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The Serpent - HaNachash - הַנָּחָשׁ

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In this study I would like to understand why Chazal teach that there is a significant connection between the serpent (nachash)[[1]](#footnote-1) in Gan Eden and the Mashiach. On the face of it, this seems so contradictory and outrageous[[2]](#footnote-2) that it boggles the mind. Never the less, if Chazal tell us this, then we know it is true and our understanding needs to be corrected.

The first use of a word in the Torah is the place where that ‘thing’ was created and, as such, teaches us the ‘meaning’ of that word and that thing. The first use of the word *the serpent*, HaNachash, is found in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:1*** *Now the serpent was more subtle* עָרוּם *than any beast of the field which HaShem G-d had made. And he said unto the woman: 'Yea, hath G-d said: Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'*

One serpent that stands out historically is the first one, THE serpent, the one that convinced Chava to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, against G-d’s will. Thanks to his ruse and advice, Mankind was sent into the longest exile to date, the one that won’t conclude until Mashiach ends it. Let’s look at this serpent first, then let’s examine his ‘cousins’ that are found elsewhere in the Tanach.

According to Ibn Ezra, consistent with his commentary to Genesis 30:27, that **nachash** נחש **basically connotes “testing”**.[[3]](#footnote-3)

“What is the Nachash? The Torah describes him as ‘Arum - עָרוּם’.[[4]](#footnote-4) Literally, the word Arum means ‘sly’, in the sense of manipulative and sneaky. But what does the Nachash symbolize for us? … the Nachash is fantasy and false imagination. The snake had an over-active imagination and was trapped in a world of fantasy. … Our own overactive imagination and fantasy, our inner snake, clouds and distorts our accurate vision of reality. This ego-based faculty ends up feeding us only what our ego wants, or, in a distorted way, what our ego is afraid of. Our fantasy either paints us as all-powerful and important or as utterly worthless and destitute. If your ego is focussing on money, for example, it may create imagery of you becoming a billionaire, or of you losing your job and living on the street. This is the danger of the ‘snake’; it pulls a person out of a perception of reality and inflates his ego with exaggerated grandiosity or crippling fear.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

In our day, old serpents often run out of venom and are incapable of killing someone, whereas young serpents can be incredibly lethal. The old serpent still causes pain and constricting, but at least you survive. Now, the serpent in Gan Eden had only been alive for a few hours. This dude was so lethal that he ‘killed’ everyone!

## Genesis 1:20-21

The first snake mentioned in the Torah is found in the very first chapter of Genesis, on the fifth day of creation:

**Bereshit (Genesis) 1:20-21** And God said: 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' And God created the great sea-monsters (taninim - **אֶת-הַתַּנִּינִם**), and every living creature that creepeth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

‘Tanin’ are found throughout the Tanach and are translated in various ways as: serpents, dragons, crocodiles, and more… These special creatures deserve their own study, so I will give a brief look later in this paper, but I will confine this study to the critters that are usually translated as ‘serpents’.

**Rashi on Genesis 1:21** “The great monsters” - the large fishes[[6]](#footnote-6) that are in the sea; and according to an aggadic[[7]](#footnote-7) tradition[[8]](#footnote-8) it means here the levyathan and its consort which He created male and female. He, however, killed the female and preserved it in salt for the righteous in the time to come, for had they been permitted to be fruitful and to multiply the world could not have endured because of them.

The next serpent we find in the Torah is in:

## Genesis 3:1

**Bereshit (Genesis) 3:1-5** Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which HaShem God had made. And he said unto the woman: 'Yea, hath God said: Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?' 2 And the woman said unto the serpent: 'Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' 4 And the serpent said unto the woman: 'Ye shall not surely die; 5 for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.'

So, this serpent could speak, walk, and was very inteligent.

## Micah 7:15

The Exodus from Egypt is the prototype which will be copied – on a much grander scale – with the coming of the Messiah.

**Micah 7:14-20** Tend Thy people with Thy staff, the flock of Thy heritage, that dwell solitarily, as a forest in the midst of the fruitful field; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. **15 'As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things.'[[9]](#footnote-9)** 16  The nations shall see and be put to shame for all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17 They shall lick the dust like a **serpent כַּנָּחָשׁ**; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places; they shall come with fear unto HaShem our God, and shall be afraid because of Thee. 18 Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20 Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, as Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

This is a prophecy, not about miracles that the Creator will perform, but about those that He will show.

He will only need to show them, because they have already been performed. He performs them countless times every day, within the minute details of our lives.

They are the greatest of miracles. So great, they escape our perception. For our minds are incapable of perceiving a boundless G‑d within the neatly bounded order of a physical world.

Until the physical will have been transformed through our labor. Transformed and made transparent, so that these most ultimate of wonders will shine through.

Our world will be a lens to perceive the infinite.

The Talmud states that "In the merit of righteous women, the Jews were redeemed from Egypt." Similarly, the Sages associated subsequent redemptions with the merit of Jewish women. We have been promised,[[10]](#footnote-10) "As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show you wonders." The Holy Ari emphasizes that the future redemption will follow the pattern of the Exodus and, thus, will also come as a result of the merit of the righteous women of that generation. Since the generation of the ultimate redemption will be a reincarnation of the generation of the exodus from Egypt, the future redemption will reflect the pattern of that archetypal redemption.

## Zohar 11, 68b

**Zohar 11, 68b** Said R. Abba: ‘We have frequently affirmed that whatever the Holy One has made, whether it be above or below, has a purpose: He is truth and His work is truth, and therefore no phenomenon in the world is to be spurned as of no account, since everything is formed according to a divine pattern, and therefore is of some necessity. Once, for example, R. Eleazar was walking along accompanied by R. Hezekiah, when they came across a snake. R. Hezekiah was about to kill it, but R. Eleazar said: ‘Nay, leave it alone, do not kill it!’ Said R. Hezekiah to him: ‘But is it not a noxious creature which kills people?’ To which R. Eleazar replied: ‘It is written :”Doth the serpent bite without enchantment? (lit. whispering)”.[[11]](#footnote-11) The serpent does not bite unless it be whispered to from above and commanded to kill some one, so as to prevent that person from committing some evil; thus the very poison is used by the Holy One in order to perform some miracle. It is, in truth, all in His hands; it is all according to His plan, and if it had no purpose He would not have created it. And if it is wrong to despise anything in this world, how much more sinful must it be to think lightly of any word or act of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is written: “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good”.[[12]](#footnote-12) The “living God” (Elohim Hayyim) purposed to give us light and to care for us in His Providence; and in His creation all are united, above and below, the “Right Side” and the “Left Side”, the angel of life and the angel of death: all are part of His plan, and it is “very good”; it is all part of the same mystic doctrine, apprehended by those who contemplate the mystery of wisdom.

***Arizal, Sha’ar haPesukim on 'Balak*** *With this you will understand how Balak was a sorcerer, for Bilaam was the snake, as it says in the Zohar, and the snake has no power other than its mouth. So, too, Bilaam who came (spiritually) from Abel the negative side of Abel - associated with the mouth.*

**Zohar, Chayei Sara 12:74** Rabbi Yitzchak and Rabbi Yosi were walking from Tiberias to Lod. Rabbi Yitzchak said, I wonder about the evil man **Bilaam**. All he did was from the side of defilement. Here we learn a secret, which is that all kinds of sorcery and witchcraft of the world are connected and derive from the primordial serpent, which is the impure spirit of defilement. Therefore all enchantment (Heb. נְחָשִׁים) is named after the primordial serpent (Heb. nachash נחש). They all derive from that side, and anyone who is drawn to that is defiled.

Snakes are not automatically tied to evil or sin. Indeed, not all images of snakes in the Tanach are negative. In the Exodus story, for instance, Moshe’s staff turned into a serpent to get Pharaoh’s attention.[[13]](#footnote-13) Also, in the wilderness, the Israelites were healed from snake bites by looking at a serpent on a pole, **which Moshe made**.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Thus we see that both Bilaam and Moshe are associated with serpents.

Abel translitterates from the Hebrew as Hevel הֶבֶל. Chazal teach that Hevel’s transmigrated soul was given to Moshe and Bilaam, the two greatest prophets that have ever lived.

בלעם משה הֶבֶל

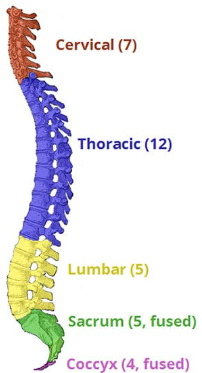
Bilaam Moshe Hevel

The letters of Hevel’s הֶבֶל name were given to these two great prophets. Moshe got the hay ה and Bilaam got the beit ב and the lamed ל.

**Hevel means ‘breath’.**

This is interesting because HaShem added a hay to Abram to become Avraham. He added a hay to Sarai to become Sarah. He added a hay to yosef to become Yehosef. In each case they were given significant abilities that they had not previously had.

## Vertebrae

The amida, shemone esrae, is The prayer. Durin the amidah we bow, at certain points, with a snake-like motion.

At birth, a baby has 33 vertebrae. Seven of the vertebrae will fuse together and we will end up with 26 vertebrae. Both 33 and 26 are both very mystical numbers, pregnant with significance.

The 33rd day of the omer is the most mystical day of the year. This is the day Rashbi revealed the Zohar.

Twenty-six is the numerical value of HaShem’s name.

When we bow during the Amida, eighteen of those vertebrae protrude.

**Berachot 28b** To what do these eighteen benedictions correspond? R. Hillel the son of Samuel b. Nahmani said: To the eighteen times that David mentioned the Divine Name in the Psalm, Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye sons of might.[[15]](#footnote-15) R. Joseph said: To the eighteen times the Divine Name is mentioned in the Shema’. R. Tanhum said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: To the eighteen vertebrae in the spinal column. R. Tanhum also said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: In saying the Tefillah one should bow down [at the appropriate places] until all the vertebrae in the spinal column are loosened.

**Berachot 12b** R. Shesheth, when he bowed, used to bend like a reed,1 and when he raised himself, used to raise himself like a serpent.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Baba Kama 16a** The spine of a man after seven years turns into a snake,[[17]](#footnote-17) should he not bow[[18]](#footnote-18) while reciting the benediction,

**Berachot 5:1** mishnah. One should not stand up to say tefillah save in a reverent frame of mind.[[19]](#footnote-19) the pious men of old[[20]](#footnote-20) used to wait an hour before praying in order that they might concentrate their thoughts upon their father in heaven. Even if a king greets him [while praying] he should not answer him: even if a snake is wound round his heel he should not break off.

This serpent. Of Genesis 3, is associated with the feminine. The serpent approached Eve, not Adam.

**Zohar Chadash on Bereshit (32b)** Said Rabbi Yose: It is written, "And Adam called his wife Chava because she was the mother of all life..."[[21]](#footnote-21) Rabbi Perachyah said to him: He should have named her “ Chaya"because cf “ life” [chai] but she was called instead based on her fated encounter with the Serpent [Chiviya[[22]](#footnote-22)], since the Serpent enticed Chava.

# The Serpent Was a Beast of the Field

Although we tend to imagine the "Serpent" as a "serpent", we should keep in mind that the creature who seduced Eve assumed its lowly, legless, slithering form only as a result of its sin.[[23]](#footnote-23) At the point at which the Serpent presents himself and his seductive arguments to Eve, this "proto-serpent" had far more in common with Adam and Eve than we might care to imagine.[[24]](#footnote-24) Perhaps this walking, talking Serpent is best described as a soul-less humanoid. Because he, too, was created in the image of the Almighty, the Serpent possessed great capabilities of speech and reasoning, but he uses these gifts as weapons of destruction in order to satisfy his own desire.

Until the serpent committed the crime of persuading the Adam and Chava to eat from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, in the Garden of Eden, he walked about on two feet like man.[[25]](#footnote-25) As punishment for bringing man low, he was condemned to crawl upon his belly and to be in eternal mortal conflict with man.

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan adds to Genesis 3 the removal of the serpent’s feet. Note the addition by the Meturgeman: The Lord G-d “said to the serpent, ‘Because you did this, cursed are you. . . Upon your belly you shall go about, and your feet shall be cut off”.[[26]](#footnote-26) According to R. Simeon b. Lakish, in Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes, when G-d had cursed the serpent,[[27]](#footnote-27) “the ministering angels descended and cut off its hands and legs, and its cry went from one end of the world to the other.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

The Ibn Ezra is of the opinion that the Nachash was a snake. It was a rather strange snake; it had legs and it spoke, but it was a snake nonetheless.

“And it seems to me that we should take this parsha literally. The Nachash spoke and walked upright and He who gave intelligence to man instilled it in the snake. The passuk testifies that the snake was the most ARUM of all the animals, but obviously not on the level of man. The word ARUM means intelligent (chacham), that it can act with cunning.”

The Ibn Ezra bases himself on the fact that the curse later relates to a very physical snake: “Because you did this, more cursed shall you be than all animals...on your belly you shall crawl and you will eat dirt all the days of your life and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. They shall strike at your head and you shall strike at their heel.” Apparently, this is a real snake. The type that we know as a snake! It also seems that at one time, previous to this incident, the snake had legs that are now somehow removed to leave the snake slithering on his belly.

Biblical scholars have assumed the Nachash, נחש, is a reptile.204 Everyone can defend such a translation by simply citing a lexicon. But the narrative is definitive in ascertaining the meaning of the Nachash.

R. Hoshaya the Elder said that Genesis 1:25 *And G-d made the beast of the earth*… This means the serpent.[[29]](#footnote-29)

***Bereshit (Genesis) 1:25*** *And G-d made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the ground after its kind; and G-d saw that it was good.*

Genesis 3 begins with the words that the Nachash (נחש) was the cleverest “beast of the field that the Lord G-d had made”. The Nachash is thus one of the beasts of the field, not one of the cattle or reptiles.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:14-15*** *And HaShem G-d said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou [art] cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:[[30]](#footnote-30) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel* (eikev - **עקב**)*.[[31]](#footnote-31)*

Thus we understand that a serpent is now a reptile, but when it was created it was a beast of the field, according to a simple reading of the text.

Now, the Torah tells us about man crushing the serpent’s head and the serpent biting man’s heel. This something that the Peshat makes clear. But a look at the sod level reveals something much deeper.

***Midrash HaNe’elam*** *Rav Yose asked: On the view that the serpent is man's Evil Inclination, how can one explain this verse?*

*He answered: It teaches that the only way to destroy the serpent is to crush him with the head; and who is the head? — The head of the Yeshiva; [that is, only with Torah can the Evil Inclination, personified by the serpent, be crushed.] Conversely, the 'serpent' can slay a man only through the heel, when one transgresses and tramples G-d's commandments under his heel. That is the meaning of the verse: 'and you will bite his heel', the Evil Inclination slays man by inducing him to trample the commandments.*

The Sephorno explains what the nachash was:

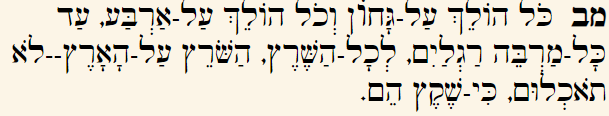
“It is the Satan. It is the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination.[[32]](#footnote-32)) – (The usage of the metaphor of a snake alludes to) maximum damage with minimum visibility, for we often give something a name reminiscent of something similar. A king may be called “a lion” and enemies are described in the Bible as “Northern snakes”.[[33]](#footnote-33) The Yetzer Hara, which induces sin, is similar to a snake in that it causes enormous damage despite its invisibility and it gains little benefit for itself. ...the power of desire is activated by the imaginative faculty which feeds its illusory physical pleasures... THE SNAKE WAS MORE ‘ARUM’ THAN OTHER ANIMALS - that is to say that they (Adam and Chava) had very powerful imaginative faculties, more than any other being, propelling towards them with great force images of pleasure, to the seat of desire.... thus the snake, which is really the imagination ... is the woman inside her own mind.”

Regarding the slaughter of the Yetzer hara, which is also known as the “נחש” (serpent), the Meforshim told us that, in the future, it will become good and its letter nun נ (gematria 50) will get changed to the letters mem, yud "מי” (same gematria 40+10 = 50). When we add the letters “מי” (Ed: the letters to replace the nun נ of “נחש”) to “תש” (Ed: what is left of “נחש” after removing the nun נ) we get "משיח” (Mashiach) and it will be good, because HaShem will cause the defiled spirits to be removed from the land.[[34]](#footnote-34)

# Middle letter

If we want to connect to the Torah, then we need to connect with:

**Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:42** Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all fours, or whatsoever hath many feet, even all swarming things that swarm upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are a detestable thing. Note the large vav: גָּחוֹן

In this verse we can connect with Mashiach and with HaShem by NOT connecting with the serpent! This pasuk is the place of connection. The Talmud comes to teach us about several “middles”:

***Kiddushin 30a*** *The early [scholars] were called Soferim[[35]](#footnote-35) because they used to count all the letters of the Torah.[[36]](#footnote-36) Thus, they said, the waw in gahon[[37]](#footnote-37) marks half the letters of the Torah; darosh darash,[[38]](#footnote-38) half the words; we-hithggalah,[[39]](#footnote-39) half the verses. The boar out of the wood [mi-ya’ar] doth ravage it:[[40]](#footnote-40) the ‘ayin of ya’ar marks half of the Psalms.[[41]](#footnote-41) But he, being full of compassion, forgiveth their iniquity,[[42]](#footnote-42) half of the verses.*

As an aside, gachon is a peculiar word which uniquely suggests the middle of the body. Gachon is only used twice in all of the Torah. Once, here in Leviticus, and yet only one other time aside from that, and that’s in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:14*** *And HaShem God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly (gachon) shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

So far we have Rashi telling us that *the serpent*, in Vayikra 11:42, is like *the serpent* of Bereshit 3.

The midrash on Song of Songs makes much of the fact that Vayikra (Leviticus) is the central book of the Torah. It is “centered” in the Torah.

The middle letter[[43]](#footnote-43) of the Torah[[44]](#footnote-44) is in the book of Vayikra, Leviticus, in the middle of the halachic laws of kosher animals! In the beginning of chapter 11 of the section of Shemini, it is written:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:1ff*** *HaShem spoke to Moshe and to Aaron, saying to them. Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the earth. Everything among the animals that has a split hoof… that one you may eat of.*

Forty-one verses later it is stated,

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:42*** *Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon [all] four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they [are] an abomination.*

Note that the subject of this pasuk is to “*not eat*”. Please recall that *eating* is a form of connecting. Thus we understand that we are *not* to connect with the evil serpent.

Rashi tells us a bit about this word “gachon”:

**that goes on its belly**: This is the snake (Torat Kohanim[[45]](#footnote-45) 11:163). The word גָּחוֹן denotes “bending low” [and it is used to describe the snake] because it moves while bent, a prostrated posture, prostrated on its belly.

