

Reflections of Redemption

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

Reprinted for Parshat Metzora, 5784
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

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Shagalov

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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Metzora

RETROACTIVE REDEMPTION

The laws of negai'im, or plagues, are presented in two separate Torah readings. In Tazria, negai'im for a person are defined; in Metzora, the purification process of a person is described. Metzora also describes both the definition and the purification of negai'im for houses. Of all the possible impurities – obstructions to holiness – negai'im are the most severe. Nevertheless, the appearance of negai'im provides a unique opportunity for spiritual elevation – the chance to do teshuvah. The inner connection between the negai'im of houses and that of people is the retroactive redemption of teshuvah.

This week's Torah portion contains the laws of negai'im. Negai'im, translated as plagues or leprosy, actually are blemishes that appear on the skin, on clothes or on houses. These physical discolorations reveal a spiritual imperfection. The laws of *negai'im* apply only when the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Temple, is standing and the kohanim are offering sacrifices. Though not applicable now, these laws of *negai'im* will become a practical issue imminently, with the coming of Moshiach.

But, they must also have a current relevance. The inner, spiritual significance of any aspect of Torah remains eternally valid; this is true even when, for whatever reason, the physical expression of that significance is temporarily suspended. That we do not, for this brief moment, have a *Beis HaMikdash*, does not affect its value or importance. What was true before the destruction, and will be true after the rebuilding, must also be true now, during the exile and its last moments.

The laws of *negai'im* seem ordered in a peculiar manner. Last week's reading, *Tazria*, describes the appearance and dimensions of the negai'im, explaining which blemishes make a human being or clothing ritually impure. It also explains how to determine if the *negai'im* – the

so-called plagues – are still active, that is, when the person may be purified. But the purification process isn't discussed until this week's reading, Metzora. On the other hand, this week's portion also discusses **all** the details of *negai'im* in houses.

Thus, the laws of *negai'im* are structured as follows: in *Tazria*, *negai'im* for a person; in *Tazria*, *negai'im* for clothing and the purification therefrom; in Metzora, purification of a person from *negai'im*; in Metzora, *negai'im* for houses and the purification therefrom.

The laws of the human being are divided between the two Torah readings and separated by the laws of clothing. Since the laws for houses follow a person's purification ritual, we may conclude there is an inner connection between houses in general and the ritual purification of the person.

Now, the *negai'im* of houses have an unusual description: it says G-d Himself will place the *negai'im* on the houses. Two contradictory explanations are given for this: one is that the inhabitants hid their gold in the walls; breaking down the houses with *negai'im* revealed the gold. The other is that the idolatry of the Canaanites was so foul, it penetrated their very houses. To remove the loathsome spirit of idolatry, the houses that had to be destroyed were marked, as it were, with *negai'im*.

Of course, not all the houses had *negai'im* and not all of them were destroyed. As there are various levels of impurity, so the degree to which it penetrates an object varies. In most cases, simple acts which took possession of the house, such as putting up a mezuzah, sufficed to remove the impurity and remnant of idolatry. But sometimes the spirit of abomination is so deep it cannot be elevated without destroying its "housing." And yet, the "treasures of gold" are located precisely there.

This concept applies to *negai'im* in general: of all the possible impurities – obstructions to holiness – *negai'im* – the so-called plagues or leprosy – are the most severe. Nevertheless, the appearance of *negai'im* provides a unique opportunity for spiritual elevation. They are an unusual occurrence with a special purpose. A person is afflicted

with *negai'im* so that he will do *teshuvah*. When a Jew returns, removes the last vestige of his acts of impurity, he reveals the “treasure of gold” within his soul. A Baal *Teshuvah* – one who has repented – stands higher than a complete *tzaddik*. Thus, it turns out that *negai'im* – the severest form of impurity -initiate the highest elevation.

We can apply this idea to our own times and situation: the length and severity of the current exile surely is the harshest and most severe the Jewish people have experienced. It follows that, as with the person and houses afflicted with *negai'im*, there is a treasure of gold, the highest spiritual and physical elevation, hidden within the adversity. The highest levels of holiness inherent in man and the world, originally concealed, can be revealed only through the process of rectification, of *teshuvah*.

This indicates the intimate and integral connection between *teshuvah* and Redemption. As soon as there is *teshuvah*, there is Redemption. Further, the Sages declare that *teshuvah* motivated by love transforms deliberate transgressions into meritorious acts. Obviously, in the days of Moshiach, all Israel will achieve this status.

Still, there is a problem, echoed in the structure of the Torah readings. We must distinguish between the individual and the object, between the one afflicted and the affliction itself, between the person and the *negai'im*. Last week's reading, *Tazria*, dealt with the *negai'im*, while this week's reading, *Metzora*, deals with the purification of man. So *Teshuvah* purifies and elevates the individual, raising him to a level higher than the *tzaddik*. But, it seems, the deliberate transgressions remain transgressions. Things that are loathsome and impure remain so; the prohibited act remains forbidden.

We know from the prophets that the blemish and iniquity last only until the day when “death will be swallowed up forever,” when Moshiach comes and the spirit of impurity will be removed forever. Still, we can anticipate the Redemption, foreshadow the coming of Moshiach, through a *teshuvah* so great that it transforms transgressions into merits. Not only is the individual elevated and purified, but the

evil is nullified. Therefore, the essence of the transgression, the sinful act changes.

There is a remarkable implication to all this: every transgression contains within it an element of the permitted. Since *teshuvah* transforms, and *teshuvah* is a mitzvah, there must be an aspect of the permitted and holy within the prohibited and sinful.

Obviously, there is nothing remarkable about a case where a practical reparation is possible. For example, if one does not tithe properly, that mistake or oversight is easily corrected.

