

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת תזריע

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד מבניו הכהנים
“If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis or a sapachas or a baheres, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh; he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen, or to one of his sons the Kohanim” (13:2)

R' Moshe Feinstein comments in his sefer Darash Moshe that the Kohen does not necessarily have to be in the Bais HaMikdash at the time when he sees the tzaraas. We see that the connection that a person should have with the Kohanim and the Torah leaders is not just tied to the Mikdash. The influence of the Torah must pervade our daily activities as well. This is because what happens to us in our daily lives is determined by our connection to Torah and by the strength our belief in Hashem. We must strive to maintain a strong bond to Torah and mitzvos constantly and place it before us as our guide. It is the most important thing in life and all aspects of our lives are judged based on our adherence to it.

This is especially illustrated by tzaraas, a physical manifestation of a spiritual imperfection. There is no physical cure to this illness. The metzora leaves the camp and sits by himself, alone with his thoughts and is allowed time to repent the sins that led to his punishment. Only after he repents does his affliction disappear. It is a disease that is contracted through a weakness in Torah observance and is remedied by a new commitment to Torah. It affects a person physically but is of a completely spiritual origin. This is true of all difficulties in life. A person's success, health and happiness all depend on his observance of Torah and mitzvos.

If all physical conditions are a result of a person's spiritual level, why does a person even need to go to a doctor? Let him repent and the disease will go away of its own accord? R' Feinstein explains that it is possible that a person's sin may be such that it can only be atoned for through repentance and physical attempts to rid oneself of the sickness. It is an extra level of atonement that is needed, in addition to repentance, in order to regain one's health.

ובשר כי יהיה בו בערו שחין ונרפא
“If flesh will have had an inflammation on its skin, and it will have healed” (13:18)

The Gemara in Sotah 5a records a statement of Chizkiyah, who said that prayer is only heard if a person makes his heart as soft as flesh (rather than hard as stone - Rashi), a reference to humility. A person's prayers are only heard if he is humble. As a proof to this concept, the Gemara cites this posuk which describes flesh which is afflicted with tzaraas and becomes healed. The posuk only mentions healing from tzaraas in connection with flesh. This shows that one who becomes humble and soft like flesh will have his affliction healed.

Each person has to ask himself where he is in life - is he hard as stone or soft as flesh? Is he humble and self-aware or does he have excessive hubris and pride? It is important for a person to train himself in the ways of humility. The Igeres HaRamban refers to humility as the "greatest of all good deeds" and that "humility brings a person to fear of Hashem. In addition to the importance of humility in prayer, it is also of utmost importance with regards to Torah study. Torah cannot reside in a haughty person. The Torah was given on Har Sinai, the smallest of mountains, to represent that humility is a necessary component of learning Torah.

The Sfas Emes once said that through a proper understanding and embodiment of the posuk “Ana Hashem” one can achieve everything. The people thought that he was referring to

the posuk in Hallel of “Ana Hashem Hoshia Na,” which refers to crying out for the salvation of the Jewish people. They understood him to mean that if one cries out to Hashem with great intensity, Hashem will grant him all his desires. However, R’ Avraham, the son of the Sfas Emes, interpreted his father’s statement to refer to a different posuk in Hallel, the posuk “Ana Hashem Ki Ani Avdecha,” “Please, Hashem, for I am your servant.” The Sfas Emes was really trying to say that humility is the key to success. By embodying the humility portrayed in this posuk, one can achieve greatness.

**זאת תורת נגע צרעת בגד הצמר או הפשתים או השתי או הערב או כל כלי עור לטהרו
או לטמאו**

“This is the law of the tzaraas affliction, a garment of wool or linen, or the warp or the woof, or any leather utensil; to declare it pure or to declare it contaminated” (13:59)

The Gemara in Nazir 65b attempts to understand why tahor precedes tamei in this posuk. The answer given is that the posuk teaches that tzaraas is tahor until proven tamei. If there is any doubt regarding the affliction, we assume that the person is still pure. R' Moshe Feinstein writes in Darash Moshe that we see a deeper meaning from this Gemara that is applicable in daily life. Every single Jew has an innate desire to do what is right in the eyes of Hashem. If a Jewish person appears to be afflicted by a spiritual defect and is acting inappropriately, he is still pure and he should not be given up on. No parent or educator should never give up on a child and decide that he is beyond help. One should always have faith that he will come around with the proper encouragement. The parent or teacher should persist in his attempts to bring the child back to the proper path. The child can read the attitude of the adults around him. If he senses that they have given up on him, he will respond in kind by distancing himself even more. The child is really looking for someone to trust and believe in his abilities and to reach out to him. If we show a positive attitude, the innate goodness will rise to the top again and the child's purity will come back in full force. Just as tzaraas, the representation of a spiritual defect, is assumed to be nothing more than a skin ailment unless actually proved otherwise, we must never give up hope on a Jewish soul that acts in an unhealthy manner.

Parshas Hachodesh

The Aruch Hashulchan writes in Siman 429 that Nisan is counted as the first month of the year because of the tremendous miracles that occurred in Mitzrayim during that month. Why was Nisan chosen to be the month in which these miracles took place?

The Egyptians worshipped sheep because it is the first in the cycle of the constellations. They worshipped as a physical manifestation of the supposedly powerful stars. This explains why Pharaoh became obstinate again even after he seemed to be broken by the plague of hail. Although he recognized the hand of Hashem in the hail, he noticed that Nisan, the month of his great constellation and the power that he worshipped, was coming up soon. He felt that when Nisan came, he would be victorious. Therefore, he hardened his heart once more and became even more stubborn than ever before in anticipation for his final victory in the month of Nisan. It was specifically regarding the month that Pharaoh thought would be to his advantage that Hashem told Moshe "this month shall be for you, the first of the months." Just as in the time of Purim we rejoice because Haman thought Adar was his special month and it became our special month, the exact same thing is true of Nisan. The Egyptians thought that the month of Nisan was their special time. Therefore, Hashem turned the tables and made Nisan our special month, the month in which He worked wondrous miracles and the month of our redemption. The Mishkan was erected in Nisan and the third Bais HaMikdash will be constructed in Nisan as

well. Hashem's sanctuary illustrates that He is the supreme power in the universe. Through it, His presence is felt in this world. Hashem's presence came down and will come down again in Nisan, the month which the Egyptians thought was theirs and would allow them to overcome Hashem but which was transformed into our special month. Now we can understand why fasting and saying tachanun is not allowed for the entire month of Nisan. Although the Magen Avraham answers that we keep these laws at the end of Nisan because the majority of the month is special, we do not need this answer anymore. We can say that the holy time is that which is governed by the sheep constellation, all of which Pharaoh thought would portend well for him. Thus, the entire month of Nisan has a special degree of sanctity.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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