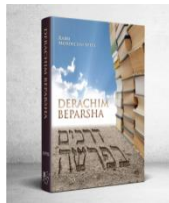


דרכים בפרשה תזריע-מצורע

R' Mordechai Appel,
an alumnus of
The Telzer Yeshiva, is
the author of
DERACHIM
BEPARSHA.



וראה הכהן והנה כסתה הצרעת את כל בשרו וטהר את הנגע כלו הפך לבן טהר הוא (יג:יג)

The Kohen shall look, and – behold! The affliction has covered his entire flesh, then he shall declare the affliction to be pure, having turned completely white, it is pure (13:13)

The *halachos* of *tzora'as* dictate that when a small area of a person's skin turns pure white, it is a sign of severe *tumah*, thus rendering the person a *metzora*. Strangely enough, from our *pasuk* we see that if the disease is so advanced that the person's entire body turns white, leaving no area unaffected, the *tzora'as* does not contaminate him at all. It is for this reason that Rabbeinu Bachye likens this *halacha* to that of a *parah adumah*, as a *chok* of the Torah that is beyond human comprehension. The *meforshim* bring various explanations which will hopefully shed light on this paradox.

Rav Schwab *zt"l* (Mayan Beis HaShoeiva) discusses a concept of *tumah* being unable to exist in a vacuum. As much as *tumah* despises holiness – ironically, it can only exist if it is somehow attached to *kedushah*. The moment all the *kedushah* is gone, the *tumah* will dissipate. We find a similar concept with truth and falsehood. The only way that people would buy into a lie is if there is a grain of truth mixed in, as seen by the *meraglim* confirming that Eretz Yisroel is a land flowing with milk and honey (Bamidbar 13:27). Therefore, a person that is completely covered with *tzora'as* is pronounced *tahor* – because the *tumah* that now lacks a life source will dematerialize on its own.

This also explains the words of Rav Yitzchok in Masseches Sanhedrin (97a): “Moshiach will not arrive until the entire world becomes heretical.” If anything, one would think that the time of total corruption is the most unlikely time for his arrival. But according to our explanation, we understand that when the world becomes totally devoid of all truth and turns heretical, it will crumble by itself – and Moshiach, the bearer of truth, will emerge.

As a side note, from here we can also learn a method in dealing with our *yetzer hara*. Any time he tries to attack, bringing *tumah* upon us, we can strengthen ourselves by retorting that the only reason he has any strength is *because* we are holy. This “note to self” can serve as a reminder of who we are, not allowing him to bring us down.

The Chofetz Chaim (Al HaTorah) offers another idea. He explains that the Torah's main goal in dealing with the *metzora* is to bring him to subdue his heart, thus turning him towards *teshuvah*. The entire process is necessary to get him to that state. Human nature is that as long as there is an excuse that can be given, it will indeed be given. When the *metzora* first notices the signs of the disease, he comes up with an excuse. “Perhaps this is not really *tzora'as*. Maybe this is acne from eating too much chocolate (the guy doesn't even eat chocolate). Or maybe it's an allergic reaction to a cream I was using.” But once the person becomes completely covered leaving no room for an excuse, he no longer fights it. He is now willing to subdue himself, allowing *teshuvah* to become his primary focus, thus bringing himself back to purity.

The truth of the matter is that *tefillah* and *emunah* work the same way. The story is told about the *chassid* that came to his Rebbe begging for a *bracha* again and again. Each time, the Rebbe turned him down. After many attempts, the *chassid* finally broke down in tears and said, “Tatteh in Himmell, You are the only hope I have left”. At that moment the Rebbe told him that he will be answered.

When we *daven*, are we truly asking Hashem, or are we thinking that if Hashem doesn't come through for us, there is a backup plan? אין לנו על מי להישען אלא על אבינו – שבשמים – We have no one else to rely on except for our Father in Heaven. The trick, of course, is to realize this from the get-go when things are going well, and not to wait until things get difficult, *chas veshalom*.

In a similar explanation, Rav Pinkus *zt"l* writes that Hashem seeks out the one that is being chased (Koheles 3:15). The Midrash comments that even if a *tzaddik* is chasing a *rasha*, Hashem will seek out the one being chased. When a person is feeling trapped, he must know that Hashem is there for him. It is for this reason that it is such a terrible sin to cause pain to a widow or an orphan. As they have no one else to turn to for help, Hashem will take up their plight.

Similarly, in times of war, the *halacha* is (Rambam: Melachim 6:7) that when we are fighting against the enemy, we are not allowed to surround them from all sides. We must leave them a way out, once again, for the same reason: we don't want them turning straight to Hashem. So too, when one is completely covered in *tzora'as*, Hashem will look after him and purify him.

We should keep in mind that if this works for *tzora'as*, then it surely works for all of our *tzaros* as well. Let us always remember that it is Hashem that we must rely on at all times, and just when we think there is no hope left, Hashem is right there.

מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos