



Look Deep To Find The Meaning

By Moshe Coronel, 12th Grade

Parshat Metzora is one of the few places in the Torah that deal with the issue of tzaraas, commonly translated as leprosy. When discussing the tzaraas of a house the Torah says “When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict an eruptive plague upon a house in the land you possess, the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, ‘Something like a plague has appeared upon my house’ (Vayikra 14:34-35).” Rashi comments that the reason Hashem would put tzaraas on the houses that the Jews would inherit was because the Amorites that previously settled the land hid valuables inside the walls of the house. Therefore, when the Jews would break the walls of the house they would discover treasure. However, the Tur HaAroch disagrees and instead opines that Hashem put the tzaraas on the walls in order to alert the Jews that there are things in the house that were used for idolatry. Therefore, when the walls were destroyed, the Jews would fulfill the mitzvah of destroying things used for idolatry. However, unlike Rashi, the Tur HaAroch forbids the use of items found in the walls.

The question is as follows: if it’s true according to the Tur HaAroch that the treasure in the walls is forbidden, then how can Rashi say that the treasure in the walls is a good thing and should be used? Shouldn’t Rashi have also ordered that the treasure found should be destroyed?

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A Blessing In Disguise

By David Benhamu, 12th Grade

In this week's parsha we learn of the “sickness” called tzaraas. At first glance tzaraas seems like a form of leprosy which was placed on a person who sinned. This was a terrible experience. The fact that this punishment is no longer given, therefore, would seem to be a positive change. Surprisingly enough, however, the Chafetz Chaim claims that being given the punishment of tzaraas is actually a blessing in disguise. How does this make sense?

To understand this statement of the Chafetz Chaim we must look at something that may seem unrelated: cars. Imagine that you are a thrifty person that wants to save money on your car. You decide to buy an older model car that works very well and has no obvious issues. After a few months this car dies. By the same logic you used to buy the first car, you buy a second car that is also old. Once again, after a few months your car dies. After going through this process many times you finally realize that buying an old car is not worthwhile. You buy a new car and after a few months your car is on the verge of dying and you see a warning signal in your car light up-the amber light on the dash indicating that your car is in need of an oil change. This finally makes you understand what was so wrong with buying older cars- they had no warning system in place. Tzaraas is very similar to that

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Ari Keller

Saying Lashon Harah About Yourself

Everyone knows that we are not allowed to speak about Lashon Harah about others, but can a person speak Lashon Harah about himself? If someone compliments you, can you deflect by saying that it's not true, or is that lowering their opinion of you and thereby speaking Lashon Harah?

One answer can be that this would be considered Lashon Harah, because Lashon Harah includes all sorts of negative speech, even about oneself. Another possible Isur revolves around the concept of "Viyisem N'Kiyim" in Parshas Matos, which means that you have to maintain a good reputation. By speaking Lashon Harah about yourself, you are violating this idea. A third potential Isur is of harming yourself. The Shulchan Aruch paskins that you can't be "Chovel B'Atzmo"; just like you can't be "Chovel B'Atzmo", you aren't allowed to harm yourself in any other way either, including speaking Lashon Harah about yourself.

However, in the Sugya of Ain Adam Maysim Atzmo Rasha, we never mention the possibility that one is violating Lashon Harah about himself. The Gemarah in Sanhedrin Daf 11 talks about great people who embarrassed themselves by taking the blame for something they didn't do, and it is even considered heroic!

With all this in mind, let's go through some Poskim to see what the Halacha is regarding speaking Lashon Harah about yourself. R' Eliyashiv is quoted saying that it is Mutar to speak Lashon Harah about yourself, because the Chafetz Chayim, who is an expert in the Halachos of Lashon Harah, did this. R' Moshe Feinstein is quoted saying that one cannot speak Lashon Harah about someone else even if they gave permission, because one is not allowed to speak badly about himself either. This clearly indicates that it is Asur to speak Lashon Harah about yourself. Lastly, the Sefer Chafetz Chaim seems to indicate that there is no prohibition of speaking Lashon Harah about yourself.

Although it might not be an Isur to speak Lashon Harah about yourself, we should still avoid speaking negatively about ourselves.

(Aliyah Summary- Continued from page 2)

ner prescribed in this aliyah. With this the purification process is completed.

5th aliyah- If the individual suffering from tzara'at cannot afford the above karbanos, two birds can be substituted for two of the animals. This aliyah describes the slightly different purification process reserved for the poor person.

6th aliyah- Homes, too, can be afflicted with tzara'at. If stones on a home become discolored- acquiring a strong red or green pigment- a kohen is summoned. If indeed the discoloration seems to be tzara'at, the kohen quarantines the home for up to three weeks. Depending on the spread of the discoloration, the home is either declared to be tahor, or the specific stones are removed from the house, or, in the most extreme situations, the house is demolished. The Torah then describes the purification process for such a home- which is very similar to the initial stage of the purification of the human afflicted with tzara'at (described in the First Aliyah). After concluding the subject of tzara'at, the Torah discusses the ritual impurity of a man who issues a sickly and unnatural seminal discharge, as well as the method by which this person attains purity when the condition passes.

7th aliyah- The last aliyah discusses the tumah contracted by a man who issues a "normal" seminal discharge, the ritual tumah of a menstruating woman, and of a man who cohabits with her. All such people must immerse in a mikvah in order to be purified. Under certain circumstances a menstruating woman was required to bring to the mishkan two bird karbanos in order to attain purity.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Max
Blumenthal*

The parshah begins with the pasuk that says, "If a woman gives birth to a boy, she is tamei for seven days". The Midrash compares this to the pasuk in Bereishis that says, "Avraham saw the place of the Akeidah from a distance." So what is the connection between these two pesukim?

The Chidushei Harim zy" a, Rav Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter, answers that the Midrash is explaining why a woman who gives birth becomes tamei. She gave birth to a holy, Jewish child. Why should that cause impurity? Does it make sense that the mother should become tamei? So the Midrash answers that tumah represents being distant from Hashem. And everyone, including great tzaddikim, experience times in their life when they feel distant from Hashem. During these times, they think Hashem isn't happy with them and that He isn't interested in their service. It is a very painful experience, but they continue performing their obligations nonetheless. Their devotion to Hashem's laws during such times raises them to very high spiritual levels. So, it shouldn't surprise us that a mother becomes impure after giving birth to a holy child. The impurity represents the great challenges that her child will go through in life.

The Chidushei Harim quotes the Zohar who states that Avraham saw that he is very distant. Hashem felt distant and unimportant. Nevertheless, Avraham said to himself, 'Why should this make a difference for me? I will do what Hashem commanded me.' It was truly a very great test. All his levels (madreigos) were taken away, and yet he said 'Why should this make a difference' and he continued serving Hashem. This happens to every person at a time when he finds himself very distant. Every Yid has times when he feels close and other times when he feels distant. The Midrash is asking why should a woman who gave birth to a Jewish child cause tumah? The answer is how man is created. There should be times of distance. And there is a great benefit earned from those times. Therefore, every Oved Hashem shouldn't ask why he sometimes feels very distant, because it is all certainly for the good.

This feeling of "distant" generally happens after one commits an aveirah. He thinks Hashem doesn't want him anymore. But if he will continue serving Hashem, he will reach extremely high levels. If we remember this message, Hashem will allow us to turn those into mitzvos and IY" H that will make the geulah come speedily in our days, banheira b'yameinu!!

JoBe Silver

11th grade

Spiritual Disease

“And the kohen shall look upon the plague in the skin of the flesh...it is the plague of leprosy, and the kohen shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.” (13:3)

The Rambam points out that the various laws of tzoraas apply only to Bnei Yisroel and that nigei battim (tzoraas on houses) only applies in Eretz Yisroel. These rules demonstrate that tzoraas is not a physical illness or disease; rather, it is a physical manifestation of a spiritual “disease.” It is for this reason that the Torah tells us that the kohen, as opposed to a doctor, comes to examine the tzoraas and determine whether the afflicted person is pure or impure.