Rashi says that the reptile referred to is the serpent, the *nachash*, the type of creature which enticed Adam and Chava to eat from the forbidden fruit. In Midrashic literature this creature is often equated with the evil inclination.

Why is this creature given the distinction of being placed in the exact center of the Torah? The following thoughts came to mind.

First, there have been (non-Jewish) beliefs which viewed evil as being something outside HaShem’s direct sphere of influence or management. Judaism, on the other hand, views evil as being one of the many tools that HaShem uses to manage His world. Evil is the servant of HaShem and this is reflected by positioning this servant in the exact center of the Torah.

Second, Chazal[[46]](#footnote-46) teach that a person can not escape evil by merely avoiding physicality. We must deal with evil, not run away from it.

HaShem gave us a powerful weapon against the powers of evil. This weapon is also a shield and an antidote. It is the Torah, itself.

***Sukkah 52b*** *The school of R. Ishmael taught, If this repulsive wretch[[47]](#footnote-47) meets thee, drag him to the Beth Hamidrash. If he is of stone, he will dissolve, if of iron he will shiver into fragments. ‘If he is of stone he will dissolve’, for it is written, Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the water[[48]](#footnote-48) and it is written, The waters wear the stones.[[49]](#footnote-49) ‘If he is of iron, he will shiver into fragments’, for it is written, Is not my word like as fire? Saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?[[50]](#footnote-50)*

Perhaps this advice for mankind is reflected here, where we find the *nachash* completely surrounded by the Torah.

The word in Hebrew for “belly” is *gachon* – גחון, spelled *gimal, chet, vav, and nun.* “Everything that crawls on its belly” is referring to a serpent. It is this *vav* (ו) of *gachon* that is the middle letter of the Torah. We have journeyed to the center of the world and landed in the belly of a serpent![[51]](#footnote-51)

The u “vav” in the word “gachon”, belly, must be raised because it is the middle central letter of the Torah. It is one of the eleven majuscules in the Torah.

… על־ארבע הולך / וכל על־גחון לולך כל

If you look into the Sefer Torah, the actual scroll of the Torah written by a scribe, you will see that this middle *vav* stands out from all the other letters and words because it is written larger than the other letters. Its elongated form is not due to a scribal embellishment. Rather, the Torah scroll *must* have this elongated *vav* in order for it to be halachically kosher to be read in the synagogue.

# Wise as Serpents

Serpents were understood, by the Nazarean Codicil, to be wise:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 10:16*** *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

So also is a Hakham, a Rabbi, a “wise one”.

***Abot 2:10*** *They [each] said three things. R. Eliezer says, “Let the respect owing to your fellow be as precious to you as the respect owing to you yourself. “And don’t be easy to anger. “And repent one day before you die. “And warm yourself by the fire of the sages (Hakhamim), but be careful of their coals, so you don’t get burned. “For their bite is the bite of a fox, and their sting is the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is like the hiss of a snake. “And everything they say is like fiery coals.”[[52]](#footnote-52)*

**Nachash – Snake - נָחָשׁ**

The Hebrew word for snake is NaChaSh (נחש).

Snakes are **chaos creatures** according to Ancient Near Eastern literature, they are not automatically tied to evil or sin. Indeed, not all images of snakes in the Bible are negative. In the Exodus story, for instance, Moshe’s staff turned into a serpent to get Pharaoh’s attention.[[53]](#footnote-53) Also, in the wilderness, the Israelites were healed from snake bites by looking at a serpent on a pole, which Moshe made.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Both Bilaam and Moshe are associated with the serpent.

In Matthew 10:16, Yeshua instructs his disciples to “be shrewd as serpents” – he would not have suggested this simile if snakes are unequivocally evil.

Jastrow defines a nachash as:

**נָחָשׁ** m. (b. h.; נָחַשׁ)

**1)** [*the hissing*,] *serpent*. Gen. R. s. 22 נ׳ הקדמוני the original serpent (the seducer of Eve). Gen. R. s. 20 נ׳ זה רשע בעל תשובות that serpent is wicked and skilled in arguments. Bekh. 8ᵃ נ׳ לשבע שנים וכ׳ a serpent’s pregnancy lasts seven years, and for that wicked animal I find no parallel (in the vegetable kingdom).[[55]](#footnote-55)

**2)** *a pungent* (*poisonous*) *fluid* in the leaves or in the stems of onions kept for a long time in the ground.[[56]](#footnote-56)

**3)** *a disease of the eye*, v. חִלָּזוֹן.[[57]](#footnote-57)

According to Ibn Ezra, consistent with his commentary to Genesis 30:27, that **nachash, נחש basically connotes “testing”**.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains that *nachash* is an umbrella term which includes many different types of snakes. Alternatively he proposes that the word *nachash* is related to the word *lachash* (literally, “whisper”, but colloquially “an incantation”), and refers specifically to snakes whose dangers can be averted by charming them into submission. Indeed, Rashi (to Jeremiah 8:17) explains that a *nachash* after seventy years turns into a *tzefa* and can no longer be charmed, implying that the word *nachash* only applies to a snake which can be charmed. Similarly, Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) argues that *nachash* is derived from the root letters *CHET-SHIN*, which refer to *moving slowly* (like the word *rochesh* that means “creeping/crawling”) and *clandestinely* (like the word *lachash*).

Although the phenomenon of the *Nachash* has been explained as a metaphor for evil, the consensus amoung the classic commentaries is that its existence is literally true (See ArtScroll Breishis III-l, p. 114, “Now the serpent was cunning...”). However, “literally true” as explained here and throughout Talmudic and Kabbalah sources means *literally,* in a higher dimension.

## Isaiah 27:1

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *In that day HaShem with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent* נָחָשׁ*, even leviathan* לִוְיָתָן *that crooked serpent* נָחָשׁ*; and he shall slay the dragon* אֶת*-*הַתַּנִּין *that is in the sea.*

The nachash seems to be an actual serpent or snake. It is a common word in the Tanach.



Shefifon[[59]](#footnote-59) - שפיפון

Nachash HaKadmoni. The Gaon emphasizes that the Nachash starts from a single tail, splits into two bodies and then both heads return to bite the single tail and become one again. The Gaon explains in many places that this is what the concept of Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David is about. Details can be found in his commentary to Tikkunei Zohar Chadash, Sifra d'Tzniutah and L'Shem Shevo v'Achlamah.



Universal Uroboros 1

In the Zohar, the imagery of the snake putting its tail in its mouth is used to illustrate the sin of "the evil tongue", i.e. slander, a gross misuse of the power of speech. (Zohar III:205b) People commit this sin when material consciousness gets the better of them. As is explained in the Tanya (ch. 32), those who give their bodies preeminence over their souls see only the outer shell of their fellow man, which differentiates between people, and are oblivious to the inner souls. They thus fall into the sin of hatred, which leads to slander.

This being the case, Paro was both a head and a tail, in the idiom of the verse, "G‑d will cut off from Israel both the head and the tail…on one day."(Isaiah 9:14)

***Soncino Footnote to Baba Batra 17a*** *The counsel given by the serpent to Eve, which brought death on all mankind, and not for any sin they themselves committed. [The reference is to physical death only and is thus not to be confused with the doctrine of “original sin” involving the condemnation of the whole human race to a death that is eternal.]*

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22** For ***since death came through a man***, also the resurrection of the dead has come through a man. For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with the Messiah all will be made alive.

**Zohar II:54a, Soncino Press Edition** For, indeed, *“there is not a righteous man upon earth that does good and sins not”* (Eccl. 7:20). And even the sinless ones who only died because of the “counsel of the Serpent” will arise and be counselors to the Messiah.

\* \* \*

We may derive, then, that the eighteenth day of Iyar (Lag B’omer) is an auspicious time for King Mashiach’s revelation. However, this revelation may come in the form of blessing, as we had with the manna, or punishment, as we had with the flood. In preparation of this day it is incumbent upon us in to pray and repent so that HaShem’s revelation manifest itself in the form of blessing and not destruction.

***Sanhedrin 59b*** *Come and hear: And over every living creature that moveth upon the earth![[60]](#footnote-60) — That refers to the serpent. For it has been taught: — R. Simeon b. Manassia said: Woe for the loss of a great servant. For had not the serpent been cursed, every Israelite would have had two valuable serpents, sending one to the north and one to the south to bring him costly gems, precious stones and pearls.[[61]](#footnote-61) Moreover, one would have fastened a thong under its tail, with which it would bring forth earth for his garden and waste land.[[62]](#footnote-62)*

# Mashiach

It is worth noting that the Nazarean Codicil explicitly relates the Messiah *Mashiach* to *HaNachash* (the serpent) when it compares the incident of:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5-9*** *And the people spoke against G-d, and against Moses: 'Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.'* ***6*** *And HaShem sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.* ***7*** *And the people came to Moses, and said: 'We have sinned, because we have spoken against HaShem, and against thee; pray unto HaShem, that He take away the serpents from us.' And Moses prayed for the people.* ***8*** *And HaShem said unto Moses: 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live.'* ***9*** *And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.*

Now compare the above incident with Mashiach in:

***Yochanan (John) 3:14*** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:*

Thus the sod level writer makes an explicit connection between the brass serpent and the Mashiach.

As an aside, According to the Talmud, Yishai is called Nachash (serpent) because he never committed a sin but died only because of the bite of the serpent, which caused the mortality of all humans:

**Baba Bathra 17a** Our Rabbis taught: Four died through the counsel of the serpent,[[63]](#footnote-63) namely, Benjamin son of Jacob, Amram the father of Moses, Jesse the father of David, and Kilab the son of David. We know this only from tradition in regard to all of them save Jesse the father of David, in regard to whom it is stated distinctly in the Scripture, as it is written, And Absalom set Amasa over the host instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Isra the Israelite, that went in to Abigal the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother.[[64]](#footnote-64) Now was she the daughter of Nahash? Was she not the daughter of Jesse, as It is written, And their [Jesse's sons’] sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail?[[65]](#footnote-65) What it means therefore is, The daughter of him who died through the counsel of the serpent [nachash].

**Shmuel bet (II Samuel) 17:25** And Absalom had set Amasa over the host instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man, whose name was Ithra the Jesraelite, that went in to Abigal the daughter of Nachash (serpent), sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother.

Rashi on II Samuel 17:25 - **the daughter of Nahash:**This is Jesse, David’s father. Our Rabbis stated that he died without sin, only because of the advice of the Serpent (נחש).

Rashi in Shabbat[[66]](#footnote-66) comments: *“The advice of the snake.” [That is,] the advice with which the snake misled Chavah, and because of no other sin, for they did not sin.*

According to Rashi, “the advice of the snake” refers to the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17-18** Dan shall be a serpent Nachash **נחש** in the way, a horned snake shefifon שְׁפִיפֹן in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward. 18 I wait for Thy salvation לִישׁוּעָתְךָ, HaShem.

The horse is the symbol for war in the Torah.

Yaaqob’s blessing to Dan, in Bereshit 49:17, symbolizes him by a type of snake called shefifon, which had wings in order to fly swiftly; Abarbanel explains that this is an eagle.



Rashi to Genesis 49:17 **a viper:**Heb. שְׁפִיפֹן. This is a shefifon, and I say it is given this appellation because it bites, “and you will bite (תְּשׁוּפֶנוּ) his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

**Midrash, Bereshit Rabbah 98:14** Became Jacob our patriarch envisioned him [Samson] and believed that he was the messianic king. "When he foresaw that he would die, he said: Will this one, too, die? “For your salvation, I hope, O God!"

**Genesis Rabbah 98:13** Just as the Unique One of the world requires no assistance, so too did Samson son of Manoah require no assistance.

“The wild, controversial Samson may seem a strange prototype for the Messiah. The midrash, however, traces various connections. Rashi reads Jacob’s blessing to Dan, “*Dan yadin amo ke-eĥad shivtei Yisrael*,” as indicating that Dan would unify (*le-aĥed*) the nation under his leadership. He would defeat his enemies like the swift and deadly serpent. It is of interest that the *gematria* (numerical value) of *Mashiach* (Hebrew for “messiah”) equals that of *naĥash* (serpent), further connecting this tribe with the promises of ultimate leadership.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

**Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 12:11** And HaShem sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan בְּדָן, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelt in safety.

**Arizal Sha’ar haGilgulim ("Gates of reincarnation"), ch 36** - Regarding Samson, my master [the Arizal] taught that this is the secret of the verse and God sent Jerubbaal and Bedan... ”[[68]](#footnote-68) and our Sages said *Bedan* is Samson, who came from Dan. The depth of the matter is that Samson was the reincarnation of Nadav son of Aharon and therefore he was called “Bedan", which is the letters of “Nadav" backwards. And because Nadav died due to not taking a wife, for he said that none of the women of Israel were worthy for him, therefore Samson was punished through the Philistine women, and also the sons of Aharon went in [to the Tabernacle] drunk with wine, so therefore Samson was a nazir from birth [and forbidden to drink wine] to rectify this.



Now this is all pertinent to our time. Consider the following Pasuk:

**Shoftim (Judges) 16:1-3** And Samson went to Gaza; there he met a hartot and slept with her. The Gazans heard that Samson had come there, so they gathered and lay in ambush for him in the town gate the whole night; and all night long they kept whispering to each “When daylight comes, we'll kill him". But Samson lay in bed only till midnight. At midnight he got up, grasped the doors of the town gate together with the two gateposts, and pulled them out along with the bar. He placed them on his shoulders and carried them off to the top of the hill that is near Hebron.

**Sota 10a** It has been taught: R. Simeon the Pious said: The width between Samson's shoulders was sixty cubits, as it is said: And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders;[[69]](#footnote-69) and there is a tradition that the gates of Gaza were not less than sixty cubits [in width].

We find ‘sixty cubits’ again in the Temple:

**Melachim alef (I Kings) 6:2** And the house which king Solomon built for HaShem, the length thereof was sixty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits.

The understand ing of Chazal is that if you want the Temple, then Gaza[[70]](#footnote-70) must first be subdued.



**Shir HaShirim Rabbah 8:9** Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai taught: If you see a Persian horse tied to a grave in the Land of Israel, anticipate the footsteps of the Messiah.

Leviatan to be slayed by Mashiach. Nachash is a picture of higher wisdom which gives men divine knowledge. Isaiah hints to both types of serpents:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *In that day HaShem with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent* נָחָשׁבָּרִחַ*, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon* אֶת*-*הַתַּנִּין *that is in the sea.*

The pole serpent and the twisted serpent are both found in the above p[asuk. The pole serpent is the good serpent and the twisted serpent is the bad serpent.

**Zohar 1, 138b** … The great serpents (taninin): these are Yaakob and Esav.

Yaakov is *Yashar El*, the straight one of God.

Malchut מלכות = 496 = Leviatan לויתן

The horse is the symbol for war in the Torah.

As an aside, **Yosef HaTzadiq** called himself a ***nachash***. I believe that this was an allusion to his role as a picture of **Mashiach ben Yosef**. He used this term in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 44:15*** *And Joseph said unto them: 'What deed is this that ye have done? know ye not that such a man as I will indeed divine?'*

The Hebrew of the above pasuk is:

טו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף, מָה-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם; הֲלוֹא יְדַעְתֶּם, כִּי-נַחֵשׁ יְנַחֵשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כָּמֹנִי.

There is a hint to Mashiach in the above pasuk. It is encoded in the verse, backwards. Here’s how you see it in the Hebrew. If you find the letter **Mem** in the last word of the Hebrew above verse and then count two letters to the right, the third letter will be a **Shin**. Do that again and the third letter will be a **Yud**, and after a skip of another two letters to the right, the third letter will be a **Chet**, which spells “**Mashiach משיח**” in reverse. Curiously, there are two instances of nachash (serpent) (נַחֵשׁ יְנַחֵשׁ)[[71]](#footnote-71) in the above pasuk, and the coded ‘Mashiach’ passes right through the second instance!

What is interesting about these words (נַחֵשׁ יְנַחֵשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כָּמֹנִי) is their **root**, which is nachash - נַחֵשׁ יְנַחֵשׁ, or serpent. This intersection of two closely related concepts, the snake and Mashiach, greatly increases the odds that the code is not random. Having said this, the encoded “Mashiach **משיח**”, even in reverse, just as lashon hara reverses the redemption, in a verse that speaks about the nachash, to brothers who were guilty of the trade of the nachash.

(The word for divining is *nachash*, the same word as the word for the serpent who seduced Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and the same numerical value as Masiach. Joseph raised the serpent to the level of Wisdom.)

To *divine* is the ability to get knowledge, or wisdom, directly from HaShem. And ‘divine’ is nachash a serpent.

So, the serpent, the nachash, in the above pasuk, is associated with divine knowledge and wisdom. This is quite a revelation! The nachash provides divine wisdom.

The association of serpents with divine knowledge and wisdom is found throughout the ancient world. Consider, for example, the Oracle of Delphi,[[72]](#footnote-72) the holy hill in Rome (the vatican[[73]](#footnote-73) – means serpent prophecy), which was holy before catholicism – it was a pagan hill. We see this same connection of serpents to prophecy and dieties in the Aztecs[[74]](#footnote-74) and the Mayans.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**Zohar1,2b** The letter pei appeared [before God] and said: “'Master of the 'Universe, it would be good to create the world with me, for the future salvation of the world is inscribed in me, as the word "**redemption**" [pedut] begins with me, so it would befitting to create the world with me. God answered: "Though you are indeed fine, the word "sin" [pesha] begins with you as well and is secretly denoted by you, like a coiled serpent that strikes and hides j head in its body. So too a sinner bows hb head [in shame] but stretches out his hands to sin...

Isaiah 11:4

The coming Jewish year is 5785 is תשפ״ה.

