as we declare daily in our morning prayers: “אלקי נשמה—**My G-d, the neshamah which you have placed within me is pure.** If, however, man sins, chas v'shalom, the neshamah leaves him—even before the transgression. We learn this fact from the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 31, 75a).

