

# *Reflections of Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
Based on the talks of the  
Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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<http://www.torah4blind.org>  
e-mail: [yys@torah4blind.org](mailto:yys@torah4blind.org)

**Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,**  
**Executive Director**

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*of*  
*Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
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by  
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

# Tazria

## THE HIDDEN HOLINESS

*Tzara'as is an external blemish, a surface impurity that cannot be cured by one's own efforts. Hence, Moshiach is metaphorically called a metzora, one with tzara'as, for he will refine the "outermost edge" of the children of Israel. The tiny, out-of-the-way blemish we cannot reach on our own prevents the world from being a dwelling place for G-dliness. But Moshiach will do more than refine the negative; he will also reveal the positive. Tzara'as is the most extreme, most external manifestation of the attribute of Divine Judgment. It is the most physical form of the impulse to move inward and upward, to dissolve into G-dliness.*

As mentioned previously, names signify the inner meaning of something. When two things share a name, we can expect some vital connection between them. This is true even if the name they share is a nickname or description, rather than their actual names. In a fascinating Talmudic passage, the rabbis propose a number of different names for Moshiach. While the suggested names often refer to the rabbi's teacher, each name also alludes to a particular characteristic of Moshiach.

In one such passage, the Sages declare Moshiach will be called "the *metzora* of Beis Rebbe." A *metzora* is one stricken with *tzara'as*, a spiritual condition that manifests itself as a skin disease, a blemish on the outer surface of an object or person. This assertion is based on a prophecy by Isaiah. Once Moshiach is recognized, he says, the Jewish people will declare, "Indeed he bore our illnesses and our pains – he carried them, yet we accounted him as plagued, smitten by G-d and oppressed." The word "plagued" technically refers to the plague of *tzara'as*. Hence the Talmud identifies Moshiach as a *metzora*, one plagued.

What characteristics do a *metzora* and Moshiach have in common?

First, we need to understand the nature of *tzara'as*, the plague which afflicts a *metzora*. The Torah defines *tzara'as* as follows: "When a man will have a rising or scab in the skin of his flesh, or a bright spot and it becomes in the skin of his flesh the plague of *tzara'as*, then he shall be brought to Aaron the kohen or one of his sons the kohanim." The plague of *tzara'as* appears on the skin – the outermost part of the person. Equally significant, it says "when a man . . ." using the word "*adam*" for "man," rather than the more common "*ish*." The Torah uses several names for a human being, depending on the context. The name "*adam*" as a general designation refers to Israel, the Jewish people at their highest.

Accordingly, *tzara'as* affects only an individual who has perfected himself, a Jew who has all but completed his Divine service. At that, it touches only the outermost aspect, the fringes, the most external or peripheral aspects of the person. Only the exterior edge needs refinement.

By and large, the Jewish people have already been purified through the long years of exile. Only the remnant, the outer layer remains unrefined. Moshiach has only to purify the external, the evil of the Jewish people that is only "skin-deep," so to speak. Therefore, he is called "*metzora*."

That Moshiach is called a *metzora* explains the length of the exile. The Jewish people, whose essence is holiness, has just about refined itself – and the world – through the Torah learned and mitzvos performed over the centuries. Still, there remain some peripheral imperfections or impurities. Although the *tzara'as* is only on the surface, its existence still renders the Jewish people – and the world – "impure" and incomplete. This is the task of Moshiach, to refine the "outermost edge" of the children of Israel. This also explains

why Isaiah says Moshiach will bear “our illnesses and our pains,” that tiny, out-of-the-way blemish we can not reach on our own. And that blemish prevents the world from being a dwelling place for G-dliness.

Still we may ask, what is the inner reason for associating the term *metzora* with Moshiach? At first glance, such an association is troubling, despite its metaphoric meaning. “Metzora” is a negative term, indicating one ritually impure and separated from the community. But the essence of Moshiach is Redemption – the rebuilding of the Temple and the ingathering of the exiles. Clearly, something of that essence must be reflected in the concept of *metzora*. Moshiach must be more than the one who purifies the transgressions of Israel; he must be the one who brings Redemption. Within “*metzora*” must be more than refinement of the negative; there must be revelation of the positive.

