

פרשת מצורע

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, Devorah,
and my dear daughter, Tova Zoe.

"זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והובא אל
הכהן" (יד, ב)

**"This shall be the law of the *metzora* on
the day of his purification: He shall be
brought to the Kohen."**

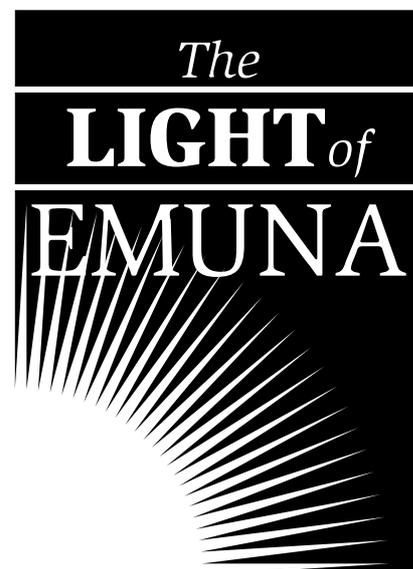
The Kohen epitomizes the *tzaddik* of the generation and the *metzora* symbolizes the sinner who is soiled by sins and iniquities. The sinner must come before the *tzaddik* for his correction and for help in returning to his roots. Problematically, the sinner is lacking in judgment and is unable to enter the *tzaddik's* surroundings unless and until he is first inspired with a thought of *teshuva* and begins to regret his transgressions. Then, his intellect is purified enough to acknowledge the truth and his soul yearns to approach the *tzaddik*, for him to teach him the Torah of *teshuva* –how to rectify his actions. That is the "law of the *metzora* on the day of his purification" – specifically on that day, for only once he has initially contemplated *teshuva* and purified his thoughts – then, and only then, can he approach the Kohen.¹

"והסגירו הכהן שבעת ימים" (יג, ה)

**"Then the Kohen shall quarantine him
for seven days."**

The afflicted person sits in isolation for seven days, pining and contemplating. Yearning carries no financial cost, it does not even require dedicated time – a person can engage in it while breathing, walking or while doing whatever else he is doing – **Hashem is with us always.**

¹ ארון העדות



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

Hashem travels with us everywhere. He resides in our hearts, at every moment, in every corner – He is never absent. Hashem desires us, Hashem loves us and He gives us the most important mission – to reveal His G-dliness in the world, so that whoever sees or hears us will recognize that Hashem exists.

Our bond with HKB"Y fills our entire inner soul. True, we have families, obligations and we are required to engage them – but, **our primary obligation is to provide our souls with their due.** The soul is a portion of G-dliness from above. It craves Hashem. "Hashem is my allotted portion and my cup."² "I have nothing in the world aside from You. I constantly look to You, continuously conducting self-analysis to determine whether I am doing Your will." We must relentlessly connect to G-dly will. That is what Hashem wants of us. If we stumble or act inappropriately: "Hashem, forgive me, help me act as I should, as You want me to. I know that I have not acted honorably, I am pained by it. Forgive me, Father." A Jew must endlessly reflect on his actions. Is he acting as Hashem wants? What does Hashem think of him?

Last week's *parsha* opens with a woman who gives birth to a boy. The Torah instructs her to meditate for seven days on the wonders of the Creator. He performed so many miracles for her.

² ד' מנת חלקי וכוסי (תהילים טז, ה)

Similarly, one who is afflicted with *tzaraas* sits alone for seven days. If we suffer from afflictions or tribulations: stop – contemplate. Why are we stricken? And, if seven days is insufficient – sit another seven days because we apparently did not deliberate enough. Likewise, one, whose close relative has died, sits *shiva* for seven days – so as to contemplate man’s mission in this world.

The main element of the task of reflection and self-assessment is self-nullification. A person must not be arrogant: “Thank G-d, I succeeded; things go well for me, thank G-d” – even though he uses the phrase “thank G-d” – his focus is on the word “I.” His heart is filled with his own ego. We must be more like Dovid Hamelech who said, “My heart is empty within me”³ – his heart is not blocked – there is room for HKB”H. If a person manages to *daven* with concentration, perform some act of kindness for another, overcome his inclination, does something spiritual – he suddenly feels like he is a *tzaddik*. We must nullify this ego. “Master of the World, I forgot. I know that it is all You – **may I merit doing *chesed* for Heaven’s sake, without receiving any honor for it, that it be truly and exclusively be for Your honor.**”

We must incessantly work on humility and submissiveness. The smaller I am – the greater Hashem is. The smaller I am – the more successful Hashem makes me. R’ Chaim of Volozhin had a brilliant student who was accustomed to visiting his Rebbe once each year. Before he would depart from Volozhin, he would spend several hours alone with his Rebbe. The rumor in the yeshiva was, that during that hour, R’ Chaim would convey the secrets of Torah. The curious and diligent students would find a nook to hide in and get a glimpse and try to eavesdrop. They witnessed R’ Chaim showing the brilliant student a difficulty in *Tosefos* and asking him to explain it. The student tried bit by bit, but ultimately, his intellect was inadequate and he could not explain it. R’ Chaim rebuked him: “the words of *Tosefos* are simple and it is implausible that you cannot understand them. The only

reason for your struggle is that a spirit of haughtiness has infected you, because you know that the yeshiva students are jealous of your time with me – and Chazal say, “Whoever is arrogant – if he is a *talmid chochom*, his wisdom departs him.” The student broke down in bitter tears at his beloved Rebbe’s reprimand. Then, R’ Chaim instructed him to take another look at *Tosefos*. Lo and behold, he correctly explained it.

Since *tzaraas* is inflicted because of arrogance and haughtiness (one can only talk about others if he is arrogant), the Kohen uses cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop to purify the afflicted. Why these items? Cedar wood hints to conceit because it is a tall tree; crimson thread and hyssop instruct the sinner to humble himself to their low level and thereby be corrected and healed. **Misappropriating honor for ourselves, Hashem have mercy, is our essential challenge.** We regularly receive compliments and get excited by good tidings – we say, Thank G-d I was successful; thank G-d, what I did went well. We must exchange these thoughts for another – we must remind ourselves Who the King of Glory is.

One who attributes all honor to HKB”H deserves to be honored, not one who tries to claim it for himself. **Nothing conceals Hashem’s light more than arrogance. It is the pinnacle of distance from Hashem.** A person who flees ego and seeks only Hashem’s Glory lives so pleasantly in this world, not to mention what awaits him in the next world.

Our pride constantly talks to us: “Look how successful you are; look how wonderfully you *davened*, your investments and children have performed so well!” **When we learn to thank Hashem for every single thing, we instill in our hearts the notion that everything was given to us by Hashem. Nothing is from us.** When we habitually recall our own deficiencies, we do not feel too self-important – we recognize that we are likely to sin, we recognize the dangers that we face at every turn, both material and spiritual – and we learn to precede every endeavor with prayer, requests and pleading.

³ לבי חלל בקרבי (שם קט, כב)

Our problem is that we do not really feel as if we are incapable without Hashem. To the contrary, we feel as if we are fine, even without Him. Even if we would never say so, we think it: "Thank G-d, we work, we make a living, we learn Torah, the children are okay." Do we really believe that without Hashem things would not be okay? Consequently, **Hashem sends us small hindrances meant to warn us.** We forget something at home and have to go back, we slip, we break something, we lose something – they are all to remind us that it is not us – we momentarily forgot Hashem. **There is a moment of arrogance before any misfortune. Ego and the pursuit of honor still control us with intensity and cause most of the damage in our lives.** We forget Hashem. We invest so much energy to make a good impression, to prove to the world that we are successful, to find favor in the eyes of others, to garner attention. The Torah reminds us that our primary task is humility and modesty.

Moreinu Harav: Dovid Hamelech says in *Tehillim*, "Purify me with a hyssop, and I will become pure; wash me, and I will become whiter than snow."⁴ Purify me with hyssop – I wish to be like the moss that everyone treads upon and degrades. I wish to be like grass – not just to remain silent when they humiliate me – but to be happy, to sing – **to accept the insults with joy, love and song – every embarrassment is an ointment for our wounds, a cure for our illnesses – they are pure waters that cleanse us. They breed success and abundance. One insult is worth millions of dollar, atones for thousands of sins and elevates us more than countless hours of holy toil.**

Humility is the root of everything holy, of all positive attributes. The letter ך is a symbol of humility – despite its diminutive size, it is all-encompassing. Its numerical value (10) is that of a *minyan*, it is the first letter of Hashem's name and the number 10 represents completeness. **This little letter is so powerful – it is a Jew (a *yid*) – Hashem loves it even if it is unsuccessful, even if it**

accomplishes only a little. Hashem loves those Jews who do not seek honor for themselves, who perform *mitzvos* without concern for reward. We must constantly conduct introspection so as never to fall into the mindset of thinking that things are the result of our own might. We must never be distracted from Hashem. **When we are unpretentious – Hashem is with us. When Hashem is with us – we are happy and that joy is complete** - it is the pinnacle of joy. If a person wishes to assess himself – he should check his level of happiness – **true joy is for one thing: that Hashem is with us, that He resides within our hearts.**

