

1.

Tazria—Metzora

The Process of Redemption

News Flash: It's Already Underway



*Dedicated in loving memory of Reb Mendel Drizin,
הרה"ח התנאים ר' מנחם מענדל ע"ה בן הרב החסיד התמים מגדולי חסידי חב"ד ר' אברהם (מאיאר) ז"ל,
marking his yahrzeit on 19 Nisan,
And in loving memory of his wife, Mrs. Channy Drizin,
חנה בילא גיצא ע"ה בת ר' ישראל משה ז"ל*

*May the merit of the Torah study worldwide accompany their souls
in the world of everlasting life and be a source of blessings to their
family, with much health, happiness, nachas, and success.*

PARSHAH OVERVIEWS

Tazria-Metzora

The Torah portions of *Tazria* and *Metzora* continue the discussion of the laws of *tumah vetaharah*, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman who has given birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a *mikveh* (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat (often mistranslated as “leprosy”) is a supernatural plague that can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person’s skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a *Kohen* is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the *Kohen*

pronounces it *tamei* (impure) or *tahor* (pure).

A person afflicted with *tzaraat* must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he or she is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the *tzaraat* recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the *metzora* (the person who has *tzaraat*) heals, he or she is purified by the *Kohen* with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread, and a bundle of hyssop.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a *mikveh*.

I. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Two Portions, Two Odd Names

TEXT 1

LEVITICUS 12:1-2

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר.
דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר, אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וַיֵּלֶדָה.

G-d spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

Tell the Children of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives and gives birth . . .”

Metzora—*The Second Portion*

TEXT 2

MIDRASH, TANCHUMA, METZORA 1

”זאת תהיה תורת המצרע,” אַל תִּקְרִי הַמְצָרֵעַ אֶלָּא הַמוֹצִיא שֵׁם רָע.
 אָמְרוּ רַבּוּתֵינוּ זְכוֹרָנָם לְבִרְכָּה: אֵין הַנְּגַעִים בְּאִים עַל הָאָדָם אֶלָּא עַל
 לְשׁוֹן הָרֵעַ שְׂמוֹצִיא מִפִּיו. וְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ צוֹחַת וְאוֹמֶרֶת לוֹ: ”אַל תִּתֵּן אֶת
 פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיא אֶת בְּשׂוּרְךָ” (קֹהֶלֶת ה, ה). אַל תִּתֵּן רִשׁוּת לְהוֹצִיא דְבַר מִפִּיךָ
 לַחֲטִיא אֶת בְּשׂוּרְךָ, לְהִלְקוֹת אֶת גּוּפְךָ.

This will be the law of the *metzora*. This word reads as an abbreviation for “*motzi shem ra*”—a slanderer.

Our sages of blessed memory said: These afflictions are brought upon us only because of the slander that issues from our mouths. The Sacred Spirit cries and proclaims, “Don’t allow your mouth to bring sin to your flesh” (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Don’t permit yourself to speak words that will stain your flesh [with *tzaraat* lesions] and harm your body.

Tanchuma

A Midrashic work bearing the name of Rabbi Tanchuma, a 4th-century Talmudic sage quoted often in this work. “Midrash” is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible. *Tanchuma* provides textual exegeses, expounds upon the biblical narrative, and develops and illustrates moral principles. *Tanchuma* is unique in that many of its sections commence with a Halachic discussion, which subsequently leads into non-Halachic teachings.

TEXT 3

LEVITICUS 14:1-3

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אֶהֱרֹן לֵאמֹר.
 זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְצֻרָע בְּיוֹם טְהֻרָתוֹ, וְהוֹבִיֵּא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן.
 וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל מַחוּזֵי לְמַחֲנֶה, וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נִגַע הַצִּרְעָת
 מִן הַצְּרוּעַ.

And G-d spoke to Moses, saying:

“This should be the law of the *metzora* on the day of his cleansing: he should be brought to the priest (*Kohen*).

“The *Kohen* should leave the camp to see [the afflicted person] and, behold, the lesion of *tzaraat* has healed in the afflicted person.”

II. ALTERNATIVE LOVE

What's in a Punishment?

TEXT 4

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI, *LIKUTEI TORAH*, PP. 53A; 86B

שהדין והמשפט הנמשך על החוטא מכורסייא דדינא זהו כמו רפואה
לו, כמאמר: "מוטב דלידייניה וליתי לעלמא דאתי", שכדאי כל יסורי
גיהנם כו'.

