

# HASHEM - WHO'S THAT?

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

This week we read the double parsha of Tazria-Metzora. We begin with the laws pertaining to a woman after childbirth and then move on to a very detailed description of the laws of leprosy. "When a man will have... in the skin of his flesh a plague of tzara'as [leprosy]. [13:2]" After beginning with tzara'as of the skin, the parsha continues with tzara'as of clothing and homes.

The commentators [Ramban, Kli Yakar, Sforno 13:47] explain that the tzara'as that afflicts garments and homes is clearly supernatural. They have no blood and lymph circulating through them that can pool at different points due to sickness or injury. This then reflects back upon the tzara'as of the skin, teaching that it too is not a natural event--similar to what we presently call leprosy--but was a miraculous phenomenon.

What was the point of this tzara'as?

When Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel] were connecting to Hashem properly, His presence rested upon them maintaining their bodies, garments and homes in health and splendor.

Tzara'as only afflicted the homes once we had entered Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel]--the Land chosen as the place where Hashem's presence would rest. Furthermore, it only occurred after the land had been conquered and divided amongst the tribes with each person settled on his portion. Only then did they have the tranquility and peace of mind making it possible to fully connect to Hashem and have His presence upon them.

At that point, sin would cause a deterioration, demonstrating that Hashem's presence had been, to a certain degree, pushed away.

Tzara'as afflicted three coverings of man--the skin that covers the flesh, the clothes that cover the body and the homes that cover and protect man from the elements. It would first afflict a person's home, showing that he had disconnected from Hashem. If the person wouldn't get the message and reconnect, it would then afflict the garments, removing an additional protective layer from him. If the necessary corrective steps would still not be taken, then the person's most personal covering--his skin--would be affected.

This clearly demonstrated that disconnecting from Hashem leaves a person totally naked and void of the purpose of his worldly existence.

As such, tzara'as was an incredible gift granted to Bnei Yisroel. Hashem wouldn't allow them to stray

away from Him. His love dictated that reminders, painful reminders when necessary, would ensure that focus would not be lost. The purpose of existence would not be forgotten. Hashem used tzara'as to speak to us in a loud, clear voice, telling us and demanding that we connect to Him.

We live in a period of 'hester panim'--Hashem no longer sends us instant, unambiguous messages. Those messages carried a tremendous level of responsibility. To ignore such a clear calling would be a clear act of rebellion. Those generations were strong and focused enough to handle such a relationship. The generations have changed...

That love is still there. The demand that we connect hasn't been altered. But His methods have...

The Slonomer Rebbe zt"l explains in the following manner.

Shlomo HaMelech [King Solomon] teaches in Mishlay [Proverbs 3:12]: "Hashem reproves the ones that He loves."

Someone who loves Hashem realizes that everything that comes his way, even the difficult things, are callings from the heavens, not punishments.

The Sefer of Vayikra began: "Vayikra el Moshe {And he called to Moshe} and Hashem spoke to him. [1:1]"

The passuk [verse] doesn't state who called to Moshe. Moshe knew that every calling that he heard was actually Hashem speaking to him. Every calling, every event and every situation that a person experiences is actually a means of Hashem speaking to him.

The story is told of the Rebbe of Sassov who was watching a person carrying a very heavy load on his wagon. The load slipped off and he asked the Rebbe to help him lift it and put it back on the wagon. When the Rebbe explained that he physically couldn't, the person angrily replied that he could but he doesn't want to.

The Rebbe immediately heard this as a message from heaven. In life there are many things that we say that we can't. The truth is that we just don't want to.

An angry response from a wagon driver. A message from heaven. Hashem sends messages telling us to connect. He no longer sends tzara'as. It's gotten far more subtle. But the love and the want for us to connect haven't changed at all.

Good Shabbos,  
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