

תזריע-מצורע

כולה הפך לבן טהור הוא It seems from the Torah that if the flesh turns white, it is a sign of טומאה. If his entire body has changed to white, one would think that certainly is a sign of טומאה. However, the Torah states just the opposite, כולה הפך לבן טהור הוא, if it has changed entirely to white he is טהור. How do we understand this paradox?

The Chofetz Chaim, זצוק"ל, explains that the purpose and goal of צרעת was to bring a person to תשובה. Chazal (ערכין טז) tell us that צרעת comes for עבירות like לשון הרע וגאווה and stinginess. The root cause for all these עבירות is גאווה, haughtiness and an attitude that everything revolves around himself. This allows him to talk disparagingly about others and to be stingy instead of helping others. Going outside of the camp away from everybody (including others who were טמא) provides him with an opportunity for introspection and to remove his גאווה. Once he has humbled himself to Hashem, he can do a proper תשובה. This, however, is all in regard to someone who has צרעת on part of his body. There was still room to convince himself and think that it was just a fluke. For this person the Torah prescribes for him to go away from everybody else. If, however, the entire body has צרעת, this can't be written off as a mere coincidence. In such a case, the צרעת itself provides the person the means to rid himself of his haughtiness and do a proper תשובה. Therefore, nothing else is necessary for his כפרה and he is considered טהור immediately.

Today we no longer have צרעת. As the Ramban writes that צרעת was not a physical ailment but rather spiritual ailment. When Klal Yisrael was on the proper level they would receive a sign when they weren't behaving properly. Even though we are not on that high level, the message, however, is still applicable. We should always work on refining our מדות and place more emphasis on helping others instead of focusing on ourselves.

Have a good Shabbos.

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