ולכן הדין . . . תכליתו חסד ולא נקמה חס ושלום . . .

ועל דרך זה גם כל עונשי התורה - עם היותן בחינת גבורות, מכל
מקום הן כלולות בחסדים, שהעונש הוא שעל ידי זה נעשה תיקון
לנפש החוטא.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Alter Rebbe)

1745–1812

Chasidic rebbe, Halachic authority, and founder of the Chabad movement. The Alter Rebbe was born in Liozna, Belarus, and was among the principal students of the Magid of Mezeritch. His numerous works include the *Tanya*, an early classic containing the fundamentals of Chabad Chasidism; and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, an expanded and reworked code of Jewish law.

Punishment and judgment from the realm of justice are, in fact, a form of healing for the sinner. This is consistent with the rabbinic dictum, "It is better to be punished so that we can enter the World to Come [and receive our reward]" (Chagigah 15b). All our suffering is made worthwhile by this.

It follows that the ultimate purpose of punishment . . . is kindness, rather than revenge, G-d forbid. . . .

This is true of all the punishments in the Torah. Though they derive from a place of Divine discipline, they are, nevertheless, interlaced with kindness, for punishments cleanse the sinner's soul.

TEXT 5A

LEVITICUS 13:46

כָּל יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא, טְמֵא הוּא. בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב, מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבוֹ.

So long as the lesions are upon him, the *metzora* is ritually impure. He is impure; he must remain isolated; his dwelling shall be outside of the camp.

TEXT 5B

RASHI, AD LOC.

”מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה.” חוּץ לְשְׁלוֹשׁ מַחֲנֹת.

“Outside of the camp.” Outside of all three camps.

TEXT 6

TALMUD, ARACHIN 16B

מה נשתנה מצורע שאמרה תורה: “בדד ישב, מחוץ למחנה מושבו”
(ויקרא יג, מו)?
הוא הבדיל בין איש לאשתו בין איש לרעהו, לפיכך אמרה תורה:
”בדד ישב”

Why is the *metzora* different in that he must “remain isolated; his dwelling shall be outside of the camp”?

His gossip created divisions between couples and friends. The Torah, therefore, decrees, “Remain isolated.”

**Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki
(Rashi)**
1040–1105

Most noted biblical and Talmudic commentator. Born in Troyes, France, Rashi studied in the famed *yeshivot* of Mainz and Worms. His commentaries on the Pentateuch and the Talmud, which focus on the straightforward meaning of the text, appear in virtually every edition of the Talmud and Bible.

Babylonian Talmud

A literary work of monumental proportions that draws upon the legal, spiritual, intellectual, ethical, and historical traditions of Judaism. The 37 tractates of the Babylonian Talmud contain the teachings of the Jewish sages from the period after the destruction of the 2nd Temple through the 5th century CE. It has served as the primary vehicle for the transmission of the Oral Law and the education of Jews over the centuries; it is the entry point for all subsequent legal, ethical, and theological Jewish scholarship.

TEXT 7

MAIMONIDES, *MISHNEH TORAH*, LAWS OF TZARAAT IMPURITY 16:10

ויהיה מובדל ומפורסם לבדו, עד שלא יתעסק בשיחת הרשעים שהוא
הליצנות ולשון הרע.

He is isolated, and it is made known that he must remain alone, so that he will not be involved in wicked talk—talk of mockery and of slander.

**Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon
(Maimonides, Rambam)
1135–1204**

Halachist, philosopher, author, and physician. Maimonides was born in Córdoba, Spain. After the conquest of Córdoba by the Almohads, he fled Spain and eventually settled in Cairo, Egypt. There, he became the leader of the Jewish community and served as court physician to the vizier of Egypt. He is most noted for authoring the *Mishneh Torah*, an encyclopedic arrangement of Jewish law; and for his philosophical work, *Guide for the Perplexed*. His rulings on Jewish law are integral to the formation of Halachic consensus.

Explaining the Name Tazria

TEXT 8

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, *LIKUTEI SICHOT* 22, P. 73

מהאי טעמא ווערט די פרשה אנגערופען "תזריע":
 תזריע איז די התחלת הלידה פון חיים חדשים . . . (על דרך ווי זריעה
 בא תבואה ופירות - אז דערפון זאל נאכדעם קומען א נייע צמיחה).
 אזוי איז דער תוכן ענין הנגעים פון פרשת תזריע: סיי דער נגע עצמו און
 סיי דער הסגר והחלט פון דעם מצורע וואס ער איז "מובדל ומפורסם
 לבדו" זיינען ניט . . . בתור עונש והעדר הטוב פאר דעם מצורע, כנזכר
 לעיל, נאר פרטים און מיטלען אין דעם תיקון (אין דער היילונג) פון
 דעם מצורע, אז ער זאל אריין אין א סדר פון חיים חדשים און ניט
 האבן קיין שייכות מיט "שיחת הרשעים שהוא הליצנות ולשון הרע".

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson 1902–1994

The towering Jewish leader of the 20th century, known as "the Lubavitcher Rebbe," or simply as "the Rebbe." Born in southern Ukraine, the Rebbe escaped Nazi-occupied Europe, arriving in the U.S. in June 1941. The Rebbe inspired and guided the revival of traditional Judaism after the European devastation, impacting virtually every Jewish community the world over. The Rebbe often emphasized that the performance of just one additional good deed could usher in the era of Mashiach. The Rebbe's scholarly talks and writings have been printed in more than 200 volumes.

This is why the Torah portion is named "*Tazria*—conception."

Conception is the beginning of birth and new life (similar to planting a seed to initiate new growth).

This captures the intent of the lesions in this Torah portion. The lesions, and the isolation that follows, in which the *metzora* is alone and it is made known that he is alone, are not meant to punish and deprive. Rather, they are steps and methods to rectify (and thus heal) the *metzora*. They help him enter a new life with no inappropriate or evil speech.

Explaining the Name Metzora

TEXT 9

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, IBID., P. 75

על פי זה איז אויך מבואר דער שם פון דער צווייטער סדרה, "מצורע", כאטש דארט רעדט זיך ניט ווי דער מצורע איז במצב של טומאה, נאר ווי ער איז "ביום טהרתו":

דערמיט ווערט ארויסגעבראכט, אז טהרת (ורפואת) המצורע (המבוארת בפרשת מצורע) איז ניט קיין באזונדער אויפטו, וואס ווערט נתחדש (בלויז) מצד די פעולות וקרבתות וועלכע זיינען מבואר אין דער פרשה, נאר דאס אלץ קומט בהמשך און אלס מסובב פון די ענינים המבוארים בפרשת תזריע.

בסגנון אחר: די פעולות שבפרשת מצורע וואס טוען אויף די טהרה (בפועל), זיינען (בלויז) ממשיך ומגלה דאס וואס האט זיך שוין אויפגעטאן אין דעם אדם דורך דער צרעת גופא . . . די רפואת האדם ברוחניות (וואס דאס איז די סיבת הצרעת) איז דורך דער צרעת והסגר ("בדד ישב גו").

און דעריבער ווערט די פרשה ניט אנגערופן "ביום טהרתו" (וכיוצא בזה) וואס וואלט אנגעדייטעט אז דוקא דא טוט זיך אויף טהרתו, נאר דוקא "מצורע" וואס ברענגט ארויס אז דאס איז די תוצאה פון דעם ענין ה"מצורע" גופא.

This also explains why our second Torah portion is called *Metzora* despite the fact that it discusses the *metzora's* state of purification rather than his previous impure state.

This underscores the fact that the *metzora's* (healing) and purification (delineated in this Torah portion) are not a new development achieved by the methods and offerings described in this portion. Rather, they are all linked to, and caused by, the subjects discussed in the previous portion.

Another way of putting it: The steps outlined in this Torah portion that render the *metzora* (factually) pure (merely) draw out and reveal what the ailment accomplished. . . . The spiritual healing (which was the purpose of the ailment) was already accomplished by the lesions and the quarantine.

Therefore, the name of this Torah portion is not “on the day of his purification” because this would have implied that his purification was first achieved at this point. Rather it is called *Metzora* to underscore that the purification [begins with and] emerges from the ailment.

III. MASHIACH IN THE MAKING

In the Oven

TEXT 10A

GENESIS 1:2

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְּהוֹמוֹת וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹת, וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל
פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם.

The earth was astonishingly empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of G-d was hovering over the face of the water.

TEXT 10B

MIDRASH, *BERESHIT RABAH*, AD LOC.

“וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת,” זֶה רוּחוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ.

“The spirit of G-d was hovering”—this is the spirit of Mashiach.

