

Parashas
Tazriah
Metzora

Kinder Torah



Spiritual Disease

“What is that spot on your skin, Shimon?”

“I’m sure that it’s nothing, dear. It will probably go away in a few days.”

A few days later . . .

“How is your skin sore, Shimon?”

“Not so good. Take a look.”

Shimon rolls up his sleeve, and his wife sees a horrible sight. A huge patch of skin is covered with the disease.

“This looks serious dear. I think you need professional attention.”

“I guess you’re right, Malka. I will go to see the doctor.”

The doctor tries to help Shimon, but to no avail. The disease keeps spreading.

“My poor husband. I cannot bear to see you suffering. Perhaps you should go see the Kohen.”

“What??? Are you suggesting that I have *tsoraas*??? Impossible. I am such a good person. Hashem would never afflict me with *tsoraas*.”

“I guess you’re right, dear. I’m sorry that I brought it up.”

A few days pass, and Shimon’s condition gets worse and worse. His skin is so infested that he is ashamed to travel in public.

“Where are you going, my dear?”

“I have no choice. I am going to the Kohen. If this disease does not stop, I am afraid that I will die.”

Shimon bundles himself up and heads for the center of the camp, Machane Kehuna. He suffers much humiliation from the stares of people. He reaches Machane Kehuna and asks a Kohen to see him.

“I think that I may have *tsoraas*.”

“Let’s have a look. Hmm. It does have the signs of *tsoraas*. We’ll have to confine you for seven days to see if it spreads.”

Seven days later, Shimon comes back to the Kohen.

“Yes it has spread. You are *tomei* (impure) with *tsoraas*. Now you must leave here. *Tomei* are not permitted in Machane Kehuna.”

“I will go to Machane Leviah. There I can be with the people who are *tomei meis*.”

“I’m afraid you cannot stay in Machane Leviah either.”

“I will go further out to Machane Yisrael. The *tomei zav* are permitted to stay there.”

“I am sorry to inform you that you cannot stay in Machane Yisrael either. You must leave the whole camp and sit by yourself. You may not cut your hair; you must tear

your clothing, not launder it, and wear it until your *tsoraas* disappears. Then call for me and I will come to see you. May Hashem be with you.”

Shimon slowly makes his way out of the camp. He reaches his destination and sits in total isolation, with nothing to do but think. And so, he sits . . . and thinks.

“I am a great person. I do not have any problems. Others are bad. They offend me. I am sure that they intend to hurt my feelings. I hate them. They force me to speak badly about them.”

Shimon gets very upset, but has no one to speak to. No one except . . . himself.

“Hashem does not make mistakes. He repays a person according to his deeds. He gave me *tsoraas* for a reason. Maybe I am wrong. I may have too much pride. Perhaps people do not mean to do any harm. It could be that I am overly

בדד ישב



מחוצ למחנה

sensitive.”

Shimon sits and thinks, sits and thinks. Slowly his attitude begins to change.

“Life is like a narrow path, with thorn bushes on either side. Hashem shows us the proper direction. If we go off the path, we are cut by the thorns. I have wandered off the path. I should be more humble. I need to love my fellow Jews, not hate them. If I love them, I will not have even the slightest desire to speak badly about them.”

After a while, Shimon’s wife and children come to visit him. They are shocked at the sight of him. Shimon sits alone with long hair and torn, dirty clothes. Although he is disheveled, his skin is clearing up. And his face has a certain glow about it; almost angelic.

“My dear wife and children, I love you so much. I’m sorry that you have to see me

like this.”

“We feel so bad for you, Abba. You have to suffer this terrible disease, isolation, and humiliation.”

“Kinderlach, everything is from Hashem. I have learned a lot about His ways. This disease came upon me because of my *aveyros* (sins). I resented my fellow Jews. I spoke badly about them. I am trying to do *tshuva* (return to Hashem). When I am completely cured, I will call the Kohen, and begin the purification process.”

And so it was. Shimon continued to do tshuva, and eventually his tsoraas disappeared. He called the Kohen to examine him.

“Yes, your *tsoraas* has cleared up. You may begin your purification process. Bring two sparrows, cedar wood, two red threads, and hyssop.”

“That is an unusual combination of items. Is there a deep meaning in this?”

“Yes. Sparrows are birds that are always chirping. They are to remind the *metzora* that he was always prattling away, speaking *loshon hora*.”

“And the cedar wood?”

“The cedar is a very tall tree. It reminds the *metzora* of his inflated pride.”

“What about the red thread and hyssop?”

“The cure for a *metzora* is to humble himself, like the red thread and hyssop which come from very lowly plants.”

“I have really learned my lesson. I will never speak *loshon hora* again.”

Kinderlach . . .

We learn many important lessons from the metzora. First, loshon hora is a terrible aveira (sin), and we must avoid it at all costs. Secondly, the root of loshon hora is conceit, which leads to sinas chinam (senseless hatred), another terrible aveira. Thirdly, one of the reasons that Hashem sends suffering is to point out our aveyros. We should realize this and use it as an opportunity to grow. Finally, a person should spend quiet time alone, honestly evaluating himself; his mitzvos and aveyros, and how he can improve. Kinderlach, may you always grow in Torah and mitzvos.

Parasha Questions

- How long is the first quarantine period of a *metzora*? (13:4)
- What are the signs to purify from a *nega*? (13:6)
- What is done with clothing that has *tsoraas*? (13:52)
- Which *korbonos* does the *metzora* bring on the eighth day? (14:10)
- What is done to a house with *tsoraas*? (14:40-42)
- Which *korbonos* does the *zav* bring on the eighth day? (15:14)