

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

איש צדיק הוא טמא הוא טמא 'ממאנו הבהן בראשו נגוע' ... (ג-ב)

The **Toras Kohanim** writes that it is a *mitzvah* to both be מטמא and מטמא. If so, why don't we do it nowadays? The **Chofetz Chaim ז"ל** suggests that perhaps the reason we don't perform this ritual is because we no longer have a *Bais HaMikdash* and cannot offer *Korbanos*. As such, we would not be able to complete the *tahara* process once the *tzaraas* clears up; thus, we have no right in the first place to declare an individual *tamei*. The lesson to be ascertained from this is that purifying oneself from *tumah* represents the idea of *teshuva* (repentance). We would only punish a sinner with the declaration of being an impure "*Baal Aveirah*" if we know that there is a chance that he will do *teshuva*. His base *tahara* must be allowed to shine through. But if we really do not think this will be accomplished, and the only result we can foresee is that those who sin will simply become more anti-religious, then starting the process off is useless.

In 5669 (1909), **R' Yerucham Halevi Levovitz ז"ל**, arrived in the *Mir Yeshivah*, where he served as the *Mashgiach* and remained until his final day some 37 years later. A new period in the life came to the *yeshivah* as the *Mashgiach* began to give *Mussar* lectures four times a week, opening the eyes of his *talmidim* to new worlds. R' Yerucham was a symbol and model of behavior for his *talmidim*. Not only was he an excellent orator, he also acted in accordance with his own teachings. He demanded more of himself than of his *talmidim*, and he was a man of *Mussar* in every sense of the word.

His devotion to his *talmidim* was legendary. He was aware and sensitive to each and every one, knowing what upset each *talmid*, which ones truly feared possessed *Yiras Shamayim*, and which ones elevated themselves in purity and holiness. R Yerucham's *shmuessen*, which he delivered four times a week, were not fire-and-brimstone harangues, but analytic and deep *shiurim* on the meaning of *Torah posukim* and *maamarei Chazal*. He very often focused on nothing "more" than the simple intent of a Rashi or a Ramban. The effect, however, was even stronger than the fire-and-brimstone variety. His words almost always packed a punch, and were not for the faint of heart.

It is told that R' Yerucham was once sitting with a group of *talmidim* as they were discussing *inyanim* of *Mussar*. Suddenly, he looked over to the window and motioned to them, requesting that they bring him the "*Mussar Sefer*" that was lying on the windowsill. A few jumped up but try as they might, they could not spot any *sefer* on it.

"*Rebbi*, there is no *sefer* on the windowsill," said one intrepid *talmid*.

R' Yerucham explained that he was referring to the orange that was resting on the windowsill. The *talmid* was baffled by this revelation but nonetheless, he picked up the fruit and handed it to the *Mashgiach*.

R' Yerucham took the orange in his hand and asked his *talmidim*, "Would you consider this a 'dry fruit' or a 'wet fruit'?"

"It's a wet fruit," they confidently responded. "We can make delicious orange juice from it!"

"But it feels dry," R' Yerucham responded.

"In order to get to the moisture," they told him, "One must take off the peel."

So, R' Yerucham peeled the orange, but once again asked them where is the wetness? It is still dry.

"*Rebbi*, take off another layer," they told him. With that, he removed yet another layer, but all they saw were the slivers that were still admittedly dry. "Why are you so sure this is a wet orange?" he again asked.

Before they could respond, he explained himself. "We see that to get the juice out of this fruit, the many layers that are protecting the moisture must be removed. It is a wet fruit, but its content is sealed in by many layers of dry substances.

"This is exactly the same with a *ben Yisroel*," continued the *Mashgiach*. "We are all intrinsically pure, even though we have many deceiving layers of *tumah* covering us up. We nevertheless must remember that we are intrinsically pure! If you don't see it, this is because you didn't go deep enough. The further you go, the more purity you will find."

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

In the uncommonly read *Haftorah* of *Parshas Tazria*, a Jewish maidservant of the Aramite general, Naaman, suggested that he seek help from *Elisha HaNavi* to cure his *tzaraas* ailment. Naaman eventually came before Elisha who instructed him to bathe seven times in the Jordan river after which his flesh will be restored. Naaman was thankful and wished to pay Elisha, but he refused by stating, "*As Hashem lives, whom I serve, I will not accept anything.*" *Chazal* (*Medrash Raba Bamidbar 10:5*) tell us that Elisha did not accept any payment from Naaman since "*it isn't the ways of the prophets to take payment for their divine prophecies.*"

However, we do find in other places, in particular when *Shaul HaMelech* went looking for his father's lost donkeys,

payment was indeed rendered for a prophet's divine message. So, why did Elisha tell Naaman that he can't accept payment?

