



PARSHAS TAZRIA METZORA

SHALOSH SEUDOS TORAH
5772

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The Unbroken Chain of Yaakov

Introduction

Parshas Metzora begins with the purification of the Metzora – a person afflicted with tzaraas. (Tzaraas is usually translated as leprosy, but is actually a spiritual condition of impurity and completely unrelated to the leprosy disease.) Upon being declared a Metzora by a Kohen, the Metzora was obligated to leave the encampment. The encampment in the wilderness was divided into three parts: that of the Kohanim, Levites and Israelites.

"זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והוצא אל-הכהן. ויצא הכהן אל-מחוץ למחנה", 'This is the law of the Metzora on the day of his purification. He shall be brought to the Kohen (priest), and the Kohen shall go out to him.'

The obvious contradiction begs for a resolution. Is the Metzora to go to the Kohen, or is the Kohen to go out to the Metzora?

Furthermore, how is the Metzora to go to the Kohen who resides in the encampment of the Kohanim if he is prohibited from entering even the most external camp?

The Modern Metzora

Although the physical manifestation of tzaraas is today obsolete - in absence of the Bais HaMikdash - it still manifests itself spiritually.

Upon entering Eretz Yisroel, Yerushalayim had the status of the Israelite camp, the Temple Mount that of the Levites, and the Bais HaMikdash itself was the camp of the Kohanim and Divine Presence. The Metzora was similarly forbidden from entering all three camps of holiness.

A person afflicted with a spiritual form of tzaraas will not be able to enter the spiritual Yerushalayim, Temple Mount, or Bais HaMikdash. The Bais HaMikdash is the house of prayer, "כי ביתי בית תפילה"², 'My house is the house of prayer.' Yerushalayim is the wellspring of Torah; "כי מציון תצא תורה"³, 'From Tzion goes forth Torah.'

The Baal Shem Tov taught that each word of prayer is a holy chamber that requires merit to gain entry. When one finds that he has uttered words of prayer without proper intent, it is a sign that he did not merit entry to those chambers. The sinful Metzora will find himself with a laden heart and wandering mind when he sets himself to learn Torah or pray.

He has been exiled from the sanctuary of G-d.

A Metzora is Disconnected from Shabbos

Yerushalayim is a Shabbos-like place. Shabbos is the most spiritually elevated day of the week, and Yerushalayim is the spiritual climax of Eretz Yisrael.

In the Friday night prayer, we conclude the prayer of השכיבנו with the words, "הפורש סוכת" "שלומו וכו' ועל ירושלים" 'He spreads a Sukkah of peace... on Yerushalayim,' and immediately proceed with the paragraph, "ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת", 'The Jewish people should guard the Shabbos,' juxtaposing Yerushalayim and Shabbos, which are inherently the same.

The three meals of Shabbos correspond to the three holy encampments from which the Metzora is expelled⁴. He has no part in their holiness due to his sinfulness, because his ענג, pleasure, of Shabbos is transformed into the נגע, (same letters, rearranged) wound, of his tzaraas⁵.

הצרת, is gematria (numerically equal to) ביום השבת, (they both equal 765). These two phenomena are diametrically opposed to each other; the Metzora has no part in the Shabbos.

The Purified Metzora

The first verse in the paragraph discussing the purification of the Metzora hints to his return to the Torah. "זאת תהי' תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו", the Metzora returns to the Torah on the day of his purification.

He is also reconnected to יום טהרתו, his day of purity. This refers to Shabbos, which the author of the zemiros (liturgy) Kol Mekadesh declared, "טהורים יירשוה ויקדשוה", 'pure ones inherit her and make her holy.'

Will the Tzaraas of Gechazi Ever be Healed?

A gentile general named 'Naaman' came to the Prophet Elisha with the request that he heal him of his tzaraas. Elisha did so and refused payment in order to make a Kiddush Hashem (glorify G-d's name). However, his attendant Gechazi pursued Naaman after he left Elisha and asked for money - ostensibly for Elisha - except that he pocketed it for himself. When Elisha found out what Gechazi did, he cursed him: "May the Tzaraas of Naaman attach itself to you and your children forever⁶." The tzaraas of Gechazi will never be healed, the Gemara⁷ states.

In the Haftorah of Parshas Metzora, we read of four Metzoramim who saved the city from starvation. The army of Aram had surrounded the capitol city of Shomron and the population was slowly starving. These four people, who lived outside of the city because of their tzaraas, realized that they would die of hunger. Therefore they set out to the camp of Aram, thinking that even if they would kill them, they were starving to death anyhow, and there was a chance that they would give them something to eat and they would live.

When they entered the camp, they found it deserted. Hashem had made the soldiers of Aram hear reverberations of an approaching military, and fearing that the Jewish king had hired mercenaries, they fled. After eating, drinking, and helping themselves to some of the booty, they thought it would be proper to inform the population, who was starving. Thereby, the entire city was saved.

