

Women's shiur – Ganei Tikvah

13 Iyar 5773

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

Tomorrow is second Pesach and its moral is that there is never a lost cause, you can always rectify. Even if someone was unable to bring the Paschal lamb, he gets a second chance. Tomorrow is also the yahrzeit of Rabbi Meir the tanna from the Mishnah who would illuminate the eyes of the sages in halachah. He was also a scribe and in his Sefer Torah, he transformed the "clothing made of skin" to "clothing made of light." Changing the ayin of skin into the alef of light and by doing so rectified Adam and Eve's sin.

From this we learn that there is a rectification in the month of Iyar which is connected with Sefirat Ha'omer, which requires illuminating the word "omer" (עמר) with an alef, transforming it into the word "omer" (אמר). This word appears in the verse, יום ליום יביע אמר ולילה ללילה יחזה דעת. This verse also alludes to a rectification of Adam and Eve. The words יחזה דעת are related with Chavah, Eve. Even though we count the omer at night, we say, "Today is so many days in the omer..." so we are connecting the days with the days, as in this verse, יום ליום יביע אמר.

In Kabbalah it is explained that the letters of omer, with an alef, אמר, are an acronym for "light, water, and firmament" (אור מים רקיע). The first thing God created in the world was light, indicating that the purpose of the world is to illuminate God in the world, in life. In the first day of creation the word "light" is mentioned 5 times, and in the second day, the words "water" and "firmament" appear 5 times each. This process of light, water, and then firmament is also described as the process by which the fetus is created in the womb. The firmament itself is already the fetus itself, but earlier, when the spiritual becomes physical, it goes through 2 stages, light and water. So the entire secret of creation is related to a woman becoming pregnant and giving birth. To count the Omer is thus a synonym for illuminating the word Omer with an alef. This is the transformation of an ayin into an alef. To insert an alef into the ayin. This is true both in pronunciation, since the two letters are very close. This is also true numerically where the values 1 (alef) and 70 (ayin) are related many times, like in the Sanhedrin where there are 70 sages and 1 above them. There are also 70 nations, and the Jewish people are a singular nation among them. In the Jewish people, Yaakov was 1 and he had 70 descendants that went down to Egypt. So whenever there is an ayin, we should reveal the alef in it. These are all related to the month of Iyar, whose name is cognate with "light" (אור). In the Tanach, Iyar is called Ziv, which means light.

So today we'll talk about a number of things that we need to rectify in the psyche in this month, which is strongly related to the redemption. We see that many things in our generation related to the redemption, things that are a prelude to the true and complete redemption that we shall merit speedily. There is a verse in the Prophets that reads, כי עין בעין יראו בשוב ה' ציון. They will see eye to eye when God returns to Zion. Every letter's

name has a meaning, and the ayin means “eye.” The eye sees, that is its initial relationship with light, but as we know that every ayin is a vessel for the letter alef, which is the light. When we exchange the letters ayin for alef, we get, They will see nothingness to nothingness. Either it means nothingness, or it means the Divine nothingness (with an alef), which is what God creates the world anew everyday with. All of creation is renewed at every moment, ex nihilo, and every person should feel that way about himself as well.

There are people who have clear sight (זכי הראות), this is especially true about children. These people can actually see with their eye how creation is recreated at every moment. The most auspicious time to see the Divine ayin (nothingness) with one’s eye (ayin) is this month. The 33rd day is גל, and it alludes to גל עיני, open my eyes, and I will see wonders. Now in the verse we quoted it says, “eye to eye” (עין בעין), the commentaries explain that the literal meaning is that there is an inner eye, the eye of prophecy (sometimes in the Zohar it is called the intellectual eye in the heart) and this inner eye, before the Mashiach comes, is what the prophet sees his prophecy with. It is not with his physical eye. But, when the Mashiach comes, the inner eye, the eye in the heart, will manifest physically in our physical eyes, and we will see God with our eyes. Therefore, this phrase, “eye to eye” (עין בעין), does not refer to the left and right eyes, but rather to the inner eye and the physical eye.