R' Zev Volf Einhorn ז"ל (Pirush Maharzu) explains that a *Navi* wouldn't accept payment for himself but it was common for him to take payment and then redistribute it to the poor or his *talmidim*. But here, Elisha had a different issue. Naaman was a general of a very powerful foreign paganistic nation, and he was afraid that Naaman would give him something that he would be unable to accept and therefore be unable to redistribute. Thus, at first Elisha simply refused Naaman's gift, but when the latter persisted, he then told him that it wasn't proper to pay a prophet for his services and Naaman accepted - not wanting to offend Elisha.

וראה הבהן והנה מראה שפל מן העור ושערה הפך לבן וממאנו הבהן נגע צרעת הוא בשחין פרהה ... (ג-ב)

In order for a צרעת to be classified as טמא, a single hair must turn white inside. The question is why must it turn white? White usually connotes purity, as it says "אם יהיו חטאיכם כשגל לבנים". A *kallah* wears white, and during the *Yamim Noraim*, our *shuls* are bedecked with white cloths, to impart this message of purity. So why does white signify *tumah*?

Rashi writes here: "ששער לבן סימן טומאה הוא גזירת הכתוב" and that is the reason - the only reason - for the white hair. Perhaps, says the **Zaida ז"ל (Baal Machsheves Halev)**, this is precisely what Rashi is coming to address. Nevertheless, let us try to understand what is the deeper meaning and message that lies therein?

The **Raavad, R' Moshe Shternbuch שליטא**, explains that white hair signifies זקנה, old age. A person is afflicted with צרעת only when the sin of הרע becomes embedded in him, like an old pastime. A one-time offense won't necessarily warrant this punishment. Similarly, the *posuk* says "ומראה הנגע עמוק". The *nega* must appear deeper than the skin. If it means literally or figuratively speaking is irrelevant (see Rashi's befuddlement), the point is that the sin isn't just skin deep, it's much more severe.

The **Pardes Yosef** offers another *pshat*. He quotes the *Gemara* which says that צרעת comes as a result of עין צרות. For example, a poor man comes begging for help and is ignored. The עני will become embarrassed which makes him blush and then turn white. Thus, the white hair reminds a person to repent and fix his wayward behavior.

Lastly, *Chazal* teach us that a מצורע is considered "כמת" like a dead person. White signifies a person who is no longer alive. This, too, serves as a reminder to improve and really live a productive life of compliments, having a *lev* and *ayin tov* instead of the opposite. While we don't have this gift of צרעת today, may our *ameilus* in learning the *parsha* of צרעת remind us to cultivate happy, healthy and enduring relationships that will usher in the *geula* - which is already at our doorstep!

משל למה הדבר דומה

והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת ... (ג-ב)

משל: A *chassid* once went into the room of his *Rebbe*, one of the great Chassidic Masters, and he saw the *tzaddik* pacing back and forth with an anguished and disturbed look on his face. Not wanting to disturb the holy man in the midst of his reverie, he waited until the *Rebbe* noticed him before he would open his mouth and speak. However, after going unnoticed for quite some time, he approached the *Rebbe*.

"*Rebbe*, what has happened? Is everything okay?" he asked. Startled, the *Rebbe* looked up and replied, "Indeed, something very disturbing has happened. Someone told me that I am a wicked person and a fool. I was so ashamed and hurt but he just continued with his rebuke."

Taken aback, the *chassid* was not quite sure what to respond. He wanted to stand up for the honor of his *Rebbe*

כל ימי אשר הנגע בו ימאנו טמא הוא בדרך ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו ... (ג-ב)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

"*Why must a leper be forced to sit alone outside the camp? Since he spoke lashon hara and caused disparity between one Jew and his friend, and husbands and wives, therefore, he too, is separated and forced to sit by himself.*" (ערכין טו:)

The **Rambam** writes that the disease of *tzaraas* (leprosy) was not a medical condition but rather a supernatural illness that was sent as a warning to an individual who was speaking *lashon hara*. There were three levels of this spiritual illness. At first, the plague attacked the person's house. If the person understood the message and repented, it did not spread any further. If the person continued to speak against others, the *tzaraas* continued to spread onto his clothing. If he now got the message and did *teshuva*, it would stop right there; but if not, his body would become afflicted with *tzaraas*.

Although the *tzaraas* illness manifested itself in a physical way, it was really a spiritual disease that was sent as a wakeup call for *teshuva*. The **Chasan Sofer, R' Shmuel Ehrenfeld ז"ל**, points out that even the three different forms of leprosy that were inflicted on the body - שאת, ספחת, בהרת - were called by three distinctly different names to direct a person to look inwardly and realize the reason why he spoke *lashon hara* in the first place.

The first type - "שאת" - means to lift up, for a person often speaks negatively against others to lift his own stature. Negative words against another, "lifts" him up. The second, "ספחת" is from the word "סיפור" which means a group (of people). Very often it is peer pressure and wanting to "join the crowd" - to be part of the "group" - that causes one to sin. And the third, "בהרת" comes from the word "בהיר" which means to clarify. A person will sometimes try to clarify and explain away his own negative behavior by speaking against others. Through understanding the underlying motive of negative speech, may we save ourselves from this horrific sin of *lashon hara*.