These four Metzoramim, the Gemara⁸ informs us, were none other than Gechazi and his three sons. The Pri Tzaddik⁹ infers from here that Gechazi has hope. Because he merited saving a Jewish city, his spiritual disease will yet be healed.

However, the Yaaros Devash states that the sin of Gechazi will never be rectified. His tzaraas is permanent; his spiritual defect will never go away.

Will, or will not, the tzaraas of Gechazi ever be healed?

Every Jew will be Rectified

The Mishna lists people who do not have a portion in the World to Come¹⁰. The Gemara¹¹ quotes a dissenting view that the דורשי רשומות – those that expound upon hints in the verses of Tanach - are of the opinion that the Jews among them *will* have a portion in the World to Come.

Elsewhere, the Gemara¹² relates the following: Logic was consulted, "A soul that sins, what should be its fate?"

Logic responded, "Evil should hound it!"

Prophecy was consulted and responded, "It should die!"

Torah responded, "He should bring a sacrifice and atone for his sin." However, a sacrifice can only atone for an inadvertent sin, not an intentional one.

Hashem was asked and said, "The soul that sinned should repent and it will be atoned."

The question arises, is true logic, prophecy, or Torah divorced from G-dliness? Why did they not answer the same as Hashem?

The answer is that there are many levels of truth. Externally, it seems as if the soul that sinned is deserving of a bitter fate. A deeper level of truth reveals that it has the ability to bring a sacrifice and atone for its sin if it was not intentional. However, when we probe the very depth of the Jewish soul, and reach the point where it is attached to its Maker, we see that it never completely ruined itself. It always has the option of returning to Hashem.

The תשובה דורשי רשומות expound upon even a רשימה - which can also mean a mark. There is a mark of pure goodness - however faint - in every Jew which is untainted by sin. From this everlasting mark of G-dliness he can always rehabilitate himself. A Jew is never lost.

Externally it seems as if Gechazi will never be spiritually complete again, he is ruined forever. The Gemara and the Yaaras Devash are, of course, one hundred percent true. But there are deeper levels of truth, and this is what the Pri Tzaddik refers to in his statement that Gechazi will eventually merit spiritual completeness.

The Children of Yaakov Avinu will Never be Lost

Yaakov is referred to as "מיטתו שלימה", all of his descendants are part of the Jewish people - none will ever be lost.

The legacy of Yaakov is strong like a tripled rope; "חבל נחלתו." Avraham, the first strand, was not strong enough to retain his legacy for *all* off his children; Yishmael descended from him. From Yitzchak, the second strand, Eisav descended. Yaakov was the third strand and formed a tripled rope. He contained the merit of his grandfather, his father and himself. All of his children will always be part of the Jewish heritage.

Yovel Returned Every Jew to his Heritage

Every seven years, in the Shemita year, a Jewish slave had the option of going free. However, he also had the option of remaining enslaved to his human master. Yovel - the fiftieth year after seven cycles of seven - on the other hand, leaves him no option; he must go free!

The plot of land in Eretz Yisrael that a Jew inherited from his father could not have been taken away from him permanently. Every fifty years, in Yovel (jubilee), it reverted to its original owner, no matter to whom it was sold in the interim. Through Yovel, every Jew permanently retained his heritage in the holy land¹³.

Seven is a number which encompasses this confined world which was created in seven days. The number eight hints to the heavenly. The fiftieth year, coming after seven cycles of seven, can also be considered as the first year of the eighth cycle. Released from the confines of earth, the Jewish man is returned to his inheritance in the holy land, and the Jewish soul is returned to the legacy of Yaakov.

"וְהָשִׁיב מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבַלְתִּי יְדָח מִמְנוּ נִדָּח" ¹⁴, '[Hashem] plans ideas so that no forlorn one should be forsaken from Him.' No matter how sinful a Jew, Yovel will rehabilitate him.

Hashem Himself will Return Jews to Him

Avraham Avinu was commanded, "Go to the land...the mountain which I will specify," which was the Temple Mount. Yitzchak arrived from his visit to the Temple Mount as his bride Rivka was presented to him. Yaakov did not go to the Temple Mount. Instead, the mountain of G-d came to him, ויפגע במקום, he encountered the place.

This symbolizes that if there will be descendants of Yaakov who lack the spiritual stamina to draw near to Hashem, Hashem will come close to them. He will cause it so that they encounter Him in their path of life.

Even though logic would scream - "They don't deserve that Hashem should descend to them, they are sinners!" - Hashem will enable each and every last Jewish soul to return because it has a רושם, an everlasting mark of G-dliness.

