

Metzora - Rabbi Yosef Y. Serebryanski

Co-existence

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Co-existence

Joy and pain can exist simultaneously in a human. The same thing that gives us joy can give us pain and that which gives us pain can give us joy. Childbirth is painful yet gives us great joy. Love can be amazing but can also cause great pain. Things that are destroyed can still have the capacity to bring joy.

When something with old and stagnant energy is removed, it opens the door to new growth. Through the death and vacuum new growth also occurs. This applies to individuals, society and nature. Awareness of the death and destruction is important yet the focus needs to be on moving forward through living in the present.

Each human is part delineated and part beyond definition. Opposites exist within us, reflecting the fact that part of us is beyond the definition of the opposites. As much as there is for us to learn and understand, we must keep in mind that there is always more that we do not understand. Facing that reality within takes each of us on a journey that involves body and soul.

The body is constantly performing many functions. We are only consciously aware of a handful of the millions of things that happen within our bodies at any given moment. In addition to the physical flows and functions, there is a spiritual movement that floats us in and out of various dimensions and planes of our existence.

The skin protects us from the outside and inside; it has pores that release toxins from the body and let the body breathe. There are skin diseases that are caused by external elements and many that are caused by internal imbalances. Skin ailments often result in exacerbated death to skin cells. The skin cells die and are replaced by new ones. In many of those cases there is a need for physical and spiritual cleansing and rebalancing.

There is a skin disease similar to leprosy. In Hebrew it is 'metzarah' (Leviticus 14:2). The root of the word tzar means narrow, enemy, trouble, pain, hard rock. Tziro is a wasp or hornets' nest.

One aspect of the disease called metzarah is that it reflects speaking of words that hurt others. It is reflected through the flow of the shape of the Hebrew letter "ayin." Ayin is a letter whose shape begins from the top right and top middle and then goes down and out the left bottom. This reflects a flow of energy that comes out. In our case it is the tzar, the hurt that comes out.

The words a person speaks may sound good and holy to the person saying them or to others when they are actually damaging in a way that is beyond recognition. "You reap what you sow." How can we tell the difference? It is by taking the time to look beyond the words.

The seeds that we plant evolve into our future. We sow our hopes and dreams. However, if we sow seeds of hatred (even those that grow only as a result of inference) they can generate damage beyond anyone's expectations. The burgeoning growths that can issue forth from those seeds serve to separate people from each other. They are the antithesis to the harmony we seek. Many speak in the name of harmony and oneness but do not see the limitations of their words or the end results. "A wise person has eyes in his head".

Proper balance between the physical and the spiritual is a rhythm that mirrors the intake and exhalation of breath. When the soul lifts up with selfless intention to achieve the Creator's will, it leaves behind a void that is only filled by its return. Running away with itself to the extreme or becoming overly involved in the

loftiness of its zealous motives causes failure of balance. The result is a “death” somewhere in our existence.

No matter the original intention, stagnation and extremes are subject to many dangers. Focusing in only one dimension, regardless of intention, allows for deviation from proper direction. This often results in laxness in areas that seem contrary to one’s goals. The attitude seeps back into the other realm. Those who exist there may not be able to properly synthesize such messages. This has the potential to cause extensive damage.

What is obvious on one plane does not necessarily translate well in another. More succinctly stated, what matters not in one dimension may be vitally important in another. That is why it is critical to look at everything with total balance. If a person holds onto the experience and perspectives of the past without new experiences, this usually shows that the long-term results will cause separation.

In each generation there are spiritual guides who can guide and heal people by transforming their issues so that people can shine.

(Leviticus 13:2) “And he shall be brought to Aharon the High priest.”

Leaders in all generations must recognize their gifts and use them wisely.

Speak your truth! How many people can handle it? Many facets of our society have become full of people who speak the truth of their agenda but not the truth of the creation. As a result of that, society has become diseased. This disease gives the world the appearance of having leprosy.

It is time to begin applying the principles of rebalancing. One part of this is speaking the truth whenever possible. In today’s society, truth is out of place as it is often contradictory to the things that people wish to believe. It is essential that we help people to consider and understand the far-reaching effects of their words. Sow love and joy. Much depends on where we put our focus.

Confusion and Delusion

During the course of our life's journeys we may arrive at a point where we feel that we have had enough. Our circumstances may make us feel despondent and hopeless. Yet just at that time, an opening occurs that allows new energy to come forth. Sudden success or unexpected help often surfaces when we least expect it.

There have been many times in my own life when the things that happened did not do so exactly in accordance with my desire. Yet, in retrospect, whatever occurred at those times was actually the best thing that could have happened, on a personal and/or universal basis.

