

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

Topics Covered

Parashas Tazria

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- ▶ **The reason for the establishment of the Mishkan on the eighth day, because it is above nature**
- ▶ **To perpetuate the holiness of the Mishkan, Moshe imparted of his own holiness**
- ▶ **This is also the reason for bris milah on the eighth day, above nature**
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- ▶ **To transmit to the generations what is**

Parashas Tazria-Metzora

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Parashas Tazria

I

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרֶיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר ... וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל
בְּשָׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ

In the holy Torah, in our parashah (12:2,3):
“Speak to the Bnei Yisrael, saying: When a woman conceives and a male child... and on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”

The commentators on the Torah have written at length regarding the juxtaposition of the parashiyos of Shemini and Tazria. It appears to me, in my humble opinion, we can explain this juxtaposition between the parshiyos from another perspective.

The establishment of the Mishkan on the eighth day, above the order of nature

Parashas Shemini comes after the seven days of inauguration, during which Moshe Rabbeinu served as Kohen Gadol. On the eighth day the Mishkan was dedicated. The eighth day is above nature and rises into the spiritual realm, unlike the natural order, which is confined to a system of seven or less. The words of Chazal in Midrash Rabbah on Parashas Emor are well known: *bris milah* is on the eighth day so that the infant should pass through at least one Shabbos, and only

Kohen, he returns to his goodness

- ▶ **Going to the Kohen is like going to the mikveh, it elevates and uplifts**

III

- ▶ **The metzora as an example of the sin of Adam HaRishon**

Parashas Metzora

I

- ▶ **All the laws of the metzora are as preparation for the arrival of the Kohen**
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- ▶ **The laws of purification were also said to Aharon, because he found the good within the metzora**
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II

- ▶ **Everything that he was commanded to bring is meant to lead him to purification and to re-enter the congregation**
- ▶ **That he was commanded regarding torn garments**

thereafter may he be brought into the covenant. It is not merely seven plus one, but an ascent into something altogether new and different.

Therefore, "It was on the eighth day," Moshe Rabbeinu, by command of Hashem, establishes the sanctity of the *kohanim* forever. He imparts from his own holiness through erecting and dismantling the Mishkan for seven consecutive days. Moshe Rabbeinu invested tremendous effort in order to establish the future *kehuna* service, and for that reason he himself served as Kohen Gadol.

The covenant on the eighth day, the essential distinction between Klal Yisrael and the nations

As in the Mishkan, the foundation of the newborn's sanctity is already formed during the first seven days, at first through the three partners, the father, the mother, and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Now there is added the mitzvah of circumcision on the eighth day, which is above nature. Through this, the level of "to distinguish between the impure and the pure," which at the close of Parashas Shemini concerns animals, elevates to the level

to distinguish "between Yisrael and the nations." Similarly, through the *bris* we distinguish the newborn Jewish child from all the nations. This is another dimension of the continuity from Parashas Shemini to Parashas Tazria. The point at which we concluded Parashas Shemini, speaking of the distinction between the impure and the pure in foods, which according to Rashi at the beginning of Parashas Tazria is "the law of beasts, animals, and birds," we now ascend to "the law of man," which includes the distinction between Yisrael and the nations. The way in which we bring the holiness of Yisrael into effect is, "And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." We elevate the infant in holiness. Thus, we enter him into the covenant of Avraham, to serve as a servant of Hashem all his life. May it be His will that Eliyahu, who comes to every *bris*, bring with him glad tidings, salvations, and consolations.



II

Aharon hears these laws directly from Hashem

In the holy Torah, in our parashah (13:2): "And

and disheveled hair was also to correct his character traits

- ▶ **With Moshe and Miriam as well, we find that tzaraas was a sign connected to their speech**
- ▶ **On the eve of Pesach and in the removal of chametz there is rectification for all the above**

Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying: If a man shall have on the skin of his flesh a *s'eis*..." The commentators of the Torah have already questioned why this section was spoken, to Moshe and Aharon together.

In my humble opinion, this instruction needed to be said specifically to Aharon, for since he was the kohen who would need to declare the affliction impure or purified and is obligated to teach these laws to all the other kohanim so that they should know well the laws of *tzaraas* and the various afflictions. Therefore, Aharon was required to know the details of these laws exceedingly well. This may be compared to a physician, who must make a diagnosis and therefore must know the science of medicine well, and likewise, in order to teach his students properly.