One snake that stands out historically is the first one, THE snake , the one that convinced Chava to eat from the Aitz HaDa’as Tov v’Ra, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, against God’s will. Thanks to his ruse and advice, Mankind was sent into the longest exile to date, the one that won’t conclude until Mashiach ends it. Hence, the gematria of Mashiach (40+300+10+8) and nachash (50+300+8) are equal, 358, since they represent two opposite sides of the same coin. The snake caused us to go into exile and Mashiach will bring us out of exile.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh of the Gal Einai Institute states, “Just as Amalek represents the epitome of evil, so does the positive snake represent the epitome of good. Mashiach himself is referred to as “Nachash HaKodesh” “the holy snake”, as alluded to by the phenomenon that the numerical value of Mashiach (358) is the same as that of the word for “snake” (nachash). In the Zohar it is told that when the holy snake, Mashiach, will kill the evil snake (overcome the fear of insanity), he will thereby merit to marry the Divine princess, to unite with the origin of the souls of Israel and so to bring redemption to the world.”[[76]](#footnote-76)

*A step deeper, Mashiach comes to transform, sublimate, and harness the snake energy to the good side*.[[77]](#footnote-77)



UN World Health Organization’s serpent

The following is an excerpt from: The Josephic Messiah, Leviathan, Metatron and the Sacred Serpent**.** The Secret Doctrine of the Gaon of Vilna Vol. II byJoel David Bakst

*One of the concepts of Mashiach ben Yoseph concerned the hidden agenda of divine stimulation, which is the ultimate source animating the accelerating thrust of technology. Now we are going to probe further into the relationship between Mashiach and technology to catch a glimpse of just how ancient-and eternal-this relationship really is. In the process, it should become clear that, although we do speak of a "modern" confluence between science and Jewish mysticism, this term is, in fact, a misnomer. Fundamentally, technology and Kabbalah have known each other from the very beginning of time.*

*There is a well known, yet confusing, rabbinic formula that points out that the words nachash (serpent) and mashiach (messiah) share the identical numerical value (358).[[78]](#footnote-78) On the surface, this equation seems to substantiate the randomness, and even absurdity, of gematria (numerical equivalence of alphanumeric Hebrew words). What could be further from the holiness and godliness of the Messiah than the impurity and evil of the serpent?[[79]](#footnote-79) The words of the rabbis, however, are compared to a simmering coal. If one is a bit too far removed it will appear dead and lifeless, giving off no heat whatsoever. If, on the other hand, one comes a little closer and gently blows upon it, suddenly the hidden flames come to life and one is warmed by their fire. Still, one must beware not to come too close, lest he be singed.[[80]](#footnote-80)*

Words with the same *gematria*, numerical value, are known to have related qualities. The word משיח has the same *gematria* as גשנה [358]. The Messiah will extinguish the poison of the נחש, the primordial snake, also with the same *gematria* [358]. This is the snake that tempted Eve to eat from the fruit. The snake implanted in man a tendency towards evil, which the Messiah will annul.

When the Nachash, snake, approached Chava he imparted to her zuhama.[[81]](#footnote-81) When the Jewish people stood at Mt. Sinai, the zuhama ended for them.

***Shabbat 146a*** *Why are idolaters lustful? Because they did not stand at Mount Sinai. For when the serpent came upon Eve he injected a lust into her…*[[82]](#footnote-82)

Why is the gematria of nachash - snake - and Mashiach (358) the same? Because, the original Snake caused us to enter exile, and Mashiach will come to take us out of exile for good. Whereas the snake imparted zuhama to mankind, Mashiach will usher in the period that conquers it. This is why Moshe Rabbeinu (upon Mt. Sinai) was commanded to take the snake before him by the tail:

***Shemot (Exodus) 4:3-4*** *He said [to Moshe], "Throw it to the ground," and he threw it to the ground and it became a serpent. Moshe ran away from it. G-d told Moshe, "Reach out and grab it by its tail." He reached out and grabbed it, and it became a staff in his hand.*

It was an allusion that his role was to bring the redemption and end the zuhama - the indelible spiritual impurity that makes death a necessity - either in that lifetime, or in a future one:

Now you can understand the meaning of, "Behold, you shall die with your fathers, and this people will rise up" (Debarim 31:16) . . . In the future, Moshe will reincarnate (i.e., rise up) and return in the last generation, as it says, "you will die with your fathers and rise up".[[83]](#footnote-83)

**Iyov (Job) 33:29-30** Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea thrice, with a man, 30 To bring back his soul from the pit, that he may once more bask in the light of the living.

The Biala Rebbe states: “Bne Israel were susceptible to the arrogance of Egypt, only because the seeds of arrogance that had already been planted within them by Adam’s sin. Since the souls of all mankind were included in Adam’s soul, we were all party to his sin, and we are all still marked by its effect. Through our Torah and mitzvos, we strive to correct Adam’s sin, which sullied the entire human race with arrogance. . . The ultimate perfection of human character will occur with the coming of Mashiach, when Adam’s sin of arrogance will be entirely corrected. In this merit, we will finally be able to understand the deepest secrets of the Torah, of which the Midrash states: “The Torah that man learns in this world is like mist compared to the Torah that will be taught by Mashiach.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

***Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 27a*** *Similarly of Moses it is written, “And the staff of God was in his hand.” This rod is Metatron, from one side of whom comes life and from the other death. When the rod remains a rod, it is a help from the side of good, and when it is turned into a serpent it is hostile, so that “Moses fled from it”, and God delivered it into his hand. This rod typifies the Oral Law which prescribes what is permitted and what is forbidden. When Moses struck the rock God took it back from him, and “he went down to him with a rod” (II Sam. XXXIII, 21), to smite him with it, the “rod” being the evil inclination, which is a serpent, the cause of the captivity.*

The Ramchal writes, “And from then onwards this characteristic of appearing in the mystical capacity of a snake is given to the Messiah, especially to MBY, who is the mystical embodiment of the left…Since then the tikun has been prepared in the mystical mission of the two Messiahs…for the Messiah ben Joseph mystically represents the left, and he bears the character of the exterior which needs all these tikunim, and the Messiah ben David mystically represents the right which needs to be joined to it [the left], and the Redemption will be complete.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

***Yochanan (John 3:14-15)*** *As Moshe lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

In Eden, the Serpent caused man’s downfall, and so it will be the ‘serpentine Mashiach who reverses that event: In Kabbalistic sources, this is the meaning of Isaiah’s description of the great final battle between the *nachash bariach* and the *nachash ‘akalaton*, the “straight serpent” and the “twisted serpent” (Isaiah 27:1). The former is Mashiach, and the latter is the embodiment of evil that will be destroyed at the End of Days.”

The Sefer Yetzirah, the earliest full Qabbalistic work (the Merkava, with which St. Paul was familiar if not adept, was earlier but not fully Qabbalistic) mentions the “Teli” around which the stars and everything in space revolves. The rabbis identified the Teli with the Nachash Bareach. A later Qabbalistic tract, the Bahir, further equates the Teli to the Mashiach (Messiah), who is often called Nachash ha-Kodesh (Holy Serpent), which is the same entity as the Nachash Bareach.

As the incarnation of evil Satan is the arch-enemy of the Messiah he is anti-Christ. The light which was created before the world, was hidden by God beneath His throne; and to the question of Satan in regard to it God answered: "This light is kept for him who shall bring thee to shame." At his request God showed Satan the Messiah; and when he saw him, he trembled. fell upon his face, and cried: " *Verily this is the Messiah, who shall hurl (bruise) me*, and all the princes of the angels of the people" down even into hell.[[86]](#footnote-86)

\* \* \*

“As soon as the kingdom of the Mashiach will be established, the remarkable feature will be that his former enemies will make peace with him … Even the erstwhile “Nachash” [the proverbial “Snake”] will be turned into “Choshen” [breastplate of the High Priest, spelled with the same letters as “Nachash”].[[87]](#footnote-87)

## Gematria

The serpent, from Gan Eden, has a direct connection to the Mashiach. We can see this in the gematria for the two Hebrew words for *serpent* and *Mashiach*.[[88]](#footnote-88)

The gematria of:

**Messiah** - Mashiach - משׁיח (40+300+10+8) = **358**

and

**Serpent** - Nachash - נָּחָשׁ (50+8+300) = **358**

Beautifully, the gematria of Mashiach (משיח)—the one who brings us back into Eden, is 358, the same as Nachash (נחש)—the one who forced us out to begin with.

**Mashiach as the nachash, the serpent, that heals as the nachash that Moshe raised on a pole for the healing of a snake bite. We thus see both the bad biting serpent juxtaposed with the good healing serpent.**

What does “the serpent set upon a pole” represent according to Numbers 21:8? It represents the healing power of HaShem. This serpent represents the Bne Israel, who must work towards their own healing. **We are the body of Mashiach, we are the ones on the pole**.

The gematria equivalence relation can give deeper insight into the spiritual connection between the words whose gematria is the same. The use of gematria can expand our awareness of the relatedness of different ideas or concepts as they are spelled out in Hebrew. Gematria can help us understand meanings which are hidden.

The gematria for *serpent* and *Mashiach* are the same since they represent two opposite sides of the same coin.[[89]](#footnote-89) The serpent, from Gan Eden, caused us to go into exile and Mashiach will come to take us out of exile for good. Whereas the snake imparted impurity to mankind, Mashiach will usher in the period that conquers it.

Just as the evil snake represents the epitome of evil, so does the positive snake represent the epitome of good. The Mashiach[[90]](#footnote-90) himself is referred to in the Zohar[[91]](#footnote-91) as “the holy snake”. This association is alluded to by the numerical equivalence of the Hebrew words Mashiach (358) and nachash, “serpent.” The Zohar further states that the Mashiach, the holy snake, will kill the evil snake by overcoming the fear of insanity, thereby overcoming insanity itself, and filling human consciousness solely with the knowledge of G-d. His reward will be to marry the Divine princess, the “congregation of Israel,” to unite with the point of origin of the souls of Israel, thus bringing redemption to the world.[[92]](#footnote-92)

## Nachash of Kedusha – The Holy Serpent

One of the names for the Mashiach, among the rabbis, is the ‘Nachash HaKodesh’, the Holy Snake.

Just as there is a nachash that represents Tumah (the snake that caused the sin ot Adam) correspondingly there is a nachash of kedusha.[[93]](#footnote-93)The Zohar says Esav is from the side of the Snake.[[94]](#footnote-94) In fact Esav had a symbolic snake on his thigh.[[95]](#footnote-95) Dan who is referred to as a snake is the one who counteracts Esav as is evident from the fact that his son, Chushim killed Esav.

**Targum Ruth 4:22** Now Oved begot Jesse, who was called Nachash, because no corruption and perversion, for which he might be delivered into the hands of the angel of death, who would take his life from him, were found in him. He lived a long time, until the serpent's counsel to Eve, Adam's wife, to partake of the fruit of the tree, the eating of which resulted in wisdom to distinguish between good and evil, was recalled before God. Because of that counsel, all inhabitants of the earth are mortal, and as a result of that blunder, the righteous Jesse died. He is Jesse, who was the father of David, the king of Israel.

**Teli – The Pole Serpent**

Serpents can heal[[96]](#footnote-96) or kill with their poison. The caduceus shows the serpent on the pole, as we see in the Torah, which was used for healing. The Hakham should exude confidence that he knows what he is doing because this often provides the cure by itself. We need to be wise and as persuasive as serpents.

In one place they are called Teli, and in the Tanach, they are called Seraphim by Isaiah, and Watchers, by Daniel.

The Dragon – AKA *Teli[[97]](#footnote-97)* – is found in the commentary of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms. *Teli* is one of the most mysterious words in *Sefer Yetzirah*. Many authorities identify the *Teli* with “Pole Serpent”, mentioned in Job 26:13 and Isaiah 27:1. The Pole Serpent is often associated with the constellation of Draco. This is not surprising, since Draco is very close to the North Pole. Indeed, around 4500 years ago, Thuban, a star in Draco’s tail, was the pole star.

Because of it's importance in the Torah, dragons are often called **tannin**, though in later times were referred to as **teli**, and are most often serpent-like creatures in Judaism.

The pole serpent[[98]](#footnote-98) is mentioned in:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5–9*** *And the people spoke against G-d, and against Moses: 'Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.'* ***6*** *And HaShem sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.* ***7*** *And the people came to Moses, and said: 'We have sinned, because we have spoken against HaShem, and against thee; pray unto HaShem, that He take away the serpents from us.' And Moses prayed for the people.* ***8*** *And HaShem said unto Moses: 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live.'* ***9*** *And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.*

Targum Pseudo Jonathanputs v.6 with an interesting connotation that explicitly tells us why a serpent was used to heal:

*And the bath-kol fell from the high heaven, and thus spoke: Come, all men, and see all the benefits which I have done to the people whom I brought up free out of Mitzrayim. I made manna come down for them from heaven, yet now turn they and murmur against Me. Yet, behold, the serpent, whom, in the days of the beginning of the world, I doomed to have dust for his food, has not murmured against me: but My people are murmuring about their food. Now will the serpents who have not complained of their food come and bite the people who complain. Therefore did the Word of HaShem send the basilisk serpents, and they bit the people, and a great multitude of the people of Israel died.*

Then Rashi provides us the reason why the people were bitten by serpents for this particular sin. The punishment was mida keneged mida, measure for measure for their sin:

**and they bit the people** Let the serpent, which was smitten for speaking evil [to Eve] come and punish those who spread slander [about the manna]. Let the serpent, for which all types of food taste the same, come and punish those ingrates, for whom one thing [the manna] changes into various tastes.[[99]](#footnote-99)

***Yochanan (John) 3:14*** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man[[100]](#footnote-100) be lifted up:*

What does “the fiery serpent set upon a pole” represent according to Numbers 21:8? It represents the healing power of HaShem. This serpent represents the Bne Israel, who must work towards their own healing. We are the body of Mashiach, we are the ones on the pole.

At the end of Parashat Chukat,[[101]](#footnote-101) the Torah tells us once again of the rebellious behavior of Klal Israel during their travels through the wilderness. The pasuk relates, “And the people spoke against HaShem and against Moshe”,[[102]](#footnote-102) complaining that they were tired of the manna and of the lack of water in the desert. The Torah tells us that HaShem got angry and sent as punishment a horde of poisonous serpents, “ha-nechashim ha-serafim”, to bite the complainers. Many Jews died. The survivors came to beg Moshe Rabbenu for forgiveness and beseeched him to pray to HaShem to get rid of the serpents. Moshe did so, and HaShem told him to make an image of a “saraf,” a serpent, and to place it on top of a high pole. Any Jew who got bitten was to look at the image of the serpent on top of the pole and would survive. The Torah tells us that Moshe then fashioned a “nechash nechoshet,” a brass[[103]](#footnote-103) serpent, and placed it atop a pole, and the rest of the Jews were saved.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The distinction between the word nachash, serpent, and the word seraf, serpent, is worth a second look. When HaShem punished Klal Israel, He unleashed “hanechashim haserafim.” The Torah uses both terms, HaShem unleashed serpents that behaved like serpents. Then, when HaShem told Moshe how to stem the plague, He commanded him to create a saraf, but Moshe created a nachash instead. Why? What is the difference between these two terms? And why does the Torah use both in this story? Furthermore, why did Moshe make the nachash out of copper when HaShem did not instruct him to do so, and why is that detail important enough for the Torah to mention?

In the English language the word serpent is a synonym for serpent. In lashon ha-kodesh also, the words nachash and saraf are more or less synonymous. Nonetheless, being different words they still convey somewhat different meanings. The word nachash has at its root nichush, as in the command “lo tinachashu”,[[105]](#footnote-105) the prohibition of magic acts and fortune telling, seemingly supernatural pursuits. Likewise, a serpent can kill a large human or even a tremendous beast with a tiny dose of poison, a seemingly supernatural faculty. This is an important connection. Those who believe they have supernatural powers no longer feel compelled to rely on HaShem for their needs. This is why the Torah considers magic and fortune telling to be forms of idolatry.

The term nachash represents the challenge of maintaining faith in HaShem, the challenge of adherence to His commandments. It is not a coincidence that the very first individual to challenge HaShem’s commandments was the nachash ha-kadmoni in Gan Eden. His behavior was classic nachash.

The word saraf, on the other hand, emphasizes the method through which the serpent kills. Serefah means burning in lashon ha-kodesh. The saraf injects a tiny dose of venom which burns its way throughout the body of the victim, eventually killing him. The venom is like a small spark that can spread to become a large conflagration. The word saraf is used by Chazal[[106]](#footnote-106) to refer to the punishment of one who rejects the commandments and direction of the Hakhamim. This hints to the insidiousness of transgressing the Hakhamim. Once one lights a spark by violating one rabbinic principle, one is liable to create an entire conflagration by continuing to violate other rabbinic rules and guidelines. Once someone loses respect for the Hakhamim, the poison can spread throughout his body. Hence Chazal refer to the retribution against such an individual in terms of the saraf.

With this background, we can understand what was happening in this parasha. When Klal Israel rebelled, they committed two sins, one against HaShem and one against Moshe Rabbenu, who represents the Hakhamim. Thus, HaShem sent hanechashim haserafim to kill them, demonstrating that they deserved two punishments, the nachash, for rebelling against HaShem, and the saraf, for rebelling against the Hakhamim, i.e., Moshe.

When Klal Israel came to Moshe Rabbenu to repent and beg forgiveness, HaShem agreed to forgive Klal Israel for the violation of His own honor, but insisted that Moshe Rabbenu’s honor be upheld by a public display of the image of the saraf. Moshe Rabbenu, on the other hand, was quick to forgive the violation of his honor, but was very concerned about the honor of HaShem. Therefore, he created a nachash rather than a saraf, to focus Klal Israel on that violation.

Ibn Ezra asks why the brass[[107]](#footnote-107) snake had to be placed on a pole. His answer is: “to be high so that all could see it.”

Did the copper serpent kill or make alive? No! What it indicates is that when the Israelites, in gazing at the serpent, turned their thoughts on high and subjected their hearts to their father in heaven, they were healed; otherwise they perished.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Ibn Ezra also points out that many Israelites erred and treated the brazen serpent like a divine object, worshipping it like a G-d. Because the Jews preserved it as an object of veneration, it was eventually destroyed by King Hezekiah.[[109]](#footnote-109) The sages highly praised him for this act.[[110]](#footnote-110)

## Job 26:13

***Iyov (Job) 26:13*** *By His breath the heavens are serene; His hand hath pierced the slant serpent* נָחָשׁ בָּרִחַ.

**Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 2:10:2** "For when the ground was difficult to travel through, because of the multitude of serpents, which it produces in vast numbers, and which, indeed is singular in some of those creatures, which other countries do not breed, yet such as are worse than others in power and mischief, and with an unusual fierceness of sight; some of which **ascend from the ground unseen, and also fly in the air**, and so come upon men unawares and do them mischief."

Here, these flying serpents not only fly but are accused of causing mischief.

## Isaiah 27:1

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *In that day HaShem with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent* נָחָשׁבָּרִחַ*, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon* אֶת*-*הַתַּנִּין *that is in the sea.*

Other commentaries identify the *Teli* with the Milky Way. According to them, the *Teli* would be the axis of the galaxy, rather than that of the celestial sphere. Another important opinion is that of the practical Cabbalists. They write that *Teli* is actually a place under the firmament of *Vilon*, and that it is inhabited by humanoid beings, which deport themselves in holiness and purity like angels. The divine mysteries are revealed to those beings, and they have the authority to reveal these things to mortal humans.[[111]](#footnote-111)

Because of it's importance in the Torah, dragons are often called *tannin,* though in later times were referred to as teli*,* andare most often serpent-like creatures in Judaism--much less like lizards than their European counterparts. It can be theorized that they are relics of the time before Judaism was codified. The perception of flying, fiery snakes or serpents is widespread in Judaism; however, like most cultures, Jews eventually created or become aware of other types of dragons.

