

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא

פרשת תזריע-מצורע

SERIES 1: ISSUE 27

THE LESSON OF TZARA'AS AND WHO GETS IT

Chapter 13

2) If a person (אָדם) will have on the skin of his flesh a se'eis or sapachas or a baheres, and it will be (וְהָיָה) a tzara'as affliction on the skin of his flesh — he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen or to one of his sons, the Kohanim.

ב) אָדָם פִּיִּיִּהָיָה בְּעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֹר־סַפְחָת אוֹ בַּהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְּעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לִנְגַע צָרַעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל־אֶחָד מִבְּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים.

Consider the following questions:

1. Since there are various Hebrew terms for "man" (אָדָם, אִישׁ, גִּבּוֹר, אָנוּשׁ), why does the Torah here specifically use the word אָדָם? The Zohar (*Tazria* 48a) tells us that אָדָם is the most elevated of all the words used for man; if so, why is it used here for the person who has sinned and been afflicted with *tzara'as*?
2. Why does the Torah command that the person with suspected *tzara'as* be brought to a Kohen? Surely, since the person seems to be afflicted with a serious illness, he should first be brought to an expert doctor to help him!
3. Our Sages (*Vayikra Rabbah* 11:7) tell us that whenever the Torah says וְהָיָה (and it will be), it indicates something happy, and yet here it seems to be indicating something bad.

Our Sages (*Avos* 4:11) have told us that whenever someone commits a sin, it is as if he creates a force of impurity that makes accusations against him. This is because, through his sin, he strengthens the "external" (i.e., impure) realm that is then able to take hold of the holy soul of the sinner. The part of this impure realm which corresponds to the sin then acquires vitality through the holiness it has appropriated and becomes like a newly created creature. This is what our Sages were referring to when they said, "Whenever a person commits a sin, he acquires for himself an accuser." This accusing force comes before the Beis Din on High and brings its charges against the sinner.

This force of impurity that is created through a sin is also what brings illnesses and troubles upon a person in this world, as *Yeshayahu* 64:6 says: *You have made us waste away through our sins.* In *Gehinnom*, as well, these accusers are the ones that afflict those who brought them into being through their sins. In fact, all the signs of *tzara'as* on a person's body that we find in this *parashah* are an external manifestation of the forces of impurity that were created by that person's sins.

Based on this, we can understand why the Torah uses אָדָם, the most elevated term for "man," when

referring to the person afflicted with *tzara'as*, even though the person has become impure and an outcast due to his sins. The word **מִצָּרַע** is only used for Jews, and even then it is generally only employed for those of perfect faith. When the Jewish people were all on a far higher spiritual level, their intrinsic holiness “pushed against” the impurity, preventing it from entering and causing it to manifest only externally as *tzara'as*. However, we are no longer on this level. Proof that this is the case emerges clearly from *Arachin* 15b that *tzara'as* is a consequence of the sin of *lashon hara*. In our times, those who speak *lashon hara* are extremely numerous, and yet we do not see anybody being afflicted with *tzara'as* as in times of old.

This is what the Torah means here when it says, “If a person (**מִצָּרַע**) will have on the skin of his flesh a *se'ei* ... and it will be (**וְהָיָה**) a *tzara'as* affliction on the skin of his flesh...” Whosoever is fitting to be called **מִצָּרַע** and has an affliction on [his] skin because of his elevated level, it may be ... a *tzara'as* affliction. But if a man is on a lower level, the exterior mark of his sin would not become *tzara'as*, since it would simply merge with the rest of his impure being. **[This answers Question 1.]**

This helps us apply our Sages’ statement about the word **וְהָיָה**. The phrase “**וְהָיָה** *tzara'as* ... on the skin of his flesh” is an indication of happiness to the afflicted person because the fact that his sin has caused this visible affliction clearly indicates that he is on the level of holiness required to push against the impurity of his sin and not allow it entry, making it appear only externally. Furthermore, through this process he will do *teshuvah* and be healed. **[This answers Question 3.]**

Through the laws of *tzara'as*, Hashem wanted to teach the Jewish people the fundamental principles of Divine Providence. They should not believe that illnesses and the like come upon a person for natural reasons or by chance; rather, they should know that Hashem controls and decrees all these occurrences. They should also know that it is the sin itself that causes the suffering and that if they do *teshuvah* Hashem will heal them. In His wisdom, He therefore decreed that there should be a clear indication to the Jewish people of these principles through the affliction of *tzara'as*, which is an illness that people tend to ascribe to natural causes and for which they have no known cure despite its severity. Then He commanded that the afflicted person shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen or to one of his sons, as if to say: “Do not think for a moment that this illness has natural causes and can be cured by the person being brought to the doctor. Rather, he should be brought to the Kohen, Hashem’s representative in this world, since Hashem is the One Who heals according to the deeds of the afflicted person — i.e., according to the extent he does *teshuvah* and corrects his ways.” **[This answers Question 2.]**

This sedra sheet is an excerpt from the newly released Alshich on Sefer Vayikra in memory of Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu zt"l. For further sponsorship opportunities and to participate in this ground breaking project please call David Rose on +44 7833 938 734.