Thus, it was not sufficient that Aharon hears these laws secondarily through Moshe, who would hear them from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Rather, it was necessary that he himself hear directly from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in order that he hear with utmost precision all the details of the laws, and in order that there be, Heaven

forbid, no obstacle or deficiency in understanding. Aharon needed to hear from the Holy One, bbe He, Himself. In truth, I have not seen commentators or Midrashim who explain it in this way, but we may find support for our words from precedents. When Moshe found difficulty in the construction of the Menorah, we find that Hashem showed him a Menorah of fire. Likewise in the sanctification of the moon, Hashem showed him an example: "Like this, see and sanctify."

How much more so in the laws of *tzaraas* and afflictions, in which there are so many intricate rulings, whether dim or bright, whether *baheres* and the like. In order to arrive at these weighty decisions, it appears to me that Aharon was required to hear the halachos from the mouth of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Himself. Aharon had to receive the comprehensive picture to become expert in this matter, so that he could teach others and transmit it to the kohanim of future generations.

The rectification of the metzora is humility

In the holy Torah, in our parashah (13:2): "If an *adam* (man) shall have on the skin of his flesh a *s'eis*,

or a *sapachas*, or a *baheres*..."

One may inquire why the Torah says *adam* and not *ish*, just as the commentators questioned in Parashas Vayikra on the verse, "When an *adam* (man) among you brings an offering," asking why it says *adam*.

In my humble opinion, it appears that this may be explained as we wrote in *Chamudei Shai* on Vayikra, concerning "When an *adam* among you brings..." When a person wishes to repent of sin and bring an offering, he must see himself as man from the *adamah*/earth, with a sense of humility.

Therefore, in our parashah, the *metzora*, who spoke *lashon hara*, which is known to stem from excessive pride, his rectification is humility. As we say in the prayers of the Days of Awe, "Man's origin is from dust, and his end is to dust." This knowledge brings us to a state of repentance, of preparation to be ready to repent for the sin of *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah uses the term *adam* for the *metzora* which is related to *adamah*, earth - humility.

Through the kohen's gaze upon the man, the man is healed

In the holy Torah, in our parashah, "When an *adam* (man) shall have in the skin of his flesh..." the holy *Sfas Emes* explains (5635/1875): "For after the sin of Adam, it is written, 'And He made for him garments of skin.' A covering and concealment were placed over all things, as it is written in the holy Zohar, that this is from the skin of the serpent. And *or* (skin) is related to *iver* (blind), for after the sin man can no longer perceive the light from within the darkness, except through labor and effort to remove the screen that separates."

The *Sfas Emes* explains that when a person sins, impurity clings to his body and finds no exit, and therefore *tzaraas*, or these afflictions, come only through this skin. He adds that the ordinary process, by which the pores of the skin can release the concealed light within man, becomes blocked. "It is known that there are tiny openings or pores in the skin. For wherever there are husks, there is also a hidden point. But through sins the windows become blocked, and the afflictions come... Yet the very

affliction itself is for healing."

From his words we learn that in the healing of *tzaraas* through the kohen there is benefit for the person, for the Torah decrees that both impurity and purification depend upon a Kohen. It is truly understandable why this gift of purification was given to Aharon, since afflictions of *tzaraas* come through *lashon hara*, and Aharon, an *ohev shalom v'rodef shalom*, lover of peace and pursuer of peace, was well suited to heal dissension, for *lashon hara* brings one to afflictions.

As was said earlier, Hashem Himself needed to teach the laws of the *metzora* to the first kohen. The idea of the *Sfas Emes* makes Aharon the most suitable teacher for all future kohanim, since this matter is a combination of the art of character refinement and the art of halachah. Aharon is the antidote to the sin of *lashon hara* that disrupts and opposes peace.

The metzora sees the good eye of the kohen and is restored

"But why should impurity depend upon the sight of the Kohen? Is it not written, 'טוב עין הוא יבורך' A

good-eyed man shall be blessed'?" When the Kohen looks upon the affliction, he does so with a good eye. In that way he heals the affliction. "As Chazal say, *metzora*, that is, *motzi ra*, one who brings forth evil." The meaning is that through the affliction the evil is drawn from the innermost part of the person to the outside.