In Yovel, a Soul Remains Connected to its Source

A soul that eats Chametz on Pesach is punished with excision from its spiritual roots. However, the wording of the verse is difficult to understand: "כָּל אֹכֵל חֶמֶץ וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא" ¹⁵, 'One who eats Chametz, that soul will be cut off from the Jewish people from the first day till the seventh [day of Pesach]. We would have thought the verse should say, "Whoever eats Chametz, from the first day till the seventh day [of Pesach] will be cut off."

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that the peculiar order over here alludes to the fact that the soul is only cut off through the level of seven. In the spheres of Yovel, the eighth level, the soul can never be cut off. The verse would then read as follows, "Whoever eats Chametz, his soul will be cut off from the Jewish people, but only in the spheres of the first day to the seventh day [in the eighth day it remains connected]."

A verse which discusses those that have no part in the World to Come is "כֹּל בָּאִיהָ לֹא יָשׁוּבוּן וְכֹי" ¹⁶, 'All those who go into [the house of evil] will not return.' Astoundingly, the salvation for these Jews is hinted to in these very words themselves. בָּאִיהָ לֹא יָשׁוּבוּן is an acronym for יבל.

During Shalosh Seudos the Yovel is Revealed

At the very end of the seventh day, during Shalosh Seudos, Yovel comes to the fore ¹⁷. As the seventh day wanes, and the first has not yet begun, a glimmer of the eighth day - which will only be truly revealed with the coming of Mashiach - appears. This is especially so during the moments when technically it is already weekday but one is still conducting Shalosh Seudos.

Each of the three meals of Shabbos corresponds to another one of the three patriarchs. Shalosh Seudos corresponds to Yaakov. The Yovel which is revealed at Shalosh Seudos ensures that all the children of Yaakov will remain connected to his heritage. This is why it is customary to speak words of inspiration and encouragement at this specific time.

Explaining the Contradiction

This may be the intention of the contradicting verses quoted above. The verse first states, 'He shall be brought to the Kohen,' He himself should go to the Kohen. The word Kohen hints to Hashem, as the Gemara ¹⁸ states, "Your G-d is a Kohen." The Metzora sullied his soul and distanced himself from Hashem; he should cleanse it and return. In accordance to truth and logic, this is what is required of him.

However, he cannot go into the camp of the Divine Presence to the Kohen, because he is impure. Will he be precluded from ever reuniting with Hashem?

The next verse begins, 'The Kohen shall go out of the encampment.' The Divine Presence will come out to the impure and helpless Jew and will purify him, just as the Temple Mount came forth to greet Yaakov. And as the verse later states, 'Afterwards, he will come into the encampment.' The Metzora will succeed in attaining purity and be spiritually rehabilitated and will then be able to enter the encampment of holiness.

Conclusion

This is very important to know, to inform others of, and to disseminate for all to know. In this generation of spiritual despair and remoteness, it is a mitzvah to inform every Jew of his essential goodness and how beloved he is to Hashem.

The holiness of the Seudah of Shalosh Seudos is referred to in the verse, "והאכלתיך נחלת" ¹⁹יעקב אביך, 'I will feed you the heritage of Yaakov your father.'

One is required to eat, i.e. to labor in order to enjoy the holiness of the other two meals of Shabbos. Shalosh Seudos, however, one is fed from Heaven. He receives its great light and holiness without effort. This is because Shalosh Seudos corresponds to Yaakov, whose even lowliest descendant - who cannot labor on his own to be part of holiness - is included in his heritage.

This is especially so this Shabbos which concluded the third of the seven attributes of Sefirah, Tiferes – perfection, balance/beauty.

Every week of the Sefirah we work on a different one of the seven attributes and each corresponds to a different one of the seven spiritual pillars of the Jewish people. The third attribute, Tiferes, corresponds to Yaakov. The middah of Yaakov is now being completed and every Jew is included.

נו בית אלוקי יעקבתפארתיזכנו השי"ת לראות בבנין בית מקדשנו ו

May Hashem give us the merit of seeing the building of the Bais HaMikdash, our Tiferes, the house of the G-d of Yaakov.

¹ ויקרא יד:ב-ג

² ישע'י נו:ז

³ ישע'י ב:ג, מיכה ד:ב

⁴ פרי צדיק

⁵ זוהר

⁶ מלכים ב' פרק ד' & ה'

⁷ סנהדרין ריש פ' חלק

⁸ סנהדרין דף ק"ז ע"ב

⁹ מצורע אות ז'

¹⁰ סנהדרין פרק י'

¹¹ סנהדרין דף ק"ד

¹² ירושלמי מכות דף ז' ע"א

¹³ פ' בהר

¹⁴ שמואל ב' יד:יד

¹⁵ שמות יב:טו

¹⁶ משלי ב:יט

¹⁷ זוהר בסידור תפלה

¹⁸ סנהדרין לט:א

¹⁹ ישע'י נח:יד