



Good Shabbos Morai V'Rabbosai,

As we did last week, we will open with a vort on this weeks פרשת השבוע, and then transition to פ"א in פ"ו wherein we will continue reviewing the 48 דברים that enable תורה קנין. We will try to make greater inroads in the total number we've learned this week אי"ה!

There seems to be an interesting dichotomy amongst the various מפרשי הפרשה regarding the nature of צרעת at least certainly on the surface. On one hand we have מפרשים like the Rambam, Ramban and the Sifarno in פמ"ז פמ"ג פמ"ד, ויקרא פמ"ג פמ"ד, who all did not view צרעת as a מחלה, a disease or מגיפה in a regular physical sense. The צרעת afflicts not only humans but clothing and houses as well, should not be understood according to these מפרשים as a natural disaster or affliction but actually they are complete deviations from the natural order of things. They are in fact a נס נגלה sent by קב"ה to directly indicate to those afflicted, his displeasure with their behavior. There is a famous גמרא in ט"ו-ט"ז which provides us with multiple אמוראים who give us lists of עבירות which in their view can be the reason קב"ה sends צרעת to a person or item. R' Yosi ben Zoma said לשון הרע, Raish Lakesh said the cause was מוציא שם רע. Reb Shmuel Bar Nachmeni said in the name of Rabi Yochanon a list of 7 possible causes:

- (1.) לשון הרע (2.) Murder (3.) שבועת שקר (4.) זנות (5.) Arrogance  
(6.) Theft (7.) Miserliness.

The גמרא then there provides פסוקים as proof for each עבירה as a source of צרעת. Two other related points made by some of the מפרשים who hold of this שיטה regarding צרעת. They point to the fact that we see plenty of other עונשים mentioned by the Torah, some even a lot worse then צרעת (even though מי שאין לו בנים or סומא is one of a select group including מוציא שם רע or מי שאין לו בנים or סומא). Yet as Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman asks, in the none of the other myriad עונשים which קב"ה has the occasion to send, in many cases different types of illnesses, we do not find an accompanying concept of טומאה as we do with a מצורע. He is not only טמא, but טמא טמא יקרא he's required to advertise his טומאה so that no one should come near him. Also when someone becomes ill חו"ש with a sickness, he sees a doctor. The Ramban points out in our Parsha that a doctor is useless. One must see the Kohen and it's the Kohen who makes the determination whether he has צרעת and that פסק is what creates the טומאת צרעת, in fact the צרעת itself isn't called צרעת regardless of appearances unless the Kohen has declared it so. All of these ideas as well as the point the Sefarno makes, that since the destruction of the בהמ"ק we haven't see the likes of צרעת, because צרעת was only sent to those on a much higher מדריגה than we are בזמן הזה. Since it's a spiritual illness, it only works for someone who is spiritual to begin with. All of this would seem to mitigate as these מפרשים point out to a spiritual rather than physical event. It may have had physical manifestations (the skin conditions described in the פסוקים and חז"ל) but it wasn't a מחלה in a traditional physical illness sense as we said earlier in the name of the Rambam, Ramban and Sefarno. However, it would appear initially at least that there amongst the many החומש who would be חולק on these מפורשים we've just mentioned. Three that come immediately to mind are the רבינו בחי' בעל משך חכמה, Rav Mayer Simcha of Dvinsk. They all seem to learn that there is a physical illness aspect to צרעת. The משך חכמה for example starts out by saying that while