The *Sfas Emes* innovates that the Kohen draws out the evil, the impurity that is trapped inside, and releases it outside. "So too the *Kli Yakar* explains." A complete person is worthy to rejoice in this, that he sees his repentance. One who is whole rejoices that he undergoes the process, descends, experiences some humility, and then is elevated. "Therefore, through the Kohen's sight the impurity is drawn outward." The Kohen, by looking upon him with a good eye, is able to remove the impurity, like X-rays and like a magnet that pulls it out from within and removes it. We will elaborate on this in Parashas Metzora, with Hashem's help.

Going to the kohen, like going to the mikveh

"And in the holy Zohar it explains, 'And he

shall be brought to the Kohen,' this is the kindness of G-d, that the Holy One desires to purify him." Being brought to the Kohen is a kindness from Hashem. It is a kindness that the Kohen can heal, and a person must accept this with love. "Through this He comes to purify him."

In my humble opinion, it appears to me that going to the Kohen may be likened to going to a mikveh. When the Kohen looks upon the person with a good eye, he purifies him, like one who goes to the mikveh, by the very act of looking upon him. Therefore, it is said, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying." Aharon learned directly from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, the laws and the special methods by which impurity is removed from a person through sight. This is a gift that we received from Hashem, blessed be He, and we must appreciate it. For even though we have sinned, have spoken *lashon hara*, and require purification, Hashem grants us a path to return back, a blessing, a process of healing.

Thus, being a *metzora* is not absolutely bad. It is a bitter medicine, yet still a medicine. What happened to Miriam the

Prophetess is one of the things we are required to remember each day. We must thank Hashem and appreciate what she did for us. She gave us hope and this blessing. True, she spoke *lashon hara* albeit with good intentions, but nonetheless we thank her and remember her as part of the six remembrances recited each day as a daily reminder. Through her we merited the message that we possess the capacity to repent, to be purified, and to be elevated.



III

The Metzora as an example of the sin of Adam HaRishon

"When an *adam* (man) shall have on the skin of his flesh..." (Vayikra 13:2)

One may further explain homiletically that the term *adam* alludes to Adam HaRishon and his sin, which was an outgrowth of *lashon hara*. Adam received *lashon hara* from the woman, and she received *lashon hara* from the serpent, who, as is known, was the vehicle of the Satan. After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, he spoke *lashon hara* about his wife before Hashem: "The

woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (*Bereishis* 3:12). The punishment for this chain of *lashon hara* was adverse consequences for all generations until the coming of the righteous redeemer, speedily in our days.

Death, labor pains, the hardship of livelihood, and the like, all followed. But these evil influences for the generations entered into the very skin of Adam and Chavah, and the evil effects changed their very flesh. As is stated in the holy books, the bodies of Adam and Chavah before the sin were in the state of *אור* or, light, but through the sin, when they became mortal and the evil inclination entered into their bodies, they descended from the level of light to the level of *עור* or, skin, as is the case today. Therefore, they became ashamed of their bodies of skin. This is hinted at in the garments of skin that Hashem made for them, garments suitable for the level of their bodies.

It is brought in the holy Zohar that this descent of Adam to the level of skin is called "the mask (skin) of the serpent," for the serpent was the original cause of this

descent, since it initiated the *lashon hara*. The serpent himself was afflicted with *tzaraas*. Thus, man's skin, which is "the mask of the serpent," is susceptible to *tzaraas* when he sins with *lashon hara*. The *metzora* who sinned through *lashon hara* is called *adam*, meaning that he repeats the sin of Adam HaRishon, whose root was in *lashon hara*. Therefore, "when it will be in his skin," meaning that through this he returns to the descent into the level of skin, which is "his flesh," bearing within it the evil tidings for generations, as mentioned above.



