

## TAZRIA 1 - SPIRITUAL BLEMISH AND THE MANIFESTATION OF SARA'AT

Firstly, it must be said that Biblical Sara'at is highly unlikely to be synonymous with what we know today as leprosy. The Rambam describes Sara'at as a disease with overtly spiritual roots which afflicted a person for reasons beyond the natural world. 1 The Keli Yekar based on a teaching of the Talmud and Midrash asserts that the name for someone afflicted with Sara'at מצורע - Mesora is related to the term מוציא שם רע - one who manifests the evil within himself externally. 2 The Torah enumerates a total of seven possible symptoms appearing on a person that is at least initially considered transient but might be indicative of the presence of an acute case of Sara'at. The Sefer Haparshiot parallels these seven technical terms of infections noted in our Parasha 3 such as se'et (blotch) sapakhat (white discoloration) baheret (white spot) ..to the seven causes of Sara'at revealed by R. Yohanan in the Talmud 4. What is really telling though is the translation of the word צרעת in the works of the earliest of biblical commentators אבונקלוס and עוזיאל - יונתן בן עוזיאל - who both define it as סגירו a cessation or sealing up. 5

### THE SEALING OR RESTRICTING OF THE LIGHT

The Zohar also defines the word Sara'at in terms of sealing up. 6 The malicious speech or any of the other six infractions of the מצורע cause a restriction or a complete cessation of the Divine light of Hochma to descend. R. HaAri explains that depending on the individual and the extent of his sin or infraction the spiritual result will cause a strong arousal of severities. 7 This in its initial stage will result in a mere restriction of the light of Hochma which is related to the letter י of the YHVH. At that point it will physically manifest itself as a transient form of Sara'at. In its more advanced stage there would be such severities aroused to cause a complete cessation of the holy light of חכמה - This will manifest physically as an acute or chronic form of Sara'at called צרעת מוחלט - confirmed Sara'at.

### ACUTE (CONFIRMED) SARA'AT - A RESULT OF SPIRITUAL DISUNITY

The Talmud relates that it was inquired of R. Hanina regarding the uniqueness of the Mesora מצורע - as compared to other impurities - in that it says (13:46) "He shall dwell in isolation, outside the camp shall be his dwelling". 8 He answered that the Mesora caused a separation between a man and his wife, between a man and his fellow. 9 In order to understand the words of R. Hanina we need the following introduction. In order to send forth the light of the Creator into the worlds we must insure that we do not cause any disunity amongst the celestial channels above. We have an upper unity between the grades of חכמה and חסד symbolically as the two initial letters of the YHVH or ה and י. Their unity is described in שיר השירים as that (5:1) of friends רעים or - Then there is the lower unity of קודש בריך and the שכינה symbolized by the final letters of the YHVH or ה and ו. According to R. Me'ir Bikayam (18th century Izmir) in his Me'ir LaAres, R. Hanina in his explanation is detailing the extent of the blemish caused by the Mesora. 11 Namely, since his infraction concealed the powerful light of the Creator known as the י of the YHVH; This in turn causes disunity amongst the lower grades ה and ו known as husband and wife and the upper grades י and ה known through the appellation lovers or friends. This then is the revelation of the Talmudic assertion of R. Hanina that a Mesora causes disunity amongst a man and his wife and a man and his beloved.

### TRANSIENT SARA'AT - ACTIVATING SEVERITIES

The Torah teaches that when a person has one of the seven suspected infections of Sara'at he shall be brought to the Kohen. 12 While other forms of impurity take effect immediately upon the reality of the matter, the infection of Sara'at is considered transient or only subject to the plague, until the Kohen

observes, determines and declares the nature of the infection. If in his initial examination the patient does not immediately exhibit symptoms of definite Sara'at - the person was to be quarantined for up to two successive periods of seven days. It is important to note that if the Kohen determines and declares the infection impure, then certain forces of impurity attach themselves to the patient; as the disunity he caused above pervades his physical being. If however, the Kohen determines that his blemish is less severe and had not caused a disunity above through malicious speech or other infractions but merely aroused a semblance of severities (without a full fledged disunity) - then the kohen can delay his determination allowing the patient to repent while anticipating a full recovery of the blemish. If at the conclusion of the seven (14) days the infection has been determined not to be a manifestation of acute Sara'at the kohen can declare him Pure.

#### WITH REPENTANCE THE KOHEN HAS THE POWER TO INFUSE THE PATIENT WITH MERCY

This privilege is given to a Kohen whose spiritual nature is one of Hesed,<sup>13</sup> with a innate ability to verbally declare that the patient had successfully sweetened the severities he had aroused during his quarantine period. According to the Zohar <sup>14</sup> only the Kohen has this unique ability to sweeten the severities and rekindle the lights *וליהדליק הנרות* the Holy (Hochma) and effectuate unity above and below. It appears though that his ability is dependent upon the infected individual doing *תשובה* - He is quarantined or sealed off paralleling his blemish of restricting the divine light from above. If after the initial or second set of seven days he has repented, it will manifest physically as a controlled state of infection. This will give the ability for the Kohen to have the perpetrator rejoin society by declaring him - Pure!

#### THE LIPS OF THE KOHEN UNIFY THE YHVH

In his commentary on the Zohar R. Moshe Zacuto comments that the patient needs the assistance of the Kohen's declaration of purity to distance himself from any negative forces. <sup>15</sup> This fits in with the spiritual source of the kohen as he is described by the prophet Mal'akhi - "For the lips of the Kohen shall safeguard knowledge, and teaching is sought from his mouth, for he is an agent (angel) of YHVH. <sup>16</sup> I think we need to take this literally; namely, he has the spiritual ability via a declaration of purity to arouse the lights of hokhma which had been restricted to once again be revealed. This will result in the letters of the Divine name YHVH to be in unity. Hence it is he - via his lips to assume the role of messenger of the YHVH.

Shabbat Shalom

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