

TOUCHED BY G-D

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the double parsha of Tazria-Metzora. These parshios primarily deal with the different types of leprosy's which afflicted people, their clothing and their houses and the ensuing purification process. "Adom ki yihyeh... b'ohr b'saro l'negah tzara'as [When a man will have... in the skin of his flesh a 'negah' of leprosy].[13:2]"

What is a 'negah'? Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the term 'negah' refers to a disease which is specifically sent by Hashem. The person affected is 'naguah', literally 'touched' by the Finger of Hashem.

What is the point of this 'touch' and what can be learned from it?

The Mishna [Erchin 8B] teaches that the 'closure' period for determining if something was actually leprosy was at least one week and at most three weeks. The Talmud there explains that the minimum one-week period applies to the leprosy of man and the maximum three-week period applies to leprosy of the houses.

King David sang the praise of Hashem: "Tzidkascha k'har'ray el [Your righteousness (unbounded kindness) is like the mightiest of mountains] mishpatecha k't'home rabbah [your judgment is like the vast deep waters].[Psalms 36:7]" Strangely, Rav Papa applies this verse to our Mishna. "Your righteousness is like the mightiest of mountains" --that refers to the one week period for man. "Your judgment is like the vast deep waters"--that refers to the three week period for houses.

Rashi explains that it's a show of kindness that man is only left 'hanging' for a week. The Maharsha explains that the kindness to man is that Hashem vents his judgments against the houses.

However, as Rav Isaac Sher asks, the entire world is saturated with Hashem's kindness and is scrutinized by Hashem's probing judgment. Is there no greater example of Hashem's kindness and judgment than leprosy!?

He explains in the following manner. The Torah is revealing to us that we are the dearest, most beloved children of Hashem. At the same time, realize that the same love that He has for you, He also has for others. We are therefore commanded not to speak badly of anyone else. Not to speak badly of one so cherished by Hashem. Our parsha shows just how careful we must treat every child of Hashem.

Raish Lakish explains that the word metzora [leper] is actually a combination of two words-- motzi

[brings out through speech] ra [evil]. By speaking badly of others one's sins reach up to the heavens [Erchin 15B]. By badmouthing others one is forgetting the Father in heaven who cares so deeply for the honor of each and every one of His children. He is cutting himself off from Hashem-- the well spring of life-- rendering himself like dead. He therefore is banished from the company of His children. "Badad yaishaiv... [He must sit alone outside the camp][13:46]."

During this time his clothing is torn and his hair and beard can't be trimmed. These laws, usually associated with a mourner, apply to him. He too is in a state of mourning. For whom does he mourn? For himself... For having been banished by his Father from associating with any of the other children. He takes this to heart. He acknowledges and comprehends that he has a Father in heaven who has boundless love for all of His children. The 'negah', the touch of Hashem's Finger, has accomplished its mission. It can now start to heal. However, the subsequent purification process is not simple at all.

The Prophet Elisha needed to go through a whole process in order to do 'tchiyas hamaisim'-- bringing the dead child of the Shunamis back to life [Melachim II: Chapter 4]. So too the metzora has to go through a very elaborate process. He too is going through a process of virtual 'tchiyas hamaisim'--bringing himself back to life--reconnecting to the Source of life. The process is long and arduous. His actions distanced him to such a degree from his Father. Just a few words had such cosmic ramifications. Solitude. Humiliation. Estrangement.

Indeed, Rav Isaac Sher explains, it is hard to find a clearer example of "Mishpatecha k't'home rabbah [Your judgment is like the vast deep waters]"...

However, he explains further, there is another profound lesson to be learned here. Leprosy of houses with the walls turning colors? Leprosy of garments with white materials turning colors? This was no natural phenomenon! This only occurred in Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel]--the land chosen as the 'dwelling place' of Hashem's presence. Even there, it only occurred once the land had been conquered and divided and each individual had the peace of mind to know Hashem and have His presence dwell in him. This leprosy was then a sign of this holiness distancing itself from the person's house, the person's garments and ultimately, from the person himself.

The Talmud [Yerushalmi Ta'anis 3:8] tells that troops came to the city of Levi bar Sisi. He took a Torah scroll and ascended to the roof. "Master of the universe, if I didn't fulfill anything that's written here then let the enemies enter the city!" he proclaimed. "Otherwise, let them be gone!" The enemies were not to be found. Another time, his student did the same thing. However, since he wasn't as righteous as his master and he 'bothered' Hashem to perform a miracle, his hand withered. Years later, his student's student tried the same thing. The enemies didn't disappear and his hand didn't wither. It's no small feat to be on a level to deserve a miraculous punishment...

This is the other lesson. The flip-side of the coin. The "Tzidkascha k'har'ray el [Righteousness that is like the mightiest of mountains]." Realize the lengths that the Father is going to in order to deal with the child that bad-mouthed His other children. To try to correct and guide that child. This clearly

shows the love and confidence that the Father has in that child. The same love that Hashem has for others, He also has for him. Even after his having done what he did, the Father wants nothing more than for the son to return.

What an incredible gift for a person. Such "Tzidkascha"! Within the span of a week, to recognize and learn from the mistake he made and thereby be restored from death to life. In the place of the "Mishpatecha k't'home rabbah " for his belittling one of Hashem's beloved children, comes the "Tzidkascha k'har'ray el" with the realization that he too is a beloved child of Hashem.

Good Shabbos,

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