

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)

IN HONOR OF A DEAR FREIND

Mrs. Masha (Marsha) Shulamis תחילת Alperin

on the occasion of her birthday,
4 Nissan, 5782

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

*

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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 Tazria, 5782

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"י
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
 ה. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
Executive Director

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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

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

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

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