Rabbinic authorities have identified the Teli to be the “Nachash Bareach” (Pole Serpent). Interestingly, the Pole Serpent is also identified with the Leviathan, an ancient Midrash states that “the world hangs from a fin of Leviathan.” The Pole Serpent has also been associated with the constellation Draco, which means “Serpent” or “Dragon.” It is quite fascinating that its formation has stars in all of the signs of the Zodiac. The Kabbalists explain that Draco, supports all of 12 of the Zodiac constellations; in other words, all of them are “hanging” from Draco. And so Draco is also called the Teli because all the other stars hang (talah) from it. The symbol of the Teli has often been depicted as a dragon, a snake or a fish. According to the Kuzari, the Teli refers to the spiritual realms which mirror its physical demonstration of the celestial bodies.

According to many Kabbalists, the Teli is the imaginary axis (ecliptic pole) around which the celestial sphere rotates, or hangs, which is the secret of the “straight serpent”, or “pole serpent”.

The Draco, or the “pole serpent” surrounds[[112]](#footnote-112) the “ecliptic pole” having stars in the sections of 12 Houses of the Zodiac Signs, as if the 12 Houses of the Zodiac Signs are “hanging” from the Draco, i.e. to be controlled by it, hence the name “Teli” תְּלִי.

The constellation of Draco is the male pole serpent, and the ecliptic is the female circular serpent that surrounds the pole serpent.

This is the secret of the mystic term “teli” תְּלִי referred to in the Sefer Yetzirah 6:1.

Sefar Yerirah, Gruenwald ed., 6:1 2 (para. 59). There are several understandings for the precise definition of the astrological Teli. Most often, the Teli was not con­ceived of simply as a star or a constellation. One prevalent way to conceive of the Teli was to imagine two celestial spheres, one traced by the annual apparent motion of the sun in a geocentric orbit, the other represented by the moon’s course. These spheres were seen to intersect at twro points, sometimes referred to as the two poles of the universe. These two nodes were also referred to as the head and tail of the cosmic dragon.

Teli means hanger, which is of the root “to hang” תָּלָה.

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the sixth Chapter refers to the Teli. Usually as the dragon or the Milky Way. Those in the know say that Teli are dragons. Kaplan quotes a discussion from a book on the Chariot that says the Teli are reptilian humanoids who know the secrets of creation and other secrets and have permission to give these to humans. In exchange for what? Kaplan says that they are in a particular place called vilon which is the middle point between normal space and Dark Matter. Kaplan says that the Teli are Kings of space but not part of space. Other words for the same thing. Kaplan says the Teli are spiritual beings who are lowered to the physical and interact with the physical. Others say that the Teli are the watchers from the Book of Daniel.Teli being reptilian have a relationship to the Serafim.

Parashat Chukat tells a very peculiar story regarding the plague of snakes that attacked Israel: “HaShem said to Moses: ’Make yourself a Pole Serpent, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live.’ So Moses made a copper snake and put it on a pole, and whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake and live.” The Sefer Yetzirah tells us about a very mysterious word, “Teli,” which comes from the root word “talah” which means “to hang.” The word has many meanings as discussed by the Sages; such as a type of sword, a quiver of piles for arrows, or a kind of bola (a line with a ball at the end used to ensare animals). The text explains the Teli is the axis by which the heavens rotate. It is explained as if there is a line with a ball at the end, symbolizing the place by which the celestial spheres hang.

Rabbinic authorities have identified the Teli to be the “Nachash Bareach” (Pole Serpent). Interestingly, the Pole Serpent is also identified with the Leviathan, an ancient Midrash states that “the world hangs from a fin of Leviathan.” The Pole Serpent has also been associated with the constellation Draco, which means “Serpent” or “Dragon.” It is quite fascinating that its formation has stars in all of the signs of the Zodiac. The Kabbalists explain that Draco, supports all of 12 of the Zodiac constellations; in other words, all of them are “hanging” from Draco. And so Draco is also called the Teli because all the other stars hang (talah) from it. The symbol of the Teli has often been depicted as a dragon, a snake or a fish. According to the Kuzari, the Teli refers to the spiritual realms which mirror its physical demonstration of the celestial bodies.

The Bahir asks: “What is the Teli? It is the likeness before the Holy One Blessed Be He” and references Song of Songs: “His locks (peyot and beard) are hanging (taltalim).” In both Talmudic and Kabbalistic traditions, the link between these two statements are significant, in that it relates to a vision of G-d in battle, and He is seen as a Young Man with locks (peyot and a beard). It is explained that this is referring to Zeir Anpin, which is a Partzuf (personification of the Light of G-d). The link between these two statements also relates to the Torah which is closely associated with Zeir Anpin, referring to fact that the Torah contains “Teli Tela’im Chochmah” (Piles of Piles of Wisdom). The hairs of the peyot and beard are symbolized as the lines upon which the letters of the Torah are written.

Here this is speaking about the Primordial Torah which preceded Creation, not the Written Torah which was “written with black fire upon white fire.” The Sages explain each letter of the Torah is a hair on the peyot and beard of Zeir Anpin, these are not literally hairs but channels through which G-d’s wisdom Emanates from His anthropomorphic “head.” The head is the concealed wisdom which is then revealed through His “hair.” The entire the verse in the Song of Songs says: “His head is a fine treasure of gold, his locks are hanging, black like a raven.” The letters of the Torah, which are written in black ink, is the revelation of the concealed wisdom. Therefore, Zeir Anpin is from where in each “hair” hangs a universe, each of which is represented by the letters of the Torah. The Teli then is Zeir Anpin, which is the axis through which the universe revolves and Torah, which the blue print through which all of Creation is sustained.

Another astounding secret that is revealed is that the Teli is the Mashiach (Messiah), often referred to as the Holy Snake (Nachash Ha’Kodesh), as the Hebrew words “Mashiach” and “Nachash” share the same Gematria (numerical value) of 358. So the Mashiach is the Pole Serpent. Since the association of Teli has already been made with the Pole Serpent, and the Pole Serpent with Draco, and Draco with Zeir Anpin; it is now clear as to the fact that Metatr-n, the Angel who governs Zeir Anpin, is “the the likeness before the Holy One Blessed Be He.” Since Mashiach is interconnected with Angel Metatr-n, it is now also clear as to whom is depicted as the Young Man with locks (peyot and a beard), which then leads to the connection with the Primordial Torah. Referring back to the passage in Parashat Chukat, the Pole Serpent was the Mashiach who saved the Jews as they gazed upon him. Upon looking at the picture attached, you will find an illustration of the Teli which is found in a commentary written by Rabbi Eliezer Rokeach of Wormes, it will be realized when viewed upside down that it is the Young Man with locks (peyot and a beard) that are hanging as described above.

## The 13th Zodiac Sign

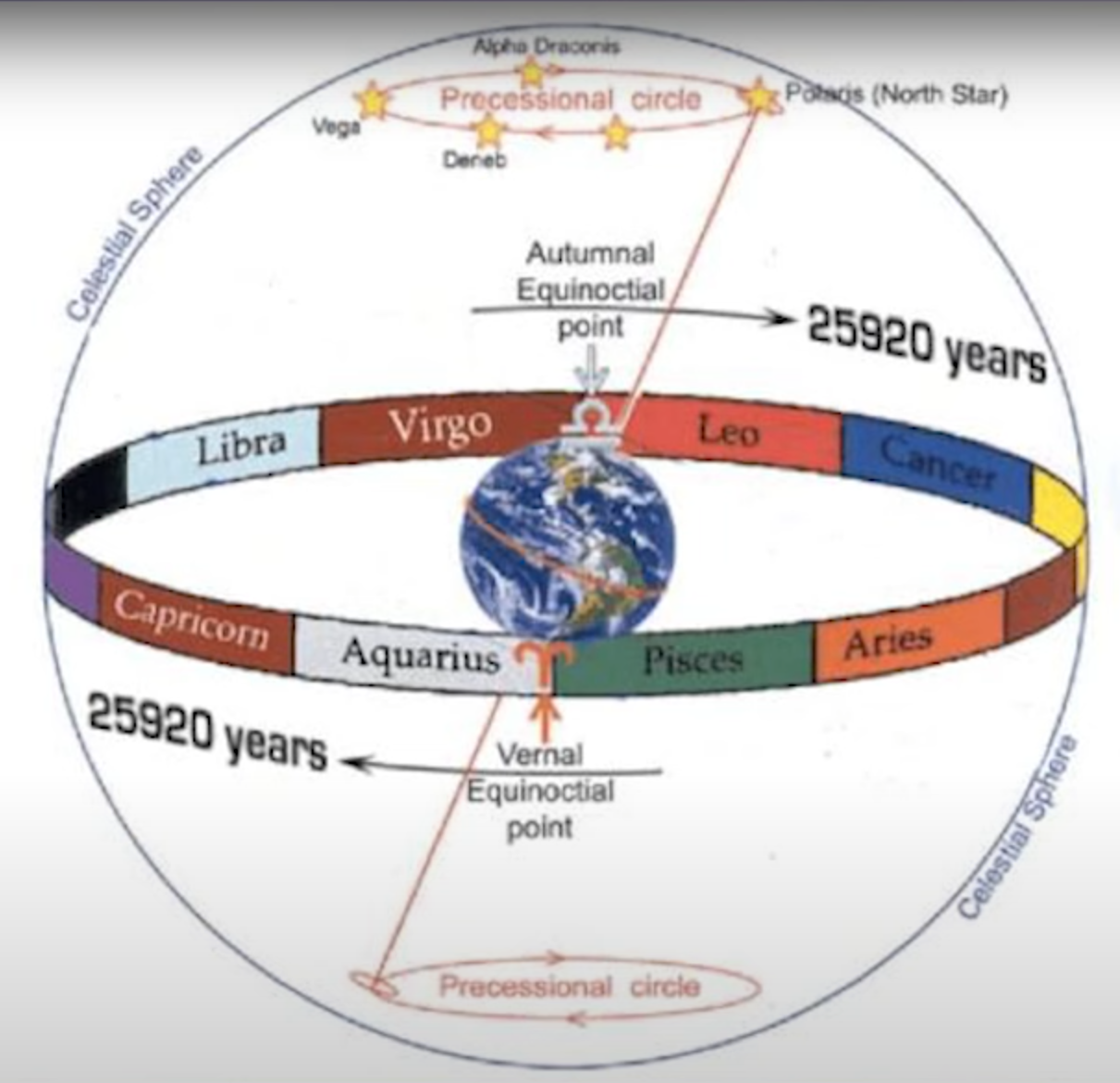
There is a thirteenth constellation on the ecliptic called *Serpens*. The constellation is divided into two parts by Ophiuchus (between Scorpio and Sagitarius), the snake bearer: Serpens Caput, representing the serpent’s head, and Serpens Cauda, the serpent’s tail.



The constellations bordering Serpens Caput are Boötes, Corona Borealis, Hercules, **Libra**, Ophiuchus and **Virgo**. The constellations bordering Serpens Cauda are Aquila, Ophiuchus, **Sagittarius** and Scutum.

In Greek mythology, Serpens constellation represents a giant snake held by the **healer** Asclepius (who had a healing staff – the caduceus), represented by Ophiuchus constellation. Asclepius is usually depicted holding the top half of the snake in his left hand and the tail in his right hand.

Asclepius was the son of the god Apollo who was said to be able to **bring people back to life** (think resurrection) with his **healing** powers. In one of the stories, he did away with a snake and saw it be brought back to life by a herb that another snake placed on it. It was said that Asclepius later used the same technique.

The 13th constellation, Ophiuchus, is the constellation for the 13th month of Adar bet.

Bamidbar 21:5-9; Bereshit 1:21, 27:3; Yeshayah 27:1; Shemtov Gefen Sefer Zichron pg. 126-128; Teli Atalya pg. 27-35; Bereshit Rabbah 65:13; Targum Yonatan to Sherashim; Radak to Sherashim; Pardes Rimonim 21:8; Choker U’Mekubal 13; Zohar 1:62a, 1:125a, 2:84a, 2:114a, 2:226b, 3:127b, 3:132a; Yesod Olam pg. 16c; Bareita DeShmuel HaKatan 2:8a; Iyov 26:7, 26:13; Ibn Ezra to Iyov 26:13; Ramban to Iyov 26:13; Ohr HaShekel 4:1; Kol Yehudah on Kuzari 4:25, 56b; Targum Yeshayah 44:25; Oh Ganuz on Bahir 95; Sefer Raziel 14b, 18b, 20a; Seder Rabbah DeBereshit 17; Batey Midrashot 1:28; Yalkut Reuveni 17b; Chesed LeAvraham 2:3; Beyt HaMidrash 1:63; Bartenura to Avodah Zarah 3:3; Pirkey DeRabbi Eliezer 9:31; Bahir 106 Kehilat Ya’acov; Talmud Bavli Chagigag 14a; Shemot Rabbah 8:1; Kohilet 11:10; Mechilta on Shemot 20:2; Eytz Chayim Sha’ar Arich Anpin 5:3; Vayikra Rabbah 19:1; Shir HaShirim 5:11; Shir HaSharim Rabbah to Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 6:1; Tikuney Zohar 56:90b; Rokeach of Wormes pg. 12b; Sefer Yetzirah [Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan] pg. 231-239

Thus, we can definitively conclude that the Biblical Seraphim are none other than our holy Dragons, the Teli. +

## Manna or Gan Eden

And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, nor is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread." (Numbers 21:5)

In Beshalach the people had no bread and complained, and received manna. Now the people have been eating this Divine bread for 40 years yet they still complain that it is not "real food."

The result of these complaints is that God sends the serpents to attack the people. The choice of the serpent is particularly apt. There was on other time in history where God provided the cuisine – in the Garden of Eden. There the instigator of old – the serpent – convinced man to take action which caused his expulsion, and the cession of the food of Eden. Now when man rejects God and His food, the serpent returns to torment and kill.

***Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 35b*** *AND THE SERPENT. R. Isaac said: ‘This is the evil tempter’. R. Judah said that it means literally a serpent. They consulted R. Simeon, and he said to them: ‘Both are correct. It was Samael, and he appeared on a serpent, for the ideal form of the serpent is the Satan. We have learnt that at that moment Samael came down from heaven riding on this serpent, and all creatures saw his form and fled before him. They then entered into conversation with the woman, and the two brought death into the world. Of a surety Samael brought curses on the world through Wisdom and destroyed the first tree that God had created in the world. This responsibility rested on Samael until another holy tree came, namely Jacob, who wrested the blessings from him, in order that Samael might not be blessed above and Esau below. For Jacob was the reproduction of Adam, and he had the same beauty as Adam. Therefore as Samael withheld blessings from the first tree, so Jacob, who was such another tree as Adam, withheld blessings, both upper and lower, from Samael; and in doing so Jacob but took back his own. It is written: AND THE SERPENT WAS SUBTLE. This serpent is the evil tempter and the angel of death. It is because the serpent is the angel of death that it brought death to the world.’*

The theme of the rejection of God is also introduced in Beshalach. The result was the arrival of Amalek – the devil – or serpent incarnate:

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. (Exodus 17:8)

The Midrash makes the connection:

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meriva, because of the altercation of the people of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. (Exodus 17:7-8)

This is what God said to Israel: "I have borne you on clouds of glory" and yet you say, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" Let the enemy come, therefore, and prevail over you'; hence, then came Amalek. (Midrash Rabbah – Exodus 26:3)1

Likewise, Amalek makes an unheralded cameo appearance in Parshat Chukat:

And when king Arad the Canaanite, who lived in the Negev, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atarim; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. (Numbers 21:1)

The Midrash reveals the identity of this king:

Who was the king of Arad? It was Amalek; as is borne out by the text (Numbers 23:29) ... If he was in reality Amalek why was he called by the name of Canaanite? For this reason: Israel was forbidden to fight against the children of Esau (Deut 2:5)... Now when Amalek came and waged war against them, a first time and a second time, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: "This nation is not forbidden to you as are the children of Esau. They are like Canaanites to you ..." This is the reason why they were called Canaanite ... You find that when Aaron died, the Amalekites went out against them and they had to turn back seven stages. (Midrash Rabba 19:20)

Indeed, Amalek is alive and well, occupying the south of the country. The rejection of God led to the arrival of Amalek, who represents a worldview of atheism and natural causality. The defeat of Amalek is based on the Jews putting their trust in God, and accepting that God indeed controls the world. This can be understood in the text:

And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (Exodus 17:11)

The Mishna explains that the defeat of Amalek was not accidental, and compares this Divine response to another episode:

Now did the hands of Moses wage war or crush the enemy? Not so, only the text signifies that so long as Israel turned their thoughts above and subjected their hearts to their father in heaven they prevailed, but otherwise they fell. The same lesson may be taught thus: [It is written], make thee a fiery serpent and set it up on a pole, and it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. Now did the serpent kill or did the serpent keep a live? No; [what it indicates is that] when Israel turned their thoughts above and subjected their hearts to their father in heaven, they were healed, but otherwise they pined away. (Rosh Hashana 29a)

The reference is to the serpent of copper which was produced in order to stop the plague. This plague is described in Parshat Chukat as coming in response to the people's complaints about the manna!

They are rejecting God's food just as they had rejected God in Parshat Beshalach an action which brought Amalek. Now after meeting Amalek they reject the manna. The result is slithering serpents on the prowl.

Both the hands of Moses in the battle against Amalek, and the defeat of the serpents which caused death are defeated in the same manner – by lifting ones eyes toward our Father in heaven.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a venomous serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." And Moses made a serpent of copper, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked at the serpent of copper, he lived. (Numbers 21:8-9)

THE FOOD OF EDEN

The food in Eden was pure; it came from a place and time before good and evil were confused and merged. Eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil changed the world. Now man would have to work the ground.

"Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust shall you return." (Genesis 3:18-19)

Man is made of both spiritual and physical components, the soul and the body. In Eden man's food was pure – closer to the spiritual despite its physical nature. Now, post–Eden, in order to find food, man must battle with thorns and thistles, until his eventual return to the dust.

It is interesting that the snake which appeared and attacked the Israelites after they denigrated the Divine food, crawls on its belly in the dust – all of its food tasting like the dust.2 And dust is the destination of failed man when forced to submit to the final surrender – death.

ANOTHER LEVEL

There is however another level of understanding the connection between food and Amalek.

When God orders the Jews to be vigilant in the epic battle with Amalek, the Torah writes:

For he said, because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. (Exodus 17:16)

The Hebrew for "generation to generation" is dor l'dor. The Hebrew term for thistle is dardar. These terms are visually identical.3

The first appearance of the force which later became identified with Amalek was in the Garden in the body of a snake. Now we are forced to eat from the sweat of our collective brow until the time comes when we return to an Eden-like existence in the end of days.

