

טוב הקהילה

בס"ד

יו"לע"י קהילת שנת בנית ד'

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טיב המערכת

המצורע ביום טהרתו

The *metzora* on the day of his purification

We find ourselves in the midst of Sefira when we are given the opportunity to elevate daily from one level to another. In this way we reach the holiday of Shavuot when we are prepared to receive the Torah. One of the difficult things facing someone who wants to enter the gates of the House of Hashem, the preventions, the difficulties, until sometimes a person might think that *chas v'shalom* his *avodah* is not acceptable before Hashem Yisbarach. He thinks that Heaven is holding him back and preventing him from elevating. This feeling is common in those trying to do Teshuva, whether one who was previously distant from keeping the Torah and the mitzvos, or one who is among those that keep the Torah, but he has decided now to do Teshuva (yes, Teshuva is not exclusively designated for the non-observant...). Suddenly, he feels a great difficulty in the new direction, and as we have said, it is possible to think that Heaven does not want his *avodah*.

The holy Torah speaks about 'תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו' – 'the law of the *metzora* on the day of his purification' (14:2). By way of a hint, perhaps we can say that it is speaking about the spiritual '*metzora*' who wants to be pure. When he comes to his 'day of purification' he feels categorized as a '*metzora*' and they distance him outside the camp, and he does not understand, 'Now, you are distancing me? When I am trying to purify myself?'

It is written in the Zohar HaKadosh that midnight is a very great time of acceptance [*eis ratzon*], and so, one who studies Torah at midnight, the holy Shechina comes to him and reveals all his sins before him so that he will do Teshuva for them and rectify that which is crooked. If a person is not aware of this, he is liable to think that Heaven is 'hinting' to him that his learning is not acceptable since they are mentioning all his sins to him. Especially at this propitious time of midnight. But the truth is not like this. As long as a person is steeped in his desires, the *yetzer* leaves him be and does not hold him back. But the moment he tries to leave it, then the *yetzer* tries to hold him back with all its might. It says in the Gemara (Arachin 15b) that '*metzora*' is a contraction of '*motzi ra*' [one who takes out bad], for now he removes the bad from within himself. He begins to feel as if he is a *metzora*, and just with the purification of a utensil one must immerse it in boiling water to remove anything absorbed in it, so it is with us, we must overcome the hardships in order to remove the bad that was absorbed within us and enter the gates of sanctity.

טיב ההשגחה

'ישועת ה' כהרף עין'

'The salvation of Hashem can come in the blink of an eye'

On Wednesday night, three days before Seder night, I went to the mall and eventually I found shoes that I liked. I handed over my credit card to pay for the 150 shekel, but for some reason the charge would not go through. I tried again but it was to no avail. Having no choice, I called my father and I asked if he could buy the shoes for me on his credit card until I could determine what happened to my credit card. I knew for sure that the bank should have covered it. Abba gladly agreed and he gave me his credit card number, but his card also did not go through.

I realized that it seemed there was a problem with their credit card machine, but if I left the shoes in the store, they would be gone in a few minutes and I would not have a selection. Even if I went home and returned, most likely the shoes would have been sold, since this was the last pair like this.

I offered a Tefillah to Hashem, I spent time looking for shoes, and now I would have to waste precious time Erev Yom Tov to go home and come back. While I was still *davening*, my neighbor who lives across the hall from me turned to me and asked, "Are you buying shoes now? I have a credit of 140 shekel, and if you do not mind, could you use the credit and give me the money?"

I could not believe my ears and I asked her if she had another ten shekel and when I got home, I would give her 150 shekel.

I bought the shoes with such gladness and thanks as I never dreamed of a salvation like this, beneficial and quick.

Afterwards, I called my father to tell him the story, and he was so excited, he said he was sending the story to Tiv HaHashgacha to thank Hashem.

This Shabbos we read a double parsha, both of which speak about the topic of the contamination of the signs of *tzara'as* and its purification. These are matters which do not pertain to today, however, since the Torah is eternal, it is obvious that there is something to learn from these parshiyos that apply to our time.

Indeed, when we consider these matters at length, we find that getting out of the web of sin is not one of the easiest things to do, it involves much suffering and embarrassment.

These signs as a punishment for sin, and when reading these parshiyos we see that one does not attain atonement until the person goes through a process that is not at all pleasant. First, he must separate himself from the rest of the people and be locked up outside the camp. This causes embarrassment with his relatives as they look for him in his usual places, and they hear that there is suspicion that he has a sign. When the Kohen confirms that he is a '*metzora*', he must embarrass himself even further in an unimaginable way. He has to go about in torn clothes, let his hair grow long, cover part of his lip with the wrap that is on his head, and if he meets someone, he must let him know that he is *tamei*. This causes him unbearable shame, and the very dwelling outside the camp is embarrassing to him, since he is secluded in isolation. So long as he is not cured from his *tzara'as* he is not allowed to return to camp. All this is so that he realizes that the Omnipresent Baruch Hu is reprimanding him. Then when he is alone in quarantine outside the camp, he is isolated with his Creator and he can then understand the severity of his actions, and only then, can he do a proper Teshuva. This makes an impression on him and cures him from his *tzara'as*.

