



אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאוצרו של
הגאון רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל

*A Dvar Torah from the writings of Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l,
transcribed by his grandson, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky*

5779 - Parshas Tazria - Plague vs. Pleasure

Parshas Tazria discusses the laws of tzora'as, the spiritual ailment cause by committing the sin of lashon hora - slander or gossip on another Jew. This ailment, called a "negah" (plague), can appear on one's house, his clothing, or even his own body. The process of declaring a patient pure or impure is performed by a Kohein, by quarantining the afflicted item, and reexamining the afflicted area to see if the negah spread.

The passuk says, "And the Kohen shall see the negah... and it did not change its appearance, (Vayikra, 15:55). **Interestingly, the passuk uses the term "eino," which can also mean "his eye," to mean "appearance".** There are other ways to say "appearance." The more common term is "mareihu," which the passuk uses many times before. **Why does the Torah use the term "eino" now?**

After the end of World War II, the brilliant Torah sage, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, Rabbi of the city of Cincinnati, visited and aided thousands of survivors in displaced persons camps in Germany and Poland who were waiting to find permanent homes. One day, as he was handing out Siddurim (prayerbooks) and other Torah paraphernalia, a Jewish man flatly refused to accept any.

"After the way I saw Jews act in the camp, I don't want to have any connection with religion!"

Rabbi Silver asked him to explain what exactly had turned him off from Jewish practice.

"I saw a Jew who had a Siddur, yet he only allowed it to be used by the inmates in exchange for their daily bread ration. Imagine," he sneered, "a Jew selling the right to daven for bread!"

"And how many customers did this man get?" inquired Rabbi Silver.

"Far too many!" snapped the man.

Rabbi Silver put his hand around the gentlemen and gently explained. "Why are you looking at the bad Jew who sold the right to pray? Why don't you look at the many good Jews who were willing to forego their rations and starve, just in order to pray? Isn't that the lesson you should take with you?"

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explains based on the teachings of the great 17th century gaon, Rav Ephrayim Zalman Margolious, in his classic work, Shem Ephrayim. **The Sefer HaZohar states that one who repents from his negah (plague), will experience oneg (pleasure).** The Hebrew words "negah" and "oneg" contain the same letters, only in a different order. The word "negah" (plague) has the letter "ayin" in the beginning, while "oneg" (pleasure) has the letter ayin in the beginning.

The Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson. **One who was afflicted by tzora'as did not use his "ayain", his eye, to look past the scene in front of him.** He looked at the scene at face value, and commented negatively. **He placed his eye in the back of his mind** - behind his thoughts and words. Thus, the Torah tells us that one who is deemed impure by the kohein, **"did not change his eye"**.

However, one who repented from that flaw, learned how to **put his eye in front of a scene**, and look beyond what is unfolding in front of his eyes. He can see the negative results of slander, and the positive results of a good eye.

He who put his "ayin" in front, will experience oneg - pleasure.

Good Shabbos!

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