In simple terms, *tzara’as* represents a concealment of G-dliness. *Tzara’as* is the most severe form of ritual impurity. Ritual impurity occurs when there is a concealment of the inner, Divine life force.

When the Torah outlines the laws of *tzara’as* – how to identify it, how to treat it, etc., the kohen plays a pivotal role. An individual or object must be seen by a kohen before being designated as having *tzara’as*. Once cured, the individual cannot rejoin the community, cannot be considered ritually pure and able to enter the Sanctuary, until after a kohen-directed ceremony. The mere appearance of *tzara’as* does not make someone ritually impure. He must be declared so by the kohen. Until then, he remains in a state of holiness. *Tzara’as* does not become meaningful until the kohen recognizes it as such. Because of his spiritual nature, precisely a kohen had to declare a person a *metzora*.

Aaron was the embodiment of kindness; he was a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, and one who brought peace between a man and

his neighbor and between a husband and wife. Kindness is the spiritual attribute primarily associated with the kohanim.

In Jewish mysticism, the opposite of kindness is judgment or force. *Tzara'as* is the most physical manifestation of this spiritual attribute, the extreme opposite of the kohen.

Kindness by its nature moves outward and downward, from above to below. It is expansive. Judgment or force by its nature moves inward and upward. It is restrictive. Mystically, kindness is an outpouring of revelation. The kohanim, through their service in the Temple and the priestly blessing, draw down a revelation of G-dliness.

But too much revelation can overwhelm and overpower. There must be a restraint of revelation, a limitation. This limitation is measured according to the recipient. It withholds an overwhelming outpouring of G-dliness, allowing the physical world to exist.

It is the impulse to move inward and upward – the attribute of Divine Judgment – that limits the impulse to move outward and downward – the attribute of Divine Kindness.

It also serves as a channel, so that G-dliness can descend into the physical. As creation becomes more physical, there has to be more concealment of the G-dliness that sustains it.

Once begun, however, the inner G-dliness can be so constrained that it descends to the level of *tzara'as*, a plague of impurity.

*Tzara'as* is a plague of the skin. It is the most extreme, most external manifestation of the attribute of Divine Judgment. It is the most physical form of the impulse to move inward and upward.

The spiritual *tzara'as* in man is the plague of desire, a longing to leave the restrictions of a body, to cleave to G-dliness with complete self-nullification and never return to the physical world. This is an impurity, the opposite of holiness. For G-d does not

desire expiration of the soul, but the service of “return.” The intent behind creation is that through Torah and mitzvos, G-dliness will be drawn into the world. The soul is to illuminate and be revealed within in a body.

In the physical world, that force may be so restricted and constrained as to appear negative. But it represents the potential for unbounded holiness. Thus Moshiach is called a metzora, for Moshiach will bring Redemption. Then the force of G-dliness will be fully and completely revealed within the physical. Then a holiness without boundaries or limitations will be revealed within the most mundane, material level.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 37:33-36)*



The Announcement Of The Redemption

22

In recent times we have spoken about and emphasized strongly the necessity for each and every Jew to do everything that depends on him to actually bring our righteous Moshiach immediately.

Since in these days (with the conclusion of the month of Nissan of the year "it will be a year in which I will show him wonders") **"all the appointed times have passed"** ("the end of Yamim (days)" and "the end of Yamin (days)"<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup> **in the simplest sense,**<sup>3</sup> certainly our righteous Moshiach will come immediately. And [then] each and every one will point with his finger and say, **"Here he (King Moshiach) has come."**<sup>4</sup> This means that actually he already came in the moment before this one, for the past tense is used.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

**Moshiach is found in the world in the time and place of exile,** and in the situation of exile, for he bears the afflictions of the exile.

1. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. And further references there.

2. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either the letter "mem" or a "nun": "Yamim" or "Yamin". The former, "Yamim," is connected to the left, the end of exile and removal of the negative. The latter, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. Translator's note]

3. In addition to the fact that already, in the time of the Gemara "all the appointed times have passed" (Sanhedrin 97b).

4. *Shir HaShirm* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on the verse (chapter 2:8(2)).

5. [In Hebrew, vowels are not usually written; rather they are understood either from the structure of the word, the grammar of the sentence or the context of the idea. Thus, in this case, the written form of the word for "come" can be read as present tense or past tense, depending on the pronunciation. Translator's note]

(As the Gemara states,<sup>6</sup> "Rav said, if he is from the living, he is like our holy Rebbe [Yehudah HaNasi]."<sup>7</sup> [And then it states,] "**If Moshiach is from those that are living now** he is certainly **our holy Rebbe**,<sup>8</sup> who bears the afflictions and is a complete Chasid."<sup>9</sup>) And he waits impatiently and longingly<sup>10</sup> to reveal himself (from the concealment of the time and situation of exile), for the King Moshiach redeems Israel with the complete and true Redemption, after which there will be no exile, according to the halachic ruling of Rambam,<sup>11</sup> "If there arises a king from the house of David, etc."

...And there<sup>12</sup> (at the beginning of the discussion): "the School of Rabbi Shilah said, Shiloh is his name, as it is written, "until Shiloh comes"; the School of Rabbi Yannai said, Yinun is his name (similar to Yannai, [thus] each one explained the name of Moshiach after his name<sup>13</sup>), as it is written, "May his name endure forever, as

6. *Sanhedrin* 98b.

7. According to the legal decision of the Rambam (Laws of Kings end of chapter 11), "If a king from the House of David arises, etc." - means that he is already a king.

8. *[In the Gemara, Rav is referring to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, compiler of the Mishneh and known simply as "Rebbe." Translator's note.]*

9. The explanation of Rashi there. This is why Moshiach is referred to as "the leper of the house of **Rebbe**," "because of our holy Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi] who is called **Rebbe**... because he bore the afflictions and sufferings like him" (*Chidushei Agadah* of the *Maharsha* there). *[The term "Chasid" here refers to one who is pious and kindly. Translator's note.]*

10. Therefore "he loosens one and binds one (he loosens the bandage on one wound, cleans it and rebinds it, then loosens the next bandage, and proceeds thus; he does not loosen two wounds together (as do the others afflicted with illness among whom he sits). He says, if I am called, I won't be detained (If I am asked to go and redeem Israel, I won't detain myself in order to bind two wounds)" *Sanhedrin* there and *Rashi's* explanation.

11. As in note 5.

12. *Sanhedrin* there.

13. Rashi's explanation there. - And the wording of Rashi is precise: "each one explained [the name of Moshiach] after his

long as the sun, may his name be perpetuated (Yinun)"; the School of Rabbi Chaninah said, Chaninah is his name, as it is written, "I will show you no favor;"<sup>14</sup> others say Menachem ben Chizkiyahu<sup>15</sup> is his name, as it is written, "for far from me is a comforter to revive my spirit."<sup>16</sup>

And we (Chassidim) follow their example<sup>17</sup> (in regard to our Rebbeim, our leaders, in particular My sainted father-in-law, leader of our generation): Yosef is his name, as it is written<sup>18</sup> "The L-rd will continue [Yosif] to apply His hand a second time, etc., and He shall gather the lost of Israel, etc." Yitzchak is his name, as it is written,<sup>19</sup> "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [s'chok]".

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"Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi] said, which is the straightforward path that a man should choose for himself? That which is honorable to

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name" (and not that the students introduced the idea that his [Moshiach's] name is like that of their Rabbi).