Parashas Metzora

I

זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו
והובא אל-הכהן: ויצא הכהן אל-מחוז
למחנה וראה הכהן ותהיה נרפא ונגע-
הצרעת מן-הצרוע:

In our holy Torah: "This shall be the law of the *metzora* in the day of his purification: he shall be brought to the Kohen. And the Kohen shall go forth outside of the camp, and the Kohen shall look, and behold, the affliction of the *tzaraas* has been healed from the *metzora*." (14, 2-3)

One may wonder, for in these verses there appears to be a contradiction from one verse to the next. At first the Torah says, "he shall be brought to the Kohen," and then the Torah says, "the Kohen shall go forth outside of the camp." At first the Torah says that the *metzora* comes to the Kohen, and in the end, it says that the Kohen comes to the *metzora*. This is most puzzling.

After the preparation of the Metzora, the Kohen may come to him

It appears to me, in my humble opinion, to explain that the order of the matter is as follows: first the sinner upon whom the affliction of *tzaraas* has come must repent and seek the rectification of his soul. This is through the awakening to improve his ways, which is hinted at in the words "he shall be brought unto the Kohen." Only then is he answered from Heaven, and from the Kohen, who is the emissary of the Merciful One, and then "the Kohen shall go forth," even outside the camp, to repair and restore the soul of the sinner who sincerely sought the rectification of his soul.

“And the Kohen shall go forth outside of the camp, and the Kohen shall see.” The Kohen goes outside the camp to the *metzora*, and this is like the physician who comes to the home of the sick man, to see and examine his health.

The Kohen is obligated to go out, as in the law that if a student is exiled, his teacher is exiled with him

In my humble opinion, this matter may be compared to the law of one exiled to the cities of refuge. Chazal said (Makkos 10a), “If a student is exiled, his teacher is exiled with him,” meaning that the teacher must go into exile with his student to teach him Torah. The role of the Kohen is similar to this.

In our essay on Parashas Tazria we brought the *Sfas Emes*, who cites from the holy Zohar that the role of the Kohen is to assist the *metzora* in the process of repentance. He looks at the affliction, “and the Kohen shall look, and behold, the affliction of the *tzaraas* has been healed from the *metzora*.” The Kohen looks with a good eye and encourages the *metzora* to repent for *lashon hara*, and through this he

releases the impurity trapped within him and enables him to reveal the light within. In that way the *tzaraas* can depart from his body.

The reason that the laws of purification were spoken to Moshe and to Aharon

Tzaraas and their laws are among the most difficult matters to understand and apply, and Aharon required special preparation from the Hashem, Blessed be He, in order to understand, to rule, and to act in the purification of the *metzora*.

This is the language of the Rashbam at the opening of the section of afflictions (Vayikra 13:2): “All the sections concerning the afflictions of man, of garments, and of houses, and their appearances, and the reckoning of their quarantine, and white hairs, and black or yellow hair, we have from the plain meaning of Scripture nothing at all, nor from ordinary human knowledge, rather the exposition of the Sages and their statutes and traditions from the earlier sages, that is the essence.”

Whoever knows the method of the Rashbam in the interpretation of the

text of the Torah, how devoted he is to the plain meaning of the verse, and how greatly he labors to explain the meaning of the text in its own right, will stand astonished at this sight, how he admits that in the section of *tzaraas* and their laws there is no entrance at all to the plain meaning of Scripture or to human intellect.

This is similar to what we wrote in Parashas Tazria, that for this reason the Hashem spoke the laws of *tzaraas* to Moshe and Aharon together. Aharon needed training from the mouth of the Almighty in order to understand and act in matters of *tzaraas*.

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon.” Hashem teaches and speaks directly to Aharon concerning these laws, how this works. Just as Moshe had difficulty with the Menorah and with sanctifying the new moon and the Hashem showed him, so too Aharon, who loved peace and pursued peace, and was expert in good character traits, learned thoroughly from Hashem and understood deeply how to look upon the *metzora* with a good eye. He then taught his sons and all Kohanim to become expert in this capacity.

The quality of a Good Eye as a rectification for Lashon Hara

A "good eye" is the opposite of the act of *lashon hara*, and therein, lies its rectification. *Lashon hara* causes strife, discord and an evil eye, while this quality of good eye possessed by Aharon HaKohen and his disciples, who are filled with love for others and bring peace, is the remedy and cure for this. It brings *shalom bayis*, peace in the home, and peace between man and his fellow. This is the power of Aharon HaKohen and the other Kohanim, that they have the power to influence others so as to establish peace between man and his fellow and to help them be healed from the affliction brought about by *lashon hara*.

