

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת מצורע

ויצא הכהן אל מחוץ למחנה וראה הכהן והנה נרפא נגע הצרעת מן הצרוע
“The Kohen shall go forth to the outside of the camp; the Kohen shall look, and behold, the tzaraas affliction had been healed from the metzora” (14:3)

Why does it say “the tzaraas affliction had been healed from the leper?” Who else would it be healed from? The Alshich writes that tzaraas comes as a punishment for loshon hara and other sins. Until he recognizes what he has done wrong and attempts to do teshuva and correct his sin, his tzaraas will not go away. This is the intention of the posuk. The tzaraas has to be healed from one who recognizes himself as a metzora and as one who has done wrong and has repented. Only then will the tzaraas be healed, when he sees himself as person with tzaraas.

The Midrash tells the story of a peddler who was going around announcing, “Who wants life?” R’ Yanai went over to the man and expressed some interest. The peddler told R’ Yanai that what he had was not for a great talmid chacham. R’ Yanai insisted so the peddler pulled out a Tehillim and read him the verse: “Who is the man who desires life?...Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking falsehood.” R’ Yanai exclaimed that he had never been able to satisfactorily explain this posuk until now. What did he not understand about this? The answer given by the Kochav MiYaakov is that he thought not speaking loshon hara guaranteed a good life in olam haba, but not necessarily in this world. Now he understood that avoiding gossip leads to a pleasant life in this world as well. Many times people get stressed out and cause great pain through their speech. If one is careful, he will spare himself much hardship. The Ksav Sofer says that Rabbi Yanai learned that it is not enough for one to watch his own mouth but to tell others to do the same and be careful as well. This is why the posuk continues: “Avoid evil and do good.” It is not only enough to avoid evil but one must make sure to also do good.

וצוה הכהן ולקח למטהר שתי צפרים חיות טהרות ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזב
“The Kohen shall command; and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop” (14:4)

The Torah instructs the metzora to take two birds for his purification process, one to be slaughtered and one to be sent away. Rashi says that a bird is constantly chirping and thus symbolizes a person whose mouth is always running. R’ Dovid Feinstein says that the slaughter of the bird represents the fact that this characteristic must be eradicated. However, one might say that he will never talk because talking only leads to tzaraas. Therefore, the Torah says to take another bird and send it out to the field. One should not necessarily avoid talking, just stay away from groups of idle talkers and engage in Torah study and other noble pursuits. Avoid associating with gossipers and attaching yourself to them and there will be no need to be concerned about the problems of talking.

וצוה הכהן ושחט את הצפור האחת אל כלי חרש על מים חיים
“The Kohen shall command and the one bird shall be slaughtered into an earthenware vessel over spring water” (14:5)

What is the need for spring water in the purification of the metzora? The answer is that the Torah is metaphorically referred to as “spring water.” The use of this water in the purification process symbolizes that what one needs to rectify his sin and to avoid repeating it in the future is to learn Torah. Speaking words of Torah leaves one with no time to speak evil about others.

ובא אשר לו הבית והגיד לכהן לאמר כנגע נראה לי בבית
“The one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the Kohen, saying:
Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house” (14:35)

R' Dovid Feinstein explains that “והגיד” usually implies that someone is saying something pleasant. Why is this language used with regard to tzaraas on a house? He answers that the person is glad to have been notified of his problem by Hashem so that he can now correct his fault. In fact, the word “nega,” “affliction,” has the same letters as the word “oneg,” “pleasure.” The Netziv writes that one is only worthy of tzaraas if he has begun to travel down the path of repentance. If a person has not begun the repentance process, he will not be stricken with tzaraas because he is not yet worthy of the atonement that is brought about by having tzaraas. Thus, if one were afflicted with tzaraas, it would be a comfort because he would know that he is moving in the right direction and is on the path of teshuva.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

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