However, an act that violates G-d's Will remains a violation of G-d's Will. One cannot deliberately transgress a commandment and expect *teshuvah* to rectify the situation. Indeed, one who says, "I will sin and repent" is not given the opportunity to repent. Therefore the sin, the deliberate transgression, has no element of the permitted. It should remain essentially evil.

And yet, *teshuvah* affects not only the person, but the transgression itself. Remarkably, it causes a retroactive redemption. It transforms past evil, turning deliberate, willful sins and desecration into actual merits. Other transformations are conditional, and so always possessed the possibility of change from one state to another. For instance, a sale may be reversed because of a change in circumstances or failure to meet a condition. In this case, the altered status existed in potential from the start. *Teshuvah*, though, affects that which was not conditional, but at first was completely and irrevocably sinful.

A Jew can transform the past because he is in essence attached to G-d, who transcends the boundaries of time. A *teshuvah* from the depths of the heart calls forth that essence. The great love of a Jew for G-d places him beyond the confines of past, present and future. That which was can be transformed into that which should and will be.

In the natural order, man cannot purify himself from his negai'im, which is why the subject is divided between two portions. Purification comes through *teshuvah*. But the Jewish people, in a state of *teshuvah*, can

break the walls of the houses, reveal the hidden treasures of G-dliness. By destroying the houses of idolatry, the previously concealed spiritual and material gold can be used to build a new house, the house of G-d, the Third *Beis HaMikdash*.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 27:107-115)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

57

Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, as proclaimed and announced by my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, the Yosef of our generation (named after the first Yosef who proclaimed and announced that "G-d will surely remember you and bring you up from this land to the land that was sworn to Avraham, to Yitzchak and the Yaakov"¹). For all our deeds and Divine service have already been completed, all appointed times have already passed, teshuvah has already been done, and all the preparations have already been finished In a manner of "great preparation," all is ready for the festive meal² of the time to come, Livyosan, Shor Habor³ and Yayin Meshumar.⁴

(From the talk of the 10th of Teves (may it be transformed into rejoicing), and Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 14 Teves 5752)

1. Our Parsha 50:24.

2. Based on the expression of our Sages, of blessed memory - Avos, chapter 3, Mishneh 16. Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi's commentary.

3. See *Bava Basra* 75a. And *Vayikra Rabba* chapter 13:3.

4. *Brochos* 34:b. See there for cross references.

58

We have already mentioned many times the words of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that aside from the fact that already "all the appointed times have passed,"¹ the Jewish people have already done teshuvah and already everything is completed, even including "polishing the buttons." We only need G-d to open the eyes of the Jewish people so that they should see that the true and complete Redemption already exists, and we are sitting already by the prepared table at the festive meal of Livyosan, Shor HaBor,² etc.

Therefore it's understood... in this generation and at this time, after every requirement has been accomplished (as mentioned above), one has the complete assurance in the Torah that there will certainly be "(You will remember the day of your exodus from the land of Egypt) all the days of your life... to bring about the days of Moshiach."³

There is no need for any interruption, G-d Forbid, between "all the days of your life" and "the days of Moshiach" (which has been the situation for the Jewish people in all the generations **before** our generation). Rather, "all the days of your life" for every Jew, living physically as a soul in a body, includes in the simple sense (also) "the days of Moshiach." This is without an interruption, since the Redemption is actually coming imminently and immediately at this instant and in this place (even if the condition is one of night, "coming to Egypt"). Thus the last moment of exile and the very last instant of exile become the first moment and the very first instant of Redemption.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. See *Bava Basra* 74b ff. *Pesachim* 119b and in other places.

3. *Brochos* 12b.

And from "the days of your life" at this time and in this place, without any interruption whatsoever, G-d Forbid, (even if he is already older than seventy years, etc.) every Jew will go immediately - totally and completely, "Reuven and Shimon descended, Reuven and Shimon arose,"⁴ - into the continuation of "all the days of your life.," into the days of Moshiach and the eternal life that then will be.

Practically, this means that the Divine service of the Jewish people now must be "to bring about the days of Moshiach." We must reveal that the situation of "coming to Egypt" in exile is in truth a situation of the "Redemption of Israel." [This is achieved] through his preparation of himself and others for the situation of "the days of Moshiach."

The above includes (particularly in conjunction with the day of passing of the Rambam⁵) strengthening and increasing the study of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, especially the Laws of King Moshiach,⁶ in the last two chapters of the "Laws of Kings" which conclude the *Mishneh Torah*.

In addition to one's own study of this, one should also influence other Jews around him (men, women and children) in a manner of "raising many disciples,"⁷ and many more will see and emulate them.

May it be G-d's Will, that through the resolution itself will come imminently and immediately the reward, the actual fulfillment of the Rambam's words at the conclusion of his work,⁸ that after there

4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 32:5. See there for cross references.

5. [*The Rambam passed away on 20 Teves. Translator's note.*]

6. This is how it is titled in the Venice edition of 5284 and 5310.

7. *Avos*, chapter 1, *Mishneh* 1.

8. *Laws of Kings*, end of chapter 11.

already exists "a king from the House of Dovid, expert in the Torah and involved in mitzvos like Dovid his father... and he will compel all Israel to walk in [the ways of Torah], strengthen its breeches and fight the wars of G-d" - who is the "presumed Moshiach" [b'chezkas Moshiach] - there will already be immediately the "confirmed Moshiach" [Moshiach vadai], who "does all the above and succeeds, builds the Temple in its place and gathers the dispersed of Israel... He will then improve the whole world so that it serves G-d in unity,..."

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Shmos, 21 Teves 5752)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FATHER
Reb Leib ben Reb Tzvi ע"ה Rothman
 Passed away on 12 Nissan, 5775

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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