In my humble opinion, the reason that the Kohen goes to the *metzora*, as the teacher goes to the student in the cities of refuge, is because he is the spiritual guide of the *metzora*. It is upon him to ensure that the *metzora* is proceeding on the proper path of *teshuva*/ repentance, until he reaches the level of "and behold, the affliction of the *tzaraas* has been healed from the *metzora*," a complete healing through complete *teshuva*.



II

Everything that he was commanded to bring is meant to lead him to purification and to re-enter the congregation

In our parashah (13:2), "and cedar wood and hyssop," Rashi explains that the reason the *metzora* specifically brings these things, cedar wood and hyssop, is because "he became haughty and sinned, therefore let him lower himself like the hyssop," and so forth. (This is similar to what we said in Parashas Tazria on the use of the word *adam* rather than *ish*. See *Chamudei Shai* on Parashas Tazria, where *adam* is connected with humility.)

The transition of the *metzora*, and the laws that he must fulfill to return with repentance, are intended to bring him to the trait of humility, lowliness, and isolation. As Chazal said, the *metzora* must walk among the public and proclaim, "Impure, impure," which shames him and causes others to distance themselves from him. In this way repentance is attained. He mocked and spoke about others, and now he becomes the subject of rebuke. He is

sent outside the camp and is unable to be with other people, because he spoke *lashon hara* about others and caused discord.

The laws of the Metzora are the path of repentance for what he did

Likewise, his garments are torn and the hair of his head is disheveled. All these are signs that he cannot be together with other people. This is his path of repentance. After he undergoes this process, he becomes a *baal teshuvah* and returns to enter the congregation. "And in the place where *baalei teshuva* stand, even the completely righteous cannot stand." (*Berachot* 34b)

The Torah mentions great righteous figures as examples in connection with *tzaraas* and repentance. One of them is Miriam the Prophetess, who had no evil intentions at all, nor did she even speak publicly against Moshe Rabbeinu. Likewise, Moshe Rabbeinu, at the burning bush, when he spoke about Klal Yisrael and said that he did not think they would believe him, his hand became afflicted with *tzaraas*. Sometimes a person speaks *lashon hara*

about individuals, and sometimes even about an entire community. In our time we must be especially careful, for we no longer have the process of punishment and rectification through *tzaraas*, Kohanim, and offerings.

On the eve of Pesach, a rectification for this sin

In a leap year, Parashas Metzora is also

Shabbos HaGadol. It appears to me to show the connection between the parashah and the festival of Pesach, based on what is brought in the Zohar (II, 40b), that *chametz* is the evil inclination. It has been explained that it is a hint to the inclination of pride. As we draw near to Pesach and cleanse away the *chametz*, searching even "in holes and in cracks," removing from within

ourselves anything whatsoever of the trait of pride, Heaven forbid, that departs; and now enters, the quality of humility to replace pride. Through this one is able to do perform a soul-searching and also to cleanse the *chametz* from our speech, and thus merit that the Chag of Pesach, *peh sach*, the "mouth that speaks," in holiness and purity, as brought in Tikkunei Zohar.

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Parashas Tazria

"And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."

This verse interrupts the sequence of the laws of impurity and purity, and comes after the law of the impurity of a woman after childbirth, which is for seven days. What is the explanation of the continuation of these verses?

