

Parshas Metzora – Gadi Last (reprint)

ח ניסן תשע"ו – 16th April 2016 – שבת פ' מצורע / שבת הגדול

The Meforshim talk about the symbolism of the various things that the Metzora has to bring as part of his purification process.

The Kli Yakar gives a few reasons that birds are brought as part of this process. Two of them are:-

- 1) Birds, who are constantly chattering, should atone for the Metzora, whose Tzora'as was a punishment for illegal "chattering".
- 2) Birds fly high, just like the spirit of the Metzora, whose arrogance enabled him to slander a fellow Jew.

The Ba'al Haturim comments that just like birds wander from place to place, so the Metzora is forced to wander around, until he is purified and allowed back in the camp.

The bringing of the 'Eitz erez, sh'ni tola'as ve'ezov' is also for a significant and symbolic reason. The cedar is the tallest of trees, whereas the hyssop is the shortest. Rabbeinu Bechay says that the atonement for the one who is so haughty and rises up like the Erez is that he lower himself to be like the lowly hyssop. Rashi, along similar lines, says that the reason he brings the hyssop is to force him to break his spirit until it is low like the hyssop.

The question asked in the name of the Shu"t Rishmei She'ela on this explanation is from a Gemorah in Erachin. The Gemorah says that the 'caporah' for a talmid chochom who speaks loshon horah is to learn Torah, whereas if he is an 'am ha'aretz' the atonement is to "lower his spirit", i.e. to rid himself of his arrogance. Why is the 'takanah' for the talmid chochom different to that of the 'am ha'aretz'? Where do we ever find two different types of Teshuvah for the same sin? He answers from a Gemorah in Kiddushin, where it says in the name of R'Chisdah that a Rav can't be mochel on his honour, because his honour comes from the Torah, and the Torah is not his to be mochel. Ravah concludes, however, that the Torah that a Rav learns is his own 'kinyan', and therefore he is allowed to be mochel on his honour.

Based on this we can explain the Gemorah in Arachin, and that is that in reality, the Teshuva prescribed for both the scholar and the 'am ha'aretz' is the same, i.e. to lower himself and break his arrogant spirit.

However, there is a problem for the scholar, and that is that he cannot be mochel on his honour because the Torah isn't his. The solution for him is to therefore learn more Torah and acquire it as his own, and therefore be allowed to be mochel on his honour and hence be able to lower himself to the level necessary to atone for his sin. Thus, the requirement for him to learn Torah is to enable him to lower himself and thus to do a proper Teshuva.

The Kli Yakar also notes that the fact that the Metzora has to be brought to the Kohen ("Vehuvah El Hakohen") is also a lesson for him. For he should have been going to the Kohen to learn Torah and Mussar previously, and then he would never have spoken loshon horah in the first place. He goes on to explain that "Vehuvah el Hakohen doesn't mean physically, rather it means that he should uproot his heart from the bad path to the good path, which is done by accepting to become close to the Kohen and to learn Torah and Mussar from him.