We must constantly remind ourselves that we are in this world in order to acknowledge Hashem – that is our purpose. We learn Torah – to know Hashem. We *daven* – to recognize Hashem. We must be ever conscious of our purpose in this world – the mission for which we were created – to recognize Hashem, to know Him, to have complete *emuna* in Him. Then, we will no longer blame ourselves for the past because we know that everything is from Hashem. Even if we have erred, it is from Hashem. **Our entire desire must be to cling to Hashem. All other desires can only damage us.**⁵

Joy is the benchmark of our inner service. We must constantly reflect and examine our level of jubilation in our *yiddishkeit* and in Hashem. Our main focus in life is to guard our connection, protect the bond. That gladdens us more than anything else. True, there are other pleasures in life, we are not such an exalted level as to separate entirely from the material world – but if we contemplate honestly – we know the truth: that **the greatest pleasure derives from loving Hashem.** A Jew's primary challenge is to be incessantly blissful. Every single person is destined to undergo challenges, downfalls and elevations, throughout his life – that is how Hashem created the world. That is the model – there is darkness and we must seek the light within. **The more severe the darkness – the more compassion Hashem has and the more light there is.** Not because we are deserving, but because Hashem is merciful. We are forbidden to be depressed for even one moment. We must take

⁴ תחטאני באזוב ואטהר תכבסני ומשלג אלבין (שם נא, ט)

⁵ המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

joy in that we are fortunate enough to be Jews, to keep Shabbos, to don *tefillin*, to *daven*. These are all priceless gems.

The greatest good is to draw close to Hashem, to have *emuna* in Hashem to cling to Hashem. That is why Hashem created us. If that is why He created us - then everything that we endure, both the good and the bad, is designed to lead us to it. It is all meant to bring us close – so, it is all good.

Everyone chases ecstasy – people spend fortunes for illusive thrills. **The only real joy is in Hashem. A Jew who is elated in his *yiddishkeit* is the happiest creature on Earth.** He knows that he serves the King of all Kings and whatever befalls him is for the best. **He drives away despair – because Hashem never abandons him.** He is at peace with himself, he does not seek to blame himself or others, he does not persecute himself, even when he is far from his goals. If a person is depressed, it is as if he says that Hashem does not

exist, G-d forbid – because if Hashem exists – how could he be sad? **Our joy is above all pain, suffering and anguish. It is not connected to anything that we possess or are lacking. It is joy in Hashem.**

To move higher and closer, we must master the secret of patience. We cannot attain anything instantly. We must prepare vessels, we must pine and yearn. Only if we realize that we are receiving from HKB”H can we appreciate what we receive. If we received without preparation, without desire, without cravings, without prayers – we will become arrogant and we will believe that it was we who accomplished. We must long for, ache for, *daven* for and prepare. Rebbe Nachman said that often the preparation for a *mitzvah* is greater than the *mitzvah* itself. Certain things require waiting. When someone is *tamei*, most of the purification process is comprised of waiting. Even when he immerses in a *mikvah* - he has to wait until the next day before his is *tahor*. Some things in life take time.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me subjugate my heart to You. There are matters that are difficult to overcome, where the *yetzer hora* is terribly powerful, like when I attempt to subjugate my heart to You. When I hum the words of the song of Israel who looked Heavenward and submitted their hearts to You and thereby overpowered the *yetzer hora* – that gives me a lot of strength – it is such wonderful gratification to offer my heart to You, Father.

Master of the World! I wish to always be in harmony with You. I wish to do only Your will, only what I am supposed to do. Help me be courageous and to truly strive to know, to endeavor, to comprehend what You want from me, how You want me to conduct myself in every situation. There are so many situations in which I want something so badly that I cannot even think clearly. Even when I ask, Father, show me Your will – not just superficially. Help me, grant me strength. At those moments that I do understand and do what You want, instead of what I want, I experience such amazing joy. Doing Your work, Father, is most blissful.

Master of the World! Help me remember that all of my successes are not really mine. They are Yours. Without You, nothing happens. Every time that I receive a compliment, some positive encouragement – I am in the clouds and I do not recall You in that moment. Only afterwards do I remember - and even then, only sometimes.

Help me, Father, to be happy with every positive word that I hear and rather than feel “me, me, me” – to be happy that You allowed me to do something well. Help me constantly remember You in those moments –not perfunctorily, like so many people who pay lip service: “it’s not me, it’s Hashem” - but inwardly they are bursting with pride. May I merit, at the first moment that I hear something positive, to be happy and immediately attribute it to You, because it is Yours. Everything is Yours, Father.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov Elias

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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