Bereshit Rabah

An early rabbinic commentary on the Book of Genesis. This Midrash bears the name of Rabbi Oshiya Rabah (Rabbi Oshiya “the Great”), whose teaching opens this work. This Midrash provides textual exegeses and stories, expounds upon the biblical narrative, and develops and illustrates moral principles. Produced by the sages of the Talmud in the Land of Israel, its use of Aramaic closely resembles that of the Jerusalem Talmud. It was first printed in Constantinople in 1512 together with 4 other Midrashic works on the other 4 books of the Pentateuch.

An Analogy

TEXT 11

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI, TORAH OR, P. 55A

הנה הגלות נמשל לעבור, וגאולת ימי המשיח שיהיה במהרה בימינו נמשל ללידה, כמו שכתוב: "כי חלה גם ילדה ציון את בניה" (ישעיהו סו, ח). וכשישראל נתונים בצרה, חס ושלום, כתיב: "כי באו בנים עד משבר וכח אין ללידה" (שם לז, ג). וכן חבלי ימות המשיח נקראים בשם חבלי לידה, כמו שכתוב: "כי חבלי לידה יבאו לך" (הושע יג, יג) . . .

דהיינו שיש להעובר כל חיתוך האיברים, ראש, ועינים, ואזנים כו'. אלא שראשו מקופל ומונח בין ברכיו, שאינו משמש כלום, שאינו מחשב ומהרהר. וכן עיניים לו ולא יראה, ואזניים ולא ישמע. וגם המאכל שלו, אף שאוכל ממה שאמו אוכלת, אינו הולך לו דרך הפה, רק דרך הטבור לבני מעיים בלבד להגדיל הגוף. כמו שנראה בחוש שבתשעה ירחי לידה נגדל גופו . . . ויש בו אברי הנשימה גם כן, מכל מקום, הרי אין לו נשמת רוח חיים עד שיצא לאויר העולם . . .

והנה ככל הדברים האלה וככל המשל הזה, כך נמשלו בני ישראל בעת הגלות . . . דסליק קודשא בריך הוא לעילא . . . פירוש שסילק שכונתו וגילוי אלקותו מהתחנתונים, ודומה לעיני בשר כאלו העולם דבר בפני עצמו. . .

והנה תכלית השלימות של ימות המשיח, שהוא בחינת לידה והתגלות אור ה' בקרב איש ולב עמוק.

The Exile may be compared to a fetus. The Redemption that we will soon experience may be compared to birth, as the passage states, "Zion prevailed and gave birth to her sons" (Isaiah 66:8). When Jews are in trouble, G-d forbend, it is like "the children have reached the birth stage, but lack the strength to give birth" (Isaiah 37:3). Similarly, the sufferings we experience just prior to the Redemption can be compared to birth pangs, as the passage states, "Pangs of childbirth assail you" (Hosea 13:13). . . .

A fetus has all its limbs, head, eyes, ears, etc. However, they don't function. The brain can't think, the eyes can't see, the ears can't hear. Although it eats from its mother's food, the food doesn't enter through the mouth, but rather directly into the stomach through the umbilical cord. The body is completely developed, as is readily visible during the final month of pregnancy. . . . It even has lungs; however, it doesn't breathe until it enters the world. . . .

This is a perfect analogy for the Jewish people before the messianic era—a time when G-d withdraws to the celestial realm. . . . This means that G-d withdraws His revealed presence from the lower realm to the extent that it appears as if the world exists without G-d. . . .

The absolute perfection that we will achieve in the messianic era is the birth and revelation of G-d's light in the hidden depths of our hearts.

TEXT 12

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON,
TORAT MENACHEM 5713:2 (7), P. 132

מבלי הבט על גודל החושך מצד הקליפות . . . צריך לידע שישנו
 כבר "רוחו של מלך המשיח". על דרך שמצינו במדרשי חכמינו
 זכרונם לברכה בנוגע לחורבן בית המקדש, שתיכף ומיד נולד מושיען
 של ישראל.
 אלא שצריכים רק לגלות זאת.

Notwithstanding the great spiritual darkness of our times, . . .
 we must know that the spirit of Mashiach is already present.
 As our sages of blessed memory taught, Mashiach was born the
 moment the Temple was destroyed.

However, it is up to us to reveal this.

Judaism Reframed

TEXT 13A

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, *LIKUTEI SICHOT* 22, PP. 75-76

די עבודה פון אידן בזמן הגלות איז אן ענין פון "תזריע" – א זריעה
והכרח לצמיחה והתחלת הצמיחה בזמן פון דער גאולה . . .
דאס הייסט, אז דאס וואס עס טוט זיך אויף לימות המשיח ותחיית
המתים איז ניט קיין באזונדער זאך פון ענין הגלות, נאר דאס איז די
"צמיחה", וואס "וואקסט אויס" פון עבודת ה"זריעה" בזמן הגלות.