Just as there is עין בעין, with the letter ayin, there is also the אין באין with an alef, the Divine nothingness. What is all of Chassidut? It is meditating on God. The most important meditation is to meditate on the recreation of the world at every moment. Since the world is recreated it every moment, there is also Divine Providence. And they act together, through God’s eyes. Just as God as it were creates the world with His speech, He first says, and then He sees what He created, like we see in the account of creation that after He created, He looked at what He had created and said that it was good. This is the most basic meditation, that there is an אין that is inspiring the inner eye to manifest through our physical eyes.

How does this verse, this redemptive verse begin? Let’s begin with the previous verse, מה נאוו על ההרים רגלי המבשר, speaking about Eliyahu the prophet who will herald the redemption, משמיע שלום, the first thing he heralds is peace, מבשר טוב משמיע ישועה אמר (the same אמר as before) להיך א-ל. The proclamation he gives is made of three things: peace, good, and salvation. The end of the proclamation is “that your King is now sovereign.” Since the Almighty is declared as King, then His manifestation below, as the Torah says, שום תשים עליך מלך, that first we declare God to be King above us, and the redemption depends on this—this is the ultimate teshuvah that we are promised. When God is proclaimed King above, He has a representative below, a human being, flesh and blood, the Mashiach. This is what Eliyahu comes to herald. The next verse, our verse, begins, קול צפידך נשאו קול יחדו ירננו כי עין בעין יראו בשוב ה’ ציון. All the prophets together will sing together that the Mashiach has come. There is the proclamation by the herald and then all the Jews, all are prophets, we see, together we raise our voice in song. There is absolute unity in this song, like the theme of the month of Iyar. Through this we will come to the end which is that we will see “eye to eye.”

Now if you wrote this verse out, we can look at its structure. Where do the letters ayin appear in the verse.

When the ayin is replaced with an alef it becomes the ayin of, "Israel has no mazal" (אין מזל לישראל), which the Ba'al Shem Tov explained should be read as, "Ayin is the mazal of Israel," meaning that the ayin, the nothingness, is Israel's mazal. Mazal is the source of one's sustenance and blessing. Mazal literally means "flow." So in all the nations, the 70 wolves that are the nations of the world, their mazal is "being." It is therefore limited. But, our mazal is unlimited, because it is nothingness. That is why we are able given our root to bring down infinite blessing. Our mazal is the Divine nothingness. That is the chidush, the novel aspect of the Jewish people. That same ayin that is our mazal, every time that a person merits bringing the letter alef into the letter ayin, is what allows us to see our mazal with our eyes. To see one's mazal is to see what one's mission in life is, what one's shlichut is. This is what is called in the world, one's fate. Fate doesn't mean that this is what will necessarily happen to you, God forbid. Rather, the mazal is what God wants from you. When a person sees the אין within the עין, he can see why God created Him, what the purpose of his life is. So the אין should be seen with our physical eyes. This is all related to the unique Jewish wisdom as it says, "Who is wise? He who sees that which is being born, coming into being." This means seeing how the world is being brought into existence at every moment, as explained in the Tanya, and this is relevant to every individual, seeing how I am born at this very moment. The whole process of coming into being, of being born, is related to women and in the sefirot seeing this is related to wisdom, the special wisdom of women.

In Pirkei Avot we read that one should look at 3 things: The first of which is "From whence you came?" (מאין באת), which means that you came from the ayin. You came from your mazal and you are going to fulfill your mazal. Every Jew, when he is born, is given a tremendous amount of power from his mazal to succeed in his mission. There is also a very nice remez here. מאין באת (from whence you came?) has 7 letters. This is the first thing one should meditate on based on this saying in Pirkei Avot. מאין is equal to 101 and באת = 503, so the total value is 604, which divides by 7, the number of letters. So the average value of each letter is 72, the gematria of chesed, it is also a holy Name in Kabbalah, the Name עב (Ab), this is considered the most essential, strongest Name (איתן), that does not change. It represents the unchanging foundation in every soul, where the person comes from. In the entire Tanach, the word עב, which means a cloud, like in the verse הנה ה' רוכב על עב קל, appears exactly 7 times.

