



Behold, He Has the Appearance of an Angel
Parshas Tazria-Metzora

The Trip to Haifa was long and arduous. The two Hasidim setting in the cab did not experience hunger or thirst, because their hearts were set on the Rebbe, whom they were on their way to visit.

They had spent much time preparing themselves to meet their Rebbe, Rabbi Yochanan of Karlin, who was staying in the Mt. Carmel area.

The two were my father, Rabbi Yisroel Grossman, and his close friend, Rabbi Yehoshua Heshil Heltovsky, who was known for his holy ways.

One of Rabbi Yehoshua's best traits was that he would guard his eyes from viewing anything he considered inappropriate. He worked at a retirement home in Jerusalem. He would always pray at the Karlin Beis Midrash in the Old City, but refrain from taking the bus, lest he encounter scenes of immodesty, and therefore would walk the long distance back and forth, three times a day.

The fact that he was well respected is exemplified in the following story: When the Gerer Rebbe once walked through the streets of Jerusalem in the early hours of the morning he saw Rabbi Yehoshua running to work with his eyes shut. The Rebbe whispered to his entourage: "Behold, he has the appearance of an angel."

Now the "angel" was on his way to meet his Rebbe. He boarded the cab only after ensuring that there were no women in the car. At some point they stopped on the way, and one of the passengers got off. The driver wanted to give a female passenger a seat, but standing for his principles, Rabbi Yehoshua threatened to get out of the cab.

My father tried to change his mind, but he was adamant. He got out of the cab, and my father after him.

"When traveling to the Rebbe there are no compromises," Rabbi Yehoshua explained, as they began to find another way to get to Haifa.

In Our weekly parsha we read: "This is the law for every lesion of *tzara'ath*, and for a *nethek*...To render decisions regarding the day of uncleanness and the day of cleanness. This is the law of *tzara'ath*."¹

Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin would interpret these verse in the following fashion: We are taught that he who learns the

laws of the sacrifices, it is if he himself has brought a sacrifice, as the Talmud teaches us: "Rabbi Yitzchak said, what is the significance of the verses, This is the **law** of the sin-offering; and This is the **law** of the guilt-offering? They teach that whosoever occupies himself with the study of the **laws** of the sin-offering is as though he were offering a sin-offering, and whosoever occupies himself with the study of the **laws** of the guilt-offering is as though he were offering a guilt-offering."²

Similarly, rabbis would say that anyone who learns about the redemption of Egypt will himself be redeemed from exile, for what one reads affects him, and if he touches upon the inner core of the issue he is studying it is if he is actually experiencing it.

Based on this notion, Rabbi Meir said that if one learns the laws of *tzara'ath* and impurity, distances himself from them. Furthermore, one who teaches others or helps them go through a process of purification, he will be saved from the profane and will be considered holy.

"This is the law for every lesion of *tzara'ath*, and for a *nethek*" - he who learns these laws, it is if he himself has contracted and been healed from these ailments. "To render decisions regarding the day of uncleanness and the day of cleanness" - he who teaches about spiritual cleanliness will himself be spiritually clean.

He who purifies himself time and again, G-d will surely safeguard him from any evil or sin. He who studies the laws of the lesion of *tzara'ath* will not be afflicted by it.

Such a person can attain a high level of holiness, as we recite after the counting of the Omer: "May I be purified and sanctified with supernal holiness... and may it purify and sanctify us with Your supernal holiness."

"The Rebbe will begin Minchah soon and we are late," my father told Rabbi Yehoshua, but the later remained calm.

"You need to travel to the Rebbe in holiness, and with self-sacrifice," he replied, and began to pray on his own.

Only after many long and tiring hours later, after many rides, did they make it to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe, who had already turned in for the night, saw them and understood that they came a long way to see him. He had them admitted them into his room with great respect. They had touched upon the core of their life, in sanctity and holiness.

¹ Vayikra 14:54.

² Tractate Menachot 110a.