Points to Ponder

Tazria/Metzora 5783

**וּבֶן־יוֹנָ֥ה אוֹ־תֹ֖ר לְחַטָּ֑את And a dove or turtle dove as a Chatas (12:6)** - What is the purpose of this Chatas? **Professor Nechama Lebowitz** suggested that when a woman has given birth and experienced a closeness with her Creator in the process and now after birth, is aware of her smallness in contrast to Hashem’s creative ability, she feels the urge to bring a Chatas on realizing and appreciating the gap in creative ability.

**וְהוּבָא֙ אֶל־אַֽהֲרֹ֣ן הַכֹּהֵ֔ן He will be brought to Aharon the Kohein (13:2)** - A kohen can’t pasken on his own negaim. The Mishna’s language is כל הנגעים אדם רואה חוץ מנגעי עצמו. Why not? The **Ba’al Shem Tov** says: כל הנגעים אדם רואה חוץ, מנגעי עצמו. If you want to see the messages that G-d is sending you, look at the flaws you see in others. If you can see that flaw in others, it’s a message that you need to work on it as well. The **Peleh Yo’etz** says: We are so good at identifying where others make mistakes and we have a difficult time seeing our own imperfections.

**כֻּלּ֛וֹ הָפַ֥ךְ לָבָ֖ן טָה֥וֹר הֽוּא: It all turned white, he is Tahor (13:13)** - The Gemara (Sanhedrin 97) uses this possuk to describe the period of Moshiach’s arrival when impudence and insult will be rampant among the Jewish people. Why is whiteness the symbol used to represent this dark period? **Rav Schachter quoted Rav Soloveitchik** who noted that whiteness denotes clarity or lucidity or that which is rational and logical. A spiritually healthy person needs to be able to combine that lucidity together with the blue or mystery, ambiguity and esoteric. Being totally rational leads one to arrogance and ultimately heresy. The contrast of Moshiach’s holiness against his generation’s heresy will be highlighted and meaningful.

**לֹֽא־הָפַ֨ךְ הַנֶּ֤גַע אֶת־עֵינוֹ֙  It didn’t change Its appearance (13:55)** - While **Rashi**, based on the Sifra, defines the word *eino* as “its appearance”. The **Chidushei Harim** homiletically explains that the word can be understood as “eye” as well. He cites the Gemara in Arachin 16a that lists *tzarus ayin,* literally translated as narrowness of the eye,as one of the negative traits that would cause someone to develop a *tzarras* affliction. He explains, therefore, that what the Torah is teaching is that the reason why the *negah* is deemed *tamei* is because this individual did not change his “eye”, from looking at other people in a negative light to looking at others in a positive light. He even adds that the word *negah* and *oneg* (pleasure) are the same spelling except for the placement of the letter *ayin.* The difference between affliction and pleasure is where the eye is.

**שְׁתֵּֽי־צִפֳּרִ֥ים חַיּ֖וֹת טְהֹר֑וֹת And he shall take 2 live Tahor birds (14:4)** - The **Zohar** mysteriously explains the korban of two birds as necessary to bring one bird for bad speech and one bird for good speech. **Rabbi Yissacher Frand** questions this statement. There is an apparent need to bring a korban to atone for bad speech, like Loshon Hora, but what warrants a sin offering for good speech? The **Shemen Hatov** explains that sometimes we have the opportunity to offer positive reinforcement yet we remain silent. In this situation, one might think that they are doing nothing wrong – nothing negative was said! Yet, the lack of positive reinforcement can be just as demoralizing as negative speech, if not worse. Therefore, one does not only need to bring a korban for the bad speech, but even for the good speech, or lack thereof.

**שְׁתֵּֽי־צִפֳּרִ֥ים חַיּ֖וֹת טְהֹר֑וֹת And he shall take 2 live birds (14:4) -  Rav Dovid Miller** pointed out that in Parshas Metzora and in Acharei Mos we have cases of taking two animals, to face two destinies. In one we send one bird free to live, killing the other, and there seems to be no particular pomp to deciding which is which. In the other, one Sa’ir is sent off the cliff to his death, the other killed to be offered as a Korban, and there is an elaborate ceremony to determine how each dies. We would think that the decision of life and death for the birds would be more significant than that of how each particular Sa’ir dies. In truth, though, life and death is not in our hands, and not for us to fret over – its in the hands of HKB”H. HOW we live our lives, however, LaHashem or LaAzazel, that is a weighty determination that is worthy of focus and celebration.

**עַל־מַ֥יִם חַיִּֽים On the living waters (14:5) - Rav Dr. Yonatan Grossman** notes that there are a number of references in the text to the fact that the metzora experience is a like an experience of death (Chazal tell us מצורע חשוב כמת). At the same time, the sending of the metzora out of the machaneh, is like a mourning experience. He is, in essence, mourning himself. Yet there is a notable transition. When the metzora begins his purification process, the word חי appears numerous times. Live birds are used and the water is called מים חיים. It is a transition from death to life.

**Haftarah:**

**כִּי־חָ֛לָה גַּם־יָֽלְדָ֥ה צִיּ֖וֹן אֶת־בָּנֶֽיהָ: For Tzion has been ill and also birthed her children (Yeshayahu 66:8)** - The Haftarah describes the Geulah and the return of the people in two critical areas -- the pangs of childbirth and the speed of delivery. In our Haftara, the pains of labor are almost absent and the speed relatively quick. Yet, Micha (7:8) and other sources seem to suggest that there will be labor pains. Yirmiyahu (31:7) seems to suggest that the timing will be longer. How do we reconcile these sources? **Rav Avrohom Rivlin** suggested that the reconciliation is dependent upon us. If we are worthy, the pains will be limited and the speed quick. If we are not, there will be pains and the labor will take time. It is all part of Nevuah Nezilah and it is dependent upon us to help the Nevuah come to the fore.