Until then from generation to generation we will be forced to separate the good from the bad, with which it has become fused. And our food will need to be extracted from thorn and thistle.

In the desert man again received food which was pure – direct from heaven.4 Now we understand that the rejection of this food brought us face to face with the serpent of old.

SNAKE OF COPPER

But what remains obscure is this snake of copper. The Hebrew term is even more curious, nachash ha nichoshet, which sounds like "snake of snakes." In order to understand this we must review the first time the term copper is used in the Torah.

And Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, forger of every sharp instrument in copper and iron. (Genesis 4:22)

The Midrash explains that Tubal-Cain made weapons:

Rabbi Yehoshua said in Rabbi Levi's name: "This man perfected Cain's sin: Cain slew, yet lacked the weapons for slaying, whereas he was forger of every sharp instrument." (Midrash Rabba Genesis 23:3; see Rashi 4:22)

Of course, the ability to make sharp instruments could have been harnessed for positive use, for example to harvest and work the ground. Exiled man was faced with the choice of accepting his lot of exile from Eden and working the ground or to use this technology to attack and kill others and take their food by force.

Copper, therefore, is a wonderful symbol of choice – and of good and evil combined together. How it will be used is completely man's choice.

Looking at the snake of copper was meant to remind man of the post–Eden choice and reality. Rejection of the manna, brought death from poisonous snakes. Healing took place along with the recognition that humanity has the ability to choose between weapons and food – death and life.

THE CHOICE

The key lesson in this is that the correct choice brings man closer to God. The Jews had to come to terms with this fact if they were to be able to continue their march to the Promised Land. There they would be confronting difficult situations, where weapons would have to be brandished.

This is however not the final goal. A time will come when weapons will not be necessary:

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall decide for many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)

This was the "magical" ability of the copper snake – a conduit which brought the Jews in touch with choice and therefore God. But the need for such tools was only appropriate, in a post-Eden world.

This is the deeper tragedy of Parshat Chukat. With the death of the generation of the desert all the naysayers should have been dead. Moses and Aaron should have led this generation into the Promised Land without war, rather with the pure spirit and Godliness which they possessed.

But this was not to be. Even Moses and Aaron received the death sentence.

The years in the desert were indeed long and circuitous. In Parshat Chukat they are coming to an end though not in the way the Jews would have wanted. The road back to Eden will continue to be even longer and more circuitous and painful, with more serpents and other obstacles both spiritual and physical along the way.

The idea of clouds introduces yet another connection, the Clouds of Glory begin in Parshat Beshalach and cease in Parshat Chukat. According to the Midrash: "You find that when Aaron died, the clouds of glory departed ... Amalek dwelt in the gap on the border, and when he heard that Aaron was dead and that the clouds of glory had departed he straightway attacked them (Midrash Rabba 19:20) See Rashi 21:6.

See Sfat Emet Kitavo 5655, explaining the Mitzvah of Bikurim – the first fruits, which offset Amalek which is described as the first among the nations.

See Nefesh HaChaim 2:6.

# Livayatan

There is another serpent that will become a feast for the Jewish people[[113]](#footnote-113) who will dwell in a succah made from its skin.[[114]](#footnote-114) The Navi writes about this giant:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *On that day, the Lord shall visit with His hard and great and strong sword on Livayatan the barlike serpent,[[115]](#footnote-115) and upon Livayatan the crooked serpent, and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.*

**Baba Batra 75a** When R. Dimi came he said in the name of R. Johanan: When Leviathan is hungry he emits [fiery] breath from his mouth and causes all the waters of the deep to boil; for it is said: He maketh the deep to boil like a pot.[[116]](#footnote-116) And if he were not to put his head into the Garden of Eden, no creature could stand his [foul] odour;[[117]](#footnote-117) for it is said: He maketh the sea like a spiced[[118]](#footnote-118) broth. When he is thirsty he makes numerous furrows in the sea; for it is said: He maketh a path to shine after him.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Rabbah said in the name of R. Johanan: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come make a banquet for the righteous from the flesh of Leviathan; for it is said: Companions will make a banquet of it.[[120]](#footnote-120) Kerah must mean a banquet; for it is said: And he prepared for them a great banquet and they ate and drank.[[121]](#footnote-121) Companions must mean scholars;[[122]](#footnote-122) for it is said: Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken for thy voice; cause me to hear it.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Rabbah in the name of R. Johanan further stated: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come make a tabernacle for the righteous from the skin of Leviathan; for it is said: Canst thou fill tabernacles with his skin. If a man is worthy, a tabernacle is made for him; if he is not worthy [of this] a [mere] covering is made for him, for it is said: And his head with a fish covering.[[124]](#footnote-124) If a man is [sufficiently] worthy a covering is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this], a necklace is made for him, for it is said: And necklaces about thy neck.[[125]](#footnote-125) If he is worthy [of it] a necklace is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this] an amulet is made for him; as it is said: And thou wilt bind him for thy maidens.[[126]](#footnote-126) The rest [of Leviathan] will be spread by the Holy One, blessed be He, upon the walls of Jerusalem, and its splendour will shine from one end of the world to the other; as it is said: And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising.[[127]](#footnote-127)

This Leviathan sounds an awful lot like a fire breathing huge, dragon!

Rashi provides some insights on the above pasuk:

**1** **on livayatan the barlike serpent** (AKA Pole Serpent) Jonathan renders: On the king who aggrandized himself like Pharaoh the first king, and upon a king who was as haughty as Sennacherib the second king. בָּרִיחַ is an expression of ‘straight’ like a bar, since he is the first. (The matter of simplicity is related to oneness. Since Pharaoh was the first great king, he is referred to as ‘the barlike serpent,’ a straight, penetrating serpent, that does not coil.)

**crooked** An expression of ‘double,’ since he is the second one. (I.e. the bend in the serpent indicates duality, thus the number two.) And I say that these are three important nations: Egypt, Assyria, and Edom. He, therefore, stated concerning these as he said at the end of the section (v. 13), “And those lost in the land of Assyria shall come, as well as those lost in the land of Egypt,” and since the nations are likened to serpents that bite.

**Livayatan the barlike serpent** – That is Egypt.

**Livayatan the crooked serpent** - That is Assyria.

**Dragon that is in the sea**: This is Esau. (The Roman Church, which includes all the Christian churches. Things like communion, trinity, etc. have the dogmas created by the Catholic church.)

To Rashi’s list, I would add one more:

**The Revelation serpent** is the Dragon that is in the sea.

**Revelation 20:2** He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and the satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

The Zohar connects the serpent with the satan/accusing angel:

**Zohar 1:35b** AND THE SERPENT. R. Isaac said: This is the evil tempter. R. Judah said that it means literally a serpent. They consulted R. Simeon, and he said to them: Both are correct. It was Samael, and he appeared on a serpent, for the ideal form of the serpent is the Satan.

There is a lot more to this Livayatan. Enough to deserve its own study.

Leviathan is always in reference to a *water-dwelling* creature in the Tanach.

## Psalms 74:13-14

***Tehillim (Psalms) 74:13*** *Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons* תַנִּינִים *in the waters.* ***14*** *Thou didst crush the* ***heads*** *of leviathan* לִוְיָתָן*, Thou gavest him to be food to the folk inhabiting the wilderness.*

This leviathon is multi-headed! Maybe like a medusa?

In Tehillim, chapter 74, King David writes: “The sea with Your might; You shattered the heads of the sea monsters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You give it as food to the people in companies.” The most thought-provocative interpretation is the one of Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, *z”l*, the first chief rabbi of Israel, Kabbalist, and a renowned Torah scholar. He describes the Leviathan as a singular creature both male and female, “its tail is placed in its mouth” (Zohar) “twisting around and encompassing the entire world”.[[128]](#footnote-128) This translation is a metaphor for the universe’s underlying unity. This unity will only be revealed in the time of Mashiach when the righteous will feast on the Leviathan during the holiday of Sukkot.

In the Talmud[[129]](#footnote-129) it is written that the Leviathan sea creature will be slain. Its flesh or meat will be served as a feast to the righteous in the time of Mashiach. Its skin or hide will be used to cover the tent where the sumptuous banquet will be held. The festival of Sukkot (Holiday of Booths) has a certain prayer that is recited upon leaving the sukkah. “May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and G-d of our forefathers, that just as I have fulfilled and dwelt in this sukkah, so may I merit in the coming year to dwell in the sukkah of the skin of Leviathan next year in Jerusalem.”

## Baba Batra 74b

***Bava Batra 74b*** *Rabbi Yoḥanan says: This is leviathan the slant serpent, and leviathan the tortuous serpent, as it is stated: “In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the slant serpent, and leviathan the tortuous serpent”.*[[130]](#footnote-130) *The Gemara provides a mnemonic for the following statements of Rav Yehuda citing Rav: Everything; time; Jordan. Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: Everything that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created in His world, He created male and female. Even leviathan the slant serpent and leviathan the tortuous serpent He created male and female. And if they would have coupled and produced offspring, they would have destroyed the entire world. What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He castrated the male and killed the female, and salted the female to preserve it for the banquet for the righteous in the future. As it is stated: “And He will slay the serpent that is in the sea”.*[[131]](#footnote-131) *And He created even the beasts on the thousand hills*[[132]](#footnote-132) *male and female. And they were so enormous that if they would have coupled and produced offspring, they would have destroyed the entire world. What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He castrated the male and cooled the sexual desire of the female and preserved it for the righteous in the future. As it is stated about the beasts: “Lo now, his strength is in his loins”;*[[133]](#footnote-133) *this is referring to the male. The continuation of the verse: “And his force is in the stays of his body”; this is the female, alluding to the idea that they did not use their genitals for the purpose of procreation. The Gemara asks: There too, with regard to the leviathan, let Him castrate the male and cool the female; why was it necessary to kill the female? The Gemara answers: Fish are unrestrained, and therefore even if the female was cooled, the female would still procreate. The Gemara suggests: And let Him do the opposite, and kill and preserve the male leviathan. The Gemara responds: If you wish, say that the salted female is better; if you wish, say instead that since it is written: “There is leviathan, whom You have formed to sport with”,*[[134]](#footnote-134) *the male must be left alive for sport, because it is not proper conduct to sport with a female. The Gemara asks: Here too, with regard to the beasts, let Him preserve the female in salt, instead of cooling it. The Gemara answers: Salted fish is good, but salted meat is not good.*



## Isaiah 27:1

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *In that day HaShem with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan* לִוְיָתָן *the piercing serpent* נָחָשׁ*, even leviathan* לִוְיָתָן *that crooked serpent* נָחָשׁ*; and he shall slay the dragon* אֶת*-*הַתַּנִּין *that is in the sea.*

## Job 3:8

***Iyov (Job) 3:8*** *Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to rouse up leviathan.*

## Job 40:25

***Iyov (Job) 40:25*** *Canst thou draw out leviathan with a fish-hook? or press down his tongue with a cord?*

# Other Snakes[[135]](#footnote-135)

Avot d’Rabbi Natan 39:3 teaches that there are seven different words in the Tanak for snakes besides the more familiar word *nachash*:

1. saraph,
2. tanin,
3. tzefa/tzifoni,
4. efeh,
5. achshuv,
6. peten and
7. shephiphon.

## Saraph – Numbers 21:6

What is a *saraph*? Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Parchon[[136]](#footnote-136) explains that *saraph* is a poisonous snake because its venom “burns” (*soref*) like fire. Similarly, Rabbi Yonah ibn Janach[[137]](#footnote-137) explains that the fire-like breath of a *saraph* can burn whatever it comes in contact with. According to this, a *saraph* is somewhat akin to a mythical dragon. However, Rashi[[138]](#footnote-138) explicitly writes that a “flying *saraph”* does not actually have wings, but is a fire-breathing snake which can jump long distances. Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor[[139]](#footnote-139) explains that a *saraph* is a type of snake whose bite burns a person as if he fell into a large furnace, immediately morphing him into a pile of ashes. He explains that this was the type of snake that HaShem sent to punish the Jews for complaining about the manna.[[140]](#footnote-140)

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5-9*** *The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread." 6. The Lord sent against the people the fiery serpents* (nachashim seraphim)הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים*, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died. 7. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord that He remove the snakes* אֶת-הַנָּחָשׁ *from us." So Moses prayed on behalf of the people. 8. The Lord said to Moses, "Make yourself a fiery serpent* שָׂרָף, וְשִׂים *and put it on a pole, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live. 9. Moses made a copper snake* נְחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת *and put it on a pole, and whenever a snake* הַנָּחָשׁ *bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake* נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת *and live.*

***Targum to Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5-9*** *And the people thought (wickedly) in their heart, and talked against the Word of HaShem, and contended with Mosheh, saying: Why did you bring us up from Mizraim to die in the wilderness; for there is neither bread nor water, and our soul is weary of manna, this light food? 6. And the bath-kol fell from the high heaven, and thus spoke: Come, all men, and see all the benefits which I have done to the people whom I brought up free out of Mizraim. I made manna come down for them from heaven, yet now turn they and murmur against Me. Yet, behold, the serpent, whom, in the days of the beginning of the world, I doomed to have dust for his food, has not murmured against Me: but My people are murmuring about their food. Now will the serpents who have not complained of their food come and bite the people who complain. Therefore did the Word of HaShem send the basilisk serpents, and they bit the people, and a great multitude of the people of Israel died. 7. And the people came to Mosheh, and said: We have sinned, in thinking and speaking against the glory of HaShem's Shekinah, and in contending with you. Pray before HaShem to remove the plague of serpents from us. And Mosheh prayed for the people. 8. And the Lord said to Mosheh, Make yourself a serpent of brass, and set it upon a place aloft; and it will be that when a serpent has bitten any one, if he behold it, then will he live, if his heart be directed to the Name of the Word of HaShem. 9. And Mosheh made a serpent of brass, and set it upon a place aloft; and it was, when a serpent had bitten a man, and the serpent of brass was gazed at, and his heart was intent upon the Name of the Word of HaShem, he lived.*

**Debarim (Deuteronomy) 8:15** who led thee through the great and dreadful wilderness, wherein were serpents (nachash) **נָחָשׁ**, fiery serpents (saraf) **שָׂרָף**, and scorpions, and thirsty ground where was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 6:2*** *Seraphim* שְׂרָפִים *stood above for Him, six wings, six wings to each one; with two he would cover his face, and with two he would cover his feet, and with two he would fly.*

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 6:6** Then flew unto me one of the seraphim **שְׂרָפִים**, with a glowing stone in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 14:29*** *Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's* נָחָשׁ֙ *root shall come forth a basilisk* צֶפַע*, and his fruit shall be a* ***flying*** *fiery serpent* שָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף.

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 30:6*** *The burden of the beasts of the South. Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper* אֶפְעֶה֙ *and fiery flying serpent* וְשָׂרָףמְעוֹפֵף*, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.*

Ibn Parchon explains that *efeh* is the female Seraf-nachash, which is shorter and thicker than its male counterpart, but its venom is more potent. Interestingly, Rabbi Shalom Buzaglo (1700-1780), a Moroccan Kabbalist, writes in Hadrat Melech (a commentary to the Zohar) that efeh is the male snake, while nachash is the female snake. Nonetheless, an earlier Polish Kabbalist named Rabbi Natan Nata Shapiro (1585-1633) writes in his work Megaleh Amukot that the two words for snake represent the male and female forces of evil, with efeh representing the female force of evil and nachash representing the male force of evil (in consonance with Ibn Parchon’s understanding).

The Midrash says that an *efeh* is a snake called an *eches* (it is unclear in which language), which was believed to have the ability to kill a flying bird by just looking at its shadow. In Modern Hebrew *eches* is an adder or rattlesnake. Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains that the letters PEH-AYIN, which make up part of the root of the word *efeh*, always denotes consistency (in movement or sound). In the case of the efeh-snake, that consistency is expressed in the rattling sound emitted by the rattlesnake. Rabbi Avigdor the Frenchman (a 14th century commentator) writes that this is the type of snake which G-d sent to punish the Jews in the wilderness.

**Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 2:10:2** “Moses prevented the enemies, and took and led his army before those enemies were apprised of his attacking them; for he did not march by the river, but by land, where he gave a wonderful demonstration of his sagacity. For when the ground was difficult to travel through, because of the multitude of serpents, which it produces in vast numbers, and which, indeed is singular in some of those creatures, which other countries do not breed, yet such as are worse than others in power and mischief, and with an unusual fierceness of sight; some of which ascend from the ground unseen, and also **fly** in the air, and so come upon men unawares and do them mischief.

## Tanin – Isaiah 27:1

The Vilna Gaon writes that *nachash* is to land as *tanin* is to sea. This analogy suggests that the word *nachash* refers to a land snake, while *tanin* refers to a sea snake, possibly an eel or something similar. On the other hand, Rashi[[141]](#footnote-141) simply writes that a *tanin* is simply a big fish. Contrary to popular belief, the word *akalaton* does not actually mean snake, but means “coiled”, and serves as a description of a type of sea serpent. The prophet Isaiah[[142]](#footnote-142) refers to the “coiled snake” (*nachash akalaton*) and the “straight snake” (*nachash bariach*), which the Talmud[[143]](#footnote-143) interprets as referring to the female and male Leviathans respectively.

We find the tanin in many pesukim, but here is an example:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1*** *In that day HaShem with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent* נָחָשׁ*, even leviathan* לִוְיָתָן *that crooked serpent* akalatonnachash נָחָשׁ עֲקַלָּתוֹן*; and he shall slay the dragon* (tanin)אֶת*-*הַתַּנִּין *that is in the sea.*

Much more information on the tanin can be found [**here**](https://www.betemunah.org/tannin.html)**.**

## Tzefa / Tzifoni – Isaiah 14:29, 30:6, 59:5

The Malbim explains that *tzefa* is an especially poisonous snake because even its excrement is venmous (in Modern Hebrew it means “viper”). Rashi[[144]](#footnote-144) explains that *tzfoni* is an “evil snake”, while *efeh* is a “completely evil snake”, which can portend only bad. As mentioned earlier, Rashi understands that a *tzefa* is the type of snake which can no longer be charmed. Nonetheless, Radak (there) says that *tzfoni* and *efeh* are two words for the same thing.

We find the tzefa and tzefoni in the following pasuk:

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:8** And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp (peten) **פָּתֶן**, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's (Tzefa) **צִפְעוֹנִי** den.

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 14:29*** *Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's* (nachash)נָחָשׁ֙ *root shall come forth a basilisk* (tzefa)צֶפַע*, and his fruit shall be a* ***flying*** *fiery serpent* (saraf) שָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף.

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 59:5** They hatch basilisks' (Tzefoni) **צִפְעוֹנִי** eggs, and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper (efeh) **אֶפְעֶה**.

**Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 8:17** For, behold, I will send serpents (nachashim) **נְחָשִׁים**, basilisks (tzefanim) **צִפְעֹנִים**, among you, which will not be charmed; and they shall bite you, saith HaShem.

**Mishle (Proverbs) 23:31-32** Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it glideth down smoothly; At the last it biteth like a serpent (Nachash) **כְּנָחָשׁ**, and stingeth like a basilisk (Tzefa) **וּכְצִפְעֹנִי**.

## Efeh – Isaiah 30:6 , 59:5, Job 20:16

When talking about the *efeh*, Rashi and Mahari Kara explain that there are only two of them in the world, a male and a female, and that they reproduce only once every seventy years. Ibn Parchon explains that *efeh* is the female *saraph-nachash*, which is shorter and thicker than its male counterpart, but its venom is more potent. Interestingly, Rabbi Shalom Buzaglo,[[145]](#footnote-145) a Moroccan Kabbalist, writes in *Hadrat Melech[[146]](#footnote-146)* that *efeh* is the male snake, while *nachash* is the female snake. Nonetheless, an earlier Polish Kabbalist named Rabbi Natan Nata Shapiro[[147]](#footnote-147) writes in his work *Megaleh Amukot* that the two words for snake represent the male and female forces of evil, with *efeh* representing the female force of evil and *nachash* representing the male force of evil.[[148]](#footnote-148)

We find the *efeh* in the following pesukim:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 30:6*** *The burden of the beasts of the South. Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper* (efeh)אֶפְעֶה֙ *and fiery flying serpent* (Saraf)וְשָׂרָףמְעוֹפֵף*, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.*

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 59:5** They hatch basilisks' (tzefoni) **צִפְעוֹנִי** eggs, and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper (efeh) **אֶפְעֶה**.

**Iyov (Job) 20:16** He shall suck the poison of asps (petenim) **פְּתָנִים**; the viper's (efeh) **אֶפְעֶה** tongue shall slay him.

The Midrash says that an *efeh* is a snake called an *eches* (it is unclear in which language), which was believed to have the ability to kill a flying bird by just looking at its shadow. In Modern Hebrew *eches* is an adder or rattlesnake. Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau[[149]](#footnote-149) explains that the letters *PEH-AYIN*, which make up part of the root of the word *efeh*, always denotes consistency, in movement or sound. In the case of the *efeh*-snake, that consistency is expressed in the rattling sound emitted by the rattlesnake. Rabbi Avigdor the Frenchman[[150]](#footnote-150) writes that this is the type of snake which HaShem sent to punish the Jews in the wilderness.

## Achshuv – Psalms 140:4

The word *achshuv* is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible because that venomous creature only appears once, in Psalms 140:4. Some commentators explain that it is the type of snake who spits out its poison, while others explain that that *achshuv* is not a snake at all but some other poisonous creature.[[151]](#footnote-151)

**Tehillim (Psalms) 140:4** They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent (nachash) **נָחָשׁ**; vipers' (achshuv) **עַכְשׁוּב** venom is under their lips. Selah

**Radak**: Chamat is venom. Achshuv is a kind of snake. It is very harsh and evil.

**Malbim**: This refers to pursuers who seek to harm for their benefit. An Achshuv (tarantula), its anger is revealed under the lips, which are more external than the tongue. So they fight wars openly, for their benefit (extortion) like a tarantula bites for its benefit, to suck man's blood.

## Peten – Psalms 58:5

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer[[152]](#footnote-152) clarifies the exact meaning of the word *peten* by comparing it to *nachash*. He argues that while the word *nachash* implies a snake which can be charmed, *peten*, on the other hand, is a snake who is immune to the effects of snake-charming and continues to remain dangerous.

**Tehillm (Psalms) 58:5** Their venom is like the venom of a serpent (nachash) **נָחָשׁ**; they are like the deaf asp (peten) **פֶתֶן** that stoppeth her ear;

Moreover, Rabbi Wertheimer offers two ways of understanding the etymology of the word *peten*: it may be related to the Hebrew word *miftan* (“threshold”), which alludes to the fact that a *peten*-snake is always dangerous and cannot be charmed. Just as anyone who enters a house surely treads upon its threshold, so does anyone who encounters a *peten* surely enter a situation of danger. Alternatively, the word *peten* is related to the Hebrew word *pituy* (“coaxing”) and alludes to the snake’s role in cajoling Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.[[153]](#footnote-153)

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 32:33*** *Their wine is the* ***poison*** (chamat)חֲמַת *of dragons* (taninim)תַּנִּינִם*, and the cruel venom of asps* (petanim)פְּתָנִים*.*

## Shefifon- Genesis 49:17

*Shefifon*, appears once in the Tanach and is described by the Jerusalem Talmud[[154]](#footnote-154) as resembling a single hair. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg[[155]](#footnote-155) writes that the root of the word *shephiphon* is the bilateral root *SHIN-PEH*, which is associated with closeness and attachment between entities (for example, the word *shifshuf* refers to “rubbing”). In the case of the snake it ambulates by wiggling and crawling on the ground, with its body always touching the floor. Rabbi Aharon Marcus[[156]](#footnote-156) argues that the Hebrew word *shephiphon* is related to the Akkadian word *shepu* which means "foot" and is representative of the Hebrew language phenomenon in which words can have polar-opposite meanings. So although in Akkadian — the *lingua franca* of the ancient word — *shepu* meant "foot", in Hebrew, it actually refers to the footless serpent.

**Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17** Dan shall be a serpent (nachash) **נָחָשׁ** in the way, a horned snake (shefifon) **שְׁפִיפֹן** in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward.

**Sforno on Genesis 49:17:2** שפיפון, name of a slim snake; our sages use this when wanting to illustrate something extremely thin, “as the width of a hair.” Physicians claim that these types of snakes hide in the trees, their sting being felt as if one had been shot by an arrow. Shimshon’s mode of operation, an individual lying in wait, in ambush, is compared by Yaakov to this snake.

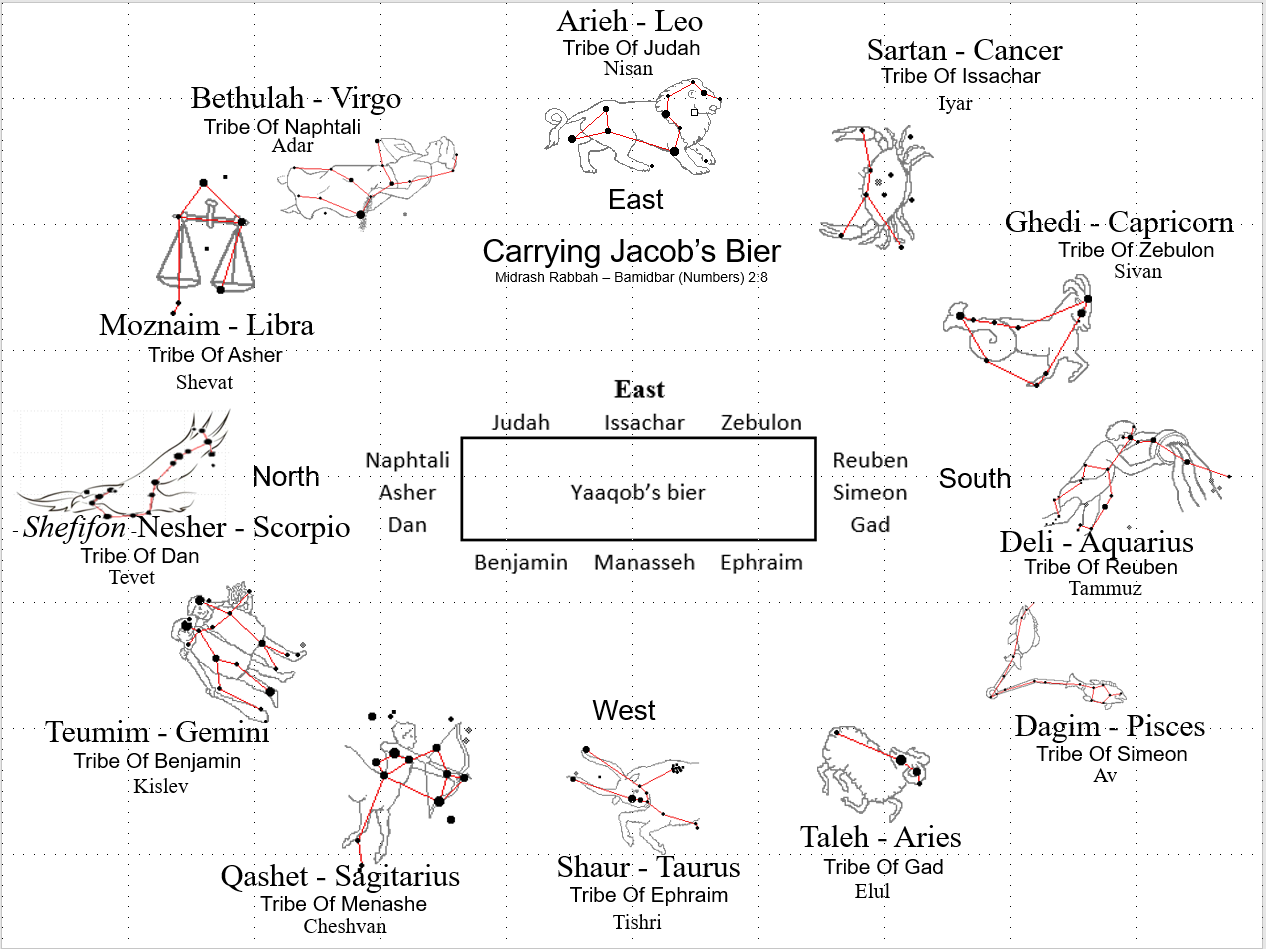
**Seforno**: Like a viper[[157]](#footnote-157) that waits by the wayside, and like a tiny snake as thin as a hair,[[158]](#footnote-158) that hides in a tree and to cast itself like an arrow upon any passing creature.[[159]](#footnote-159)

**Rashi on Genesis 49:17** שפיפן is another name for a serpent, a nachash נחש. I am of opinion that it is thus called because it hisses (נושף) when biting.[[160]](#footnote-160) Similarly we have, (Genesis 3:15) “and thou shalt bite (תשיפנו) at their heel”.[[161]](#footnote-161)

**Rashi #2 (citing Targum Onkelos) and Targum Yonasan**: Like a viper[[162]](#footnote-162) that waits by the wayside, and a cobra that lies in ambush on the path (of whom the nations are terrified and who strikes the Pelishtim).

**Malbim**: In size they were like Nechashim (big snakes). Regarding Derech they were like a Shefifon (small snake, which goes stealthily from the side).

It seems likely that the *Shefifon* / eagle / serpent prophesied by Yaaqob is a eagle-snake. This is reflected in the mazzaroth / mazzalot for the tribe of Dan.



**Ramban on Genesis 49:17:1** SH’PHIPHON (SERPENT) is the name of a snake which bites at the heel, with the second root-letter being doubled. In the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Terumoth the Rabbis said, “It is a small kind of serpent, its name is *sh’phiphon*, and it is as thin as a hair,” with the earth being permitted to crack before it. Samson is compared to a snake because Samson did not wage war against his enemies as did the other judges and kings. Rather he alone went out against them, just as the viper which leaves his hole to attack travellers on the road…

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**Rashbam**: Like a snake kills all who pass by the wayside, so too, will the tribe of Dan kill all their enemies.[[163]](#footnote-163)

**Ibn Ezra** on Genesis 49:16 DAN SHALL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE. Jacob hinted that Dan, although born of a handmaid, would have a standard just as the tribes born of the wives did.[[164]](#footnote-164) Dan was thus a ruler over all the other tribes that were descended from the handmaids.[[165]](#footnote-165)

**Ibn Ezra** on Genesis 49:17 [A SERPENT.] Jacob compared Dan in his strength to a serpent.[[166]](#footnote-166) It is also possible that shefifon (a horned snake) comes from the same root as yeshufekha (they shall bruise thy) in they shall bruise thy (yeshufekha) head (Gen. 3:15).[[167]](#footnote-167) According to this interpretation shefifon ale orach (a horned snake in the path) means the same as nachash ale derech (a serpent in the way).

**Ibn Ezra** on Genesis 49:18 [I WAIT FOR THY SALVATION, O LORD.] When the serpent bites the horse’s heel, it is afraid that the rider will smash its head with his sword. Hence the prophet prayed, I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord.[[168]](#footnote-168) The “thy” of Thy salvation refers to Dan. The meaning of our verse is: I trust to God for thy salvation. It is also possible that Scripture employs a nun (salvation) in place of an infinitive.[[169]](#footnote-169) Our verse should thus be rendered: I trust that God will save thee. Thy salvation in We will shout for joy in thy salvation[[170]](#footnote-170) is similar.[[171]](#footnote-171) The aforementioned is the case whether the “thy” of thy salvation[[172]](#footnote-172) refers to King David or to the anointed, his son.[[173]](#footnote-173) Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid says that the word va-yomer has been omitted from our clause and it should be read as if written: and he will say (va-yomer), I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord.[[174]](#footnote-174) Rabbi Isaac[[175]](#footnote-175) explains our verse as follows: when the prophet Jacob prophetically saw his son Dan in the form of a serpent, he was overtaken by fright and exclaimed, “Save me, O Lord”.[[176]](#footnote-176)

***Sanhedrin 104a-104b*** *Certainly the Lord will help the Jewish people. Rav Naḥman says: Impudence is effective even toward Heaven. How so? Initially, it is written that God said to Balaam: “You shall not go with them”,[[177]](#footnote-177) and ultimately after Balaam persisted and asked,* ***it is written: “Rise up and go with them****”.[[178]](#footnote-178)* ***Rav Sheshet says: Impudence is monarchy without a crown****,[[179]](#footnote-179) as it is an assertion of leadership and lacks only the official coronation as king, as it is written: “And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me”.[[180]](#footnote-180) The sons of Zeruiah, due to their impudence, were as formidable as David himself.* ***Rabbi Yoḥanan says: Balaam was disabled in one of his legs****, as it is stated concerning him: “****And he went limping [shefi]****”.[[181]](#footnote-181)* ***Samson*** *was disabled* ***in both his legs****, as it is stated with regard to Samson, who was from the tribe of Dan, in the prophetic blessing of Jacob: “Dan shall be a serpent by the way,* ***an adder [shefifon] in the path that bites the horse’s heels****”.[[182]](#footnote-182) Rabbi Yoḥanan interprets shefifon as the plural of shefi, indicating disability in both legs.*

Shimshon’s (Samson’s) two eyes were bored out, meaning that his two eyes became demoted to the level of one eye. In the blessing of Yaakov to Dan, Dan’s descendant, Shimshon, is called the *shefifon*, a “serpent”, a hint that Shimshon is the “serpent” **on the side of holiness**. One of the curses given to the serpent was that its two feet were removed, so that it only has “one” foot (so to speak). Shimshon is the holy kind of “serpent” because his ancestor Dan is repaired by joining with Yehudah, where the concept of “one” becomes turned into “two”. Through Mashiach (who comes from both Yehudah and Don), “one” becomes “two” (Dan is joined with Yehudah), and this repairs the evil oneness of the serpent.

# Ten Curses affecting the Nachash

The serpent was damned with ten curses:[[183]](#footnote-183)

1. The first curse was that angels descended and cut off his hands and feet. He screamed so loudly that it could be heard from one end of the world to the other. This was because he brought death to the world. When a person commits murder, it is because he is being dragged after his passions. The serpent was therefore punished in that he would have to drag himself on his belly.

2. Until this time the serpent did not eat regular food like other animals, but was nourished by spiritual "food." The second curse was that he should now eat the dust of the earth. Even if he were to eat the tastiest things in the world, he would taste only dust. He also cannot be satisfied unless he eats dust.

One should not think he can make do with any kind of dust that he finds. If this were the case, it would be a blessing; he would not have to struggle for food. The only dust that can nourish the serpent is that which comes from great depths, and he must dig down to reach it.

3. Before this, the serpent was very important; he was considered the king of all the animals. The third curse was that he be cursed by all the animals. [The word MiKall, which we have translated as "above all," is literally, "from all." This verse can thus be read, "Cursed are you from all the animals." (Tr.)]

4. The fourth curse was that the serpent would constantly be leprous. The white dots on his body are leprous spots. This was punishment because he slandered [G-d].

In general, leprosy is a punishment for slander and malicious speech.[[184]](#footnote-184) The punishment fits the crime, since malicious speech causes people to become separated from each other. The punishment is leprosy, where the person must also be separated from all men.[[185]](#footnote-185)

5. The fifth curse was that the snake must shed his skin every seven years. He must find two very smooth stones, where he can squeeze between them, pulling off his skin. This produces excruciating pain.[[186]](#footnote-186)

Besides this, the serpent must also remain skinless until he can grow a new hide. This punishment also fits the crime, because Adam was created with a beautiful shining skin.[[187]](#footnote-187) This skin shone like our fingernails do today.[[188]](#footnote-188)

For this reason, we gaze at our fingernails during Havdalah. All during the Shabbat the person has been like a king. He wore his best clothing, ate good food, and drank good wine. It is therefore very easy for him to feel self-important and to discuss weekday things on the Shabbat. Gazing at his fingernails, he should realize how much harm the sins [of pride and excessive speech] can bring, and repent.[[189]](#footnote-189)

6. The sixth curse was that there would be great hatred between the woman and the serpent. [The Talmud teaches that the serpent actually had intercourse with the woman, so she said that he "seduced" her.] When a man and woman sin with each other, they end up hating each other. A good example is found in the case of Amnon and Tamar[[190]](#footnote-190) This hatred exists even today. People have an inborn loathing for snakes, whenever a snake is seen, people smash its head.

7. The seventh curse was that a human can smash a snake's head, but if it wants to retaliate, it can only bite a person's heel.

G-d told Adam that if his children keep the Torah, they do not have to worry about the serpent. It is not the serpent that kills, but sin. If they do not keep the mitzvot, authority is given to the serpent to bite them.[[191]](#footnote-191)

Here too, the punishment fits the crime. The serpent bites people on the heel because they are not careful with the mitzvot; they tread on them with their heels.[[192]](#footnote-192)

8. The eighth curse was that poison exists inside his mouth. This actually burns the snake's mouth.

9. The ninth curse is death. Since the serpent was the cause of death, he was the first to experience it.

10. In the ultimate future, when the Mashiach comes, all will be healed, great and small. In the case of the serpent, however, G-d said, "Dust shall you eat, all the days of your life". This is an allusion that he will remain this way even in the Messianic Age.[[193]](#footnote-193)

It may seem that the fact that the serpent lost the power of speech should also be counted among these curses, since this was the worst of them all. But actually, since "dust is his bread",[[194]](#footnote-194) the serpent's tongue became gross, and he lost the power of speech.[[195]](#footnote-195)

Kabbalah Uroboros



Herein lies the mysteries of the masculine and feminine energies, the “straight, expanding light” and the “curved, contracting light” of the Creator’s Divinity.

