

English

בסייעתא דשמיא

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



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Why the responsibility of checking the tzaraas was given over to the Kohanim

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד מבניו הכהנים (יג ב):

If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis, sapachas, or baheres, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh; he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen, or to one of his sons the Kohanim.

We need to understand why the laws regarding the tzaraas were given over to the Kohanim for them to rule upon, whereas the laws regarding all other areas of the Torah were given over to the Torah Scholars to decide upon. Furthermore, the Midrash tells us (ויקרא ט"ז ח') צער גדול היה לו למשה בדבר הזה, כך הוא כבודו של אהרן אחי להיות רואה את הנגעים, אמר לו הקב"ה, Moshe was greatly troubled over Aharon's involvement with examining skin afflictions. He wondered, "Is this befitting the honor of my brother Aharon, to examine people's tzaraas afflictions?" Hashem replied, "And does he not receive the twenty-four priestly entitlements?" Hashem's reply to Moshe definitely needs explanation, as what do the twenty-four priestly entitlements have to do with Aharon checking the tzaraas?

The Midrash (ויקרא ט"ז א') comes to explain unto which sin the tzaraas comes as a punishment, and says as follows. When Moshe cautioned the Jews; זאת תהיה תורת המצורע (י"ד ב') - This shall be the law of the metzora, the word 'מצורע' may be expounded as a contraction of 'רע', מוציא [שם] רע, thus it is as if the Torah wrote; זאת - This shall be the law of the defamer. The Sages thus explain, that the Torah uses the word מצורע in this Passuk, as opposed to the more commonly used word of צרוע, to teach us that that it is one who is רע שם רע who will be punished with tzaraas.

In regards to someone who is מוציא שם רע, the Gemara in Kidushin - כל הפוסל פסול וכי' ואמר שמואל במומו פוסל (ע ע"א) teaches us that Whoever declares others to be genealogically unfit is himself

genealogically unfit. That is, anyone who regularly demeans the genealogical status of other families, reveals himself to be genealogically blemished. The Gemara continues on (עא ע"ב) and says, דבדקי בני מערבא, כי מינצו בי תרי בהדי הדדי חזו האי מינייהו דקדים ושתיק, אמרי האי מיוחס טפי. אמר רב שתיקותיה דבבל היינו יחוסא - The following method was used by the people of Eretz Yisroel when they would investigate someone's lineage; When two people would quarrel with each other, they would see which one is the first to quiet down and they would say, "That person is genealogically purer than the other". Rav said, "The silence and peacefulness of the families in Bavel is the basis for their having been established as possessing genealogical fitness".

The Rambam (פ"ו הל' תרומה ה"ב) writes, תרומה של תורה אין אוכל אותה אלא כהן טהור - The Biblically obligated Terumah may only be given to a Kohen who is of pure lineage. It is also clearly inferred from the Yalkut Shimoni (פרשת קרח רמז תש"ה) how much more this is so in regards to Kodshim, the priestly portion of the sacrificial offerings, which only a Kohen of pure lineage may partake in.

This is the reason why there was a need for the laws of tzaraas to be given over to the Kohanim, so that they could know who it was that was inflicted with tzaraas, and it would thus be an indication to them that those inflicted were obviously מוציא שם רע, which is a sign that they must have some genealogical impurity in their lineage. This would thereby let the Kohanim know to stay away from intermarrying into those families,

in order to keep themselves genealogically pure and eligible to receive all twenty-four priestly entitlements, including the Terumah and Kodshim.

We can now understand the Midrash that says; Moshe wondered, "Is this befitting the honor of my brother Aharon, to examine people's tzaraas afflictions?", to which Hashem replied, "And does he not receive the twenty-four priestly entitlements?", for it is precisely because Aharon and the Kohanim were given the twenty-four priestly entitlements, that they were also given the responsibility to examine people's tzaraas afflictions.

(זרע שמשון פרשת תזריע אות ז)

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What the Peddler Taught R' Yannai in Regards to the Stringency of Speaking Loshon Hora

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הפה (יד ב):
This shall be the law of the metzora...

The Midrash (ויקרא טז ב) cites this Passuk and expounds on it as follows. זאת תהיה תורת המצרע הה"ד מי האיש החפץ חיים. This shall be the law of the metzora, thus it is written, 'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit'. The Medrash continues and relates an incident which teaches us the significance of this message.

An incident took place with a peddler who would make his rounds in the towns which were in the vicinity of Tzipori, and announce; "Who wishes to acquire a life-giving drug?" Whenever he would make this announcement, people would cling to him, anxious to hear more about this drug.

One time when R' Yannai was sitting and studying in his reception room, he heard this peddler making his announcement. R' Yannai promptly called the peddler over and asked to purchase this drug. The peddler replied, "Neither you nor any like you have any need for that drug which I have to sell". Nevertheless, because R' Yannai persisted, the peddler came close to him, and showed him the Passuk in Tehillim, מי האיש החפץ חיים אוהב ימים לראות טוב – 'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good?' The peddler then showed R' Yannai what is written thereafter; נצור לשונך מרע, 'Guard your tongue from evil'. This Passuk indicates that guarding one's tongue from speaking ill of others is the key to preserving one's life and to seeing good days. R' Yannai then said; Shlomo Hamelech proclaimed similarly in Mishlei (כ"א כ"ג) and said, שומר

'One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from troubles'. Subsequently, R' Yannai said; All my life I have read this Passuk, yet I never knew how it is to be understood, until this peddler came and made known to me the importance of 'Who is the man who desires life'.

We need to understand what it was about this Passuk in Mishlei that at first R' Yannai didn't understand, and why only after hearing the words of the peddler, who seemingly did

nothing other than show R' Yannai a Passuk in Tehillim, did the meaning of the Passuk in Mishlei become clear to him?



The Midrash Tanchuma brings the Passuk in Mishlei, שומר פיו, ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו - One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from troubles, and modifies it, as if it were to say, שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרעת נפשו - One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from tzaraas. What R' Yannai did not understand about this Passuk before the peddler came along, was why the Passuk would say, שומר מצרעת נפשו - he guards his soul from tzaraas, when it should have said, שומר מצרעת גופו - he guards his body from tzaraas, for tzaraas inflicts the person's body and not the person's soul?



When the peddler announced, "Who wishes to acquire a life-giving drug?" and then went on to show R' Yannai the Passuk, מי האיש החפץ חיים,

'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil', this caused R' Yannai to reflect and realize that the tzaraas that inflicts the slanderer isn't a tzaraas that merely inflicts the slanderer's body, rather it endangers the slanderer's life, too. Accordingly, the Passuk would be understood as follows; 'One who desires life' [and doesn't want to endanger it with the tzaraas that can endanger the slanderer's life], and also 'loves days that he may see good' [and doesn't want to ruin his days with the tzaraas that inflicts the slanderer's body], should 'guard his tongue from evil'.

As a result of this new understanding of the Passuk in Tehillim, R' Yannai also gained an understanding of the Passuk in Mishlei. The Passuk says, שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו - One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles, and while the Tanchuma does modify the Passuk to read,

שומר מצרעת נפשו - guards his soul from tzaraas, nevertheless it still wouldn't read שומר מצרעת גופו - guards his body from tzaraas, for although, in truth, the tzaraas is only found on the slanderers body and not on his soul, nevertheless the tzaraas doesn't merely inflict his body, rather it also inflicts him in a way which is a danger to his life, and thus, the tzaraas is indeed an infliction to the slanderers soul, as well.

(זרע שמשון פרשת מצרע אות ז)



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