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פרשת מצורע- שבת הגדול - תשפ"ב

“SHOWING LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING TO THE METZORA”

This parsha reveals to us that even a metzora (“halachic leper-a person afflicted with tzara’at”) has feelings and sensitivities, and is entitled to our sympathy, kindness and understanding under the law of “Ve’ahavta Le’rei’achca Kamocha” (VaYikra 19:18), [You shall love you fellow as yourself].

The laws of metzora are very strange for us to fathom. Despite the fact that the contamination of the metzora (male or female) is caused by degraded **spiritual** malady, the “disease” manifests itself in a physical fashion. Part of the therapeutic process is to isolate the metzora away from people and be left alone, by himself. Being alone outside the camp gives him the opportunity to reflect on his deficiencies and to do Teshuva so that he can once again become part of his nation. As soon as that change takes place, within his mind and heart, then the same G-d Who afflicted him will remove the mark of his degradation and he can begin the process of return.

At the final stage of his purification (14: 10-20) the metzora brings three animals as offerings to G-d, one as an Asham, one as a Chatat and the third as an Olah, and all three are accompanied with the appropriate Mincha (meal offerings). The Gemara Menachot comments (90b) that usually the Chatat and Asham are not accompanied by meal offerings however, in this case the metzora is accorded this honor as a testimony of HaShem to the sincerity of his Teshuva, by the fact his bodily afflictions have been removed.

The Torah then states (14:13) that the Korban Asham is slaughtered in the same place (the north side of the mizbei’ach) as the Chatat and Olah offerings. Chazal ask (see Rashi) that this is superfluous, as all korbanot asham are slaughtered in this place. The Gemara Sotah (32b) explains that it is done in the same place to protect the sensitivity of the one bringing a chatat (sin offering). By slaughtering the chatat in the same place as the olah people who are not intimately involved in the korban will not know if it is being brought as a voluntary offering (olah) or a sin-offering (chatat). Now, we may think that is not true for a metzora whose sin of lashon Hara is responsible for his physical- spiritual disease. Yet, stresses the Torah, even this individual has feelings and dignity, and this has to be preserved as much as possible.

This idea is prevalent and applies even to a Jew who committed a terrible sin (eg- murder) for which he is punished with the death penalty. Even here, the Halacha states that Beit Din must find the least painful way of execution, because of VeAhavta Lerei’acha Kamocha, (Sanhedrin 45a).

The laws of Metzora do not apply today, but the implications are for us to focus our attitude when we do inter-act or encounter with our own fellow Jews who try to impose their lifestyles upon us, do not [yet] keep Shabbat or kashrut.- the Rashas of today!. Would we invite any of these to our Seder? The Baal Hagaddah does! for he, the Rasha is sitting at the Seder together with the Chacham, the Tam and the Sheh’eino Yodei’a Lish’ol. It is simply because they do not know any better, and they are in the category of “Tinok Sheh’nishba”. Our attitude towards them needs some modification. How do we explain to our children when they see another Jew driving a car on Shabbat? By us, labeling these as “Goyim” or “Yiddishe Goyim” is teaching our children exactly what the Torah and Hagada is warning us **not to do**. They do not need our scorn or hatred; rather, they need our sympathy, sensitivity, our education and our love.

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim--.
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler