

טומאה, along with other forms of צרעת, which are many and intricate - of פרשת מצורע, including זב. These הלכות contain profound lessons, embedded within all their details. The נגע of צרעת, as brought down by many מפרשים, can affect a person's house, his בגדים, and ultimately, the person himself. The חסד, first brings צרעת upon the house. If the person learns the lesson and does תשובה, he is spared. If he ignores the warning, the צרעת spreads to his בגדים, coming closer to him. And if that does not wake him up, it finally afflicts his own body.

I want to focus on one particularly interesting פסוק regarding the נגע of the house. In פרק י"ד, right after ויִדְבֹר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אֶהֱרֹן לֵאמֹר: כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם לְאֻחֲזָנָה: (14:33-34) in מצורע, it says Hashem says that He will place צרעת in the houses. There is a vast amount of תורה on this idea. The most well known explanation is that the אֲמֹרִים hid treasures in their walls, and Hashem sent the נגע so that בני ישראל would find these hidden riches. However, in פסוק ל"ה, it says: וְכֹא אֲשֶׁר - a very interesting and unusual פסוק, unusual phrase, פִּנְגַּע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית - the man who has the house where this is happening; וְהָיִיד לִפְנֵי לֵאמֹר - פִּנְגַּע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית. All the מפרשים discuss this פסוק at length. I want to share two approaches from Rabbi Dr. Twerski.

The פסוק says פִּנְגַּע - "something like a נגע" appears to me. The person does not declare outright, "I see a נגע." The first מהלך explains that even if a person is a פוסק and knowledgeable in הלכה, when it comes to himself, he must step back and say, "I am personally involved; I cannot pasken for myself." He must bring the שאלה to another פוסק because he is נוגע בדבר and cannot be completely objective. A person should always judge himself לטובה, but when something concerns him personally, he must seek an expert opinion rather than rely solely on his own judgment.

The second מהלך brings out another fundamental lesson. If a person were to say definitively, "There is a נגע in my house," he is essentially declaring himself guilty. However, by saying פִּנְגַּע נִרְאָה לִי, he is leaving room for doubt: "Maybe there is a נגע, maybe not - please come and tell me." He is not directly saying something negative about himself. As we know the famous גמרא in כתובות, a person is not believed to make himself into a רשע. A person should not speak negatively about himself.

This reminds me of a famous story about the חפץ חיים. Once, a stranger approached him, asking for directions to the great גאון and צדיק, the חפץ חיים. The חפץ חיים pointed him in the right direction but humbly added, "He's not such a great גאון and צדיק." The man, not realizing whom he was speaking to, was furious and smacked him, exclaiming, "How dare you speak that way about the גדול הדור?" When the man finally reached the house and realized that the person he had struck was the חפץ חיים himself, he was mortified. The חפץ חיים smiled and reassured him, "You don't have to apologize. It was my honor that you were defending, and you taught me a very important lesson. I have always told people not to speak לשון הרע about others, but you showed me something deeper - you're also not allowed to speak לשון הרע about yourself. Just because you're saying it about yourself doesn't mean you're allowed to say negative things." The חפץ חיים connected this idea to our פסוק: פִּנְגַּע נִרְאָה לִי - one should not say definitively that he has a נגע; he should leave room for the possibility that it is not so.

Why is this such an important lesson? The answer is simple. A person should always see himself as being exactly 50-50 - equally balanced between being a צדיק and a רשע. If someone considers himself a צדיק, he might think, "I can afford to do a few עבירות - I have enough זכויות to balance it out." On the other hand, if he considers himself a רשע, he might feel, "I have no hope of doing תשובה. I'm already lost - why should I even try?" Instead, a person must always view himself as 50-50, understanding that every מצוה can tip the scales in his favor and every עבירה, חס ושלום, can push him to the other side. It's a very good lesson to learn.



This year, שבת הגדול falls on פרשת מצורע, preparing us for the great טוב of פסח. שבת הגדול is called "הגדול" because בני ישראל displayed tremendous אמונה. They did not lie or try to conceal their intentions; rather, they openly declared, "We are taking your שעפסעלע and we are going to שחט it." This was a bold and dangerous statement, yet they did not waver. They stood firm in their אמונה and honored שבת and הקדוש ברוך הוא with absolute truth. Good Shabbos!

