



Lia Manning
Gush Chapter
Director
What's that on
your skin?!

Walking through the streets, being stared at by children; people looking away quickly as if they hadn't noticed the plagued skin. These are all truthful accounts of what people with skin diseases experience on a daily basis. If you have Type I diabetes, or suffer from a heart condition, the average passer-by on the light rail would be none the wiser. Eczema, psoriasis, and dermatitis, to name a few, are worn on the sleeve of the person they affect.

It is no wonder then that a person affected with a skin condition like Zara'at is to leave the camp until they are cured. We must ask ourselves if this is a form of punishment or rather for their own protection, to shield them from embarrassment. Rabbi Moshe Lichtman, in his book "Eretz Israel in the Parasha" suggests that although this particular skin affliction is a punishment, Zara'at is also a measure of closeness to Hashem: "One cannot be distanced from Hashem unless he is usually close to Him". Such a bold and visible punishment is quite different from the nature of our private relationship with G-d. Suddenly, our distance from the Creator must be worn as a badge, for all to see. Perhaps shame is the opposite of what this affliction

means to achieve.

Judaism is good at keeping sensitive matters quiet. The Kedusha of a home and family, for example, is surrounded by layers of discretion. The fact that such a G-dly punishment affects the skin for all to see must mean that its publicity is an inherent part of the process. If it becomes a regular occurrence where everyone deals with Zara'at at one point or another, then shame is not part of the equation at all. If anything, maybe it teaches us the valuable lesson that just as we are all beloved by Hashem, we must all work hard to remain in His favor.

If our neighbor should not be so lucky at the moment, we must be compassionate and respect their privacy. While the person themselves are given time to reflect on their relationship with Hashem in the privacy outside the camp, the community can learn the invaluable lesson of respect and empathy.



Eli Jerozolim
10th Grade, Efrat
"Tzaraat - punish-
ment or lesson?"

If you think Covid is making everyone crazy, can you imagine how tzaraat was? Tzaraat is a very strange disease! It mixes together a physical illness with a mystical punishment from Hashem.

Tzaraat raises many questions such as why do we need to isolate if it's not

bricks infected with tzaraat, they found gold hidden by the Amorites in the walls.

What?!? Tzaraat was a punishment! Why would the Medrash assume that anything positive came from it?

Apparently the medrash had a very different view of punishments. Punishments are not meant to hurt you but they are there to guide you and actually bring you even greater rewards.

So we can now answer both of our original questions. When you isolate, you are not trying to avoid infecting others but apparently one of the people you've been in contact with isn't having a positive impact on you! You need to isolate yourself and reassess your relationships. It forces you away from those people, who whether you like it or not, you probably know inside that it would be best to stay away from.

Emptying your house for tzaraat is very similar. Something in your house is getting in the way of your bigger goals. It could be clothes or money, but something is becoming an obstacle for you to accomplish more important things.

May we be fortunate enough to see the rewards that Hashem gives us through punishment and become better from our mistakes. ■

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