Our work during the Exile is akin to planting—a necessary step that initiates a sprouting and growth at the time of our Redemption. . . .

This means that what will occur in the messianic era is not separate from what occurs today. Rather, it is an outgrowth from the planting that we do today in Exile.

TEXT 13B

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, IBID.

איז אויף דעם די הוראה, אז . . . אין "מעשינו ועבודתינו" פון זמן
הגלות דארף דערהערט ווערן אז דאס איז אן ענין פון "תזריע" וואס
ברענגט די "צמיחה", דעם גילוי פון משיח צדקנו.
ובמילא, אז די גילויים דלעתיד זיינען ניט קיין באזונדער ענין, נאר א
המשך ותוצאה פון דער עבודה פון גלות . . . די צמיחה וואס קומט פון
דער עבודה אין גלות.

The lesson is that we must view our efforts and devotions during the period of Exile as planting seeds that will trigger the sprouting of the messianic era and the Divine revelations we will enjoy then.

This means that the messianic era of the future is not separate from today's devotions. Rather, it is a continuation and outcome from our devotion to G-d today. It is the growth that results from our current efforts.

A Blend, Not Cause and Effect

TEXT 14

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, IBID., P. 77

דאס גופא קען זיין אויף צוויי אופנים:

(א) ער דערהערט ווי זיין עבודה, "תזריע", איז א זריעה וואס וועט ברענגען די צמיחה, די גאולה, אבער דאס איז . . . אלס נאך א זאך, וואס וועט זיין בנפרד. ער האלט טאקע בא "אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא", און די עבודה איז צוליב דעם "שיבוא" – בא אים הערט זיך דאס אבער ווי נאך אן ענין, אז דורך מעשינו ועבודתינו ברענגט מען אראפ און מ'איז ממחר (א באזונדער ענין) ביאת משיח צדקנו . . .

(ב) א העכערער אופן איז, אז בא אים איז "תזריע ומצורע" מחוברות – דער אחכה און קווינו כל היום . . . אין זיין עבודת "תזריע", איז ניט נאר אז יעדע זיין עבודה וועט גלייך גורם זיין "שיבוא", נאר אז די גאולה העתידה איז איין זאך מיט תוכן עבודתו ("תזריע ומצורע" ווערן איין פרשה) – ווייל ביאת המשיח איז די צמיחה ובמילא די שלימות פון זיין זריעה.

This can occur in two ways:

A. We realize that our efforts plant seeds that will result in the Redemption, but the result seems separate from our efforts. We await Mashiach imminently and work to hasten his revelation; however, our efforts and his revelation feel like two separate stages. (1) Our efforts (2) hasten his revelation. . . .

B. A better approach is to combine the two, as in when the Torah portions *Tazria* and *Metzora* are combined. This means that we don't just plant seeds by awaiting, anticipating, and working to hasten the revelation of Mashiach. Rather, his coming becomes part of our effort—*Tazria* and *Metzora*, a single continuum. Mashiach's arrival is the result, and therefore the culmination, of our efforts.

*Living with Mashiach***TEXT 15**

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON,
TORAT MENACHEM 5719:2 (25), P. 208

שמעתי מאבי אדוני ומורי, זכרונו לברכה, ביאור דיוק הלשון "להביא
 לימות המשיח", . . . שצריכים "להביא" (אריינבריינגען) את הגילוי
 דימות המשיח גם עכשיו בעולם הזה.

I heard from my father and mentor of blessed memory that our sages' statement—"To bring the messianic era"—. . . tells us to bring (introduce) Mashiach into our present.

KEY POINTS

- » The *metzora's* quarantine and impure lesions are not separate from their eventual purification. They are part of the same process. The process of purification begins with being declared impure.
- » The same is true of every trouble in life. The solution begins the moment we become aware of the problem. They are not two stages. The problem and solution are a single process.
- » This applies to Exile and Redemption. Our *mitzvot* during the Exile bring about our Redemption. But they are not two stages, one triggered by the other. They are a single continuum. Mashiach is already here. Like a fetus in the womb, we need time to be ready.
- » When we realize this, Mashiach becomes an imminent part of our daily reality. We think about him, learn about him, and are excited about his arrival. We act as if he is already here.
- » This mindset ensures that when someone talks about Mashiach, we don't view it as a pipe dream. We see it as a reality that has already begun and will soon announce itself.