



S. FLORIDA ZMANIM

CANDLE LIGHTING

7:22 PM

S"Z KRIAT SHEMA

10:12 AM

SUNSET

7:41 PM

MOTZEI SHABBAT

8:17 PM

"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT METZORA

פרשת מצורע

~ ה' ניסן תשע"א ~

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FLYING FEATHERS

RABBI CHAIM LANNER

Twitter, Facebook, and... *Parshat Metzora*. Remember that story you heard as a kid- with the pillow and the feathers? There's that man who speaks *lashon hara* (slander) about his friend to all his cohorts in his town and then regrets doing so. He asks his rabbi how to undo what he did and the rabbi (most likely the Chafetz Chaim- R' Yisroel Meir Kagan (1838-1933)) tells him to throw the feathers of a pillow into the air, retrieve all the feathers, and to reconstruct the pillow. When the man explains to the seemingly oblivious rabbi that such a feat is impossible, the rabbi wittingly retorts back, "Exactly!"

The poignant message of this timeless parable has become more significant than ever with the marvelous technology and devices of today and, no doubt, of tomorrow. "Did you see that ugly outfit she was wearing today?" That used to be something that the girl sitting in the back row of the classroom whispered to the girl sitting next to her. Perhaps, by the end of the period, forty minutes later, the room of eighteen girls was collectively mocking their unattractively adorned classmate. By lunchtime, chances are, that all fifty two kids in the grade were entertaining themselves with the fashion faux pas this girl had committed a mere four hours ago in the first few moments of her day.

April 2011 brings this exact scenario to a whole new level. Within seconds, not only will this unprovoked castigation of that innocent girl be blasted out to hundreds of Twitter followers and Facebook friends, but there will also be a photo accompanying the caption leaving nothing to the reader's imagination. Perhaps, if her outfit were to be comical enough, a video would be uploaded as well; maybe even to YouTube. Perhaps, if lucky enough, the video could go viral, and a few million viewers would be able to entertain themselves with this girl's outrageous wardrobe ensemble.

The prescription the Torah offers to people who speak *lashon hara* about others is *tzaraat*, translated, loosely, as leprosy. The leprosy, after the first offense, hits the home of the offender. After the second offense, the leprosy makes its way to the slanderer's clothing. Only after the third offense does the leprosy actually attack the person's actual body. Each time a person opens his mouth to speak maliciously about another, he is revealing something that "his friend" clearly was not interested in sharing with others. It is a completely unfair and unwarranted invasion of this person's privacy.

Thus, measure for measure, the punishment of leprosy fits the crime of *lashon horah* quite perfectly. If one has no respect for the boundaries and barriers of others, than he too will have to learn what life is like without the same. When someone is callous enough to flippantly reveal that which is meant to be concealed, then he too will feel what it's like to have his concealing agents taken away too; starting with his home, then his clothing and culminating with his very skin. It may be a worthwhile idea to spend some time this Shabbat contemplating the contents of what we twitter, blog and text. Once the "send" button is hit, that's a bunch of feathers being sent out that we can never get back.

THE POWER OF SPEECH

CORI DENNIS ('13)

This week's *parsha*, deals extensively with the laws of *tzaraat*. The Gemara explains that *tzaraat* came about during the times of the *Beit Hamikdash* as a punishment for the sin of *lashon hara*. If a person spoke negatively about someone else, his home would be afflicted with this, so called, *tzaraat*. If he did not repent, his clothes would also become affected. If he was still reluctant to repent, then his body would be affected. As a result of his evil speech, the *metzora*, the individual afflicted with *tzaraat*, would then be separated from civilization and publicly be proclaimed as an "impure person."

In *Parshat Ki Teitze*, the Torah commands us: "Remember that which Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the road at the time you went out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 24:9).

Miriam spoke *lashon hara* about her brother Moshe and was, thus, stricken with *tzaraat*. When Miriam was separated from the camp, however, all of *Bnei Yisrael* waited for her for seven days. No one traveled during the week of her isolation. Everyone waited for Miriam. Our Sages teach us that the entire camp waited for her as a reward for waiting and watching over her brother Moshe when he was a baby and placed in the Nile.

Despite the magnanimity of such a *middah keneged middah* reimbursement, Miriam most likely would not have wanted this reward. Isn't it more of a punishment to have everyone questioning, "Why aren't we moving?" and the answer being "It is Miriam's fault- because she spoke evil words about her brother." What kind of "reward" is this?

The Rambam explains that the Torah is hinting to us: contemplate what happened to the prophetess Miriam. She spoke about her younger brother whom she loved and helped raise; she just made a mistake. Moreover, Moshe was not even bothered by any of her comments, as it is written, "And the man Moshe was extremely modest". Nevertheless she was immediately punished with *tzaraat*. If Miriam was inflicted after harmlessly gossiping once, how much more intense will the punishment be to those who frequently speak improperly. Miriam made an innocent mistake. Therefore, when we are commanded to remember the sin of Miriam; the Torah is not denigrating Miriam; she is not being criticized. Rather the Torah is saying, "While you are waiting for Miriam, keep in mind the destructive power of *lashon hara*." If what she committed is considered *lashon hara*, how much more so must we guard our tongues with every ounce of restraint from within us.

