



Parshas Tazria & Metzora 2020, a love that heals

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parshas discuss some of the complex laws pertaining to Tumah & Taharah – ritual purity and impurity. The Torah begins with the process of purification that a woman must undergo after childbirth. This involves immersing herself in a Mikvah and bringing a sacrifice in the Beis Hamikdash.

The Parsha goes on to explain the intricate laws of Tzara'as, a skin discoloration that renders a person ritually impure. Someone who has the symptoms of Tzara'as must be seen by a Cohen, and judging by the various signs (such as an increase in size after seven days), the Cohen pronounces it pure or impure.

A person who is afflicted with Tzara'as must dwell alone outside of the city until it is healed. Once the prescribed time has passed, they must undergo a rigorous process of purification to return to their city and community.

However, a question comes to mind: The Pasuk regarding Tzara'as states, (13:2-3) *“When a person has a swelling, a rash or a discoloration on their skin and they suspect that it is Tzara'as, they shall go to Aaron the high priest or one of his sons, the priests. The Cohen shall examine the rash on the skin; if the hair in the affected area has turned white and the rash appears to deepen, it is a Tzara'as infection, and the Cohen shall pronounce them impure.”*

Rashi explains that only a Cohen can declare a discoloration of the skin Tzara'as or not. But why does the Torah only allow a Cohen to rule if a rash is considered to be Tzara'as or not?

Furthermore, the Pasuk says that if a person suspects that a rash may be Tzara'as, they shall go to "*Aaron the priest or one of his sons, the priests.*" However, all of Aaron's children were priests in the Mishkan, so why does the Torah, which is usually very concise with its wording, add these seemingly redundant words?

The Malbim explains that the reason that only a Cohen can pronounce a skin discoloration Tzara'as is that they are the ones who are tasked with atoning our sins. For a person can receive Tzara'as for speaking badly about another person, as the Gemara states (Arakhin 15b), "*Whoever speaks badly about another person, Tzara'as will inflict them.*"

Since Tzara'as is usually considered punishment, the Cohanim are charged with diagnosing it and supervising the process of purification after it is healed.

However, the Kli Yakar gives a deeper and more powerful explanation. He explains that only a Cohen can declare an infection Tzara'as because the Cohanim have a stronger love for the Jewish people than the rest of the nation.

When they pronounce a rash Tzara'as, we know that they are only doing so out of love for that person, for the Cohanim only hope that they learn from their mistake and be better because of it.

The Kli Yakar continues that this is why the Torah adds the words "*one of his sons, the priests,*" for it teaches us that even those who are unfit to serve as a Cohen in the Mishkan can still declare a blemish Tzara'as.

All descendants of Aaron have an intrinsic affection for the Jewish nation regardless of their status of service. This deep and inherent love for the Jewish people originates from Aaron himself, as it says in Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer (17:2), "*Aaron loved peace and pursued peace for husbands and wives.*"

This is the reason that men, women, and children mourned for Aaron's death for thirty days, as opposed to Moshe Rabbienu, whose death was only mourned by the men for thirty days.

In our daily life, and especially during this unprecedented time, it is imperative that we be kind and compassionate towards one another, even if the other person is not deserving of such kindness. For the Jewish nation is inherently connected, and therefore, the physical and spiritual future of the Jewish people lies in every Jewish person's hands.

“Be like the students of Aaron, love peace, and pursue peace, love people, and bring them close to the Torah.”

-Hillel in Pirkei Avos (1:12)

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini