

# Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshiyot Tazria-Metzora

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## Tzaraat: Killing Yourself to Live

Adam Friedmann

At first glance, the ordeal of the metzora, both affliction and purification, seems to be unique, different from the other cases of punishment in the Torah. However, a closer look indicates linguistic and practical parallels that give us a better sense of what the metzora's experience is supposed to be about.

Rabbi Professor Yonatan Grossman (<http://etzion.org.il/en/one-who-mourns-himself>) notes that there are strong parallels between the language describing the metzora and that of the mourner. The metzora is commanded to tear his clothing and grow out his hair. (Vayikra 13:45) These are signs of mourning which are prohibited for Aharon and his sons when they are forbidden from mourning after the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. (Vayikra 10:6) The metzora also must hood himself (Vayikra 13:45), a practice which is associated with mourning elsewhere. (Yechezkel 24:16) It appears that one who finds himself afflicted with tzara'at responds through mourning.

Who is this mourning for? According to Rabbi Grossman, a hint may be found in the language that describes the affliction itself. The blotches are white and, at one point, the Torah describes skin which is not tzara'at-coloured as "living flesh". (Ibid, 13:14-15) The implication seems to be that the afflicted skin is dead. In effect, the metzora has died, at least in part, and is therefore in mourning for himself! [See also Nedarim 64b, which says that a metzora is as though he had died.] The process of purification for

the metzora involves coming to terms with his own partial death and ultimately becoming purified from it. A midrash (*Otzar HaMidrashim*, p. 482) underscores this point by indicating the similarities between the purification process of the metzora and one who has come into contact with a dead body.

Rabbi Grossman's analysis is fascinating and allows for a more detailed understanding of the metzora's story, but there is a further point which must be considered to complete this picture. If the message which G-d sends the metzora is that he is "dead" and that his behavior caused this, we must seek to understand what actions lead him to this state and how those actions constitute "death".

The Sifra (Metzora 5:7) declares that tzara'at is a function of *lashon hara*, or slander. We learn this from the story of Miriam, who spoke badly about her brother Moshe and was likewise afflicted. But why does *lashon hara* entail pseudo-death as a punishment? What is the Torah teaching us with this connection? At least two prominent options are offered by early commentators:

Rambam, in discussing the laws of the metzora in his *Mishneh Torah* (16:10) suggests that *lashon hara* is the first of a series of increasingly evil types of speech. One starts speaking badly of others and then one is emboldened to belittle righteous people, the prophets, and ultimately G-d Himself. The result is a total ethical and spiritual breakdown which leads a person to ruin. The laws of tzara'at serve as a

counter-measure to prevent this from happening. Rambam suggests that the metzora is exiled from society to keep him away from the groups of people who gather to speak *lashon hara*. By the preceding analysis, however, we may add something more. G-d is warning the metzora that his behaviors are killing him. The seemingly innocuous comments of *lashon hara* are disastrous in and of themselves and will lead to further self-destruction.

Rashi, in his commentary to the story of the metzora (Vayikra 13:46), takes a different approach. The metzora is required to leave society and sit alone and is therefore further removed than any other impure person. Rashi quotes our Sages who explain that this is because of the separation that the metzora's slanderous speech caused. "Just as, through his *lashon hara*, he separated between man and wife and between man and his fellow, so too should he be separated." This comment indicates a different perspective on the damage done by the metzora. His slander destroys society. As a result, he is totally exiled from the group and discovers that he is not whole without it, that part of himself dies through this exile. The recovery process forces the metzora to realize the importance of a functioning community, almost above all else.

May we merit to internalize the lessons of the metzora and understand the consequences of our speech both for ourselves and our community.

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**הורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה (במדבר לו)  
Marking the State of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> Year!**

**Israeli Landmark: The Path of the 35 (The Lamed Hei)**

**Yaron Perez**

In November 1947, the UN Partition Plan was approved; among other elements, the plan established that the Etzion bloc would be under Arab control. However, the Arabs rejected the plan. They attacked the Jewish communities in the Etzion bloc, and interrupted the supply routes from Jerusalem. Many fighters were killed attempting to provide supplies and reinforcements, and defending the communities. In light of the security situation, a decision was made to send a unit of fighters on foot, with extra ammunition, under the command of Dani Mass.

On Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (January 15), around 11 PM, 38 fighters set out from the Har Tov settlement. After some hours, one of them sprained his ankle south of Beit Shemesh; he and two others retreated, and the other 35 continued. In Israeli parlance, they are known until today as "The Lamed-Hei". According to reports collected after the Six Day War, near Surif an elderly shepherd, or two women, came upon

the convoy. The fighters released them, and a short time later, at the edge of the Etzion bloc, the enemy opened fire on the convoy. The fighters hid in local caves, not knowing that some 2000 Arabs were being mustered at the same time. After five hours of silence, at about 2 PM, the fighters began to climb a hill to a better position – not knowing they were surrounded. Arab snipers began shooting at the fighters, killing many of them. The few who remained continued to battle for hours, until they depleted their ammunition; the last of them was killed at about 5 PM.

When news of the battle arrived on the following day, the local British police made a deal with the Arab fighters to exchange money for the bodies of the soldiers. But when commander Hamish Duggan went to collect the bodies, he found them mutilated and cast into a wadi. With the aid of his soldiers, Duggan brought the bodies to Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, where they were buried.

Arab attacks on the Etzion bloc continued, and one day before the declaration of the State the Etzion bloc fell into Arab hands. 127 men were killed after the surrender, and the rest of the residents were taken captive.

Some months after the conclusion of the 1948 war, Rabbi Shlomo Goren obtained permission from the Jordanians to retrieve all of the bodies from Kfar Etzion. All of them were buried in the military cemetery on Mount Herzl.

To remember the fighters, many schools go to the Etzion bloc on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> of Shevat, and ascend the path the 35 fighters travelled. The march passes a *yishuv* called "The Path of the 35", where there is a monument to remember the fighters. May their memory be blessed.

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**The Zionist Idea: The Timeless Flexibility of Torah**

**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

The establishment of the State of Israel presented numerous complicated halachic questions for rabbinic authorities for which they had minimal precedent to provide guidance. For Jews living in the Diaspora, agricultural laws that only apply in the Land of Israel had not affected their day to day life. Thus, as Jews began to resettle the land and establish farms, rabbinic authorities had to reexamine *Hilchot Zeraim*, and some writers published works on the topic, such as the work *Eretz Hemdah* by Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli.

Even thornier, however, were many of the broader political questions. Building an army that could function on Shabbat, and that would reflect a Jewish ethos, was a monumental challenge. Ensuring that the country could have police, hospitals, and other emergency services on Shabbat presented similar problems. Without sovereignty, these were questions that Jews never had to deal with, as they were minority populations in larger societies. Thus, the rabbis who took on these questions needed much creativity and ingenuity to develop the laws.

Moreover, often it was necessary to mine the halachic system for leniencies and flexibility. Taking a strict approach would have precluded the possibility of presenting a halachic perspective that was functional in the modern state. David Ben-Gurion (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y0kbb4ENFs>) once remarked that it was Rabbi Shlomo Goren's ability to understand this that led to his respect and support for the latter as Chief Rabbi of the IDF (and later Israel). Furthermore, it is a testament to the eternity of the Torah that it had the flexibility to make it speak to the modern situation.

Rabbi Goren himself articulated this belief in a 1966 speech (in the presence of Ben-Gurion):

It is clear that we need Torah leaders who will have a nationalistic approach to political questions and a positive approach to the historical turn of the Jewish people that happened with the establishment of the State...

The eternity of the Torah lies in the space for maneuvering and the possibilities open to its guardians, scholars, and those who fulfill it. There is an expression in the Talmud Yerushalmi: "If the Torah had been given clear-cut, it would have had no leg to stand on, so that the Torah could be expounded in 49 ways to render something impure and 49 ways to render it pure." In other words, if the Torah were given as fixed as a code, "Do this and don't do that", it would not have been possible to stand on our feet and live according to it. Rather it was given in a flexible way, with 49 ways to render something impure and 49 ways to render it pure, 49 ways to obligate and 49 ways to exonerate. Each generation has its own innovations in Torah, but all this is only within the framework of the Torah, within the framework of the halachah.

For more on R. Goren's approach, see: [http://asif.co.il/?wpfb\\_dl=4875](http://asif.co.il/?wpfb_dl=4875).

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## Biography

### Rabbi Uzi Kalcheim

#### Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Uzi Kalcheim was born in 1935 in Haifa, to parents who had made aliyah from Poland. His parents' restaurant was one of a very few kosher restaurants in a city which was called 'Red Haifa' for the strong leftward leanings of its citizens.

Young Uzi became Bar Mitzvah in 1948, less than two months before Israel's declaration of independence, and the dramatic event expressing the bond between the land and the people left deep impressions on the young lad.

