

Parshas Metzora

This week's parsha is Metzora and it is also Shabbos Hagadol. This week's haftora from Melachim 2 7:3-20 discusses people who were plagued with Tzaraas- a key theme in the parsha.

The story is interesting, in that the 4 victims who quarantined outside the city, were affected by the famine because of a Samarian war, and in accordance with the prophecy of Elisha. They were so hungry that they went to the enemy camp to beg for provisions. The enemy heard chariots, and Hashem made it sound much more intense that they thought Israel was attacking them, resulting in the enemy retreating, leaving their provisions and food behind. The 4 victims told the king, who sent messengers to see if it is true, as a result the people were saved.

When Elisha had prophesied on the matter, a guard at the gate denigrated the word, and belittled the possibility of the outcome, for which he was punished by being trampled by the Jews who ran to the enemy camp to eat the food left behind by the enemy.

There must be a lesson in the naysayer being mentioned and resulting in punishment. I think it is that in the moment of badness, it is difficult to have hope, one cannot see the forest for the trees, and they will scoff at the possibility of a greater outcome. This naysayer may seem to be right in the moment, but life is long, and there is a lot of time for a greater outcome to take place. Perhaps the adage could be thought of, good things come to those who wait.

Part of the lesson of Metzora is to be careful with what you speak about, and how you speak- i.e., shmiras halashon (guarded speech). Perhaps the lesson here, is that the ensuing cannibalism from the famine as seen in the haftora is also metaphoric in that talking about other people can eat people up because people make assumptions, as opposed to knowing truth. And if they know facts, is it theirs to share. When people are talking about others, negatively or even positively, the net gain is usually for the teller of the information, not the person being spoken about, or the person listening.

Shmiras Halashon is a very important way of life, like how the gemara in Pesachim spends time explaining how the Tanaim would exact their speech so as not to open the possibility of negativity, or insinuate something negative, that in and of itself may not be problematic. Even Elisha ben Avuyah- Acher, seemed to keep Greek songs on his lips, i.e., not holy speech, which was an explanation for his easily shaking off the yoke of heaven, even though he was a sage.

Therefore, the lesson is to guard our speech, not be a naysayer or speak ill or about people, and the result will be good for those who wait, and we should be zocheh to Mashiach now.

Good Shabbos