

CHANGING THE "EYE"

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: 1102 - Tazria / Metzora - Series III. Good Shabbos!

Guarding Against Feeling Too Good About Oneself

The end of parshas Tazria deals with Tza'ra'as [the spiritual blemish often (mis)translated as leprosy] that appears on clothing. The pasuk [verse] says, "The kohen will see the garment after it was washed, [vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno] and he sees that the nega [blemish] has not changed, the garment is unclean, you should burn it in fire."

The pasuk uses interesting language: "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno," which means that the appearance of the nega has not changed. This is actually an idiomatic expression. The word "ayno" literally means "eye," and the expression literally means "the blemish has not changed its eye."

I saw a beautiful insight, quoted in the name of the Chidushai HaRim. The Gemara in Meseches Ayrachin tells us that there are a number of avayros [sins] which can cause tza'aras. The most commonly known avayrah is loshon horah [evil tongue; slander]. However, the Talmud in Meseches Ayrachin also says that the punishment of tza'aras comes "al tzoras ho'ayin." Tzoras ho'ayin [literally - narrowness of eye] does not only mean a person who is tight-fisted or cheap. A tzar ayin is a person who never sees the good side of anything and always sees evil. It is the opposite of a generosity of spirit. It is a stinginess, not only regarding money, but regarding viewing life, in general. A tzar ayin is a person who does not like to see other people's success. The only success that he is interested in is his own success.

If that is the sin that causes tza'ra'as, then the tikun [correction] that causes the tza'ra'as to go away, is the person doing teshuva [repenting] and switching from being a tzar ayin to a tov ayin. That means that one who is like a student of Bilom HaRoshoh, who Chazal tell us had this trait of tzoras ho'ayin, of stinginess of spirit, must change to become from the students of Avrohom Avinu - to become a tov ayin [one with a good eye]. If the tza'ra'as stays the same and does not get better, the garment is unclean and the person does not have a tikun for his avayrah.

The Chidushai HaRim says that when the pasuk says, "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno" - "and behold, the tza'ra'as did not change its appearance," there is a double meaning. "Lo hofach hanega es *ayno*" - His ayin [eye] did not change. In order to do teshuva, this person's ayin must change. He must change from being a tzar ayin to being a tov ayin. The pasuk is hinting to us, "Vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno." His ayin did not change. He has the same stinginess, the same unwillingness to share and be generous.

"Ayno," here, does not merely mean that the appearance did not change, but the ayin did not change. The tzoras ayin, the avayrah that brought on this terrible punishment is still in place.

The Chidushai HaRim continues with a classic chasidishe vort: The word "nega" is really the same word as the word "oneg." What is the entire difference between the word "oneg" - pleasure and the word nega [in the Hebrew lettering]?

The only difference is the placement of the [letter] "ayin." The "nun" and the "gimel" are in the same place. The only difference is whether the "ayin" is at the beginning or at the end. What is the difference between "nega" and "oneg?" What is the difference between a person having tza'ra'as and a person having pleasure? It all depends on the placement of the "ayin." That is this person's problem. The problem is with the "ayin." His problem is with his perspective and his approach to life. His problem is with his ayin, so his tikun must be "hofach hanega es ayno." He must change his "ayin." He must take the "ayin" from the word "nega" and make it into "oneg."

However, if someone is so stingy of spirit that he can not be gracious, he can not see the good side of life, then he remains a metzorah and "henay lo hofach hanega es ayno" - the nega remains and he must burn the garment because he is incapable of changing his "ayin." He is incapable of changing his perspective.

Glossary

Tzaraas / Nega(im) -- spiritual plague(s) causing various types of discoloration of skin, clothing, or house walls; associated with various sins of speech.

Lashon HaRa -- evil tongue; slander

Teshuva -- repentance

Personalities & Sources:

Chidushai HaRim -- founder of the Gerre chasidishe dynasty (1800s) .

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