

CHIRP CHIRP

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

In the times of the Bet HaMikdash there was a spiritual affliction Tzara'at (not leprosy). It manifests itself on a person's home, clothing and body. A person, who suspected that he or his property might be affected, called the kohen to inspect the suspect areas and to make a determination.

The Midrash tells of a very poor Kohen who decided to leave the land of Israel to go elsewhere in order to earn a decent living. He began teaching his wife the laws of Tzara'at so that she could substitute for him in his absence.

"The appearance of the hairs is crucial to proper determination". Said the Kohen to his wife. " Each hair has its own follicle which nurtures its growth. If the hair has dried up know its source underneath the skin has spoiled".

"If every single hair is nurtured individually by G-D certainly he would provide for every human being" commented his wife. The Kohen changed his plans and did not move.

The question is what persuaded him to change his mind? He certainly already knew and believed what she told him!

Our Mussar masters say that we can truly understand a concept even teach it to others and yet fail to apply the principal to our own lives. The Kohen knew that Hashem provides for all but did not properly focus on the idea, nor did he relate the concept to the reality of his own life. Once his wife had crystallized the idea into a practical application regarding his life he decided not to move or travel to earn a livelihood.

In order to improve and grow we must develop a daily routine that includes study of ethics and personality development! The constant repetition will create an incredible impression on us and help us achieve our life goals of character development and spiritual perfection.

QUESTION FOR YOUR SHABBAT TABLE

Why does the metzora bring two birds as part of his offerings at the time of purification? Also, why is it that one is slaughtered and one is set free?

Answer:

In Tehillim David Hamelekh said: "Can your silence be justified at a time when righteousness you should speak--when with equity you should judge the sons of man?"

Rebbi Yitzhak explained: "What is man's trade in the world? He should act as a mute. Should you think that you should also not speak words of Torah -- the verse commands "Righteousness you should speak" [Hulin 89a]

The Sages have taught that at the time a person brings an offering to the Temple and sees the Kohen slaughter it and offer it on the alter the person should contemplate that the animal or bird is being offered in his or her place and contemplate thoughts of repentance [teshubah]. The affliction of biblical tsara-at came upon a person because of the sin of lashon hara. When the bird was slaughtered the person would think about the bad use to which he or she put his or her mouth and resolve to be silent. Since there are positive, constructive ways to speak, the Torah commanded that the metzora also bring a second bird, whose chirping would remind him or her that there is a good speech which could console, encourage, praise and advise others, as well as, speak words of Torah. This bird was set free to encourage the proper use of the gift of speech. Speech can bring death and speech can give life -- choose life. [Based on Aperiion, Rav Shelomo Ganzfried zt"l]

DID YOU KNOW THAT

One who launders a garment on Shabbat violates a Torah prohibition.

Therefore, if there is a stain on a garment it is forbidden to clean it with water even though one does not thereby clean the entire garment. Cleaning with talc or other substance other than water is also forbidden. Should someone wish to clean off a garment one may rub LIGHTLY with one's hand or with a dry cloth --but one should be careful not to rub the dirt vigorously. One is also forbidden to wring out liquid from a garment. [Source Yalkut Yosef, Volume4, Shabbat 2, Siman 302:1]

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