This Two-Tailed Uroboros (akhnai) is also the secret of what is known in ancient Biblical texts and traditional Judaism as Leviathan. Leviathan — ostensibly some kind of giant aquatic beast that is as big as the entirety of creation — is, however, more than a legend. Along with numerous levels of meaning, Leviathan is an esoteric concept alluding to the higher-dimensional “shape” of reality and consciousness itself. Moreover, traditionally, there is not just one Leviathan, but *two*Leviathans — one male and one female (One “yang-like” and one “yin-like”). Leviathan is also a code name for the Two-Tailed Sacred Serpent, a “polarized singularity” — a “two” that is “one” and a “one” that is “two”.

in the form of an akhnai, that is, a serpent biting its own tail Sifra di-Tsenicutha [Zohar, II, 179a], in order to sw allusion to Sifra de-Tsenfutha Baba Metzia 59b

# Talking Animals

I would just like to add a few thoughts regarding parsha, Balak. I’ve heard Rabbi Fohrman mention that there are only two places in the Bible where we find animals speaking and humans don’t even act surprised. Those are of course serpent in the garden of Eden and Balaam’s donkey.

**Bereshit (Genesis) 3:1-6** Now the **serpent** **וְהַנָּחָשׁ** was more subtle than any beast of the field which HaShem God had made. And he said unto the woman: 'Yea, hath God said: Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?' 2 And the woman said unto the **serpent**: 'Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' 4 And the **serpent** said unto the woman: 'Ye shall not surely die; 5 for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.' 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

**Bamidbar (Numbers) 22:28-33** And HaShem opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam: 'What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?' 29 And Balaam said unto the ass: 'Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in my hand, for now I had killed thee.' 30 And the ass said unto Balaam: 'Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden all thy life long unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?' And he said: 'Nay.' 31 Then HaShem opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of HaShem standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face. 32 And the angel of HaShem said unto him: 'Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I am come forth for an adversary, because thy way is contrary unto me; 33 and the ass saw me, and turned aside before me these three times; unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I had even slain thee, and saved her alive.'

Out of curiosity, I wanted to check if those two stories are connected in other ways and interestingly, I was able to find other intertextual connections (parallels and contrasts).

- Both animals ask humans questions, but results are quite different: a conversation with the serpent ends in death for Adam and Eve, conversation with donkey saves Bilaam’s life.

- Both animals seem to have a better understanding of the human – Divine relationship in the story. The serpent seems to know what is needed for humans to become like God, and Bilaam’s donkey understands the wrath of God towards Bilaam.

- Both animals are leading humans astray from the path they are on. The serpent does it with words, donkey literally.

- Both stories are about two kinds of perception. After a conversation with the serpent and eating from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve's eyes were “open.” In the episode with the donkey Bilaam’s eyes are opened. Again, the results are different. Later on, in the story, in his final oracle Bilaam says: "And he took up his parable, and said: The saying of Balaam the son of Beor, and the saying of the man whose eye is opened;" Num 24:15

- Both stories are about obedience/disobedience to God’s explicit words and will.

- In the garden story because of the serpent’s speech, blessings of God are overturned and God pronounces curses. In the story of Bilaam, thanks to donkey’s speech intended curses are turned into blessings for Israel, another firstborn of God.

- Story of the Garden is the story about exile from the presence of God. In the story of Bilaam Israel is going towards the Promised land to live in the presence of God.

- In both stories, we encounter an angel with the sword on the path of a man.

- In both stories, there are words GOOD AND EVIL. In the garden of Eden story, there is of course the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the other story, Bilaam states:

**Bamidbar (Numbers) 24:13** If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of HaShem, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; what HaShem speaketh, that will I speak?

- In both stories, there is a word nâchâsh. In the first story it is a word for a serpent. In the second story, it has a meaning – enchantments.

**Bamidbar (Numbers) 24:1** And when Balaam saw that it pleased HaShem to bless Israel, he went not, as at the other times, to meet with enchantments **נְחָשִׁים**, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

**Zohar, Chayei Sara 12:74** Rabbi Yitzchak and Rabbi Yosi were walking from Tiberias to Lod. Rabbi Yitzchak said, I wonder about the evil man Bilaam. All he did was from the side of defilement. Here we learn a secret, which is that all kinds of sorcery and witchcraft of the world are connected and derive from the primordial serpent, which is the impure spirit of defilement. Therefore all enchantment (Heb. **נְחָשִׁים**) is named after the primordial serpent (Heb. nachash). They all derive from that side, and anyone who is drawn to that is defiled.[[196]](#footnote-196)

What can we discern from these connections?

# Advice of the Serpent

by R. Yisrael Herczeg

Why do righteous people die?

The Gemara in Shabbat 55b and Baba Batra 17a quotes a baraita that says:

There were four who died because of the advice of the snake. They are the following: Binyamin the son of Yaakov, Amram the father of Moshe, Yishai the father of David, and Kilav the son of David.

**Rashi in Shabbat 55b comments**: “The advice of the **snake**.” [That is,] the advice with which the snake misled Chavah, and because of no other sin, for they did not sin.

According to Rashi, “the advice of the **snake**” refers to the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

**Targum to Ruth 4”22** - Now Oved begot Jesse, who was called **Nachash**, because no corruption and perversion, for which he might be delivered into the hands of the angel of death, who would take his life from him, were found in him. He lived a long time, until the **serpent's** counsel to Eve, Adam's wife, to partake of the fruit of the tree, the eating of which resulted in wisdom to distinguish between good and evil, was recalled before God. Because of that counsel, all inhabitants of the earth are mortal, and as a result of that blunder, the righteous Jesse died. He is Jesse, who was the father of David, the king of Israel.

The commentary attributed to Rabbeinu Gershom on Baba Batra 17a has a different understanding of “there were four who died because of the advice of the snake.” It says, “[The four died] because of the advice that [the snake] advised Chavah, and not because of Adam’s sin.”

Rabbeinu Gershom’s terse comment gives rise to many questions:

Rabbeinu Gershom evidently is of the opinion that the advice of the snake was not a sin. Why then did it result in the punishment of death?

Why should mankind be punished for what the snake did?

If death had already been decreed upon mankind because of the advice of the snake, what was added when God cursed Adam with death for his sin?

In order to arrive at the answer to these questions, let us first examine why Rabbeinu Gershom apparently wishes to avoid explaining the baraita as saying that the four did indeed die because of Adam’s sin.

The sugya in Shabbat 55a-b which quotes this baraita says:

Rav Ami said: There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without transgression. There is no death without sin as it is written, “The soul that sins, it shall die. A son shall not bear the transgression of the father, and a father shall not bear the transgression of the son. The righteousness of the righteous one shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked one shall be upon him”.[[197]](#footnote-197) There is no suffering without transgression as it is written, “I shall make a reckoning of their offense with a rod, and with scourges, their transgression”.[[198]](#footnote-198)

The Gemara challenges Rav Ami’s statement from a baraita that says that Moshe and Aharon never sinned. The Gemara defends Rav Ami by saying that he follows the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar who says that Moshe and Aharon died because of the sin they committed by striking the rock.

Then the Gemara challenges Rav Ami’s statement from the baraita quoted above that says that there were four people who never sinned, yet these four people did die. The Gemara concludes that this baraita is a refutation of Rav Ami.

Rashi and Tosafot understand that when Rav Ami says “there is no death without sin,” he means that an individual does not die unless he himself has sinned. The baraita that says “there were four who died because of the advice of the snake” refutes this because it shows that these four people did not die because of their own sins. They died because of the sin of Adam and Chavah.

Rabbeinu Gershom apparently does not explain the baraita as the other commentators do, because in his eyes, it would then not pose a problem for Rav Ami. Rav Ami says that that there is no death without sin. Rabbeinu Gershom does not understand Rav Ami as referring only to the sin of the one who dies. Rav Ami means that death always occurs because of some sin, whether it is the victim’s or someone else’s. Death because of the sin of Adam and Chavah, according to Rabbeinu Gershom, is death with sin. Were the baraita referring to that sin, as Rashi and Tosafot understand it, it would not contradict Rav Ami’s statement. Yet the gemara says that it does. Therefore, Rabbeinu Gershom stresses that the baraita does not refer to the sin of Adam. It refers to “the advice that [the snake] advised Chavah” which he views as not being a sin at all. But then what is it, and why do people die because of it?

The problems we have raised are resolved if Rabbeinu Gershom viewed “the advice of the snake” as a euphemism.

When God confronted Chavah with her sin, she said in her defense, “The snake advised me”.[[199]](#footnote-199) The word the Torah uses for “advised me” is השיאני. Rashi to Shabbat 146a, based on Midrashic sources (see Torah Sheleimah to the verse in Bereshit), cites an exegetical interpretation which reads the word as *hisiani*, with the letter *sin*, rather than *hishiani*, with the letter *shin*. Accordingly, the verse means, “The snake **married** **me**,” and teaches us that the snake had relations with Chavah. Along the same lines, Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer, chs. 21 and 22, says that it was the snake who fathered Kayin.[[200]](#footnote-200)

It does not seem that Chavah committed any sin through having relations with the snake for at the time she and Adam had not been given any prohibitions other than to refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge. This is implied by the comments of one of the Baalei HaTosafot to the above verse, brought in Tosafot HaShalem.[[201]](#footnote-201) He writes that it is because Chavah had relations with the snake that women are forbidden to have more than one husband at a time. Hence, at the time that Chavah had relations, the prohibition was not yet in effect.

According to Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer,[[202]](#footnote-202) death was decreed upon the snake at the same time it was decreed upon Adam and Chavah. Nevertheless, it is possible that anyone born of “the pollution that the snake injected into Chavah”[[203]](#footnote-203) would have been mortal from the time of conception.

We now hold the key to Rabbeinu Gershom’s understanding of the baraita. The four who died “because of the advice of the snake” never sinned, nor did they have anything to do with the sin of Adam. The “advice of the snake” is a euphemism for the snake’s relations with Chavah implied in the word השיאני, “the snake advised me”.[[204]](#footnote-204) Kayin was the offspring of the union between Chavah and the snake. Even if Adam and Chavah would not have sinned, he would have ultimately died because he was mortal from birth. Adam’s curse of death applied to his other sons, Hevel and Sheit, and to Sheit’s descendants. It affected them, but only – according to Rabbeinu Gershom’s view of Rav Ami’s opinion – if they sinned, like their ancestor Adam. All people since the time of the Flood are descendants of the snake because Naamah, the wife of Noach, was a descendant of Kayin.[[205]](#footnote-205) The four people who led lives free of sin did not die because of the curse of Adam, for that affects only those who have sinned. They died only because of the mortality they inherited from the snake.

The Maharsha[[206]](#footnote-206) asks why the gemara uses the circumlocution “the advice of the snake” rather than stating “the sin of Adam” directly. According to Rabbeinu Gershom this is not a problem; “the advice of the snake” is something different from the sin of Adam.

Rabbeinu Gershom’s interpretation of “the advice of the snake” resolves another difficulty. The gemara in Shabbat brings a source from Scripture that Yishai, father of David, died because of the advice of the snake. II Shmuel 17:25 refers to David’s sister Avigal as the daughter of Nachash (“snake”). The gemara asks, “Was she the daughter of Nachash? Wasn’t she the daughter of Yishai? But [the verse means] she was the daughter of the one who died because of the advice of the snake (nachash).” While it is true that Yishai died because of the advice of the snake, is “snake” the appropriate title to give such a saintly figure? According to Rabbeinu Gershom it is indeed appropriate to refer even to one as saintly as Yishai as “snake,” for as righteous as a man may be, there is no denying that a part of him is serpentine.

**Miscellaneous Serpent Stuff**

A practical application of eye disease in the Talmud involves disqualifying an animal for sacrifice. The Talmud (Bechorot 38a) disqualifies any animal “if the ris (eyelid) of its eye was punctured, notched, or split, if there is a dak in its eye or an intermingling or a chilazon nachash or a grape-shaped growth.” Rashi translates dak as “cloth.” He seems to understand dak as a cataract, a clouding of the lens. Rambam defines dak as a spot in the eye. The word dak is used previously in Leviticus in reference to blemishes that disqualify a priest (Leviticus 21:20). A nachash, which is also the Hebrew word for “snake,” is thought to be a pterygium, a benign growth which creeps (like a snake) onto the cornea (Mansour). An “intermingling” is defined by the Talmud as “something that mixes the color of the eyes” (Bechorot 38b). This condition is now described as a coloboma, which is an iris sector defect caused by insufficient closure of the embryonic fissure. The following Mishnah continues with the topic of eye blemishes, discussing “white flecks or water in the eye.” Both of these conditions lead to complete blindness and may be another example of cataracts.

\* \* \*

The Rambam[[207]](#footnote-207) codifies this distinction as halacha:

One who recites an incantation over a bodily affliction and reads a verse from the Torah, and likewise one who reads [Torah] over an infant so that he not be frightened, and one who places a Torah Scroll or *tefilin*on a child so that he will sleep – it is not enough that such people are included among the *chovrim* (incantation-sayers) and *menachashim* (omen-readers), but they [are also] included among the *kofrim ba’Torah* (the deniers of Torah), for they utilize words of Torah as remedies for the body, whereas they are truly only remedies for the soul, as it is stated, *“[the words of Torah] shall be life for your soul” (Mishlei 3:22)*. But if a healthy person reads Scriptural verses and chapters from Tehilim so that the merit of their reading will protect him and save him from suffering and harm, this is permissible.

It is reasonable to assume that the permissible type of Tehilim reading ("so that the merit of their reading will protect him") qualifies as using words of Torah as "remedies for the soul," as described by the Sefer ha'Chinuch. In other words, if a person reads Tehilim with the intention of "inspiring his soul in a good direction" and making an effort to internalize what he reads, then this will bring him merit, and save him from suffering and harm.

\* \* \*

# Serpent Proteins

Some explain that the corona scandemic is alluded to in *Rashi* on the verse regarding the Passover offering, “Do not eat from it *na*.[[208]](#footnote-208) Rashi explains the meaning of this word, *na*, “If it is not sufficiently cooked it is called na” (שֶׁאֵינוֹ צָלוּי כָּל צָרְכּוֹ **קוֹרְאוֹ נָא** בְלָשׁוֹן עֲרָבִי). Some have noted that when the words, “it is called *na*” (קוֹרְאוֹ נָא) are pronounced very similarly to “corona”. However, there is a second allusion to corona in this part of Rashi’s commentary can be found in the first word, “If it is not” (**שֶׁאֵינוֹ**), since its value is 367, the value of “corona” (**קוֹרוֹנָה**), as above.

The active ingredient in the first ACE inhibitor, captopril, was originally derived from snake venom? Launched in 1981, captopril was based on an ingredient of the venom of the poisonous Brazilian Viper.[[209]](#footnote-209)

Surprisingly, they found that the protein codes in the 2019-nCoV are most similar to those used in snakes. The spike protein of the Wuhan flu vaccine contains the dna of cobra venom asian krate snake.

Cysteine rich secretory proteins (CRiSP) are predominantly found in snake venoms and some arthropods, but also in the venomous saliva of monitor lizards.

Captopril (Enalapril),[[210]](#footnote-210) Integrilin (Eptifibatide) and Aggrastat (Tirofiban) are drugs based on snake venoms, which have been approved by the FDA. In addition to these approved drugs, many other snake venom components are now involved in preclinical or clinical trials for a variety of therapeutic applications. These examples show that snake venoms can be a valuable source of new principle components in drug discovery.

Habushu is a traditional form of Okinawan rice liquor that comes with a fang-bearing pit viper coiled at the bottom of the bottle. Known as Protobothrops flavoviridis, or simply habu, the venomous snake lives on Japan's Ryukyu Islands.

black mamba venom contains neurotoxins that work to paralyze small animals and, as researchers discovered, serves as a painkiller just as powerful as morphine, but without many of morphine's side effects. The researchers examined venom from 50 snake species before they discovered the mamba's propensity for dulling pain.

Ivermectin, HCQ, and monoclonal antibodies are anti-venom treatments.

In summary, results derived from our evolutionary analysis suggest that 2019-nCoV has most similar genetic information with bat coronovirus and has most similar codon usage bias with snake.

There are cancer treatments whose components are derived from snake venom.[[211]](#footnote-211)

Come out of a room and they come walking in from the kitchen ask where did you come from and where you going to?

Where did you come from? And where are you going to?

In Hebrew when you try to say that to somebody when you use Hebrew and you say where did you come from? And where you're going to?