Now returning to our verse, קול צפיד, let's see where the letter ayin appears. There is a special wisdom that has developed only recently, looking for words that appear in equidistant letters in a verse or section of the Tanach. Let's see if we can find the word אין whether it appears in this verse.

קול צפיד נשאו קול יחדו ירננו כי עין בעין יראו בשוב י-הוה ציון

The first alef is in נשאו, it is also the 10th letter in the verse. About 10 it says that the tenth will be consecrated for God. נשאו means to raise something. The secret of the root נשא, which is also the root of the word Nasi (the Rebbe was a Nasi, which is actually more than a king) is the power to carry opposites at the same time (נשיאת הפכים), like in

the psyche, as explained in the Tanya, that a Jew is both crying and laughing at the same time. Crying in his heart, because he has an evil inclination, but laughing because God is with him all the time. The left ventricle is full of one's sense of self, one's evil inclination. But the right ventricle (and one should always make one's right overcome one's left) is full of an awareness of God's Presence and fills one with laughter and joy. If one feels that God is taking him out of Egypt everyday, performing miracles for him, then that is what one comes to become aware of. In fact, the power to carry opposites is seen in the form of the letter alef, the 10th letter in this verse. So we've found the letter alef. Now we need to find the letters yud and nun. How nice it would be if the final nun in **אין**, would be the final nun that appears in the verse in the word **עין**. Starting from the alef we've found, we skip 9 letters, **קול צפיד נשאו קול יחדו ירננו**. We have the vav (ו) of **נשאו**, and then **קול יחדו**, 8 letters so far, and the 9th letter is the yud (י) of **ירננו**. The yud is what is singing here. Skipping 8 again, we have **ירננו כי עין**. The ninth letter is the final nun of **עין**. The ayin in **עין** is the first such letter in the verse. So between the alef of **אין** and the nun of **אין**, we have the verse's first letter ayin, again showing us how the two connect.

Let's see something a little more complex. This again is something numerical. The verse's final letter is also a final nun in the word **ציון**. It would be very nice if we could find another **אין** that would end with the verse's final nun. Before we think about how this can occur let's recall that we said that the previous verse is about the heralding of the redemption by Eliyahu the prophet, where he says to Zion, **מלך א-להיך**, your King has ruled. Zion (**ציון**) is the heart's inner point, the will of the heart, the deepest yearning in a Jewish heart. It is also the point from where there is birth in a person's soul. The womb of the congregation of Israel is called Zion, from where the Jewish nation gives birth to her children. Zion (**ציון**) is equal to 156, or 6 times 26 (the value of Havayah). It is also equal to Joseph (**יוסף**), also the value of Ezekiel (**יחזקאל**). But, here the allusion is that through gematria teaches me what Zion means. What exactly is Zion awaiting. What does it truly mean to be a Zionist? It really means to await **מלך א-להיך**, Your King has ruled. **מלך** (ruled) is equal to 90, the value of tzadik, the first letter in Zion. **א-להיך** is equal to 66, the value of the other 3 letters in Zion (**יון**). So we have that the herald is telling Zion what it means to be Zion, it means to look forward to **מלך א-להיך**, Your King is sovereign. Not only do the two equal one another, but the phrase **מלך א-להיך** is exactly in the same structure (90 and 66) as the word Zion.