People have a tendency to interpret the conditions of their lives based on preconceived definitions. It allows them to see things as being absolutes of black and white or good and bad. The stuck perceptions are based upon short term vision, which often excludes acknowledgment of the presence of the Creator, the indefinable Source. This blinds them from recognizing the variances and limitless possibilities that exist in the universe. Then they are shocked when many of the things that they see as being negative ultimately turn out for the best. The converse is that something seemingly good may end up being bad.

Having what we think we want is not always good. This is especially true when we see only merit in having wealth or power. In today's society there seems to be a competition as people accord fame to those who have power and fortune. Celebrity status or power often leads to corruption and greed. Self-centered power mongers have agenda that generally do not take the well-being of mankind into consideration. Thus, their actions can lead to disease and eradication of groups of people either by desire or default.

When we look at man-made events that happen in the world we are viewing scenarios that are marketed advertisements to the public. The way that something is presented can alter public opinion. The most successful persons are often those whose personal promoters who have done the best job of presentation. In recent news we have been reading about how various leaders have paid untold amounts of monies to public relations firms to correct the perception of their images worldwide. The bottom line is that what we see on the surface is not usually representative of what is going on behind the scenes.

Political aspirations drive people to strange and desperate deals with those who have the means to fund them. The price is often one that goes far beyond the financial considerations as the “powers behind the thrones” dictate behavior and agenda in the person of their beneficiaries. That same money source often holds immeasurable sway with media as the interspersing between money, media and political power dance together in different themes and combinations. As different sources deplete or gain in their financials, personal lives and personalities go up and down with the times. Yet the public generally does not know who or what truly controls what goes on behind the scenes.

Many of us do not really desire to see beyond the comfortable borders around us. Some people defend their limited beliefs by claiming that God forbids them from removing blockages to obtain further knowledge. Society has taken the story of the Garden of Eden and corrupted it to its furthest possible misinterpretations. The results have us doing things in the name of God that are truly remarkable in their ignorance. Eating from the proverbial “Tree of Knowledge” is not something that is definable for most people in today’s world. The information that is out there is meant to serve our growth yet so often people conceal that which we need for our individual or collective growth.

Yet we persist in this presumption that learning too much will somehow cripple us or force us to cross a line that will place our beliefs in juxtaposition with what the Creator desires. The result is that we use the Creator as an excuse that prevents us from doing many of the things that will benefit mankind.

There are those who abuse knowledge by not sharing it, by misusing it or by not seeking or being open to the knowledge. Why are there people who are convinced that they are in charge of what can or cannot be dispersed when it comes to disseminating truth? Much of this rhetoric emanates from religious leaders who have promoted blindness to the truth while increasing their power over people. It has progressed to the point where they become obsessed in their considerations of image while deliberating the physical as well as spiritual life and death issues of their constituents. In doing so, they have abused the trust that was placed in them by their followers.

Instead of seeing themselves as representatives of the limitless source of all life, they reinterpret themselves as having the authority to dole out physical and spiritual life based on their own interpretations. The sorrow caused by physical/spiritual death as a result of their personal direction is **not** justifiable under any circumstances. While we know that all things come from the Creator, we know that turning away from the source leads to death on all levels. Thus, when our actions drive someone away physically or spiritually, or directly impact on the continuation of human life, we must take responsibility.

Knowing what is pious for oneself is a highly introspective and personal issue. When using that personal definition causes a negative reaction in others, it is time to stop and re-evaluate the effect that we have on others. The “religion” of helping people to recognize and connect to the true source of all things should not be consumed with producing robots that are obedient to man’s directives. Rather, true leaders should come to recognize that group observance is positive only when it is predicated on the ability of constituents to take responsibility for their individual connections.

When the personal connection has been established we can join in unison as groups that are synonymous in those actions that elevate them spiritually. Then we can live together in joy, not in fear and pain. When the connection is established first it will foster recognition of one’s placement by the Creator. When individuals are open to truly hearing what the Creator desires for them, they will know when a change for them is truly appropriate.

Instead, today we find ourselves living within a system where everyone claims they want the best and the truth, yet they do not recognize what is blocking them (or the rest of the world.) It is very much like a person who puts on blinders and then says, “I cannot see.”

(Leviticus 14:2) **“This will be the guidance for the metzarah on the day that he shines and he is brought to the priest.”** The word metzarah is explained as a rare skin disease. It appears on the skin reflecting a deeper issue. The word also means to bring (take) out the bad (motzi rah). Therefore, many explain the cause of this disease to be a reflection of talking about others in a way that is hurtful.

The bad, or negative, can display itself in many ways. One is that everything appears good and then negative rears its head. Another is that the bad is released allowing for clarity, which is good. We need to identify the people who can teach us the art of how to expel the negative from our being so that we will have clarity.

“And he is brought to the priest.” The purpose of this is to have the priest determine whether the condition is cleared up or still contaminated. Deeper interpretation suggests that the “bad” is brought to the priest/leader so that the priest can reflect upon whether he is fulfilling his responsibility in the world. If the situation is “clear,” it is a sign of his positive impact. If the contamination still exists, then he must do more in his occupational responsibility to contribute his personal balance within the energy flow.

The word **“metzarah”** is composed of two words **‘motzi’** and **‘rah.’** The letters of the first word have a meaning of ‘juice,’ ‘limit,’ ‘siege,’ ‘fenced in’ or ‘encircled.’ **“Rah”** (the Hebrew letters of raish and ayin) means; ‘bad,’ ‘friend,’ ‘shepherd,’ ‘smashed,’ ‘dirt,’ ‘filth,’ ‘under,’ ‘pasture,’ ‘thinking,’ ‘seeking spiritual guidance,’ ‘tend,’ and ‘satisfy needs.’

Biblically a leader is called a ‘shepherd’ and followers are called ‘the flock.’ We live at a time when people are afraid to “make the first move” when making any kind of change. It is time for each person to become the leader who is responsible for his/her personal conduct. A shepherd guides you to the grass, but **you** are the one who chooses to eat and relate to the digestion of the food. You are responsible for your connection to life. You have to locate yourself in a place that best serves the purpose of fulfilling your existence on earth.

If people want clarity and truth why do they wallow in confusion? The confusion is a comfortable operative zone. It exists as a result of many factors. The first step in dissolving the confusion is to take the bold step to detoxify and clear oneself. It is so obvious that much of today’s woes in the world are directly due to the leadership and toxins that are part of what society “feeds us.” We have to take back the power that we have given to a system that seeks to swallow each individual and turn them into feeders for a larger power source.

In the context of today's society, it is easy to understand transparency. It means that something is clear. When people do things behind closed doors or hide things, it is clear that they have something to hide. This clarity allows us to see what is truly motivating our "leaders" today. It is a strong signal to us to be more careful in choosing those from whom we take advice, leadership and counsel.

When we are not afraid to realize that our past mistakes are the corrections of our future lives, we will have taken a big step towards recovery. Those mistakes include our ability to recognize our choice of poor leadership, as well as previously giving erroneous advice to others. When we are able to admit the truth within ourselves we will enable ourselves to guide others to do the same. That will put us on the road to true balance worldwide.

Peace and Balance

Many people speak about how to achieve peace. Often, they do not realize that the solutions they propose will only affect a temporary solution. These are people who have a limited vision. In contrast, those who have long term vision know that true peace must be achieved in a different manner, and thus their journey towards that goal takes a different direction.

People who have narrow vision cause many afflictions to themselves and others. Their limitations do not allow them proper perspective on how to be part of the proper energy to generate peaceful transition for all things. Thus what they pursue is more likely to result in peace that comes with eventual death than peace that comes with eventual life.

An example of such delineation of differences in interpretation is evidenced in the Torah in Leviticus 13:2. The Hebrew word "**metzorah**" refers to a variety of skin affliction. In Hebrew the word "**tzorah**" has three letters which can be read "**tzorayin**" meaning "**narrow eye.**"

When the Torah states “**The Name** (Hashem) **spoke to (el) Moshe**” the Aramaic translation does not say “**to**” but “**with.**” In Isaiah 16:12 the word “**el**” is also translated by the Targum to mean “**ahl – concerning.**”

There is a different understanding of the verse if “**el**” is accepted to mean “**to**” as opposed to “**with.**” If it means “**To,**” then the conversation is something told **to** (and for) Moses. If we understand it to mean “**with,**” it indicates that the conversation is **about** (and for) the people. That would mean that the message is conveyed **through** Moses for the people. Moses was a messenger. As stated in Ethics of the Fathers, Moses received the Torah, which encompassed all its intricate details, which were then passed on to Joshua, who then passed it on to the Elders who passed it on etc.

The differences in the meanings conveyed by the words **to** and **with** are found in a variety of places. In Kings 2 5:19 in the story of Naamon, after the prophet healed him from his skin disease. At that time the prophet Elisha tells Naamon “go **to** peace - **lesholom.**”

According to Jewish practice, it is a custom to utter the expression (within prayer) “go **with** peace” – ‘**besholom**’ when burying the deceased.

The Talmud (Berachos 64a) delineates the difference by stating that the prefix “**le**” is said to a living person while prefix “**be**” is said when addressing the dead.

The Maharsho explains that a living person needs to go through a journey which ultimately brings him/her to attain the peace he/she seeks. Thus, we wish a living person to go on the road towards ultimate peace. In contrast, the burial place of the deceased is only a resting place for the body. The soul continues its journey from that place. Thus, we pray for peace of the body in this temporary place, a place of transition.

