

# א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

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מצורע

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## The Specificity of our Language

By Mimi Fischer

In this week's פרשה, מצורע, פרשה, we learn that if someone notices a mark of צרעת on the walls of their house, they must say to a בהן, "כְּנָגַע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵיתִי", "Something like a נגע appeared in my home" (ויקרא י"ד:ל"ה). This raises a question: why would a homeowner say "something that looks like צרעת" appeared on his home? If someone notices a mark of צרעת on their house shouldn't they just say so?

There is a story about the חפץ חיים, Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, which helps answer this question. One day, a visitor came to Radin, the חפץ חיים's hometown, to visit the city and see the חפץ חיים personally. The visitor met an elderly Jew in the streets and asked the old Jew for directions to the house of the חפץ חיים, a great צדיק and גאון. The elderly Jew gave him the directions but told the visitor, "As it turns out, the חפץ חיים is not such a צדיק, nor a גאון, as you say." The visitor became angry with these words and slapped the old Jew across his face, rebuking him for speaking in such a manner. However, when the old Jew led the visitor to the house of the חפץ חיים and into his study, it was revealed that that old Jew, the man the visitor slapped, was the חפץ חיים himself! The visitor immediately began to cry and beg for forgiveness. Instead of becoming angry, the חפץ חיים simply smiled and said, "There is no need to apologize as I deserved the rebuke. I have dedicated my entire life to teaching בני ישראל about the terrible sin of הרע לשון. Today, I learned something new: not only is הרע לשון about others prohibited, but a Jew should not even speak badly about himself."

This story demonstrates why someone must say they see something like צרעת on their house. The punishment of צרעת is given for speaking badly about your fellow Jews, and from the חפץ חיים we learn that this sin extends to speaking badly about yourself as well. When someone sees a mark of צרעת on their house, they should not jump to conclusions and assume they sinned. They should not tell a בהן, "I spoke הרע לשון and now there is a mark of צרעת on my house." Rather, they should be kind to themselves and speak about themselves with the benefit of the doubt.

The תנ"ך expands further on this idea and says there are two places in תנ"ך where the phrase "נראה לי" appears. The first time this phrase appears is in this week's פרשה. The second time it appears is in (ירמיהו ל"א:ג) "appeared to me from afar" - "מִרְחֹק ה' נִרְאָה לִי" ירמיהו. This teaches us that while צרעת plaguing our houses seems terrible, it can contain good news. The process of purifying a house infected by צרעת includes breaking the walls with the צרעת on them. רש"י explains that by doing this, the Jewish homeowners found treasures hidden there by the אמורים during the forty years the Jews wandered the desert. Therefore, when a Jew sees that a mark of צרעת has appeared in his home, he should know מִרְחֹק ה' נִרְאָה. ה' רוח is appearing to him in the distance, bestowing riches and good fortune among the Jews. A Jew says he sees "כנגע", something like a נגע. to not immediately assume they are being punished or that ה' is bringing them misfortune. He should instead be patient, and know that ה' is always with him in the distance, helping him and granting him good fortune.

# צרעת The Importance of

By Eyal Levin

כי: " In פרשת מצורע, we learn about the laws of צרעת. The introductory פסוק for the laws of צרעת says: "תבאו אל-ארץ כנען אשר אני נתן לכם לאחזה ונתתי נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אחוזתכם When you come to [the] land of that I give to you as a possession, and I will give/inflct you [with] צרעת in the houses of the land that you possess" (ויקרא י"ד:ל"ד). Why is ה' saying He will give צרעת? Why is it a definite "ונתתי" – will give and not "אם צרעת" – "If I will give" – "אתן"?

רש"י answers by quoting the ספרי, that the צרעת given, was in fact a blessing because when we would tear down the walls of our house to cleanse the house of צרעת, we would find gold. The אמורים who were living in Israel would hide their treasures in the walls of their houses, so that when the Jews conquered the land, the Jews wouldn't steal אמור's treasures. Therefore, ה' will give צרעת through which בני ישראל will receive a reward.

The שפתי חכמים adds that צרעת appearing on clothing is considered a good thing. This is because the צרעת can help identify which clothes were used for idolatry, and which ones were not. צרעת would only appear on the clothing taken that was used for idolatry. since צרעת appeared on the clothing, בני ישראל were able to identify which ones needed to be burned, thereby fulfilling the מצוה of destroying items used for idolatry, even if they weren't supposed to take the clothes in the first place. The שפתי חכמים goes on to say that while the original צרעת was used as a punishment for various things, most notably הרע לשון ה', in his infinite kindness and forgiveness, uses צרעת as a reward as well.

When it comes to destroying your house, רש"י said you are presented with the opportunity of doing a מצוה, and are presented with a material reward for completing it. When it comes to destroying your clothes, שפתי חכמים said that you are presented with a מצוה, and as a reward you get to complete another מצוה. This reflects what happens in our everyday lives. Sometimes after completing a מצוה we get a material reward, directly or indirectly later in life, while other times, by doing a מצוה, we get the זכות to complete another one! May we follow through with all the opportunities ה' gives us to do מצוות.

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