

## Shabbat Tazria-Metzora 5780, Rabbi James Proops

This week is the 7th Shabbat that we are in 'isolation', unable to attend shul and hear the *Kriyat HaTorah*, forced to make do with reading the parasha to ourselves or maybe together with our family. As we go through this week's double-portion of Tazria-Metzora one can not help but make comparisons and connections between the 'quarantine' of one who has been declared to have *tzara'at* on their body and our own current predicament of quarantine and isolation. Certainly we must learn from the fact that the goal of isolation for one who has *tzara'at*, is self-reflection, *teshuva* and spiritual growth and therefore we should all endeavor to use this time for our own introspection and development.

Having completed discussing the issues of the *tzaraat* on the body, the parasha continues to explain that *tzara'at* can also appear on people's houses and outlines the difficult process of purification. This includes removing all the possessions from one's home in order to avoid them becoming impure, and subsequently removing the afflicted stones from the house. The pasuk which introduces this section is the subject of much discussion and insight by the Rabbis throughout the ages. The pasuk states "When you come to the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ נֹגַע צְרָעַת בְּבַיִת I give a lesion of *tzara'ath* upon a house" (Vayikra, 14, 34). Rashi, bothered by the use of the word וְנִתְּנָה 'I give', points out that finding *tzara'at* on the walls of your home was in fact a *bracha* rather than simply a plague. Citing the *medrash*, Rashi points out that behind those afflicted stones *Bnei Yisrael* would find treasures that had been hidden by the Emorites, who had lived in *Canaan*, with the hope that the Jewish people would not be able to benefit from them following their conquest. Without *tzara'at* causing the Jews to remove the stones they would never have known what treasures lay behind them.

In the remarkable sefer *Aish Kodesh*, the compilation of the drashot of the Pieznetzna Rebbe, Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, given to his *chasidim* in the Warsaw Ghetto, we find an incredible observation on this Rashi. In his drasha given on Shabbat Parshat Metzora in 1940 the Pieznetzna Rebbe poses the following question: If the purpose of the *Tzara'at HaBayit* was to provide the *Bnei Yisrael* with the gold that was hidden in the house, why then does the Torah prescribe the seven days of quarantine, and only afterwards the removal of the bricks? Why can't the homeowner remove the bricks immediately and find the treasure?

He goes on to explain that this *halachah* acts as a reminder to every Jew that we must believe that everything Hashem does, even if it seemingly negative at the onset, is ultimately for the best. The Pieznetzna Rebbe explains that there are many hardships that people may endure, yet people of faith believe that all the hardships are thrust upon us from the *Ribono Shel Olam* so that he can become a better person, to become closer to Hashem, and find that spiritual 'treasure'. What an incredible declaration of faith coming from within the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto! From the depths of despair the Rebbe continued to teach that there is always light at the end of the tunnel and there is always an ulterior purpose in the Divine plan. The 'light' is always there, just like the treasure hidden in the walls, we are just not able to see it

Certainly we cannot draw any comparison to that which was suffered in the Ghetto, nonetheless we are all currently going through our own period of despair and must draw from the inspiring message of the Pieznetzna Rebbe, that the light at the end of the tunnel does exist.

I believe we can also draw an important message from the medrash itself, in that the treasure was ever present in the walls of people's homes without their even realizing it. So often we chase the various treasures that exist beyond our walls and pay little attention to those that exist within them. The walls of our home tell the story of what goes on behind closed doors. What treasures lie within those walls? Laughter, joy and love or impatience, raised voices, squandered relationships and lost opportunities. If we look carefully, we all have some 'blemishes' on the walls, some areas of home life which could do with attention and improvement. Now is our opportunity to remove those 'afflicted bricks' and rebuild. An opportunity to work on those areas of life at home in which we are lacking. Once we begin to focus on those areas we will surely find the treasures of enhanced shalom bayit, peace of mind and personal development.

Let us make the most of this time in quarantine, buoyed with the underlying emunah that this is part of God's Divine plan, and unearth all the treasures that are waiting to be found.

Shabbat Shalom