14. [Literally, "I will not give you Chaninah." Translator's note.]

15. This is how it's written ("ben Chizkiyahu") in our editions, but in the *Yerushalmi* and *Eicha Rabbah*: just "Menachem. - Note that Rashi quotes the word "Menachem," and adds "ben Chizkiyah." It seems that Rashi's words should be amended thus: "The correct version is "ben Chizkiyahu, but the typesetter 'fixed' it and removed the words: "The correct version is..." This requires further study.

16. See also the *Yerushalmi Brochos* chapter 2, halacha 4. *Eichah Rabbah* 1:51. See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Ma'amarei Razal*, p. 106, that "all the opinions are true and these and those are the words of the Living G-d." Note there. [The verse quoted literally reads: "Menachem the comforter of my soul is far from me." Translator's note.]

17. [The Rebbe here refers to the tradition of Chassidim to interpret the names of their Rebbe as a reference to Moshiach. This is in the tradition of the Talmudic sages. Translator's note]

18. *Yeshayhu* 11:11-12.

19. *Tehillim* 126:2. See *Brochos* 31a.

himself and brings honor from man." ...<sup>20</sup> This can be explained in light of what was previously said regarding the revelation and coming of Moshiach:

..."Rabbi said, which is the straightforward path that a man<sup>21</sup> should choose for himself:"

"The man" - refers to "this man<sup>22</sup> (who is 'at a high level... complete in everything') when his actions are proper and all things corrected... only the residue hasn't yet been cleaned from the edge of his clothes, etc." because of the exile - as was the case with Rebbe. In our generation - the last generation of exile, the footsteps of Moshiach, when we have concluded and completed all aspects of the service we had to do during the time of exile - it can be said that every Jew is at this level.

The question is: Since we've already completed "our actions and service throughout the duration of exile"<sup>23</sup> - what is the "**straightforward path**" (the easiest and fastest among all the paths of Torah) that all the Jewish people, who have concluded their service, should choose **to realize the revelation and coming of Moshiach?**<sup>24</sup>

...The explanation of "the straightforward path" to reveal and

20. *Avos* chapter 2, *mishneh* 1.

21. [Literally, "the man," implying the ideal man. Translator's note.]

22. *Likkutei Torah* on our parsha, 22:2.

23. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

24. Beginning with the revelation and coming of **Moshiach within each and every Jew**, for it is known the verse, "A star will go forth from Yaakov, etc." that refers to *Melech HaMoshiach* (*Yerushalmi Taanis*, chapter 4, Halacha 5) also refers to each and every Jew (*Yerushalmi Ma'aser Sheni* chapter 4, Halacha 6), since in every Jew there is a spark of the soul of Moshiach (Me'or Aynaim, end of Parshas Pinchas).

bring Moshiach through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes**"<sup>25</sup>- can be understood in practical terms:

As a preface, since our righteous Moshiach is ready to come immediately, but he hasn't actually come, therefore the final effort required ("the edge of his clothes") of every Jew to bring Moshiach must be (not through Kingship in its purity, the concern of king Moshiach himself, but) through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes.**" That means, the subject of Moshiach (Kingship) as it is found in **Torah** (Harmony).

...Simply put: "Tiferes" refers to learning Torah, and "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes**" refers to **learning the Torah concerning King Moshiach and Redemption** that are explained in many places.<sup>26</sup>

These places are: the Written Torah (particularly "the words of the prophets... for all their books are filled with this matter"<sup>27</sup>); the Oral Torah, in the Gemara (particularly the tractate Sanhedrin and the end of tractate Sotah) and in Midrashim; and especially the Inner Teachings of the Torah, beginning with the Zohar ("with this book of yours, the book of the Zohar, they will leave their exile in mercy"<sup>28</sup>), through Toras Chassidus (that through the spreading of the wellsprings outward the master, king Moshiach, will come<sup>29</sup>), to

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25. [Literally, "*Kingship in Harmony.*" There are seven "emotional" Sefiros (emanations of G-dliness). These "character traits" such as kindness, severity or discipline, harmony, etc. are reflected in the individual's personality. Each of these also includes all the others. (There is a kindness within kindness, a discipline within kindness, etc.). Translator's note.]