At the age of eighteen, after graduating from Yeshivat Bnei Akiva Kefar HaRoeh, then headed by Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah, and after additional two years in Yeshivat HaDarom, Rabbi Uzi decided he wants to learn in Merkaz HaRav, Jerusalem, under Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook. In 1954 the yeshiva was small, and most of its students were older, mainly students who had learned there under Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook before his passing twenty years earlier. Rabbi Uzi identified the strong personality and clarity of Torah that Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah possessed, and was able to convince a group of his friends to follow him to the yeshiva. This revived and injected new blood into the institution which later become one of Religious Zionism's most important foundations.

Rabbi Kalcheim remained in Merkaz for almost two decades, and was ordained by some of the most prominent rabbis of the time – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rabbi Yitzchak Arieli, Rabbi Avram Shapira and Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. He served as a Rabbi in different places, including Givat Shaul in Jerusalem, and he taught in various yeshivot including Kerem B'Yavneh, and he was the one of the founders of Kollel Eretz Chemdah.

While his halachic knowledge was impressive, his greatest contribution was in the realm of Jewish thought, or as he called it – Emunah (faith). He had a deep and broad knowledge of the texts written by medieval authorities on the subject, such as the Kuzari, Moreh Nevuchim, and Sefer Ha'Ikarim, but first and foremost he dedicated himself to learning, teaching, spreading and clarifying the Torah of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, orally and in writing.

Rabbi Uzi passed away on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, 5754.

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## Torah and Translation

### Secular Pioneers in a Holy Land

#### R' Uzi Kalcheim, The Nation's Song to Its Land, pg. 262

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

שאלה זו: "למה ילכו בראש הרחוקים מיהדות בפנימיותה" (אגרת תתסח) שנשאלה כבר בדור הקודם, בתקופת חובבי ציון, הועלתה בקונטרס "שלום ירושלים" של האדמו"ר מפילוב נכדו של ר' מנדלי מקוצק, אשר ענה: "יש להכיר מזה חסדי הבורא יתברך איך שבעוה"י" שאמונתו בוער עוד בלב ישראל, וה"ו לא כבה נרם שאפילו מי שרחוק מאד מהתורה ומצות, וכמעט ששוכח עיקר שבת, ועדיין אמונת ישראל טמון וגנוז בלבם, ובער בקרבם בלבם להפקיר ממונם ולשום עין על ארץ אבותינו לפדותה מידי אכזרים". (שלום ירושלים עמ' 6). האדמו"ר מפילוב ראה בזאת חסד ד' - שנשארו הנקודות היהודיות בלבם של העושים למען א"י, והיה בכך לימוד זכות עליהם.

הרב זצ"ל ראה בכך "את האירוניה של ההיסטוריה" (אגרת תתעא) "שנושאי המשרה לא היו כלל מרוצים לרוחנו הפנימי" (שם), שהורדוס העבד האדומי, אשר ידיו מלאו דם, הוא בונה את המקדש, שעליו אמרו חכמינו: "מי שלא ראה בנין הורדוס לא ראה בנין נאה מימיו" (ב"ב ד, א) וכן היה בבית ראשון "כערכם של הצידונים היודעים לחרות את העצים מן הלבנון יותר מבני ישראל" (שם).

ומכאן נזכיר את משלו המפורסם על החלוצים, שבתקופת הבנין יש צורך בהם. כשמתגלים הצדדים החיצוניים של הבית יכול פועל להכנס לקודש הקודשים בבגדיו המטונפים - מה שלא יכול לעשות הכהן הגדול, רק פעם אחת בשנה, עם בגדיו המיוחדים. במשל זה הלקוח מן המציאות, ענה לשואליו, מדוע את א"י מיישבים חלוצים שפרקו עול. עתה נמצאים אנו בתקופת בנין ולכן יכולים הכל להכנס לארץ ולבנותה. החול משמש כבסיס אל הקודש - וסופו של דבר ש"זרע עבדיו ינחלוה ואוהבי שמו ישכנו בה" (תהלים סט: לו)...

This question: "Why are those who are most distant from the inner elements of Judaism the ones to lead?" (Letters of Rabbi Kook #868) was already asked in the previous generation, the era of *Chovevei Zion*, raised in the pamphlet "The Peace of Jerusalem" by the Admor of Pilov, a grandson of the Kotzker Rebbe. He answered: "From this we see the kindness of G-d, how with the help of G-d, whose faith still burns in Israel's hearts, and G-d forbid their lamp is not extinguished; for even one who is very far from Torah and mitzvot, and who has almost forgotten what Shabbat is – still, the Israelite faith is buried and stored in their hearts, and it burns within them, in their hearts, to abandon their wealth and to turn their eye to the land of our fathers and to redeem it from the hands of the cruel ones". (Peace of Jerusalem, pg. 6) The Admor of Pilov saw it as a Divine kindness, that the Jewish inner character remains in the heart of those who act on behalf of the Land of Israel. That in itself teaches merit on their behalf.

