

# RABBI GOLDBERG'S *Parsha Perspectives* FOR TODAY

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Tazria-Metzora for your Shabbos Table

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## DVAR TORAH FOR THE FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

### Allowing in the Light

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת (13:2).

The Torah in Parshas Tazria introduces the subject of *tzara'as* by speaking of an אדם, a person, who has a discoloration on עור בשרו – “the skin of his flesh.”

The *Sefas Emes* finds it significant that the Torah refers to the individual here specifically with the term אדם, and that it specifies that the affliction appears not simply on בשרו, the person's flesh, but on עור בשרו – “the **skin** of his flesh.” This *pasuk*, the *Sefas Emes* explains, brings us back to the story of Adam Ha'rishon, of his banishment from *Gan Eden*. After he and Chava partook of the forbidden fruit, they suddenly felt ashamed by not wearing clothing, and so God made for them כתנות עור, leather garments, for them to wear (Bereishis 3:21). The word עור, the *Sefas Emes* writes, is related to the word עוור – “blind.” The garments made for Adam and Chava after their sin signifies the state of “blindness” in which human beings live ever since that tragic event. Before Adam and Chava's sin, there was a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, between what is good for us and what isn't. Temptation existed externally, as represented by the snake, a different creature that lured man to sin. Internally, however, Adam and Chava lived with clarity. After the sin, we live with כתנות עור, with “coverings” that “blind” us. We now struggle to see the difference between right and wrong; temptation makes sin and vice seem attractive and alluring, blinding us to their evil.

However, the *Sefas Emes* writes, these כתנות עור, this covering, is porous. There are small holes through

which light can enter to give us clarity, to resolve the confusion, to show us what is right and what is wrong. Even in our condition of “blindness,” the darkness is not complete. We have sources of light, of guidance, that clarify for us what is right and what is wrong. The Torah here warns that a נגע, a spiritual affliction, occurs when it seals עור בשרו, blocking the “perforations” in the “covering” that allow the light to enter. A person is plagued when the holes are sealed, when the “blindness” becomes complete, and he can no longer distinguish between right and wrong.

The takeaway from this deep insight of the *Sefas Emes* is that we must always ensure to keep the “perforations” open, to allow the light of clarity and truth into our lives. Ever since Adam and Chava's sin in *Gan Eden*, we live in darkness, in confusion, blinded by temptation. This is the struggle which every person must go through each day of his life. In order to successfully wage this battle, we need to allow the light in, to remain open to receiving guidance and instruction. We need to learn and to expose ourselves to those who can instruct us and show us where we need to go. If we close ourselves off to guidance, if we do not pursue knowledge or inspiration, then we thrust ourselves into total darkness, we become completely “blinded,” and will then, God forbid, experience נגעים, spiritual maladies, which can be very difficult to cure.

## DVAR TORAH FOR THE SHABBOS DAY MEAL

### The Three Primary Obstacles to Growth

The Torah lists three types of skin discolorations that qualify as *tzara'as* – שאת, ספחת, בהרת. The term שאת refers to the color of natural wool; בהרת denotes the

whiteness of snow; and ספחה signifies the secondary colors that resemble these two shades of white.

Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk, in *Noam Elimelech*, sees in these terms an allusion to the three primary obstacles to growth, the three characteristics that prevent us from advancing and becoming the best versions of ourselves, resulting in נגעים, spiritual maladies.

שאת is related to התנשאות – arrogance and conceit. If a person thinks of himself as complete, as superior, as better than all others, then he has nobody from whom to learn. He will never humble himself to receive new information, to question his behavior, or to acknowledge the need to change. And so such a person will never grow.

ספחה stems from the root ספח, which refers to something that is attached. A second obstacle to growth is associating with the wrong people, placing oneself in bad company, exposing oneself to negative influences. Even if one wishes to grow and advance, negative peer pressure will get in the way. We are profoundly affected by our surroundings, and so it is vital that we place ourselves in the company of worthy role models, of those who will elevate us instead of pulling us down.

Finally, בהרת is related to the word בהיר, “clear.” A person will never grow if he assumes that he already has pristine clarity, that he already understands everything there is to understand, that he already has all the answers. In order to grow, we need to admit that we are confused, that we lack clarity, that there is much that we do not yet know or understand. Only once we acknowledge how much we have yet to learn can we hope to learn and progress.

## DVAR TORAH FOR SHALOSH SEUDOS

### The Joy of Going חוץ למחנה

Parshas Metzora outlines the procedure by which a *metzora* who has been cured of his *tzara'as* infection regains his status of *tahara* (purity) so he can return to his city from which he had been banished. At the beginning of this process, the Torah commands, ויצא הכהן אל מחוץ למחנה – the *kohen* must go outside the city to inspect the *metzora* and determine that והנה נרפא – the *metzora's* infection has indeed healed (14:3).

The Tolna Rebbe *shelit"á* notes the comment of the Midrash in a separate context (*Pesikta Zutresa*, Parshas Balak) that the word הנה implies שמחה, something that is done joyfully. Applying this connotation of הנה to our *pasuk*, the Tolna Rebbe concludes that the

Torah requires the *kohen* to go outside the city to the *metzora* happily, with joy and enthusiasm.

The *kohen* is told to leave the sacred, spiritual environment of the *Beis Ha'mikdash* and go חוץ למחנה, outside the camp, to help a sinner who had been stricken with *tzara'as* because of his wrongdoing, compelling him to live in solitude and isolation far away from other people. And the *kohen* is expected to go there joyously, excited over the fact that the *metzora* has been cured.

The Tolna Rebbe explains that the *kohen* is to feel such genuine love and affection for every Jew, even the lowly *metzora* banished outside the camp, that he should rejoice over the opportunity to go חוץ למחנה to help him and bring him back. A leader's love for his fellow Jews is manifest not inside the “*Beis Ha'mikdash*,” not when everything is pure and pristine, but specifically when there is a need to leave חוץ למחנה, to leave the serenity of the *Mikdash*, to help the fellow Jew struggling with difficult problems and complex situations. The Torah does not permit the *kohen* to remain in the *Beis Ha'mikdash*, in the “*ivory tower*.” He is instructed to go, when necessary, חוץ למחנה to help those who find themselves distant from that tower, and he is told to do so not begrudgingly, but joyously, out of a deep sense of love, affection and devotion to each and every one of his fellow Jews.

There are many people today who are situated חוץ למחנה, outside the “camp,” who feel rejected or distanced from the community. It might be an *aguna* who feels abandoned and disillusioned. It might be somebody who has chosen not to follow the path of traditional observance, and feels estranged by the community. It is our responsibility to go to these and others like them חוץ למחנה, to lend them a hand, to show them support, to extend friendship. And we are to do so בשמחה, joyfully, fueled by our deep sense of unconditional love for all our precious fellow Jews. We are not entitled to remain comfortably inside the מחנה, in our shuls and *batei midrash*. Our love for every Jew must lead us to enthusiastically go חוץ למחנה to connect with those who, for whatever reason, find themselves outside the community, to show them affection and lend them support.