

HAVE A GOOD LOOK

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

"...he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohein, or to one of his sons the Kohanim" (13:2)

The Torah discusses a person who is afflicted with the spiritual malady known as "tzora'as". Although it is a spiritual affliction, tzora'as manifests itself physically, in the form of a skin disease.¹ An individual suffering from this disease must be brought before a Kohein to be diagnosed. The Seforno questions why the Kohein is the only person empowered with the ability to proclaim the affected individual either tamei - impure or tahor - pure.²

In all prior situations in Sefer Vayikra where a Kohein's services were required, the Torah stated that the service shall be performed by either a Kohein or the children of Aharon the Kohein.³ However, concerning tzora'as, the Torah states that the metzora shall be brought to either Aharon himself or one of his children.⁴ Why does the Torah personalize Aharon's involvement in this procedure?

Very often the manner in which a person validates his own standing in life and boosts his self-esteem is by focusing on the failures and shortcomings of others. The Mishna describes Aharon's nature as an "ohev shalom verodeif shalom" - one who loves and pursues harmony.⁵ Aharon had the ability to create harmony in relationships where there had previously been enmity.⁶ Only a person who is predisposed to focusing on the positive traits of others can have this ability. Seeing the positive in others is what allowed Aharon to present a person's former enemy as an individual worthy of his friendship.

It is this quality of Aharon which makes the Kohein worthy of diagnosing tzora'as. Only a person who searches for the positive in people is qualified to evaluate their flaws. A person whose predisposition is to search out the flaws of others, cannot render an objective judgement.

It is precisely for this reason that the Torah emphasizes Aharon personally. Unlike other services that any Kohein can perform by dint of his ancestral right, the ability to diagnose a metzora stems from his non-judgmental nature, to which all Kohanim are predisposed due to Aharon's perfection of this quality.

1. See Rabbi S.R. Hirsch for definition of Tzora'as

2. 13:2

3. See 1:4,7,8,11 etc.

4.13:2

5.Avos:1:12

6.Avos D'Rav Nosson

Outstanding

"and the Kohein shall place at the middle part of the ear of the man being purified"(14:25)

This week's parsha records the purification process that the metzora, an individual with a skin malady, undergoes to permit him to regain entry into society. The tzora'as malady from which the metzora suffers is a result of "loshon harah", the slanderous conversation in which the metzora has engaged; hence the name metzora from the term "motzi rah" - "one who brings forth evil".¹ After the metzora is separated for seven days, the Kohein takes blood from the guilt-offering brought by the metzora and dabs it on his right ear, thumb and big toe as part of the final purification process.² This process is found on only one other occasion, the inauguration of the Kohein. Why does the Kohein, who is the most noble and elevated member of Klal Yisroel, undergo the same process as the individual who has just been ousted from society as a result of his odious behavior?

The Talmud records that the primordial serpent walked upright and was the original king of all beasts. After instigating Chava to sin, the serpent was cursed by the loss of its limbs and the inability to savor its food. The serpent, which is also the symbol of loshon horah, proclaimed that just as he is unable to enjoy his food, there is no satisfaction in speaking loshon harah, "mah yisron l'baal halashon"³ - "There is no benefit gained from the speaking of loshon harah." The Talmud relates that while a minority of people are susceptible to the desires of promiscuity, a majority are tempted by theft. However, everyone is susceptible to the sin of loshon harah. Generally, man is motivated by gratification, which explains the temptation for promiscuity and theft. Why is every man susceptible to the sin of loshon horah if there is no gratification in this transgression?

Every person has a deep yearning to sense self-worth. Secular society promotes competition as the forum in which to gauge our worth; we sense our self-worth vis-à-vis our contemporaries. Unfortunately this manner of gauging ourselves is fraught with great dangers. We are never truly encouraged to fully develop our own potential and individuality for success is achieved by besting others, not by challenging ourselves to be all that we can be. Furthermore, instead of applying ourselves and developing our talents we sometimes choose the path of least resistance. We elevate ourselves by stepping upon others. By putting others down we delude ourselves into believing that we are better than them. However, instead of feeling accomplished, we are left feeling empty and unproductive. The greater a person's potential, the greater the void that is left when he is unfulfilled. For this reason the greatest cynics and ba'alei loshon horah who are capable of making the most insulting remarks are usually the most talented individuals who take the easy way out and attempt

to feel accomplished by belittling others instead of making the effort to develop themselves in a positive manner.

It is this desire to feel self-worth that fuels a person to speak loshon harah. Every individual is affected because everyone has the need to feel fulfilled. The Kohein is the individual who embodies self-accomplishment. Having developed his potential, he stands out in society. The inaugural process that he undergoes highlights the fact that he is an outstanding individual. The message to the metzora is that he too can be an outstanding individual and it need not be for his negativity. Rather, he should emulate the Kohein and develop his potential so that he too will be elevated for his positive accomplishments

1.Arachin 16a

2.Shemos 29:20

3.Taanis 8a