So now let's return to looking for **אין** in a more complex way in the next verse. Starting with the alef of **נשאו** all the way to the final nun of **ציון**. We are only missing the yud. It would be very nice if the yud would be the yud of either **עין** or **בעין**. From the alef of **נשאו** to the yud of **עין** there are **קול צפיד נשאו קול יחדו ירננו כי עין**. We find that there are 17 letters (the value of "good" **טוב**). Counting from this yud to the final nun of Zion, we see that there are 21 letters. So this is not an equidistant skip. So let's look at the yud of **בעין**. From the alef to the yud of **בעין**, we have **קול צפיד נשאו קול יחדו ירננו כי בעין בעין** and there are 21 letters, but now the skip from this yud to the final nun, will be 17 letters. The final nun refers to bringing light all the way from above to the lowest reality. This is a special example of symmetry in a verse. In one form we have 17 and 21, in the other 21 and 17.

But if we think about what the verse is telling us, that there should be “an eye in an eye” (עין בעין), we are led to transform the verse by including the second “eye” (בעין) in the first, the distance will be 17 in both directions: נשאו קול יחדו ירננו כי עין יראו בשוב י-הוה ציון. Now the distance is 17 (“good”) in both directions. So far we have looked at how the ayin with alef (אין), the Jewish people’s mazal, is within the ayin with an ayin (עין), in the eye. Seeing this is Jewish wisdom.

Just as there is Jewish wisdom there is also Jewish understanding, since wisdom and understanding go together. In understanding there are two other words that are related by the alef-ayin connection. They are “happiness” (אושר) and “wealth” (עושר). This is also a meditation unique to the month of Iyar. We will end with this because we would like to bless everyone with wealth on the exterior and happiness inside. The Rebbe used to bless everyone to be wealthy monetarily, but this should of course go together with happiness on the inside. In Pirkei Avot, it says that “Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his portion.” This is true only in respect to material wealth, but not so in respect to spiritual wealth, where a person should always seek to attain more.

In Hebrew it is common to wish someone “happiness and wealth” (אושר ועושר). Even if someone has material wealth, but he is not happy, he is God forbid depressed, than all his wealth is not worth anything. The external vessel of material wealth must be filled with happiness. How is this all related to understanding? Because the person who is wealthy is the one who is happy. Happiness and joy are the same word in Hebrew, איהו עשיר השמח בחלקו. Wisdom is selflessness and understanding is joy. In another place in the Talmud it says that being poor means not having knowledge, da’at (אין עני אלא בדעת). Indeed, in Pirkei Avot it connects understanding with knowledge. If there is no understanding there is no knowledge and if there is no knowledge there is no joy.

To be happy with one’s portion means not looking at another person’s portion in the world. If God forbid I’m not content with what I have, then I begin to covet what others have. What this is all predicated on is that we each have a portion, a different portion in the world. We begin our reading of Pirkei Avot every week with the mishnah that reads, “All Jews have a portion in the World to Come.” In the first mishnah in chapter 4, which asks, Who is wise? Who is wealthy? and so on, the mishnah’s author brings a verse to support each reply. So the mishnah reads, “Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his portion, as it says, ‘When you eat the fruit of your labor, you are happy and enjoy goodness,’ you are happy in this world and you will enjoy goodness in the World to Come.” From the verse the mishnah quotes there is a clear connection between happiness and wealth. It is also clear that whereas the question is “Who is wealthy,” in material wealth, the verse brought in the reply states that it is a person who is happy in this world. Meaning that the task of inserting the alef into the ayin is in this world, inserting happiness into wealth.

Now, there is being truly in the portion that God gives you. Whatever that might be. Whether it is a lot of material wealth or a little. But, there is another type of happiness, spiritual happiness. The happiness that accompanies the performance of a mitzvah. This happiness is infinite. The Rebbe Rashab explains in Ayin Beis that there is so much power in the happiness of a mitzvah that it is able to change a person’s nature.

Normally, happiness has the power to cause some change in a person's behavior. For example, we see that even a person who is stingy, during a wedding of a child, or such, he can change his nature and open his pocket to whomever needs tzedakah. Normally, a person acting in this manner, the change he experiences is not eternal. After the wedding, he will go back to being stingy. But, the Rebbe Rashab says that because of the happiness in performing a mitzvah a person's actual nature can change, for the reset of his life. The Rashab actually says there are two things that can completely change your nature, forever. The one is מוחין דגדלות מצד אבא, "great mindedness that comes from the aspect of the father principle." This changes the heart's character traits into emotions that entirely originate from the intellect. Emotions that come from the mind are completely different from emotions that come from the heart. This is true and lasting change. And the second manner is through the great joy of a mitzvah. This type of joy, that can change one's character forever, is true happiness. The chidush here is that this can be experienced in this world, even though the mother principle is related to the World to Come (but, this is sometimes read as "the World that is coming," thus relating it to the present moment). This type of happiness is not happiness in just any portion, but portion here is a part of the etzem, the essence, and as the BST says, "When you hold on to a part of the essence, you are holding it all." This is alluded to in the verse, תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל. The final words, מרב כל, mean that there is happiness in serving God that holds on not just to a portion, but to it all, "from all." This type of happiness is the essential spiritual happiness that must be integrated into the happiness we have in our material portion in this world. They must be unified until they become one. This is another meditation.

So we've seen two meditations on inserting the ayin into the alef, with two words in each meditation (אויש עויש and אין עין). And these are meditations that are particularly suitable for the month of Iyar when we insert the alef of אמר into the ayin of עמר.

Questions and answers

Q: What stage of the redemption are we currently in?

A: The question itself reflects that the point of the redemption is not properly understood. It is understood to people that the redemption is something dictated from above, but actually it is dependent upon us. For this reason, we are at the very final moment, but like the Mashiach told Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in the Talmud, that he will come today, if we listen to His voice, to God. The Rebbe heralded that everything is ready at this very moment for redemption. Now it is dependent on the spark of Mashiach in each and every one of us. When enough of these sparks act together it will happen. It is also dependent on the eyes, as we said that every person has to open his eyes and see this, that Mashiach is coming right now, at this very moment. There is a question phrased as "Who holds the key to redemption?" There are those who think that God holds the key, but the truth is that He gave the key to each of us. The key is to first of all open the eyes, and to open all the treasures inside.

Q: If God created the world to benefit man and that was His entire intent, why did He create the snake?

A: The snake is the evil inclination and it does indeed say that the Almighty regrets having created it. He asked us to bring a sacrifice to atone for this act every Rosh Chodesh. But, even as much as God regrets having created the evil inclination, He is still committed to a world in which it exists, because He continues to recreate it at every moment. And yet He regrets it. So God is carrying opposites. The reason is that God wants me to reveal the Name Ab (עב) in me, the power of steadfastness that we discussed earlier, the faculty of victory in each of us.

Let's add something. We are in Sefirat Ha'omer and today is the malchut of netzach, the kingdom of victory. Today is about the end of victory. There are two explanations regarding what the malchut of each week, of each sefirah is. One explanation is that it refers to the revelation (התגלות) of the midah, the sefirah of that week. Malchut is the revealed world. The second, deeper explanation is that the malchut is that I come to a state in which I control, rule over this sefirah. Meaning that I can control and transform this faculty within myself. We said before that there are two ways to change our character fully. Either through the mindfulness of the father principle, or the happiness of a mitzvah. Now at the end of each week in Sefirat Ha'omer, there is a revelation of the mochin of Abba, the mindfulness of the father principle, and this gives us the power to control this sefirah in ourselves. Victory can be something negative, like being argumentative, enjoying conflict. But it can be something good, like a person who is adamant, who won't budge, who won't give in. The Rebbe said that to bring the Mashiach there have to be 10 adamant people, stubborn (עקשנים), who simply won't give up. This is the positive form of the sefirah of victory. The power to decide that I can control my victory, that is today. This is the malchut, the kingdom, sovereignty over victory, allowing me to direct the faculty in whatever direction I deem proper. Rebbe Nachman writes based on the Zohar that netzach is the forehead. That is were stubbornness is.

So going back to the question, the role of the snake is to be conquered. The one who kills him is the Mashiach. The one who kills him is given the King's daughter. Who is this daughter, she is prayer. For this reason we need the snake. Everything is needed. All that God created He created for His honor.

Q: Usually a person is warned not to commit a sin. And in the case of Adam and Eve, they were not aware of how much evil and damage could come about from listening to the snake. So God created a world and they thought everything was fine and I believe they didn't understand how dangerous the snake was.

A: This is the verse, נורא עלילה על בני אדם. That is what the sages say. God made it so that it was very difficult to not sin in this case. It is hard to understand, but the final goal is the elevation that will come in the form of Mashiach as a result of this descent.

Sometimes it says that they did understand how terrible their choice was, but they preferred to sin and not come out as more righteous than the Almighty who had directed things so that they would sin. There is also such an explanation.

This also means to control your victory, to decide that this time you're not going to come out on top.

Q: How can one perform mitzvot with joy?

A: The foundation of joy is lowliness. Both materially and spiritually I don't deserve anything. It is all a gift from God. This is true with respect to the material wealth I have and all the more so spiritually. The word "mitzvah" means "together," and God is giving me an incomprehensible opportunity to connect with him, to be one with Him by performing a mitzvah. That I, nothing, can become one with God, that gives a tremendous amount of happiness.

Q: What about the security situation? How long will we suffer from the Arabs? What will be?

A: Like we said before. It depends only on us to decide that we are stronger. God gives us the strength to be strong. We really are strong, but someone decides, like we just said, that "this time we won't be victorious." He doesn't have real control over his victory.

Q: What can we say to young children that live in locations that have Arabs around them, children that are afraid? How can we calm them?

A: It says that someone who lives in a border area has to be of strong character. This is something the sages say. So you have to bring them up to have strong character (גבורים). Their father and mother also have to do all they can to change the situation, to ensure that when this child grows up, they become another voice in the chorus of prophets, קול צופך נשאו קול, as we quoted earlier. The word voice appears twice in this verse, indicating that a lot of voices need to be heard to change reality.

Second pesach teaches us to be optimistic. You must be optimistic. The Jewish people exists only because of our optimism. We have to be optimistic at the level that is supra-rational. To be optimistic that we can control victory, that is our task.

Q: Everything that was discussed is understood, including everything that was said about happiness. But, I don't know what it is, but people can't overcome, they can't control their emotions, so I don't know which is stronger today, happiness or sadness and doubt. As much as I think that our generation is very strong, people understand, they learn, they invest time in this, but still, the joy and happiness don't show.

A: Ok. Apparently you don't spread yiddishkeit enough. Every Jew has mazal and the mazal is to spread Torah. If we would influence people enough, reality would change.

Q: It says that when one person does teshuvah the entire world is redeemed. I feel that who am I to try and succeed where so many great people have failed. Great men have tried to bring the redemption for 2000 years and failed.

A: That's true, but there is a parable given to us by great tzadikim that the king had a ring that was lost. Nobody could find it, not even the greatest subjects. And then suddenly someone, a simple person, stumbled upon it. It says that Mashiach comes without concentration, **היסח הדעת**, without intent. One has to stop thinking about how everyone else failed to bring Mashiach and therefore who am I to succeed. One has to remove such a thought from the mind. That is the meaning of **היסח הדעת**, in this case. The verse says, that with earnestness one can succeed. If the Rebbe said to do all that we can to bring the Mashiach, then this is the only important thing to do, forgetting about all other attempts that have failed. In Psalms itself, **מצאתי דוד עבדי**, "I have found David my servant." The Mashiach is suddenly found. He comes suddenly. Maybe it depends only on you, regardless of whether you are great or small.