**What you're literally saying is you just came from nothingness and you're going to dimension of greatness that cannot even be expressed**

How Hebrew transition of one minute ago to one minute in the future, because we understand that every moment of past is a total annihilation, what is left of the past what do you have of the past whisp of a memory, and all that you have extracted from the past that's all, and that's nothing compared to the next moment of your life and the next stage of what you will be coming And therefore, just speaking, Hebrew put into that dimension of incredible explosion creation, of the future

Rabbi tatz

And

**Corona** - קראונא (1+50+6+1+200+100) = **358**

\* \* \*

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1. Nachash stems from the root that means “shining whisperer”, “shining enchanter.” In Shemot (Exodus) 7:9-15 the nachash is parallel to the tanin, the sea creature of Bereshit (Genesis) 1:21 and also related to the Livayatan of Yeshayahu 27:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. No serpent, no animal of any kind, is called Satan, or Beelzebub, or Devil, in the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bereishis volume 1b, translation and commentary by Rabbi Meir Zlotowittz, overviews by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, page 1891, published by Mesorah Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Falling, Getting Up, Snake & Moshiach,” Dovber Pinson [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is the pshat, the simple understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is the drash, the midrashic understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Baba Batra 74b [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Not make wonders. *Show wonders*. Bring the wondrous into the realm of human perception and cognition. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Micah 7:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Kohelet (Ecclesiasted) 10:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Shemot (Exodus) 7:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. see Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Tehillim (Psalms) 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Slowly and with effort. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Which is the symbol of ingratitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. And thus not appreciate the favours of eternal God bestowed upon mortal man. [This is but a quaint way of indicating the depths into which human depravity, which has its source in ingratitude to the Creator, may gradually sink.] [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Lit., ‘with heaviness of head’. Cf. Latin gravitas. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Perhaps identical with the wathikin. V. supra p. 49 n. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This is the Aramaic word for serpent. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The serpent was cursed that it would need to crawl on its belly, Bereshit (Genesis) 3:14. Rashi infers that it had legs which were amputated. The higher the position the greater is the fall, and this applies to the serpent, who not only was the chief of all animals, but walked upright like man, and when it fell it sank into the reptile species. - Bereshit Rabbah pg 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayahu chapter 65 *remez*509, where G-d is cited as saying to the serpent, “I created you to stand on two feet like man…but you wanted to kill him in order to marry Eve. See Bereshit Rabbah 19:1: NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD. R. Hoshaya the Elder said: He stood out distinguished [erect] like a reed, and he had feet. R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: He was an unbeliever. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer; Zohar 1:35 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. It was taught in R. Meir’s name : According to the greatness of the serpent so was his downfall : because he was More subtle than all, he was More cursed than all – Bereshit Rabbah Genesis 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The same interpretative expansion of Genesis 3:14 appears in Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 19:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Bereshit Rabbah 7:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. All the days of your life, i.e. as long as the species of serpents will remain on earth (Radak). Including the days of the Messiah. This curse will never be removed. Even in Messianic times [when *‘the wolf and the lamb shall eat together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox’*] ‘the serpent’s food shall be dust’ [Isaiah 65:25] (Malbim). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. In this heel generation we are susceptible to being bitten by the serpent. We are the generation that is most at risk from the serpent. There is a danger of “you shall bruise the heel.” In the final generations of the exile the Jewish nation resembles Adam HaRishon, and the culmination of the exile is his heel. The danger exists that the serpent will bite Adam’s heel. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Baba Batra 16b [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 8:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Aderet Eliyahu - Derashot on the Parasha & Haftarah (Rabbi Yosef Chaim / English – vol 1) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Rashi quotes, and the families of scribes — Soferim — which dwelt at Jabez; I Chron. II, 55. The term is generally applied to the band of Scholars from the Babylonian exile, who propagated the knowledge of the Torah and interpreted it. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. To safeguard the correctness of the text. Soferim is taken in the original sense of its root safar, ‘to count’. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly — Leviticus 11:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Leviticus 10:16: And Moses diligently enquired after — darosh darash — the goat of the sin-offering. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Leviticus 13:33: we-hithggalah, then he shall be shaven. [In M.T. the words ‘he placed on him’ (Lev. VIII, 8) is given as the middle verse.] [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Psalm 80:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. It is not stated whether letters or words are meant: S. Strashun observes that he counted the words, and found that the first half exceeds the second by nearly 2,000; hence the reference is to letters, and there is such a reading too. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Psalm 78:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The letter *vav* of the word *gachon* represents the midpoint *of the letters* of the Torah scroll. While most of the letters of the Torah are written in the standard script, he says, there are certain letters that are different. Some are written in an unusual fashion, while others are bigger or smaller than the standard letters of the Torah. If one were to count all the small and large letters in a standard Torah scroll, one would find that there are 16 or 17 of these letters (depending on whether we count the truncated *vav* in Numbers 25:12.) Of these, the ninth, i.e., the middle one, is the *vav* of *gachon*. In other words, the Talmud was not referring to the *vav* of *gachon* as the middle of all the letters of the Torah scroll; rather, it was referring to it as the middle of all the unusually large and small letters in the Torah scroll. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The middle letter of the book of Psalms is: Tehillim (Psalms) 80:14: The boar out of the forest doth ravage it, that which moveth in the field feedeth on it. - יְכַרְסְמֶנָּה חֲזִיר מִיָּעַר;    וְזִיז שָׂדַי יִרְעֶנָּה. The suspended vav has had all kinds of meanings attached to it by the Rabbinical writers: the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, the hanging of the Messiah on a tree; or, according to the Talmud, the middle letter of the Psalms, as similarly a large letter denotes the middle letter of the Pentateuch. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. “The Teaching of the Priests,” the old Rabbinic name for Leviticus [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Our Sages [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The Evil Inclination. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Isaiah 55:1; sc. the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Job 14:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Jer. 23:29. [This can also be rendered: ‘like the hammer which the (granite) rock (against which it is struck) breaketh; the Evil Inclination being compared to an iron hammer and the Beth Hamidrash to a granite rock, v. Totafot]. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Rabbi Joel David Bakst [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Neusner, J. (1988). *The Mishnah : A new translation* (677). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Shemot (Exodus) 7:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. see Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Gen. R. s. 54 הנ׳ של בית the domestic serpent (harmless); a. fr.—Pl. נְחָשִׁים. Gen. R. s. 84 נ׳ ועקרבים snakes and scorpions; a. fr. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Erubim 29b [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Bekh. VI, 2 חלזון נ׳ וכ׳, expl. ib. 38ᵇ as identical with חלזון; Tosef. ib. IV, 2; Sifra Emor ch. II, Par. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Bereishis volume 1b, translation and commentary by Rabbi Meir Zlotowittz, overviews by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, page 1891, published by Mesorah Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. שְׁפִיפוֹן (m.) (b. h. שְׁפִיפֹן; שפף) [sliding,] a species of serpents, adder (?). Num. R. s. 149 כנגד … נחש וש׳ corresponding to the two things to which his (Dan’s) father compared him, serpent and sh’fifon. Sot. 10ᵃ בלעם … שנאמר ש׳ וכ׳ Balaam was lame in one foot, for we read (Num. XXIII, 3), and he went shefi; Samson was lame in both feet, for it says (Gen. XLIX, 17) sh’fifon (sliding) on the road. Y. Ter. VIII, 45ᵈ bot. מין קטן הוא ושמו ש׳ it is a small kind of serpent, its name is sh’fifon, and it is as thin as a hair. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The Heb. היה translated ‘living creature’, denotes literally a wild animal, which cannot be put to service, but can only be caught and eaten. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Heb. מנדלבונים from \*\* (Levy) or \*\* (Krauss). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Thus the Serpent was intended to be put to service before it was cursed. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. The counsel given by the serpent to Eve, which brought death on all mankind, and not for any sin they themselves committed. [The reference is to physical death only and is thus not to be confused with the doctrine of ‘original sin’ involving the condemnation of the whole human race to a death that is eternal.] [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Shmuel (II Samuel) 17:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Divre HaYamim (I Chronicles) 2:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Shabbat 55b [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Tribal Lands, Chapter 8:25; Dan [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 12:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Shoftim (Judges) 16:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. ‘Gaza’ means ‘brazen’. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. The two words of nachash suggests that there are two who are serpents: a good serpent and a bad serpent. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. According to the Suda, Delphi took its name from the Delphyne, the she-serpent (drakaina) who lived there and was killed by the god Apollo (in other accounts the serpent was the male serpent (drakon) Python). Pytho (Πυθώ) is related to Pythia, the priestess serving as the oracle, and to Python, a serpent or dragon who lived at the site. "Python" is derived from the verb πύθω (pythō), "to rot". [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The Pope’s audience hall looks like a snake head [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Quetzalcoatl was, as his name indicates, a feathered serpent. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Kukulkan; lit. "Plumed Serpent", "Amazing Serpent", is the serpent deity of Maya mythology. It is closely related to the deity Qʼuqʼumatz of the Kʼicheʼ people and to Quetzalcoatl of Aztec mythology. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg, Kabbalah and the Healing of the Soul – Part 35 – The Snake - http://www.inner.org/healing/healing35.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. “Nadab & Abihu: Gate of Reincarnations: Ch. 33,” Shabtai Teicher [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. This conceptual equation appears, among many other sources, in the Ari, the Ramchal and R. Yitzchak Izik Chaver, (disciple of a disciple of the Gra), e.g., in his commentary *Be’er Yitzchak* on *Likutay HaGra* (last line on p. 175, Warsaw edition, 1889). See also R. Ya’akov Emden, *Siddur Ya’avetz, Zimrat HaAretz* (his commentary on *Perek Shira),* where, in explaining the song with which the serpent praises his Creator, he writes, “There is, however, certainly a level corresponding to that of a *nachash* in the realm of sanctity. This is the level of Mashiach, which is numerically equal to *nachash”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The plain explanation is that it is the holy power of the Mashiach that will vanquish the corresponding evil of the serpent. (A similar equation, also unexpected, is that Torah equals 311 alnd Samael plus Lilith also equals 311. R’ Yaakov Abuchatzeira, *Petuchay Chotem*, end of *Ki Tavo.)* Yet, the deeper question remains - what is the source of the power of the Mashiach to conquer this evil? The resolution to this question will now be developed in this chapter. See also Volume I, Chapter 2, *The Messianic Mission of the Gaon of Vilna, Gematria, Transmigration and Divination* for the role of *gematria* in the system of the Gaon as well as the Appendix, explaining the secret of *Tachtit HaHar* - the inverse relationship of a single side with two surfaces. Also relevant is the acrostic drawn by the Torah master R. Ya’akov Zvi Yolles (author of *M’lo HaRoim)* in his *Kehillat Ya’akov* (part II, 11a, Lemberg, 1870) that the three letters that spell *nachash/*serpent are the three beginning letters of the rabbinic phrase, *novlot chachma shelema’ala* - “distilled supernal wisdom”. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Pirkey Avot, 2-10 and amplified by R. Chayim Volozhin, Nefesh HaChayim, beginning of Chapter 3 in reference to the mystery of. the tzimtzum. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Zuhama = impurity, spiritual dirt [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Cf. II Esdras 4:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Mevaser Tov, The Biala Rebbe, Sefirat HaOmer, pg. 251 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. R’ Moshe Hayyim Luzzato, Kinat HaShem Tzevaot 20, cited in Messianic Mystics, Moshe Idel, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, pg 238 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Pesikta Rabbati. 3:6. ed. Friedmann, p. 161, b. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. “King With a Purpose,” (Chabad) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ramchal - Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707 in Padua – 16 May 1746 in Acre (26 Iyar 5506)), also known by the Hebrew acronym RaMCHaL (or RaMHaL, רמח”ל), was a prominent Italian Jewish rabbi, kabbalist, and philosopher. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. At times, the equivalence denotes that the two sides of the equality are like arch-enemies or arch-rivals. The positive and holy side of the equality is responsible and has the power to rectify the negative side. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Mashiach ben David [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Zohar Vaera,* Tikkun 21-9: When the evil Snake will be removed from the world, the Holy snake, which is the Vav and Zeir Anpin, will rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. as in Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. also see Maharsha to Sota 13a Divrei Hamaschil Chushim [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Peirush Yonatan on Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel to Toldot 25:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Snake anti-venom is made from the venom of the snake. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. The word Teli [means] hanging [down], meaning the gathering of the attributes. It is also the word for dragons – reptilians. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. See also Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27: where Livayatan is also called a pole serpent. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Midrash Tanchuma Chukkath 19, Num. Rabbah 19:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. It must be clearly understood that this pasuk is connecting Mashiach ben Yoseph to the serpent, not Mashiach ben David. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5–9 [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. “If I make it of gold [zahaf or of silver [kessef], these words do not correspond to the other [viz., nachash, meaning serpent]. Hence, I will make it of nechoshet [brass] since this word corresponds to the other, viz., nahash nehoshet—a. serpent of brass [i.e., a play on words].” [Gen. Rabbah 31:8] [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. This section is Excerpted from Dr. Mandell Ganchow*Coming of Age: An Anthology of Divrei Torah for Bar and Bat Mitzvah.* [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Pirkei Avot 2:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. It is worth noting in: Daniel 2:31-35 “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before thee; and the appearance thereof was terrible. As for that image, its head (Nebuchadnezzar) was of fine gold, its breast and its arms (Medea & Persia) of silver, its belly and its thighs (Greek Empire) of brass (NACHASH), its legs of iron (Aram, Edom-Rome), *its feet part of iron (Aram-Edom-Rome-Christianity) and part of clay (Ishmael-Islam).”* Thus we see the serpent in the brass legs of this terrible image. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Rosh Hashanah 3:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Melachim bet (2 Kings) 18:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Pesachim 4:9, 56a: Berachot 10b; Avodah Zarah 44a [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. from Aryeh Kaplan’s commentary [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 31:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Bava Batra 75a [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. In the Machzor this is found in the farewell to the succah. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Iyov (Job) 27:13 also speaks of this pole serpent. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Iyov (Job) 41:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. That of the foul breath. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. The sweet odours of the Garden of Eden perfume the sea. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Iyov (Job) 41:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Iyov (Job) 40:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Melachim bet (II Kings) 6:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Heb. Talmide Hakamim, lit.. ‘disciples of the wise men’, applied to scholars, distinguished students. Here taken to be synonymous with the righteous men mentioned previously. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 8:13. The ‘companions’ are the Talmide Hakamim. The entire Song of Songs is regarded in Talmudic literature as an allegorical poem on God, Israel and the Torah. The gardens are the Colleges. the companions are the scholars. ‘Haberim’ companions in Song of Songs. is taken to be equal to Habbarim in Job. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 23:8. (18) Iyov (Job) 40:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Mishle (Proverbs) 1:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Iyov (Job) 40:29. Bind, refers to a small object, such as an amulet, which one attaches (binds) to a string. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 40:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Rashi on Bava Batra 74b [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Bava Batra 75a [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Tehillim (Psalms) 50:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Iyov (Job) 40:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Tehillim (Psalms) 104:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. This section was largely written by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein for Ohr Somayach, tthough I have edited and augmented it. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. A grammarian from the 12th century [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. 990-1050 [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. To Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 30:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. A 12th century French commentator [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Bamidbar (Numbers) 21:5-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. To Bereshit (Genesis) 1:21 and Niddah 22b [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 27:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Baba Batra 74b [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. To Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 59:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. 1700-1780 [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. A commentary to the Zohar [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. 1585-1633 [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. In consonance with Ibn Parchon’s understanding [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. 1740-1814 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. A 14th century commentator [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. e.g., a spider, which is an *achavish* in Hebrew [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. 1866-1935 [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Bereshit (Genesis) 6:1-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Terumot 8:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. 1785-1865 [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. 1843-1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Refer to Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17:1:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Yerushalmi, Terumot 5:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Seforno: Likewise Shimshon, who fought on his own, unseen by his enemies as he suddenly swooped down upon them. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Gur Aryeh: (Unlike Rashi), one may explain that a Shefifon always drags ('Shaf') its belly along the ground; this is the meaning of the verb Shin-Fey. Ha'Kesav Veha'kabalah (to Vayikra 13:45, citing R. S. Poppenheim): Whereas most snakes lift some part of their body off of the ground, the Shefifon does not raise it at all. Related words include the animal 'Shafan,' and the 'Ashaf' magician who walks dragging his feet (e.g. Bil'am, who walked 'Shefi' - Bamidbar 23:3). (CS - See Yalkut Shorashim (Steinberg)) [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. cf. Rashi thereon [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Whose bite is incurable. Targum translates it as Churman (the term used by Arab doctors [Sforno]), because it destroys all. The Seforno adds that it is kills many in one go with its look and with its voice, which is why it characterizes Shimshon, who was capable of fighting the enemy. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. The Rashbam does not comment on the details described in the Pasuk. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. For the standards see Numbers 2. The four tribes with standards were: Reuben, Judah, Ephraim and Dan. The first three were descended from Jacob’s wives, Dan was the son of Bilhah, Rachael’s handmaid. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. This explains Dan shall judge his people, i.e., he shall be a ruler over the tribes descended from the handmaids. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Scripture says that Dan shall be a serpent in the way. I.E. points out that Jacob compared Dan to a serpent only with regard to his ability to harm his enemies. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Hence shefifon means a snake. It is so called because it bruises (Krinsky). [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. When the serpent strikes (that biteth the horse’s heels, so that his rider falleth backward), he is not out of danger. The rider can still kill him. Hence Jacob prayed that God be with Dan so that when he struck his enemy he would escape safely. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. I.E. interprets li-shu’atekha (for thy salvation) as if written le-hoshi’akha. The latter is a verb, the former a nun. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Tehillim (Psalms) 20:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Here, too, the “thy” in thy salvation does not refer to God. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Tehillim (Psalms) 20:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. The Messiah (Cherez). Any of the Judean kings descended from David (Weiser). The point is that the caf suffixed to yeshu’ah (salvation or victory) does not refer to God. The same holds true in our verse (Filwarg, Cherez). Vat. Ebr. 38 reads, “Thy salvation (thy victory) is similar in that “thy” refers either to David or to the anointed his son.” [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. The subject of va-yomer is Dan, i.e., Dan after biting the horse’s heel will say, I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord (Filwarg). According to this interpretation “thy” in Thy salvation refers to God. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. According to Weiser, the reference is to Rabbi Isaac, one of the early Gaonim of Sura. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. “Save me, O Lord” is a paraphrase of, I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord. According to this interpretation also, “thy” in Thy salvation refers to God. The reason for Jacob’s fright was explained by I.E. at the beginning of his comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Bamidbar (Numbers) 22:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Bamidbar (Numbers) 22:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. There is evidence to suggest that the corona virus wus developed from snake venom. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Shmuel (II Samuel) 3:39 [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Bamidbar (Numbers) 23:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Bereshit Rabbah; Tikunei Zohar, p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Lashon HaRa [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. commentary on Metzorah, MeAm Loez Commentaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Bereshit Rabbah. Cf. Tikunei Zohar 92b; Zohar, Sh’lach [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Targum Yonatan; Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Rabbi Moshe] Alshich, [Torat Moshe, Venice, 1601] p. 17) [By causing Adam to sin, the snake made him lose this beautiful skin.] [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Zohar, VaYachel [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. 2 Shmuel (Samuel) 13:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Tikunei Zohar, p. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Targum Yonatan [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Zohar Chadash 18b) The same is true of anyone who speaks maliciously. He will never be healed unless he repents completely. (Targum Yonatan; Bachya; Zohar, Sh’lach [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 65:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Toledot Yitzchak [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Zohar 1:125b [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:33 [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. According to this midrash, “And Adam knew Chavah his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Kayin” means, “And Adam knew [what] Chavah his wife [had done], and she conceived…” Rav David Luria in his commentary to Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (ch. 22, note 1) notes several points in the wording of the passage that the support this midrashic interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. vol. 1, p. 131 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. ch. 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. This is the wording used by the Gemara in Shabbat 146a. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. According to Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (ch. 21), Scripture uses another euphemism in this passage, as well. “ ‘Which was in the center of the Garden’ (Bereishis 3:3). ‘In the center of the Garden’ is a euphemism for that which is in the center of the body…” [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Bereshit Rabbah 23:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Mahadura Batra to Baba Batra 17a [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides), Mishneh Torah: Sefer ha'Mada, Hilchos Avodah Zarah 11:6. It should be noted that whereas the Sefer ha'Chinuch defines *chover chaver* as "a person who will recite words and tell people that those words cause benefit or harm in a certain matter," the Rambam defines it as "a person who speaks words which do not belong to any language and have no meaning, but he – in his foolishness – imagines that those words produce a beneficial effect." And yet, the Rambam writes in our halacha that one who uses words of Torah to heal is included in the category of *chover chaver*.  [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Shemot (Exodus) 12:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Bothrops Jararaca [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. For controlling blood pressure. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Gilead Pharmaceuticals [↑](#footnote-ref-211)