Upon looking at the pasuk, many ask the following question: Why does the Torah mention that the kohen has to examine the tzoraas twice; what do we learn from the repetition of the word kohen?

One possible way to answer this question is based on the following halacha. When the kohen goes to look at the tzoraas, he must first look at the person and see what he is dealing with. For example, if the person is a chassan during his Sheva Brachos, the kohen cannot determine the person impure, in order to not ruin the Simcha of the chassan and the kallah. This shows that the Torah is more concerned with the happiness and well-being of the afflicted person than the actual tzoraas itself. This again demonstrates very clearly that the affliction of tzoraas is not physical but spiritual.

The Yeshuos Malko provides another answer. He says that when the kohen goes to look at the potentially afflicted person, he should not only look at the person’s shortcomings and the places where he has been affected. He must also look at the person as a whole, with all of his good traits and qualities taken into account. Therefore, although the kohen must first examine the tzoraas (as that is his responsibility), as long as afterward he looks at the man as a whole person with all of his strengths taken into account, only then can he make a full assessment of the person and the tzoraas.

People make mistakes. When we look at them, we must strive to see all of the positive traits and not only focus on the harm and damage this person’s actions may have caused. Upon focusing on the good, suddenly the bad points are no longer as significant.

(Adapted from Derachim Beparsha)



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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

"If she has not the means for a lamb, then she should bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons"(12:8)

When I come to stand before the heavenly court, I do not fear the question: "Why weren't you Moses?" I was not equipped to be Moses. But I tremble for the day that it will be demanded of me: "Why weren't you Zushe?" (Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli)

Rebbetzin Devorah Leah, daughter of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, told the following:

"In the city of Vitebsk lived two tea merchants, both named Hoisha, known as 'Big Hoisha' and 'Little Hoisha.' 'Big Hoisha' was a wealthy man, with a large, respectable establishment and a well-developed distribution network. 'Little Hoisha' was a small-time operator, running his business from hand to mouth, forever scrambling for loans to keep it afloat.

"One day a message arrived that one of Little Hoisha's tea shipments had been confiscated at the border by customs officials. For the poor man, this spelled utter ruin. Not only would he lose everything, but he would also be left with crushing debts which he would never be able to repay.

"I was there," Devorah Leah related, "when they broke the news to Reb Hoisha, who was in Lubavitch at the time. The unfortunate man collapsed in a dead faint; time and again they revived him, but as soon as he remembered what had occurred, he would collapse once more.

"We ran to my father and told him of Reb Hoisha's state. Father instructed that when Reb Hoisha is again revived, we should tell him that the messenger is mistaken. Shortly thereafter, the matter was indeed clarified. It turned out that the confiscated shipment belonged to the other Hoisha, the tea merchant, 'Big Hoisha,' who would hardly feel the loss.

"Father always maintained that he never performed supernatural wonders. Now, the Chassidim who had witnessed the incident claimed that they had caught him red-handed with a supernatural feat. 'You are mistaken,' replied Father to this 'accusation.' 'There is nothing miraculous about my prediction. You see, our sages tell us that whenever the Almighty causes a person to undergo a challenge or trial in his life, He always provides him with the capacity and fortitude to bear it and to learn from the experience. So when I saw a calamity which Reb Hoisha was not equipped to deal with, I understood that it was not meant for him. Obviously, there must have been some misunderstanding . . .'"

(Moshe Coronel- Continued from page 1)

There is a famous story told about Rabbi Akiva's teacher, Nachum Ish Gamzu, that relates to this concept of troubled treasure. The Jews at the time were dominated by the Roman Empire and therefore tried to maintain the empire's good graces by sending a tribute full of valuables and gifts. They also selected Nachum Ish Gamzu, a man famous for his Emunah in Hashem, to be the national representative escorting this tribute. One night, Nachum Ish Gamzu stayed at an inn where the innkeeper was an untrustworthy individual; while he slept, the innkeeper swapped out the dazzling tribute for dirt all the while concealing his thievery from Nachum Ish Gamzu's eyes. After waking up, Nachum Ish Gamzu continued along his journey to the emperor's palace where he would present the Jewish gift to the Emperor. Sure enough, Nachum Ish Gamzu revealed the contents of the gift- dirt. The Roman Emperor, furious at what he thought was a grave insult, condemned Nachum Ish Gamzu to death. Nachum Ish Gamzu, in desperation, cried out, "Your Majesty, this isn't just regular dirt; this is the dirt our forefather Avarahm used in his battles, and I guarantee if you use it you will be successful in yours as well!" Sure enough, the emperor sent this dirt to the front lines, and the Roman army was able to use it with great success against its enemies.