True, he has still not earned his rectification. Now he must undergo a purification process which entails rebuke through a hint. Therefore, we take cedarwood and *eizov* [hyssop] and we tie them together and we sprinkle the blood of the slaughtered bird on him. With this we remind him that he must lower himself like a hyssop, meaning that even though he has already repented for his sin, we teach him that he has not yet come to be pure until he accustoms himself to change his nature completely. Similarly, he must shave all his hair and we consider this to be humiliating as well. This is done to make his heart humble even after reentering the camp and it helps to accustom himself to be humble. Only after humiliating himself against his will like a hyssop, then he is ready to come and offer his *karbanos* and be purified through them.

All this is a rebuke for us to demonstrate how the sin can twist the heart. It is not possible for the person to fulfill the mitzvah of Teshuva without going on a difficult journey subjecting him to embarrassment which is intolerable. Only after all this does he merit a change of heart and he is prepared to repent and correct his deeds.

From her the person is aroused to fear Hashem, and he will distance himself from any whiff of sin, for a person is brought to justice even in this world by Hashem. True, today we do not have the Bais HaMikdash and *tahara* is not relevant to us, and therefore, we also do not have the distress of *tzara'as*. However, the purpose of the affliction is not the distress or the uprooting of the person, Heaven can afflict us with other distresses. We must know that it is not for nothing when a person finds it hard to earn his *parnasah* [living], and it is not for nothing when a person finds it hard to train his children [*chinuch*], and so too with the other distresses that are found among us. All these things are only the result of sin. It is not easy for a person to consider that Teshuva will protect him if he should sin *chas v'shalom*, for as we see here, doing Teshuva is not at all easy.

The main aspect of Teshuva is regret for the past and acceptance for the future, but the sin causes the heart to be twisted, and the person does not sense the severity of his actions. Therefore, he does not regret or accept as needed, and only after enduring tribulations does he merit a purification of the heart and then he is prepared to do Teshuva, as Rebbe Yisrael of Salant used to say, "Teshuva is a very difficult mitzvah, if only we did not need it..."

For this reason Tzaddikim were very afraid of sin, maybe they would not be able to repent as much as necessary. It is told about the 'Imrei Emes' of Gur who had an expensive bottle made of crystal and he would pour his Kiddush wine in it for Shabbos. One Shabbos there was a commotion in his house and the table was moved a little, and the bottle fell and shattered into many pieces. When the Imrei Emes saw this, he let out a heavy sigh. Since it seemed that the Imrei Emes was upset because of the broken crystal bottle, one of the guests sitting there wanted to put his mind at ease, so he immediately offered the Rebbe that he would replace the bottle with a nicer one to grace his table, as long as the Rebbe would not be upset. The Imrei Emes told him, "Do you think I am upset over the loss of the bottle? My sigh was only for what Heaven wanted me to be aware of, and I am quite concerned because of this if *chas v'shalom* I was not aroused as needed."

Similarly, it is told about HaGaon HaTzaddik Rebbe Isser Zalman Meltzer who was meticulous with his actions. In those days, the milkman would deliver milk to everyone's house with pasteurizing it and everyone would pasteurize it for themselves on the fire. The *Rebbetzin* would boil the milk on the fire in the house of Rebbe Isser Zalman. Afterwards, she would bring a cup of hot milk to her righteous husband to quench his thirst. One day after placing the pot of milk on the fire, the *Rebbetzin* left the kitchen for a few minutes to take care of something. In the meantime, a cat snuck into the small kitchen and found a large treasure, a pot filled with hot milk. It slinked closer to the boiling pot and in order to enjoy some of it, it turned the pot over. When the *Rebbetzin* heard the commotion in the kitchen, she hurried back there. However, to her utter disappointment, she saw what happened, the cat made itself at home and all the milk was spoiled.

With anguish, she turned to her husband and told him what had happened. To her surprise, R' Isser Zalman began to tremble, and he wondered aloud, "Why did Hashem do this to us? This only happened to us because of a sin that we had done! If so, we have to examine our deeds until we understand what sin HaKadosh Baruch Hu found in us so that we can do Teshuva for it." And so, R' Isser Zalman and his wife sat together and examined their deeds until they determined that there was an amount of money that they needed to take *maaser* [tithe] from, they immediately set aside the *maaser* that they forgot about, and only after Rebbe Isser Zalman separated the *maaser* and repented for his inadvertence, did his peaceful expression return to his face.

Like these righteous of their generations, great was their fear of any whiff of sin, because they knew that they would have to give an accounting for every little thing, and the Teshuva did not serve as a solution for their fear.