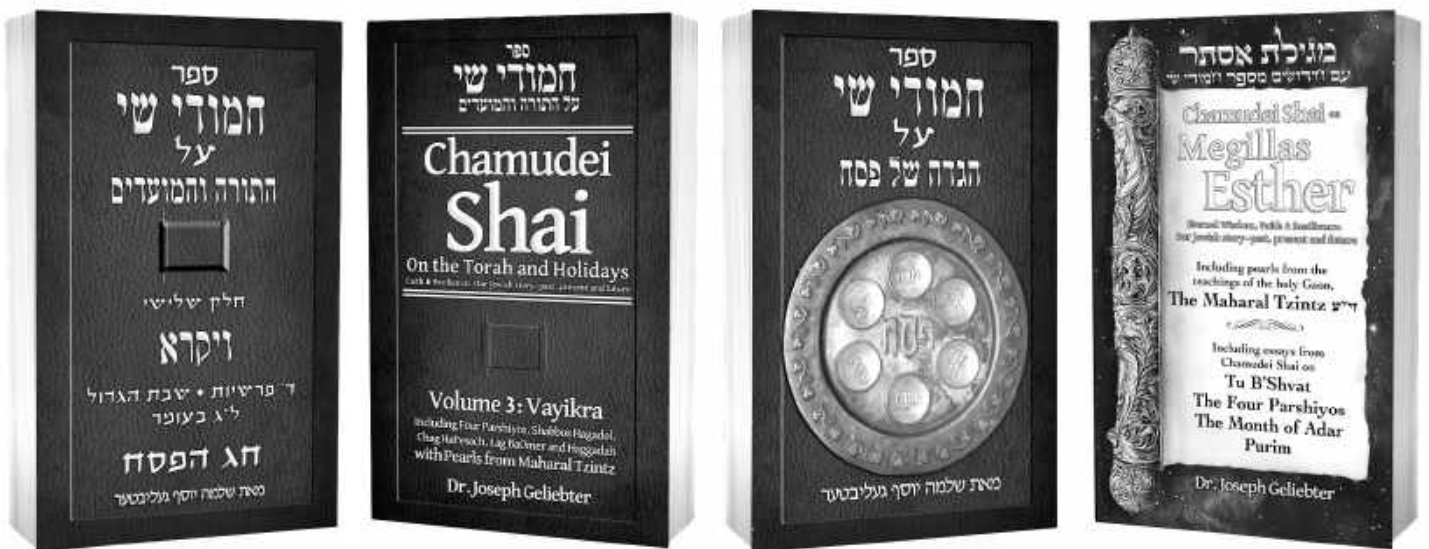
The Maharal Tzintz explains that from here there is an answer to the heretics who ask mockingly: "If the Holy One desired men to be circumcised, He would have created them so!" Those "wise in their own eyes" do not grasp the depth of the matter of *bris milah*, and how it is a great merit and a precious gift to Yisrael. It is known that through the sin of Adam HaRishon, evil entered into the body of man. Beyond the evil inclination for all evil desires, man became susceptible to impurity. It is impossible to escape becoming impure. A sign of this is the impurity of childbirth, as explained above. The impurity takes hold up to seven, as the reader will observe, for many impurities that endure for a time are for seven days, like the impurity of childbirth.

Therefore, after the sin of Adam HaRishon, the Holy One made man with the foreskin, which absorbs in great measure the impurity from the person. For this reason the foreskin must remain on the person for seven days, corresponding to the days of impurity, like the days of a woman's impurity after childbirth, in order to absorb the impurity. Thereafter, on the eighth day, one rises above and is saved from impurity through the removal of the foreskin, as we wrote above. A person must do this himself as a rectification for Adam HaRishon, because he brought impurity into mankind. These are beautiful and precious words.

Parashas Metzora

It is well known that *tzaraas* comes on account of a blemish in the soul, the greatest of these being *lashon hara*, as Chazal expounded on the verse, "This shall be the law of the *metzora*," reading it as *motzi ra*, one who brings forth evil. Therefore, at first, "he shall be brought unto the Kohen," meaning that his deeds rise to the Supernal Kohen in the Heavenly Court, to see whether he has repented and become worthy of rectification. And if indeed he has improved his ways, then "the Kohen shall go forth," meaning that the Kohen on earth goes out to him to save him and to purify him.

Now it is written, "the affliction of the *tzaraas* has been healed from the *metzora*." It should have said the reverse: "the *metzora* has been healed from the affliction of the *tzaraas*." The Maharal Tzintz explains that this hints that although he remains still a *metzora*, meaning that there still remain in the depths of his soul certain matters requiring rectification, nevertheless *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, in His abundant mercy and kindness, permits him to become purified once the "affliction of the *tzaraas*" has been healed. Once, through some measure of repentance, the visible signs of the *tzaraas* have departed from him, he is already purified from impurity, even though he still remains a *metzora* and must continue to repent.



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