

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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In the end of Parshas Tazria, the Torah discusses the laws of *tzara'as* found on a garment. The Torah mentions a number of possibilities, including a case where the garment must be washed and then confined for seven days. At the end of the seven days, various laws apply, depending on the status of the *tzara'as*, such as if it grew in size or remained the same.

In a case where the *tzara'as* disappeared as a result of the washing, the Torah says (Vayikra 13:58) that "וכבס שנית וטהר". Rashi explains that the word *וכבס* here means to immerse the garment in a *mikvah*, and he proves this from the translation of Onkelos.

This requires explanation: The simple translation of *וכבס* is to wash. Especially considering the fact that the Torah writes *וכבס שנית*, which suggests that the second *וכבס* is similar to the first one, when the garment was washed, not immersed. As for the question why the garment must be washed again if it has already been washed, one can answer that this is a decree of the Torah, as the Ibn Ezra indeed learns. So why does Rashi introduce a new translation to *וכבס*, that it means to immerse? The Rebbe explains that to the contrary, Rashi's proof that *וכבס* means to immerse is actually from the word *שנית* itself.

TESTING OR CLEANSING?

There are two ways to understand the effect of the first washing in removing the *tzara'as* and the need for a second washing:

(1) One way is to view the first washing as not having *halachically* removed the *tzara'as*, because if the *tzara'as* is indeed no longer existent, why must the garment be washed a second time? It's one thing if the first washing would have been *halachically mandated* (for the sake of removing the *tzara'as*); in such a case,

ABLE TO CLEANSE

the *tzara'as* would be *halachically* recognized as having been removed. But if the first washing was done for any other reason, then even if the *tzara'as* is no longer physically apparent, it is not recognized by *halachah* as having been removed. Now, in

our case, the garment was washed before being confined to test out if the *tzara'as* would last or not, and perhaps such a washing does not have the *halachic* ability to remove the *tzara'as*. So therefore the garment must be **washed** again, so that the *tzara'as* will be *halachically* recognized as having been removed.

(2) Another way is to view the first washing as having *halachically removed* the *tzara'as*. However, the washing was only effective in cleansing the area of the garment which contained the *tzara'as*. But

the *tzara'as* also brought about impurity to the **entire garment**, so it must be **immersed** to be rendered pure.

THE "SECOND" CLEANSING

Now let's try to understand the words *וכבס שנית*: If the first washing was ineffective in removing the *tzara'as*, then why is the second washing referred to as "second"? It's really the **first** washing, because the previous washing did not accomplish anything! But if the first washing **was** effective, then the second washing is indeed "second": The first washing accomplished the removal of the *tzara'as* from its specific location on the garment, and the second washing (the immersion) purified the entire garment. So it follows that the word *שנית* itself serves as proof that *וכבס* means to immerse.

We can now understand an earlier Rashi on this *possuk*. On the words *וסר מהם הנגע*, that the *tzara'as* disappeared as a result of the first washing, Rashi explains that the first washing was

performed על פי כהן – as per the directive of the *kohen*, and that this washing removed the *tzara'as* לגמרי – completely.

These details seem to be self-understood and superfluous. It's obvious that the washing was performed as per the *kohen's* directive and that the *tzara'as* was completely removed as a result! But now we can appreciate what Rashi is trying to say. Rashi is emphasizing that the first washing wasn't merely to test out the *tzara'as*; it was performed as per the directive of a *kohen* and is therefore **halachically recognized**, and consequently, the washing was able to remove the *tzara'as* **effectively and completely**. But since the *tzara'as* had an effect on the rest of the garment as well, a second action, immersion, must be taken to purify it.

AM I CLEAN?

According to a well-known saying of the Alter Rebbe, Rashi on *chumash* contains ideas from the concealed and inner aspects of the Torah, and most importantly, it provides lessons in our service of Hashem. The Rebbe explains that we can learn a lesson in *avodas Hashem* from this Rashi as well, relating to the cleansing of the spiritual blemish created in a person when he transgresses an *aveirah*, which is accomplished through *teshuvah*. (The reason why the Torah teaches us this lesson here, in the laws of *tzara'as*, is because *tzara'as* is caused by speaking *lashon hara*, which is a severe *aveirah*, to the extent that it can lead to *kefirah*, *chas veshalom*, as the Rambam writes. So the Torah chooses to teach us a lesson in *teshuvah* by this specific *aveirah*.)

When a person does *teshuvah*, the spiritual blemish brought about by the *aveirah* is cleansed. This is true even if he has merely performed the most basic form of *teshuvah*, consisting of a straightforward decision that he will not transgress the *aveirah* again, as the Alter Rebbe explains in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*.

But even after he has done *teshuvah*, he must still bring a *korban*. The *Gemara*, quoted in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, explains this with an analogy of someone who sinned against the king. Even after the king has forgiven him, he is still unfit to see the king face to face. Similarly, even after one has done *teshuvah* and the sin has been forgiven, the sin causes him to be unfit to greet Hashem's face until he brings a *korban*, or nowadays, until he fasts and gives *zedakah*, as explained in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* at length. Consequently, a *yid* may believe that his *teshuvah* has not completely wiped away the *aveirah*, as evidenced by the fact that he must still bring a *korban*, fast, and give *zedakah*.

But Rashi tells us that this is not true. Since he has performed a basic *teshuvah* **as required by halachah**, consisting of a simple resolution to refrain from transgressing the *aveirah* again (*teshuvah tata'ah*), the sin has been removed completely and effectively. The fact that he must still bring a *korban* is not because something was lacking beforehand; rather, the *aveirah* had a negative effect on the person as a whole, and a higher level of

teshuvah is needed to rectify that (*teshuvah ila'ah*). But as far as the *aveirah* itself is concerned, it has already been completely removed, and there is no reason for it to prevent a person from serving Hashem with joy.

“Since he has performed a basic *teshuvah* as required by *halachah*, consisting of a simple resolution to refrain from transgressing the *aveirah* again (*teshuvah tata'ah*), the sin has been removed completely and effectively.”

For further learning see לקו"ש חלק ז' תזריע ג'

In memory of
Bezalel ben Shlomo HaLevi
for his yahrtzeit
6 Iyar

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info@merkazanash.com
347.471.1770