The miraculous dirt seen in the story of Nachum Ish Gamzu can be used as a metaphor in the seeming contradiction between Rashi and the Tur HaAroch. Perhaps, we can suggest that Rashi and the Tur HaAroch actually agree with one another. Rashi is saying that the fact that, similar to when Nachum Ish Gamzu understood that the sneaky swap was part of God's plan, Hashem supplied us with the treasure would have been enough of a gift to us. The Tur HaAroch is saying the flip side: the fact that Hashem continued to supply us with miracles, like Nachum Ish Gamzu's miraculous weaponizing of dirt, even though one miracle would have been enough, is another indication of Hashem's love for the Jewish people. The Tur HaAroch focuses on the deeper meaning of the positives of the treasure: Hashem is giving us the opportunity to fulfill His mitzvot.

The lesson is obvious: while everything we get is an opportunity, we should always look for ways to deepen the meaning of our experiences in life.

Have a great Shabbos!

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little amber light on the dash. It is a warning system for your spirituality. Even though eventually you may be able to realize the problem on your own, in current times, where tzaraas is no longer given as a punishment, we are put at a massive spiritual disadvantage. For this reason the Chafetz Chaim felt that tzaraas was a good thing.

Although the concept of tzaraas is gone, there are other warning systems in place to help guide us through life. Guilt, for example, is to the soul as pain is to the body. Although none of us enjoy the experience of pain it can also be beneficial. If we would not feel pain in life, each of us would most likely be missing limbs and suffering from other health issues! Similarly when we do something wrong, the pang of guilt which flows through us makes us regret whatever wrong thing we did. We all hate the feeling of guilt, so we should try to avoid it in the first place. This should teach us that when we feel guilt, we should embrace the lesson that it is teaching us and let it fuel your drive to stand up to your desires. Listen to your heart, and let Hashem help guide you through the ups and downs of life.

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The Severity of *Lashon Hara*

The parshiyos of Tazria and Metzora discuss the dinim of tzaraas. Chazal say that one of the primary causes of Tzaaras is Lashon Hara - speaking negatively about someone else.

Lashon Hara is one of the most pervasive challenges that we face daily. The Gemara in Masechet Shabbos states that; "There isn't anything poorer than a dog and there isn't anything richer than a pig." Rashi explains that the pig is considered wealthy because it can eat all types of food, it can find food on its own, and it is fed food. A (wild) dog, however, is not given compassion, and is not given as much food. The Vilna Goan explains that this Gemara is really an analogy for Lashon Hara. The "wealthiest" Mitzvah- the most practiced, is the prohibition of eating pork, which is kept by even non-religious jews. The "poorest" mitzvah- the least observed, is the prohibition of speaking Lashon Hara. This is compared to the dog, for the Gemara states; "Whoever speaks Lashon Hara, it would be proper to throw him to the dogs."

There is a famous story in the Medrash in which a peddler came to the town of Rav Yanai, claiming to have the medicine for life. When Rav Yanai asked the peddler for the medicine, the peddler opened a Tehillim and read (Perek 34): "Who is the person who desires life...? He should guard his tongue from speaking bad."

Indeed, The Chofetz Chaim writes that being careful with regard to speaking actually enhances the quality of one's life. The peddler referred to careful speech as a medicine for life, not a protection against death. He states that being cautious with Lashon Hara results in a more fulfilling, content, and stress free life.

May the constant vigilance of avoiding Lashon Hara be a Zechus for the Achdus of Klal Yisrael!

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