

Self-Improvement

Rabbi David Hoenig

2016

In this week's Parsha, Parshat Tazria, a physical and spiritual affliction is discussed. This affliction, called Tzara'at, can afflict gossipers. How does it work? Someone with a lesion who is worried it may be Tzara'at goes to a Kohen. The Kohen examines and then determines if it is in fact Tzara'at. If someone is diagnosed with this affliction, the individual is then sent out of the community by the Kohen until the Kohen determines that the individual is healed. The Kohen is an integral part of the entire process and not just the diagnosis. Speech is a powerful and unique tool given to us by Hashem. Too often this tool is misused intentionally or unintentionally. Someone with Tzara'at is forced to acknowledge responsibility of their own maladaptive behaviors. Additionally, they need to go see a Kohen. With the afflicted individual's cooperation, the Kohen works with them to remove them from the community and then assists in following the individual's healing process. The Kohen is also responsible for the individual's reintegration into the community. There are times when people don't do the right thing. In any relationship, in order to repair damage, one needs to own up to what they have done wrong. They need to take responsibility. Only then, they can fix their maladaptive behaviors. Although an individual can work on their behaviors solitarily,

sometimes a more supportive approach is available. Through others feedback and support, we can more easily recognize and learn from our mistakes. Self improvement can be a difficult yet joyful process.

Parsha Questions

- 1) On which day must a newborn boy have a Brit Milah? (8th day)
- 2) What color spots need to appear on the body to make a person possibly have Tzara'at? (White)
- 3) What is a person who has Tzara'at called? (Metzora)
- 4) Who should a person see if they think they have Tzara'at? (Kohen)
- 5) What happens if a Kohen thinks the individual has Tzara'at? (He declares the individual a Metzora)
- 6) When does a Metzora become Tahor? (When the signs of Tzara'at disappear)
- 7) What types of material can get Tzara'at? (Wool, linen, leather)
- 8) What type of spot needs to be on the wool, linen or leather to be seen by a Kohen? (Dark red or green)
- 9) If the spot is big enough, how many days does the Kohen put it away for? (Seven days)
- 10) If after these 7 days the spot gets bigger, what does the Kohen do? (Burn the material)

Seeing Good Even in the Galut

Rabbi Avi Heiligman

2016

The Shabbat before Pesach is known as Shabbat Hagadol- the Great Shabbat. Two of the things that are customary to do on this Shabbat is to listen to a shiur (class) about Pesach and its customs. The other custom is to read part of the Haggadah in the afternoon to familiarize ourselves with the text. As we know, the Jews leaving of Egypt is just half of the story. Fifty days later, they received the Torah and then wandered for 40 years in the desert before finally reaching the Holy Land. The Haggadah states “anyone who speaks at length about the miraculous event of leaving Egypt is praiseworthy.” Why do we only tell of the hardships that we faced in Egypt and hardly mention receiving the Torah and entering Israel? There is something about the hardships that we faced in Egypt that still resonate with us 3,300 years later. It can be explained in a parable. There was once a poor man who wasn’t very wise or worldly. One day he struck it rich and besides buying himself fancy things he spent a lot of time and money studying and became smart. A few years went by and he became an intellectual but his money slowly dwindled until he was poor again. On the anniversary of his gaining wealth, he made a party for all of his friends. After being asked how he can still be joyous despite the big monetary loss that he suffered, he responded that “although I have no money left, I am wiser now than before I got rich. The knowledge that I gained will never leave me”. Even though we are 2,000 years into the final exile, which is known as the galut of Edom, we are still much wiser than we would have been if we remained in Egypt. We are thankful for that Hashem redeemed us and one who speaks at length about leaving Egypt manifests his appreciation for what he gained as a result of that great experience.

Parsha Questions

- 1) How many birds does a Metzora bring? (2)

- 2) What three things must a person also do to become pure after Tzara'at? (Cut all of his hair to the mikvah and bring a korban)

- 3) Sometimes Tzara'at can come on a wall of a house. How can this be good? (Sometimes the previous owners hid treasures behind the walls and once the Tzara'at was chipped away the treasure would appear)

- 4) The Shabbat before Pesach is also known as _____. (Shabbat Hagadol)

- 5) Who should fast on Erev Pesach? (Firstborns)

- 6) What can a firstborn do in order to eat on Erev Pesach? (Hear a siyum)

- 7) The night before Pesach we go around with a light and look for chometz. What is this known as? (Bedikat Chometz)

- 8) What do we do with the chometz on Erev Pesach? (Burn it)

9) Who can we sell the chometz to? (A non Jew)

10) Are you allowed to eat matza on Erev Pesach? (No)