TAKE YOUR TIME

SARAH BARROCAS ('14)

Parshat Metzora informs us that one who speaks *lashon hara* is stricken with *tzaraat*, and is therefore branded as a *metzora*. The *metzora* must leave the camp and reside in seclusion in order to do *teshuvah*. Once Hashem feels that his or her *teshuvah* is sincere, the *metzora* must first go through the purification process before being fully forgiven.

There are three stages of purification. Stage one requires the *metzora* to acquire two birds, that are both kosher and healthy, for a *korban*. However, before doing the *korban*, the *metzora* is a *tamei* and therefore must wait one week prior to bringing this offering.

In the second stage, the *metzora* must have the *kohen* shave all the hair from the *metzora's* outer body. He or she must shave the head, beard, and eyebrows specifically. The reason for this is because the head signifies arrogance, just as the *metzora* considered himself more worthy than others, the beard identifies the area around the mouth in which he spoke *lashon hara*. The eyebrows represent the trait of *tzarot ayin*, jealousy, that encouraged him to ruin the reputation of a fellow Jew.

Therefore, by shaving all of these areas, the *metzora* is removing him or herself from those traits that permitted and seduced him or her to commit the sin. The final stage of purification is the giving of three *korbanot* accompanied by a meal-offering, which is particularly conspicuous as sin offerings are not usually accompanied by meal offerings. Hashem allows this meal offering because it serves as a testimony to His acceptance of the *metzora's* genuine repentance.

One should learn from this that no matter how iniquitous the sin, if one takes time and genuinely repents, Hashem will ultimately forgive the person. In today's society, we don't get stricken with *tzaraat* in the physical sense; therefore, our challenges are harder because we do not have an apparent representation of our sins. However, because we are given a bigger challenge, the merit, in turn, is greater. We must learn from this *parsha* the importance of taking time to recognize our iniquities and thereby avoiding straying from the path of Torah and ultimately assisting ourselves to live a truly holy and spiritual life.

TZARAAT. MEDICAL MYSTERY

ELANA GELMAN ('12)

Only after delving into the first few verses of this week's *parsha*, it becomes clear that *Parshat Metzora* is almost exclusively "tzaraat-themed". Superficially, there is nothing strange about this in depth discussion of *tzaraat*, because its purpose is to give cautionary advice in preventing this malady, in addition to teach the protocol in the event of a widespread *tzaraat* epidemic. What is strange about the discussion of *tzaraat* is that despite the copious amounts of details the Torah provides regarding the *halachot* of *tzaraat*, there is no verse within the text that actually specifies what *tzaraat* is. While *tzaraat* is often used synonymously with 'leprosy' (mainly because of the Torah's association of the affliction with a white skin rash) no other indicators of a "common" leprosy status are cited in the text. So what exactly is *tzaraat* if not leprosy, and what is its purpose if not simply dermatological punishment?

The loss of feeling, paralysis, disintegration of muscle, and gross skin abnormalities that take place as acute leprosy advances, are missing from the Torah's rendition of the malady, thus making such an explanation unwarranted. For those who are not medical aficionados or do not have WebMD available to them, a regular case of leprosy in fact cannot spread its contagious microbes and contaminate articles of wool or linen, nor can it spread its infection on the infrastructure of a house. In light of this information we are forced to think of other alternatives to what *tzaraat* really is because a clinical case of leprosy cannot infect possessions or houses, or any inanimate objects of the sort.

Also significant is that that the Torah is reticent regarding the actual reason behind one acquiring *tzaraat*. As the Torah depicts *tzaraat*, it seemingly appears and "strikes down" abruptly, without warning. Since there was no centralized Center for Disease Control (our modern day CDC) then, the Kohen was trained in being able to discern the symptoms and even notoriously proclaim the ill-stricken individual as 'tamei', impure--usually warranting the notorious seven-day incubation period.

Nechama Leibovitch explains that "tzaraat is a divine signal to the straying soul to return to the way of the Torah, a sublime manifestation of God's desire to have the sinner do *teshuvah* (repentance)"(Vayikra). She gets this premise based on a teaching of the Rambam, a practicing medical doctor, who expressed that "tzaraat of garments and houses are not natural phenomena", but spiritual signs, given to guide the afflicted in the right direction. The Rambam's approach to *tzaraat* is simple; he viewed it as a way to dissuade *Bnei Yisrael* from involving themselves in *lashon hara*. It is hard for us to put ourselves in that situation, however, who wouldn't want to just keep their mouth closed, rather than getting a grotesque skin "condition"?

Tzaraat, as a "real" medical illness, may no longer be prominent in modern times, but like other seemingly archaic laws of *Sefer Vayikra*, the primary lesson of *tzaraat*, as elucidated through by our long standing ritual and tradition, is as important as ever. The Torah's reasoning behind the punishment of *tzaraat* is that it is only when a man is within the structure of isolationism, of being removed against his will from human presence and God's company, can the deprecating effects of *lashon hara* be understood and afterwards appreciated.

ציפורי מצורע SAGIV ZEHAVI ('12)

ידועות ומפורסמות דרשות חז"ל כי הצרעת באה על לשון הרע, גבהות לב וחמדנות. בכל המקרים הנ"ל האדם עשה פעולות שליליות ועבר בקום ועשה על ציווי התורה. חכמי האמת פתחו בפנינו צהר חדש בהבנת הצרעת כעונש וממילא גם דרך חדשה בהבנת המושג הימנעות מעשייה ודיבור. בעל "שפת אמת" (תרס"א) מביא:

"כמה דעונשא דהאי בר נש (כמו העונש שבא על האדם) בגין מלה בישא (בגלל דיבורים שלא היה אמור להוציא מפיו כמו לשון הרע) כך ענשיה בגין מלה טבא דקאתי לידיה ויכיל למללא ולא מליל (כך עונשו על מילים טובות כמו דברי תורה שהיה יכול לומר ולא אמר)" (זוהר כרך ג (ויקרא) פרשת תזריע דף מו עמוד ב).

קרבתו של המצורע מורכב מארבעה חלקים: א. עץ ארז ב. שני תולעת ג. אגודת אזוב ד. שתי ציפורים חיות טהורות. רש"י כבר הסביר כי הציפורים המפטפות באות לכפר על פטפוטי של המצורע. וז"ל:

"לפי שהנגעים באין על לשון הרע, שהוא מעשה פטפוטי דברים, לפיכך הוצקו לטהרתו צפרים, שמפטפטי תמיד בצפוף קול" (ויקרא י"ד:ד).

ציפור אחת נשחטת והיא אסורה באכילה. השנייה משולחת ומותרת באכילה. הסיבה ההלכתית לכך מופיעה בסוגיא במסכת קידושין (נ"ב ע"ב) שם הגמרא מסכמת "רבא אמר: לא אמרה תורה שלח לתקלה (סברא הוא שהמשולחת מותרת דלא אמרה התורה שלח לתקלה שתהא למכשול עון וילכדה אדם ויאכלנה - רש"י, עין עוד ב"פני יהושע" על אתר וב"שערי יושר" שער ג פרק ו).

ה"שפת אמת" מסביר את העניין גם מבחינה רעיונית. הציפור השחטה היא כנגד הדיבורים הלא כשרים שיצאו מפי המצורע, לכן ברור מדוע היא נאסרת באכילה. לעומתה הציפור המשולחת היא כנגד הדיבורים הכשרים שלא שולחו מהפה, לכן ברור מדוע היא מותרת באכילה, כי בזה תיקונו. עקרון זה, שאי דיבור משמעות אמירה והוא יכול להיחשב כחטא בא לידי ביטוי גם בדברי חז"ל הבאים. על הפסוק "פִּי רַבִּים חֲלָלִים הַפִּילָה וְעַצְמִים כָּל הַרְגִיָּה" (משלי ז' כו) דורשים חז"ל: "כי רבים חללים הפילה - זה תלמיד חכם שלא הגיע להוראה ומורה, ועצמים כל הרוגיה - זה תלמיד חכם שהגיע להוראה ואינו מורה" (סוטה דף כב ע"א).

בשם הגר"א, הגאון מוילנא, מובא שזו הסיבה שעל פי חלק מהמסורות הדיבר "לא תרצח" מופיע פעם בניקוד קמץ ופעם בניקוד פתח. דברי חז"ל מתבארים נפלא, יש "רציחה" על ידי הוראה טרם הזמן, הדיבור המיותר הופך לכלי משחית ויש "רציחה" על ידי המנעות מאמירת דברי אמת ובחירה בשתיקה כשיש מה לומר. את הרעיון הנ"ל ביטא רבי מנחם מנדל מקוצק כשקבע "אין דבר רועם יותר מן השתיקה".

בימים אלה אנו נמצאים בחודש ניסן, ימים שעליהם אמרו רבותינו "בניסן נגאלו". מתחילה תקופה שראשיתה בפסח וסופה בשבועות. בין לבין נציין את יום השואה והגבורה, יום הזכרון לחילי צה"ל ונפגעי הטרור, ל"ג בעומר ויום שחרור ואיחוד ירושלים. שאלת אמירת ההלל והיחס לימי הזכרון תעלה לדין הלכתי וציבורי, כמדי שנה בשנה. אולי זה הזמן לחזור על העקרון שאי אמירה כמוה כאמירה שלילית. החלטה שלא להחליט משמעותה להחליט לכיוון השלילי. מי שאינו אומר הלל, מכריז מה דעתו על תקופתנו לא פחות ממי שאומר הלל. חזקיהו מלך יהודה הצדיק איבד את זכותו להביא גאולה לעולם כיוון שסגר את פיו ולא שלח שיר תודה והודאה לד' אלקיו (סנהדרין צד ע"א).

הבה נתפלל כי נזכה כולנו בקרוב לשיר לקב"ה שיר חדש על גאולתנו ועל פדות נפשנו

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