there is no easy answer to why the koheinim were given the job of determining צרעת, especially when it appears that what they are being asked to make a determination regarding what appears to be medical symptoms. He adds that clearly the koheinim's work here is not part of their avodah either in that like the creation of אדומה מי פרה (which is also not considered avodah) it was done outside the precincts of the mikdash. But he then goes on to suggest, that the reason the Torah insists that the Kohen be the "Doctor" is not because it isn't a physical illness but because the נגעים of צרעת were held to be very contagious (of all things). He quotes a medrash in ויקרא רבה which speaks about the precautions taken by gedolai yisroel to (socially) distance themselves from people with נגעים. One refused to get within 100 אמות of a man stricken with צרעת, others refused to get near food that was in the immediate vicinity of a מצורע. And then in a twist on what we saw earlier from the other מפרשים, he davka sees in the requirement of תמא יקרא - תמא טמא - evidence of possible contagion. The משך חכמה then says because the contagion possibility is a real danger, then only someone with really special השגחה from קב"ה could risk getting into any kind of proximity to the מצורע. Therefore the koheinim whom according to Rav Mayer Simcha have a special level of divine providence and protection were the only ones who could risk getting close to the מצורע. (It's a very interesting and provocative idea, given the circumstances we find ourselves in now with this horrendous virus. Who should care for the cholim, who should make teharos for the niftarim and possibly expose themselves to this contagion. All forms of interpersonal chesed, are now open to question given the Matzav! Does anyone today qualify as having special השגחה and protection from the רבש"ע which can allow them to be exposed מצוה לשם, I don't believe so, and certainly wouldn't advise anyone to take exponential risks!) The Abarbanel tries to strike a balance between the two sides and takeh could possibly provide the bridge between the otherwise seemingly unbridgeable מהלכים. What he says is a further development of a concept that we spoke of earlier. That צרעת had very real physical components- but it was a physical manifestation of a spiritual malady. There is a whole discussion in the מפרשי החומש regarding the Abarbanel himself in ויקרא יג' נא' פסוק א' in ויקרא יג' נא' writes: וקראו אלו החליים נגע מפני שהיה נגוע בכאב: because the skin was plagued with pain. Rashi writes similarly in ויקרא יג' נא' on the words צרעת ממארת that it is a לשון סלון ממאיר which is a quote from ספר יחזקאל and indicates it felt like you stuck by thorns or briars. The medrash later on in ויקרא רבה says about the בני"י who were חוטא בעגל that they received painful צרעת and became זבים and that the pain weakened their bodies. Clearly there are sufficient indicators that there was not only the emotional pain of ostracism as the מצורע had to wear special clothes, go outside the מחנה, cry תמא טמא, and as קב"ה Himself says to מש"ר regarding מרים הנביאה when she is stricken with צרעת (במדבר יב') - צרעת itself. Based on this one could say that really there isn't much of a מחלוקת between the two camps of מפרשים. This was a spiritual malady, it had tumah associated with it, it wasn't curable by doctors, one had to see a Kohen. However, it manifested physically- not only in terms of appearances- but in terms of pain and contagion as well. Emotional pain – depression causing physical pain is a well-known fact, and a spiritual malaise becoming contagions is something we see again and again Rabbosai!!

This idea can also serve to answer an important question. We know that every פרשה in the Torah has multiple meanings and applications: But there is a consistent understanding that everything that is written in the Torah has some relevance לדורות. There has to be a lesson or pertinent applications of every פרשה even in the here and now. Many מפרשים therefore ask, that if נגעים ended with the destruction of the בהמ"ק (and according to many it will never come back again) what is its real time application now? There are a number of תירוצים given in the אחרונים. One תרץ I saw which is very

applicable in today's times and circumstances is given by R' Gamliel Rabinowitz. He says there is the need for a person to recognize that while medical attention and visiting doctors and clinics are important to maintain your health, one should be careful about complete reliance upon these נדיבים. Yes, of course one should consult and adhere to instructions of the medical professionals, however one needs to remember in many cases the real source of the malady is spiritual in nature, and the doctor is a שליח ה' is only addressing the symptoms in such a case- not the root cause of the illness. This dovetails nicely with what we've spoken about, in that while there are definite physical elements to צרעת which need medicinal treatment, the root of the malady is in fact the only way to "cure it" is spiritual and through a Kohen. The current plague we are dealing with definitely needs medical treatments and one should follow all the instructions of all medical professionals in all aspects of prevention and treatment. But given the elusive nature, and the seemingly almost individualized affect it has on different people. One must recognize the Yad Hashem, and approach it as first and foremost a spiritual malady like צרעת and seek to deal with the tumah and עברות which are the underlying cause.