

BAAL HATURIM'S INSIGHT HIGHLIGHTS THE TORAH'S SENSITIVITY

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Tazria

Baal HaTurim's Insight Highlights The Torah's Sensitivity

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 545 - Dangerous Medical Procedures. Good Shabbos!

The Baal HaTurim provides us with a fascinating insight into the purification offerings brought by a woman who has given birth (following the prescribed days of impurity and purity). At the beginning of Parshas Tazria, the Torah specifies the nature of these offerings:

A woman who can afford the standard offering is commanded to bring a sheep within its first year as an Olah offering and a young dove (ben yonah) or a turtledove (tor) as a Chatas [sin offering]. [Vayikra 12:6]

A woman who has given birth (yoledes) who cannot afford the standard offering of a sheep is allowed to bring two turtledoves (shnei torim) or two young doves (shnei bnei yonah) - one for the Olah offering and one for the sin offering. [Vayikra 12:8].

The Baal HaTurim points out that throughout the Torah -- including the above quoted pasuk 8 -- whenever the torim (turtledoves) and the bnei yonah (young doves) are mentioned, the torim are always mentioned first. Only in pasuk 6 above is the sequence reversed, with the Torah first mentioning the ben yonah and then the tor.

He explains the reason as follows. Normally, the Torah requires two birds to be brought at a time. In the case of the woman who gave birth, only one bird is required (one sheep and one bird). If only one bird is to be brought, it is preferable to bring a "ben yonah" type of bird than a tor. Why? Because turtledoves always live in pairs -- male and female. When one of the pair is taken away from its

mate, the Talmud states in Kerisus that the remaining bird will never take another mate. They only mate with one bird their entire lives.

The Torah is concerned that the remaining turtledove should not remain lonely and depressed the remainder of its life. Consequently, the Torah advises us to give preference to taking the ben yonah in such a situation. The ben yonah's mate will find someone else.

This should not be interpreted as an "Animal Rights" Baal HaTurim. This is a "Sensitivity" Baal HaTurim. The Baal HaTurim is teaching that the Torah's ways are full of pleasantness. The Torah always tries to teach us to be sensitive and caring human beings. If one treats animals and even birds with such sensitivity, then certainly one will treat humans with sensitivity.

A person who is insensitive and uncaring acts that way across the board. He cannot just "turn on sweetness" for the people in his shul or the people in his immediate circle. One trains oneself with the attribute of compassion by applying such compassion to everyone and everything he comes in contact with.

This lesson of the Baal HaTurim regarding the sacrifice of the yoledes is the same concept pointed out by the Ramba"n regarding the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen [Sending away the mother bird before taking its young]. The Ramba"n says that the mother bird has pain seeing its young taken from the nest, therefore we are commanded to send her away before we take the young for ourselves. The Talmud says that one who praises G-d for showing mercy to the mother bird regarding this mitzvah is silenced. Why? Because this is not an "Animal Rights" mitzvah. Rather, here too, the Torah is training us to be caring human beings so that we should treat PEOPLE properly.

The Kohen Picks The Birds For the Metzora's Offering

When it is time for the Metzora to go through his purification process, the pasuk says: "The Kohen shall command, and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live birds..." [Vayikra 14:4] Rav Moshe Feinstein in the sefer Darash Moshe asks, why is it the Kohen who has to worry about the bringing of these birds? Let the Metzora himself look into the Torah, see what offerings he needs to bring, and procure the offerings himself! Why does the Kohen need to prescribe the two birds for the Metzora?

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote 8-10 volumes of his Igros Moshe responsa. He answered thousands of queries in his lifetime. But he used to complain. He used to say that he would get many queries about pretzels and about the details of Shabbos observance and other ritual laws. But he bemoaned the fact that rarely, if ever, would he be asked how to raise one's children or how to give charity. Certainly, everyone knows that one must give Tzedaka. But there are priorities. Who do we give to and who do we not give to? He was not asked those types of questions. The two smallest volumes of the Igros Moshe collection are from Choshen Mishpat (the section of Shulchan Aruch dealing with business matters). He used to complain that people did not ask him enough of the "right questions."

People confront so many spiritual matters in their lives. Too often, they don't realize that these matters are "shaylos" (require Rabbinic consideration) as well.

The Gemara tells us that the condition of Tzaraas comes as a result of a person being stingy (tzaar ayin), and not wanting to lend out his property. Tzaraas comes because someone does not know the difference between how to speak and how not to speak.

Rav Moshe explains that the Metzora's problem was that he did not ask advice regarding how to conduct himself in life. He thought he knew how to treat his money and how to treat his speech. Therefore the cure for him is that he cannot even decide for himself which two birds to take for his purification offering. The Kohen must instruct him: "These are the two birds you should use for your offering."

This will hopefully send home to him the message that one needs to consult a Rov for ALL types of Shailos.

A shaylah is not only the laws of Shabbos, Niddah, and Pesach. Hilchos Tzedakah is also a shaylah. Therefore, specifically here by the Metzora, who is lacking in this matter of taking counsel in matters which he feels he is competent to decide on his own, the Torah goes out of its way to insist that it is the Kohen who arranges the procurement of his birds.

Winning a Windfall And Learning How To Handle It At The Same Time

Not only can Tzaraas affect the body of a person and his clothing, it can even affect the walls of his home. We learn [Vayikra 14:34]: "When you arrive in the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I will place a tzaraas affliction upon a house in the land of your possession."

Rashi explains in the name of the Medrash that the affliction of one's house with Tzaraas is actually a blessing in disguise. When the Canaanites heard that the Jews were about to enter their land, they were afraid for their money. They therefore dug holes in their walls, stuck in their wealth, and plastered up the holes.

The question is, if the Almighty wished to deliver a windfall bonus to the Jews who entered Canaan, this is a strange way to bestow the blessing. Could He not provide a windfall that would not involve ripping up one's house? It would be a very traumatic business to find a "nega tzaraas" on the wall of one's home. When the process of the House-Leprosy started, one did not know where it would end. In a worse case scenario, one could lose his entire house! This is how G-d chooses to give us a present?

The interpretation could be that the Ribbono shel Olam is doing the person a kindness by delivering the wealth to him in this manner. Receiving wealth easily with no strings attached, like falling off a log, is not an easy thing to handle.

Periodically, we read stories in the paper of lottery winners winning 9 figure jackpots. Initially, they

claim that their winnings will not change them in the slightest. A year later, we read an update of their lives -- they have been ruined. A windfall of money is a tremendous test. Unless it is handled properly, it can be a curse.

G-d says: I will give you a windfall. You will win the lottery. But you will gain your windfall in a context that will emphasize how fragile life is. You will first come to understand how wealth (one's house) can be here today and gone tomorrow. When the person gets the money under those circumstances, he treats it differently and approaches it differently. It is an insurance policy that it won't change him.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are:

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