Rabbi Kook zt"l saw in this an "irony of history" (Letter 871), that "those who carry the responsibilities would not be at all comfortable with our inner spirit." (ibid.) so Herod, the Edomite slave whose hands were filled with blood, was the one to build the Temple, regarding which it was said by our sages: "He who did not see Herod's temple never saw a beautiful building in his life." (Bava Batra 4a) That also was the case in the first Temple, "as the Sidonians' level in cutting wood was higher than the Israelites'." (Letters of Rabbi Kook, ibid.)

Here we can mention Rabbi Kook's famous parable regarding the pioneers, that in the time of construction there was a need for them. When [only] the external aspects of the house are revealed, a worker can come in to the Holy of Holies with dirty clothes – where even the Kohen Gadol cannot go but once a year, and with special clothes. With this parable, taken from reality, he answered those who asked him why the Land of Israel is being settled by pioneers who have abandoned the yoke [of Heaven]. We live now in an age of construction, and that is why anyone can come to the land and build it. The secular serves as a basis for the sacred, and eventually, "The seed of His servants will inherit it, and the lovers of His Name will dwell in it." (Psalms 69:37)

The fifth biblical mitzvah (Shemot 12:6) is to prepare the korban pesach, and the sixth (ibid. 12:8) is to eat the korban. By performing these mitzvot, we commemorate the departure from Egypt, re-creating the original departure. Groups gather and select a lamb or goat, and bring it as their offering. Part of the meat is burned on the altar; the rest is eaten by the members of the group.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer published arguments for bringing the korban pesach in our own age. Rabbi Kalischer dealt with numerous technical objections – identifying the location of the altar, requiring a prophet, attaining taharah, identifying kohanim, creating proper clothing for the kohanim and more.

*To be continued...*  
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**Weekly Highlights: Apr. 21 – Apr. 27 / 6 Iyar – 12 Iyar**

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>שבת Apr. 20-21 Shabbaton @Shaarei Shomayim: 70 Years of Israeli Crises?</b>				
After Hashkamah	Yaron Perez	Aliyah from Ethiopia: Jews or Christians?		Shaarei Shomayim
Derashah	R' Jonathan Ziring	Rabbi Amital and The Rabin Assassination		Main Shul Shaarei Shomayim
Derashah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Religious Unity? The IDF of R' Shlomo Goren		Downstairs Minyan Shaarei Shomayim
6:15 PM	Panel Discussion Mod. R' Chaim Strauchler	Disengagement, 12 Years Later		Shaarei Shomayim
Seudah Shlishit	Adam Friedmann	Eritrean Migrants: 'Infiltrator' or 'Stranger'?		Shaarei Shomayim
After Hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
After minchah	R' Meir Rosenberg	Guest Shiur	BAYT	<i>Simcha Suite</i>
<b>Sun. Apr. 22</b>				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	<i>Hebrew</i>
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Adam Friedmann R' Jonathan Ziring	Reframing the Exodus in Light of Sinai Counting the Omer: Re-living? Remembering?	Shomrai Shabbos	<i>Re-scheduled Midreshet Yom Rishon For women</i>
<b>Tues. Apr. 24</b>				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah: A Prayer	Shaarei Shomayim	
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua	5 Theodore Pl.	<i>Note Location!</i>
<b>Wed. Apr. 25</b>				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Celebrating 70, Week 1: 1952: Going Nuclear	Beth Emeth	<i>torontotorah.com/ celebrating</i>
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Exploring Bamidbar	32 Timberlane Ave.	<i>For Women</i>
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	Yaron Perez	הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Thu. Apr. 26</b>				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Kidnapping Wives?	49 Michael Ct.	<i>For women</i>
<b>Fri. Apr. 27</b>				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Muktzeh and Nolad	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<i>Advanced</i>

***For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim***

10:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Beitzah  
11:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Contemporary Halachah: Vaccination  
8:30 AM Monday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Nefesh haChaim  
8:30 AM Friday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, The Book of Yeshayah

***For University Women, at Ulpanat Orot***

9:30-11:30 AM Monday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, From Rachel Imeinu to Racheli Frenkel  
9:30-11:30 AM Tuesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Shabbat  
9:30-11:30 AM Wednesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Contemporary Halachah  
9:30-11:30 AM Thursday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut