SOUL OF TORAH נשמת התורה

A Chassidic Take On The Parsha

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THE COURAGE TO BEGIN AGAIN

Earlier this week, on *Yom HaShoah ve'Hagevurah*, I shared a brief reflection on the Kaliver Rebbe Z"L, a childhood hero who, for me, embodied the dual themes of this sacred day: devastation and resilience, *Shoah* and *gevurah*.

(Michal Meron: Parshat Metzora)

I described how he survived the horrors of Auschwitz, including the experiments of Josef Mengele, physically broken yet spiritually unextinguished. In the aftermath, he did not retreat into despair but responded with song, composing melodies of faith, hope, and longing that became a source of comfort for many.

I noted as well the contrast between his religious response and that of Elie Wiesel, two souls shaped by the same inferno, yet oriented in very different ways. And I pointed to his ability to find a path back to God marked by *temimut*, a simple but steady faith.

To gain a bit more insight into the Rebbe's inner world, I want to share a short vort of his on this week's *parashah*, *Tazria-Metzora*. In his sefer Kol Menachem he writes:

> זאת תהי' תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן. ולכאורה איך זה אומר עליו ביום טהרתו ועוד לא טוהר? ... מסופר על הק' ר' אהרן מקרלין זצ"ל שפעם שלח איש אחד לרבנו ר' בער זצ"ל כדי שיתן לו תיקון, וכדי שרבנו ר' בער ידע במי מדובר רמז לו שמכף רגל ועד ראש אין בו מתום. וכשהגיע האיש לרבנו ר' בער ראה אותו והנה הוא שלם לגמרי כי מיד שקבל עליו את עול התשובה סר עוונו ואינו עוד. ולכן גם המצורע ביום שנתרפא סימן הוא שהתחרט על מעשיו הרעים ולכן נקרא כבר מיד בשם טהור. וזהו ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן עצם ביאתו אל הכהן זה כבר הסימן הראשון של טהרה

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ: וְהוּבָא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן
"This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification: he shall be brought to the kohen." (Vayikra 14:2)

At first glance, the wording is difficult. The Torah refers to this as "the day of his purification," even though the purification process has not yet begun. He has not yet been examined, nor has any of the rituals been performed. In what sense, then, is this already called his "day of purification"?

The Rebbe answers with a story about the holy Rabbi Aharon of Karlin ZT"L, who once sent a man to Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch ZT"L (the Maggid) for guidance and תיקון. To identify him, he described him as someone who, "was spiritually flawed from head to toe," not externally, but in his inner, spiritual state, something the Maggid would perceive.

Yet when the man arrived, the Maggid looked at him and saw none of what the Karliner had attributed to him. He saw someone spiritually whole. But how can that be? After all, Rabbi Aharon had described him as spiritually flawed from head to toe.

The answer must be that something had already shifted. The moment a person genuinely accepts upon himself the yoke of *teshuvah*, he is no longer the same fractured person he once was. The past is still there, but it no longer defines who he is in the present. Already at that point, he can be seen, truthfully, as whole.

So too with the *metzora*. The Torah calls it "the day of his purification" not because the process is complete, but because it has begun in earnest. The very act of coming to the *kohen*, the willingness to step forward, is itself the first stage of purification. Already at that point, the Torah is speaking of him as *tahor*.

This dvar torah, in turn, offers a key insight into the Kaliver Rebbe himself. One might have expected that someone who witnessed the depths of human cruelty during the Holocaust would emerge deeply wary of people. Yet he chose to look beyond failure and focus on the turn toward change.

This is not naiveté, but a principled stance. A person is not defined only by where they have been, but also by their capacity to begin again. Even a small but genuine movement toward teshuvah carries weight. It signifies a change in identity, rather than just an adjustment in behavior.

In light of the reflection from earlier this week, this too is part of his gevurah. Not only the strength to survive or to believe, but the ability to continue seeing people through the lens of possibility. To come out of the camps not hardened, but with a deepened אהבת ישראל, and with the willingness to recognize and value change even at its earliest stage.

For the Kaliver Rebbe, even after everything, a person who takes a real step toward teshuvah is already, in that moment, standing on "the day of his purification."

The Kaliver Z"L

Zecher Tzadik Livracha. May his memory be a blessing. Deprived of the ability to build a family, he left behind no descendants. His legacy lives on through his Torah. May our learning of his teachings be *l'iluy nishmat*, bringing elevation to his soul.