



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778  
 Parashat Achrei Mot-Kedoshim / פרשת אחרי מות-קדושים

## The National Repercussions of an Individual's Behavior

Our parsha describes three items that can be afflicted by tza'arat: a person's skin, clothing and house. The midrash teaches us that when a person speaks lashon hara and is deserving of punishment, God, in his mercy, sends the warnings in a gradual fashion. First, a person's abode is afflicted with the leprosy. If homeowner does not take the intended warning to heart, then the next stage brings the leprosy one step closer to him and his clothing is hit. Finally, after exhausting other possibilities, God afflicts the person himself with leprosy.<sup>1</sup>

While this sequence is certainly logical, it stands in opposition to the order that the Torah itself actually presents the laws. Parshat Tazri'a begins with the laws of a leprosy that affects human skin and only then transitions into afflicted clothing and homes. If, as described by the Midrash, the order of events is the opposite, why does the Torah present it in this fashion? What lesson is there to be learnt from beginning with human leprosy and concluding with leprosy of the home?

R. Avraha Kilav<sup>2</sup> suggests that the answer to this question is encoded in the following midrash:<sup>3</sup>

“In a house in the Land of your possession:” This is the Beit HaMikdash. “And he who owns the house should come” this is the Holy One Blessed be He... “something like leprosy appeared to me in the house,” this is the filth of idolatry.

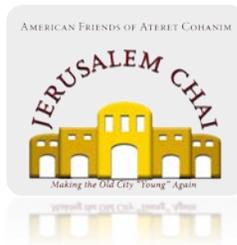
In other words, the afflicted house represents the Beit HaMikdash and the owner of the house who is forced to leave is none other than Hashem himself.

With this symbolism in mind, we can return to our question and explain the significance of the Torah's sequence. A person might think that speaking lashon hara or committing other sins is his

<sup>1</sup> Vayikra Rabbah 17:4.

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/1364>.

<sup>3</sup> Vayikra Rabbah ibid.



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own personal affair over which he has full autonomy. However, the Torah is telling us that this is not the case. Personal sins which primarily effect the individual also have communal and even national ramifications. The Beit HaMikdash itself, the epitome of a national treasure, becomes contaminated through these “personal” sins.

This teaches us an important lesson regarding our own conduct. We might not necessarily see the connection between our own personal conduct and the state of Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash, but the Torah teaches of a direct link between them. Caring about Yerushalayim does not only entail governmental or national activities, but it really begins with putting our own spiritual affairs in order. The interconnection between the individual Jew and the Jewish people as a whole – a hallmark of Yerushalyim – means that national redemption must be accompanied by personal spiritual redemption as well.