בס"ד

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In this weeks Torah portion, the Mitzvah of Tzaraas is given. There are different forms of Tzaraas which may appear, either in ones house, garment or on their body.

The Talmud in Maseches Arachin 15b brings a statement from ריש לקיש who explains the verse that says זאת תהיה תורת המצורע to mean that this is the law for one who defames someone. The person afflicted with Tzoraas must come before the Kohen who pronounces him to be a Metzora who then is banished from the Jewish camp to live in solitude. After the Metzora repents, and the affliction disappears, he remains in his impure state, until the Kohen pronounces him verbally to be Tahor, purified from his spiritual impurity.

The Chofetz Chaim points out that the purification of the Metzora is not determined by a physician but rather by the Kohen. This is to teach us that the individual who abused his speech by slandering others, must appear to the Kohen whose task is to teach Torah who thus uses his speech in a the most positive way, who then renders this person a Metzora through speech. Again when the Metzora repents, the Kohen with his power of speech, declares him to be Tahor.

This teaches us that life and death is controlled by ones tongue. If he slanders he becomes a Metzora which the Talmud says is akin to death and when he repents it is the tongue of the Kohen that restores him to life.

The Chofetz Chaim explains this concept with a parable. A person was brought into a huge factory which had 248 machines operating at the same time, each one designed to perform a specific task relating to the weaving process. The workers were cautioned to be extremely careful with one of the machines in particular because if that machine would break, then all the other machines would cease working. Similarly, a person is composed of 248 limbs. Each one has a specific task, however it is the tongue that drives the other limbs because life and death is controlled by the tongue.

King David says in Tehillim, אחור וקדם צרתני, the human being was created last and first. The Midrash explains that the purpose of Creation was for Man and in that sense he was created first, however, physically, he was created last. If a person merits by fulfilling Hashems will, then he is told you were created first, however, if he leads a life contrary to Hashems will then he is told that he was created last and even a mosquito is more important than him.

I believe that this can be understood as follows in light of the above. The power of speech is what defines the superiority of Man over the animal kingdom. If speech is used in a positive way such as Torah, Tefilla and giving words of encouragement, then he is told that he was created first because he is displaying that he is in fact the purpose of Creation. However, if he abuses his speech and speaks Loshon Harah, then even a mosquito precedes him in Creation, because the mosquito is carrying out Hashems will while the human fails to do so.

Each one of us can reach high spiritual heights through the positive uses of the gift of speech. Let us appreciate this precious gift every moment and one can facilitate the creation of many Angels through Torah, Tefilla and words of kindness and so on.

It is our fervent wish to Hashem to be able to once again come together in shul and show Him that we can use our power of speech correctly. Shabbat Shalom