

The Kohen shall look after the affliction has been washed and behold! The affliction has not changed its color. (13:55)

The *Zohar Hakadosh* notes that the words *nega* and *oneg* are comprised of the same Hebrew letters, but in different sequence: *nun, gimmel, ayin* – *nega*; *ayin, nun, gimmel* – *oneg*. The difference between them is where the *ayin* is placed – at the beginning of the word (as in *oneg*, pleasure) or the end of the word (*nega*, affliction). The *metzora* is to derive a powerful lesson therein. If he expiates his hurtful speech and changes his life, he transforms his present state of *nega* to *oneg*. As long as he is afflicted, however, it indicates that he has not yet repented.

Horav Leib Lopian, zl, expands on this idea. As mentioned, the difference between *oneg* and *nega* is the placement of the *ayin*. The *Rosh Hayeshivah* extrapolates this thought to one's approach to life and living. If, at an early age, one uses his eyes and heart to understand what Hashem asks of him and he conforms to it, he merits that his life will be one of *oneg*, pleasure. He knows where he is going; he is focused on what is appropriate; he lives life with Torah and *mitzvos* as his lodestar. If, however, he comes to his senses only during his twilight years, and then takes time (because, now, he has so much of it) to look back on his life, he sadly will see *nega*. While one can repent later in life and go forward with hope, it will not undo what has been done. The *nega* is present. Therefore, it is best that he place his life on the proper track, so that he will not only arrive safely at his "destination," but he will look back on his "trip" as being meaningful and pleasurable.

Horav Avraham Gurvitz, Shlita, quotes *Horav Eliezer Lopian, zl*, who cites the *Midrash Rabbah Shir HaShirim* 1:10, that Shlomo *Hamelech* wrote *Shir HaShirim* in his youth, *Sefer Mishlei* later on in life (but still young), and, *Sefer Koheles* in his old age. The *Rosh Yeshivah* (Toras Emes, London) explained that when one who comes to Torah i.e. studies, lives and is guided by it, at an early stage in his life, in his early youth, his life is one of *Shir HaShirim*, of song and joy. It is a life of purpose and meaning. One who arrives at the decision to live a Torah life later on, once he has reached young adulthood, when he has formed his habits and adopted a different lifestyle, his life is one of *Mishlei*, cognitive, common sensical realization that change is imperative. He is guided by the logic that he refused – or of which he was unaware during his youth. He certainly can change, but it will be a thoughtful process. The one who lives a life of physical privilege, squandering his time and prowess toward the base and ephemeral will be like *Koheles*, who understood that life as is, without direction and enduring meaning, is *hevel*, nothing, *haveil havalim*, futility of futilities. He must now make every attempt to salvage whatever he can of what is left of his life, before it is too late.

Life has purpose; otherwise, Hashem would not have created us. Hashem has assigned each of us a life mission to fulfill. One of the underpinnings of Jewish belief is that Hashem created this world with purpose. The cornerstone of Judaism is that each of us has a Divine mission to fulfill. It is that mission and its execution which give our life meaning and fulfillment. It is that sense of mission from which we derive our strength and resilience. It is what makes us go forward, to build and

create – despite being plagued with tragedy and grief. Torah and *Chassidus* in America were built by *udim mutzalim mei'eish*, firebrands plucked from the fire, survivors of the European Holocaust, who did not defer to grief, but instead used it as the foundation for building the future for us. How sad it is when people wait/waste an entire life before they realize that their lives have purpose, that they have been charged with fulfilling a Divine mission.

Time is a Divine gift. How we use it defines who we are and how we view this gift. I saw an inspiring thought concerning the idiom, “killing time,” which in my opinion, is tantamount to murder. Only, with murder a perpetrator and a victim are involved. The perpetrator is the victim when one kills time. The following poem/essay (cited by Rabbi Efrem Goldberg) is especially inspiring. The author chose to remain anonymous. Its message is like its author, faceless. This allows for each of us to attach our life and identity to its message.

“To realize the value of one year: Ask a student who failed his exam.

“To realize the value of one month: Ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.

“To realize the value of one week: Ask the editor of a weekly newspaper (or *Peninim*).

“To realize the value of one day: Ask a daily wage earner who has ten mouths to feed.

“To realize the value of one hour: Ask those who are waiting for a loved one in surgery.

“To realize the value of one minute: Ask the person who missed the train.

“To realize the value of one second: Ask the person who survived an accident.

“To realize the value of one millisecond: Ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics.”

Every moment is precious. A moment wasted is irretrievable. We might make up what we wanted to accomplish, but the moment in time is lost forever.