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Parshah Tazria and Metzora
by Julie Zhuk on 2023-04-22

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This parsha is important because it reminds Jews to get rid of hurtful speech. Words are not like physical contact. When someone hits you using physical force it may hurt, but over time it goes away. Words are different, they are said in the air and they don't go away as easily. It goes without saying that words sting. Even if the words spoken are true, the impact can wind up being the same. Then you have to deal with the aftermath, that is never fun. Unfortunately, it can continue to adversely impact future generations. There is a Jewish source that states "death and life are in the power of the tongue." Any kind of hurtful speech or bad gossip where people are not sensitive to others, is pervasive. It can be spread virally, and it is infecting the minds of others. It can have a boomerang effect, where it will eventually come back to bring negativity into one's own life. Relationships are shattered this way. We learn from our Torah sages where they describe a wise person as the one who foresees the consequences of their actions. If we can imagine everyone saying that the buck stops here.

The transformative results of speaking kindly would have a positive effect and would be life-changing. In last week's Torah portion Shemin, we were commanded different foods to stay away from. Just as we may be concerned about what goes into our mouths, we should be concerned what goes out as well. Meaning what we say, how we say it. The Torah Sages say that eating contaminated foods can make us sick physically. Also they can make us spiritually sick. The same goes for what comes out of our mouths, what we say. Many years ago, when people got tzara'as, they were isolated. It wasn't viewed as a negative thing, it was seen as a corrective one. They were given time for introspection and could examine his or her not so great behavior. The Torah recognized tzara'at as a physical manifestation coming from a spiritual cause.

The Torah's treatment of tzara'at integrated a spiritual treatment so it could affect a positive outcome. It worked out in a way to treat the entire person, not just the illness. They didn't need a doctor in those times years ago. The kohen would notice the blemish pieces on the skin of a person and they could tell if it was more than superficial. The kohen would render a diagnosis of tzara'at. This attested to the greater understanding why tzara'at was treated spiritually. It was to attain a complete healing of both body and soul. We learn from this parsha to be kind because that gives people encouragement. It's what everyone needs in their lives. By being understanding and showing appreciation to others, is what fortifies us. When we accentuate the positive traits within ourselves and others, we are enriching our environments.