

פרשת תזריע, the beginning of the two פרשיות that discuss נגעים, opens with the very positive topic of having אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר: קינדרלעך. There are two major topics in פרשת תזריע, and the one we will focus on for the next few moments is נגעים, an entire מסכתה in משניות.

The פסוק states: (13:2) וְהָיָה כְּעוֹר בְּשָׁרוֹ לִנְגַע צֹרַעַת - if a person sees a נגע on his skin, he must go to the כהן. All the מפרשים explain that we no longer experience נגעים today. This was not an ordinary skin condition like leprosy or any other disease; rather, it was a רוחניות malady, a direct message from הקדוש that it was time to do תשובה for various עבירות - not only for הרע לשון but for other sins as well. Even though נגעים no longer appear in a physical sense, the lessons they teach are eternal.

The ספרים bring down, as quoted in תורה של תורה, an insightful connection between the words נגע and ענג. If you rearrange the letters of נגע, they spell ענג, a word closely associated with שבת, as the פסוק states: וְקִרְאתָ לְשַׁבָּת עֲנָג (ישעיהו נ"ח:י"ג). Similarly, if you rearrange the letters of צרעת, they form the word עצרת, which refers to יום טוב, as it says: וְעֲצֶרֶת תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם (במדבר כ"ט:ל"ה). The ספרים explain that שבת and יום טוב stand in direct opposition to the concepts represented by נגע and צרעת.

A נגע signifies that שליטה's הקדוש ברוך הוא is being hidden, that טבע conceals the פנימיות of the בריאה. When a person does an עבירה, he further strengthens this concealment. By design, טבע already hides the קדושה within it, because Hashem wants us to work to uncover the truth, to put in effort, to sweat the details in order to reveal the פנימיות. It is not meant to be an easy-pickings situation. However, הקדוש ברוך הוא provides us with assistance. What is that help? שבת and יום טוב. These days open our eyes to קדושה, they open our hearts to see not only שליטה's הקדוש ברוך הוא but also His הנהגה in עולם הזה - to recognize that Hashem is actively running the world.

Our job, therefore, is to remove the עור - to peel away the קליפה, the covering that conceals and suppresses the פנימיות and קדושה, and reveal the אור הגנוז that is hidden within טבע. This is what differentiates us from all the other religions of the world: our mission is not to escape טבע but to elevate it, to be מרום the טבע and reveal the קדושה within it. Through this, we serve Hashem and fulfill our role as an אור לגוים. Good Shabbos!

