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מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Tazria – Metzora

Man's Deeds Affect the Walls of His Home and His Belongings

Our *parasha* states (14:34), "When you come to the Land of *Cana'an*, which I am giving you as an inheritance, and I give *tzaraat*, a leprous sign in the house of the land of your inheritance."

Rashi, quoting the Midrash in *Vayikra Rabba* (17:6), asks if Hashem was telling the Jews that they would inevitably receive *tzaraat*. He quotes R' Shimon bar Yochai's answer that when the Canaanites heard that the Jews were coming to conquer the land, they hid their wealth inside their houses and in their fields. Hashem said, "I promised their fathers' that I would bring their children into a land filled with every good thing," as the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 6) 'And houses filled with every good thing.' Therefore, continues the Midrash, what does Hashem do? He brings leprous marks on the house. The Canaanite would break down his house, and the Jew would find a treasure.

Questions:

1 – If Hashem wanted to make the Jews aware of these treasures, why did it have to be through leprous marks? Why could it not be through a happier medium? 2 – Furthermore, asks the *Zohar*, if the purpose of the leprous marks was only to reveal the hidden treasure, why was it sometimes necessary to throw the remaining rubble outside the city?

Man's Understanding Versus That of the Torah

We will begin by stating that man generally does not lend much importance to the physical items that surround him, whether it is a building or the furniture inside it. He merely values their external appearance, but as far as their spiritual value is concerned, he does not think that they possess very much. The truth is though, that these items can affect his fate, *mazal*, and soul. Therefore the Torah teaches man not to make light of the physical items that surround him, nor to belittle the degree to which one's deeds affect him.

Why the Stones From the Walls Are Not Returned

In the *Zohar*, R' Shimon bar Yochai writes differently than what he taught in the aforementioned Midrash. In the *Zohar* he asks that if the entire purpose of breaking down the house was to find treasures, then after the treasure was found, the Jew should theoretically be allowed to rebuild it with the same stones. Yet this is forbidden. Therefore, R' Shimon explains that there is an additional intention behind breaking down the house, one that makes reusing the stones an impossibility. Man must realize that he is able to sanctify his actions with his mouth, by saying that he is doing them to fulfill the Will of Hashem. Like the *Mishkan*, where everything was sanctified due to the Jews saying that their donation was for the sake of enabling the *Shechina* to dwell amongst them, so too, with each individual who builds his home. He must say that the purpose of building the house is to fulfill the Will of Hashem, and by doing so, the *Shechina* will dwell inside the home. The opposite is true as well. If a person says that he is building the house for the sake of idolatry, it turns the house into a den of impurity, one in which the *Shechina* cannot reside. When the Jews entered *Eretz Yisrael*, Hashem wished to allow the *Shechina* to dwell amongst them. However, they did know what had previously been the status of the home in which the Canaanite lived. Was it one of purity or impurity? Therefore, Hashem wrought kindness for the Jewish people, and afflicted the houses with leprous marks. This way, the houses would be broken down, and the Jews would discover the impure homes that the gentiles had built. They would therefore be required to build a pure, holy home from scratch, and the *Shechina* would be able to dwell in the house with them. The *Zohar* states that a house that was built for the sake of impure practices is one that is very dangerous to live in. Those who live in such a home are guaranteed to take ill or lose their money, and are better off living in the street. Therefore, when building a home,



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everyone is required to say that he is building it to study Torah and perform mitzvot. By doing so, blessing and success will fill his home, and the *Shechina* will dwell there as well. We see therefore, that even though Hashem wishes to reveal the monetary treasure hidden inside the house, He also wishes to reveal the spiritual treasure that man's home will now be graced with; for man's entire fate depends on it. I found that the *Sfat Emet* (*Metzora*) wrote similarly. He asks why it was necessary for Hashem to reveal the treasures in such a fashion. Why did He place the thought to hide the treasures into the minds of the Canaanites in the first place? If they would not have thought to do this, there would have been no need to break down the houses. He explains that the entire subject of the leprous marks on houses, is an extraordinary one, and it is symbolic of the Jewish Nation's holiness. It teaches us that Jews have the ability to bring holiness and purity into the places that they live. Regarding sin, the *Navi* (*Chabakuk* 2:11) teaches, "A stone from the wall will cry out, and a sliver from a beam will answer." In other words, the walls of man's very home will testify against him. All the more so, does this apply for the good. A *tzaddik* must bring a feeling of holiness into everything he owns. The Jewish people took *Eretz Canaan* out of a state of impurity and brought it to a state of holiness. Now it would be called *Eretz Yisrael*, and Hashem's *Shechina* would reside in the *Beit Hamikdash*. Drawing holiness into one's material possessions is included in the *pasuk* from *Kriat Shema* which commands a Jew to love Hashem, "*be'chol me'odecha, with all of your money.*" This is why leprous marks afflicted houses as well. It was a favorable implication, because it taught them that they have the power to rectify the impurity of all of these impure places and find treasures in their place. For the more mundane an object is, the more sparks of holiness lay nestled inside it.

Wearing the Clothing of a Tzaddik Imparts the Tzaddik's Holiness

The *sefer Kovetz HaSofer* (14) quotes the *Chatam Sofer* as saying that one who wears the clothing of a *tzaddik* receives an influx of holiness from the spirit of the *tzaddik*. This is because the clothing of an individual absorbs the holiness of the one who wears them. The opposite is true as well. For example, Esav imparted his impurity to his clothing as well, and they had the ability to contaminate one who wore them. The *Shailot u'Teshuvot Ve'darashta Ve'chakarta* (*chelek* 5, *Even Ha'ezer* 18) cites a *Yerushalmi* as a source to the words of the *Chatam Sofer* and of R' Chaim Kanievsky (see there), who state that there is holiness in the belongings of a *tzaddik* which exert an influence on the individual. [Also see *Shu"t Maadanei Sofer* 2:17, who discusses this topic.]

Story About Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sassov

When Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sassov was about to take leave of his *rebbe*, Rebbe Shmelke of Nikolsberg, Rebbe Shmelke gave him a loaf of bread, a coin, and his overcoat. Even though Rebbe Moshe Leib was perplexed, he did not dare question his *rebbe*, and set out on his journey. As he was traveling, he heard voices emanating from a pit. As he drew closer to see who was in the pit, he discovered an individual who owed the *poritz* rent for his home, but did not have the money to pay. The *poritz* therefore threw him and his family in a pit. When Rebbe Moshe Leib heard the prisoners' story, he first gave them his loaf of bread and encouraged them by telling them that Hashem would help them. Then he went to the *poritz* and got him to agree to relinquish part of the debt; the remaining amount would be paid by Rebbe Moshe Leib himself. He then gave the *poritz* the coin he was carrying. When the *poritz* saw that he was only repaying him one coin, he grew furious. He felt that Rebbe Moshe Leib was disgracing him by giving him such a small amount. He therefore commanded his servants to imprison him. Furious still, he commanded them to throw Rebbe Moshe Leib to his starving dogs that were capable of tearing a human being to shreds in a matter of moments. However, Rebbe Moshe Leib donned Rebbe Shmelke's overcoat and the dogs fled in fear, without even touching him. When the *poritz* saw this, he was shocked and said to Rebbe Moshe Leib, "I see that you are a holy man." He then agreed to forgo the entire debt, and freed him. *Zechutam yagen aleinu, ve'al kol Yisrael. Amen.*



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The Belongings of a Tzaddik are Holy

The *pasuk* states (*Bereishit* 23:17), "And Efron's field that was in *Machpela* ... was confirmed [*va'yakam*]." Rashi explains that *va'yakam* is an expression that alludes to being raised. He therefore writes that the field ascended to a higher level, as it left the ownership of a simple man like Efron and was acquired by a king, Avraham. The Klausenberger Rebbe *zt"l* said that this is a source to the well-known fact that there is a tremendous love for the belongings of a *tzaddik*. Many individuals covet them, because of the holiness which rests on his belongings. Therefore, immediately after the field left the ownership of Efron and was acquired by Avraham, Avraham illuminated it with the light of holiness, until it assumed a new form. The Rebbe said that the Rebbe of Rudnik *zt"l* told him that he inherited from his father in law, the Rebbe of Barnov *zy"a*, a box of snuff which belonged to Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz. One time, when he was sitting at the table of the Klausenberger Rebbe's holy grandfather, Rebbe Chaim of Sanz, the Rebbe remarked to someone sitting next to him, "Today, my grandfather [- Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz] inquired of me about his box of snuff." The man heard this and thought it was a joke. At that moment, the Rebbe of Rudnik removed his box of snuff from his pocket. Rebbe Chaim sensed this, and turned to him saying, "Where did you get this nice box from? Please show it to me." When he presented it to Rebbe Chaim, he opened it and smelled it, despite the fact that it was his holy way never to inhale snuff.

The Walls of Man's Home and the Beams of His House Will Bear Testimony

Chabakuk (2:11) has stated, "A stone from the wall will cry out, and a sliver from a beam will answer." Our Sages teach in *Masechet Taanit* (11a) and *Chagiga* (16a) that an individual might ask who will testify against him and bear witness to the sins he committed. The Gemara answers that it will be the walls and beams of his home, as the *pasuk* states, "A stone from the wall will cry out, and a sliver from a beam will answer." The *Zohar* (*Va'eira* 28) states similarly. It quotes the *pasuk* from *Chabakuk* and then exclaims just how careful man must be not to sin against Hashem. Sometimes Hashem makes the walls and beams of his home His agents to witness and then testify about man's deeds. It continues that Aharon's staff was but dry wood and yet it was twice a messenger to perform miracles: 1) It was a staff, but nevertheless swallowed the snakes of the Egyptians. 2) It temporarily came alive, becoming a living entity. Furthermore, it states in *Masechet Eiruvin* (18a) that any house in which Torah study is heard at night, will not be destroyed. In *Masechet Sanhedrin* (92a) it states that any house in which Torah study is not heard at night will be consumed by fire. These words are not simply *mussar*; rather, they constitute a *halachic* ruling. This is as *Maran the Shulchan Aruch* rules for all of Israel (*O"C Hilchot Kriat Shema ve'Tefila shel Arvit* 238:1), "One must be more careful to learn at night than during the day, and one who squanders the night will receive a great punishment." He explains further in *Yorah Deah* (*Hilchot Talmud Torah* 246:24), "Every house in which Torah study is not heard at night, will be consumed by a fire."

Words of Mussar

We have learned how great man's power is to negatively affect all of his belongings and the walls of his home with his wicked actions and deeds. Conversely, these items have a negative effect on the one who uses them, and they can dictate his entire fate, as the *Zohar* mentioned. On the other hand, a good deed has the ability to sanctify and uplift all of man's physical items and transform them into spirituality. All the more so, does this apply to the individual himself, who possesses a Divine soul; he can be sanctified and uplifted by his actions and words, which he performs to serve Hashem. Our Sages teach us (*Masechet Berachot*) that this is the intention of the blessing, "*asher kideshanu be'mitzvotav*, Who has sanctified us with His mitzvot." In other words, mitzvot sanctify and uplift us. Therefore, every house in which Torah is studied will endure, and if not, the house will be consumed by fire as our Sages teach. Therefore, he who lives accordingly, merits that his children, raised in such a holy atmosphere, are graced with a spirit of holiness and become offspring blessed by Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka



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