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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### פרשת תזריע - מצורע

וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי הַכֹּבֵס אֶת הַנִּגְעַת וְהִנֵּה לֹא הִפְךָ הַנִּגְעַת אֶת עֵינֹו וְהִנֵּה לֹא פָשָׂה טְמֵא הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָפֶנּוּ.  
(ויקרא יג, נה)

*The Kohen shall look after the affliction has been washed, and behold! – the affliction has not changed its colour, and the affliction has not spread, it is contaminated, you shall burn it in fire. (Vayikra 13:55)*

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn about the laws of *tzaraas*. As Chazal teach, *tzaraas* is not a physical disease; instead, it is a physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise and serves as a punishment designed to encourage the wrongdoer to rectify their behaviour. *Tzaraas* can appear in various forms, on houses, garments, and different parts of the body.

At the end of the *Sidrah*, the Torah discusses the *halachos* concerning *tzaraas* that appear on garments. The *possuk* specifies the rules that apply after the garments have been quarantined twice and the affected area has been washed: *לֹא הִפְךָ הַנִּגְעַת אֶת עֵינֹו*, meaning that the affliction has not changed colour, the item is considered *tamei* and must be burned. Rashi explains these words to mean that if the colour of the affliction has not dimmed or diminished in intensity, the item is *tamei*, even if it has not increased in size.

The Shem Efraim (R' Efraim Zalman Margolios *zatzal*) raises a question from the Meforshim. The phrase *לֹא הִפְךָ הַנִּגְעַת אֶת עֵינֹו* literally translates to "change colour," such as from green to red. If that is the case, why does Rashi interpret these words differently from their straightforward meaning? One might argue that Rashi felt compelled to provide this explanation due to the context of the next *possuk*. However, it remains questionable why the Torah chose an ambiguous term in this instance instead of writing explicitly, *וְהִנֵּה לֹא כָהָה הַנִּגְעַת*?

He cites an explanation from R' Yitzchok Eizek of Koritz *zatzal*, who teaches that the Torah's choice of wording conveys a profound lesson. The Zohar states that the words "נִגְעַת" (affliction) and "עֵנֶה" (delight) share the same letters. This indicates that once a Metzora repents from his sin, his affliction can transform into delight. The Metzora finds joy in the *tzaraas* because the affliction served as a motivation for self-improvement! Consequently, if he is not healed from the *tzaraas*, it demonstrates that he has not learned his lesson and has not repented as required. The Torah conveys this above message: Since he has not been healed, *לֹא הִפְךָ הַנִּגְעַת אֶת עֵינֹו* – the (letter) "ע" has not changed from the end of the word to the beginning. Since the Metzora has not yet amended his ways, the *נִגְעַת* - affliction has not been transformed into *עֵנֶה* - delight.

The concept of *tzaraas* serving as a spiritual warning is emphasised by the Rambam in his closing paragraph to Hil. Tumas Tzaraas. The Rambam writes: *Tzaraas* is a generic term that includes many conditions that are unlike one another, for a whiteness on human skin is called *tzaraas*, the loss of some hair from the head or beard is called *tzaraas*, and the change of colour in garments or houses is called *tzaraas*. This change, referred to in the Torah as *tzaraas*, is not a natural occurrence; it is a

miraculous sign intended to caution the Jewish people against evil speech. For if someone speaks *lashon hara*, the walls of his house change; if he repents, his house is cleansed. If he continues in his wickedness, the condition may spread to his leather utensils, then to his clothes, and eventually to his skin. Ultimately, he will be isolated and notorious until he refrains from engaging in the chatter of wicked, which is scorn and slander.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* suggests that the phrase “לא הפך הנגע את עינו” may contain another meaning. As mentioned in the Rambam, *tzaraas* serves as a Divine reminder for those who are engaged in “the chatter of wicked, which is scorn and slander.” The *possuk* in Mishlei (21:24) explains the root of these negative traits: דד יהיר לץ שמו, *the wilful, boastful man: scoffer is his name*. Rabbeinu Yonah elaborates that a combination of cruelty and arrogance creates a backdrop for scorn and slander. A person who takes pleasure in the suffering of others tends to speak derisively about them, and due to self-centredness, believes that no one will similarly speak of him. Furthermore, an arrogant individual believes that everything is fitting for him, and views the possessions of others as if they are rightfully his. This attitude leads to criticism of others, fostering animosity and harm. Thus, the Metzora receives his punishment of isolation from society and his belongings - *middah knegged middah* – as this is what he wished upon others.

This lesson can also be found in the *possuk*. The rectification and repentance for the Metzora require him to change his outlook and attitude towards others. He must transform his עין - eye, from negative to positive, resulting in kind speech and behaviour. Accordingly, the *possuk* expresses that if he is still afflicted with *tzaraas*, it indicates that לא הפך את עינו - he has not yet changed his eye - to a positive perspective, which would have led to his purification.

In reference to the insight from the Zohar that the words נגע and ענג share identical letters, R’ Leib Lopian *zatzal* made the following observation. The only difference between these two words is the placement of the letter "ע" which symbolises where a person places their עין – eye, or focus. A person who focuses his עין from the beginning, by contemplating from a young age the meaning of life and planning accordingly, will merit a life filled with ענג – delight. Conversely, someone who tragically places their עין at the end of life – realising its purpose only in later years - will perceive and experience their life as one of נגע - affliction. (See Issue #23, citing the Midrash Shir Hashirim.)

Although the laws of *tzaraas* no longer apply today, we can still learn valuable lessons from them. *Tzaraas* was not simply a physical disease that required containment; rather, it served as a spiritual message to encourage individuals to rectify their behaviour. Once the Metzora understood the message behind it, he experienced a profound sense of delight for the spiritual elevation he had achieved. Similarly, we should strive to improve ourselves by maintaining a positive outlook towards others, which will lead us to a life filled with delight!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).