26. They are easy to find - through indexes (which have proliferated in this generation), arranged alphabetically, in the appropriate entries: Redemption, Moshiach, etc.

27. Rambam, *Laws of Kings* chapter 11, halacha 2.

28. *Zohar* volume 3 124:2 - in *Raya Mehemna*. It is quoted and explained in *Igeres HaTeshuva* beginning of section 26.

29. *Igeres HaKodesh* of the Baal Shem Tov - *Keser Shem Tov* at the

the Torah of our Rebbeim, our Leaders, and principally in the Torah (Ma'amarim and Likkutei Sichos<sup>30</sup>) of the Leader of our generation. Learning this material is a sample of and preparation for learning the Torah of Moshiach, "For a new Torah shall go forth from Me,"<sup>31</sup> meaning he will teach to all the people the Inner Teachings of the Torah (the reasons of the Torah) and knowledge of G-dliness ("know the G-d of your fathers"<sup>32</sup>). This accords with the halachic ruling of the Rambam<sup>33</sup> that "in that time... the Jews will be great sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of their Creator, etc."

This increase in learning the Torah concerned with Moshiach and Redemption ("Malchus sh'b'Tiferes") is the "straightforward path" to actually cause the revelation and coming of Moshiach and Redemption.

My intention here is action<sup>34</sup> - and certainly the following will be publicized everywhere:

In order to realize the immediate revelation and coming of Moshiach - each and every Jew (the men, whether they are dwellers in the tent (Yisachar) or men of business (Zevulun), and the women and children, each one according to his ability) should increase their learning of Torah, particularly the subjects of Moshiach and Redemption.

It would be even better if they would learn (in public) with ten others because, in addition to the advantage that "ten who sit and

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beginning.

30. *[Ma'amarim are discourses of Chassidic philosophy; Likkutei Sichos are collections of talks on the Torah and holidays. Translator's note.]*

31. *Yeshayahu 51:4. Vayikra Rabba chapter 13:3.*

32. *Divrei HaYamim 1 28:9.*

33. *The conclusion and completion of his work, the Mishneh Torah.*

34. *[Literally: "I have come for action." Translator's note.]*

occupy themselves with Torah, the Divine Presence dwells among them,"<sup>35</sup> there is a particular advantage when learning about Moshiach and the Redemption in public. Such public learning affects the excitement and the heart-felt joy through which comes an increasing desire and anticipation for the coming of Moshiach.<sup>36</sup>

In addition -- and this is obviously most essential - one should increase the quality of one's observance of mitzvos; in particular one should enhance one's fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzedekah (comprehensive of all the mitzvos<sup>37</sup>) with distinction, for it "draws near the Redemption."<sup>38</sup>

It is proper and correct to connect the increase **in tzedekah** with an increase **in the Torah** concerning Moshiach and Redemption; by giving tzedekah with the **intention** to bring close and hasten the Redemption. This intention itself constitutes **learning Torah in matters of Redemption**. When one thinks of from time to time the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, "great is tzedekah for it brings near the Redemption," it constitutes learning matters of Moshiach and Redemption.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 6 Iyar 5751)*

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35. *Avos* chapter 3, mishneh 6. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, section 23.

36. Therefore, those who want to learn in depth, and in the give and take fashion of scholarly discourse (and to even contribute original Torah ideas about Moshiach and Redemption) in a quiet and peaceful setting, and therefore prefer to learn by themselves or with a partner, should still try (from time to time) to also join the learning of ten; this way they will also have the advantage of learning with ten (as mentioned in the text).

37. See *Tanya*, chapter 27.

38. *Bava Basra* 10a.

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