In Genesis 15:15 Abraham is told “**You will come to your fathers in peace – besholom, you will be buried in good old age.**” The PriMegodim explains that the word **besholom** only relates to the body. Thus “**besholom**” – reflects a temporary state but not the ultimate state, while “**lesholom**” reflects the ultimate goal.

By studying these delineations, we should heed the fact that when people seek peace, we need to be aware of exactly what it is they are asking for. Often those who look for what amounts to cursory or temporary peace have limited vision. Yet those who better understand what the process entails conduct themselves in a way that looks far beyond the “quick fix.” In the words of Ethics of the Fathers, “Who is wise? One who sees the future” meaning the future outcome of his/her actions or words.

The book of Leviticus discusses skin disease as well as other bodily impurities. Everything is mentioned in the Torah if one understands how to find and understand the deeper meaning that is held in the Torah’s holy words. The following story is an example.

One day a follower (chossid) of Rabbi Shraga Meir of Bialaberzig, (the Rabbi was a son of the famous Rabbi Nosson Dovid of Shidlowtzei) came to Rabbi Shraga Meir and described his problem. It was that every time he heard a raven crow, he became stricken with a deep fear, which was followed by something negative occurring to him that very same day.

Rabbi Shraga Meir instructed him that from that point on, when hearing a raven’s crow, he should recite the Hebrew words “Yevorechecho Ado-nai.” The numerical value of these words is 278, which is the same numerical equivalent of the word: “Orev” - raven. The two words have a relationship by way of the same vibrational frequency between the words and raven. The rabbi was certain that this practice would effect a balance. The follower did as the rabbi suggested and had peace for many years.

At some point after many years the disturbance resumed. He immediately returned to his Rabbi. The Rabbi explained that the reason it returned is because we never pronounce the name (of G-d) the way it is written but with a title “Master – Ad-onai.” Thus, the numerical values are not precisely matched. The intention does effect a change, but the lack of accuracy prevents that change from being permanent.

The Rabbi then asked his follower if he was extremely careful when it came to the practice of washing his hands after eliminating bodily wastes. The follower acknowledged that he was not particularly careful about it.

The Rabbi then opened a Chumash to Leviticus 15:11 **“Whoever the man with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water, must cleanse his clothes and wash himself in water, and he remains contaminated until evening.”**

The Hebrew for **“Whoever the man with the discharge touches”** is five words – **“Vechol asher yiga bo hazov.”** The first letters of these words together make up the word “v’ayvo” while the last letters of the words make up the name “orev” – raven. The name of the angel spirit for ravens is v’ayvo. The verse then states **“a man who did not wash his hands.”**

He told him to take care in washing his hands. Also since we do not actually pronounce the Holy Name he should say another verse, from the book of Esther 2:17. This would keep the energy of not saying the exact word in balance.

Tanya chapter 27 and 28 describes how not to give attention to negative thoughts or feelings. While various diseases or circumstances challenge a person, it is not a reason to be depressed. It is a time to rise to the challenge and find inner strength to live and exist beyond the limitations they create.

We need to be aware that many things that on the surface appear to be temporary or unnecessary are in fact vital. While other matters which seem permanent or very important may in fact be temporary stop gaps at best. We need to go beyond the surface; as it often reflects an internal problem. Once we know the internal problem we can hopefully rebalance that which needs correction. We need to expand our vision so that we not stay stuck. May we all find healing, peace and harmony in all aspects of our life.

Blockages

Last week we discussed blockages. Today we will discuss where they come from and the issues of dealing with them.

In ancient times there was an eruption that occurred on the skin or in houses and it was called “tzoraas.” Today it is usually translated as “leprosy.” Yet, while there may be some similarities, what we understand to be leprosy is not the same ailment described in the Torah.

One defining aspect of this disorder was that in order for it to be seen or defined, it needed to be looked at during a cloudless day and not at night.

A person having this condition was called a “Metzarah.” The word is a combination of two words motzi ra or motzo ra, meaning bringing out bad or finding bad. In general, this type of disease only affected highly refined or spiritual people. The appearance of the tzoraat is an indication to the person that the blockage must be addressed and corrected.

Why is this?

What is its purpose?

Where did it come from?

Blockage, as all other things, comes from the Creator. In order to create, the Creator had to create the appearance of a blockage. This means the Creator is masking its power and energy from being visible in the creation (both physical and spiritual). The Creator life force is everywhere and if it were fully visible nothing else would exist. Therefore, a blockage was created to allow perceived existence. This blockage is reflected in every creation.

The greatest people, souls, saints, those that are connected with God, etc., all have a blockage, which limits them. Actually anything with a definition is limited and a limit usually is a blockage. People have experiences with God not realizing that it is an experience with an aspect in the creation not the essence of the Creator. Therefore, people in all religions or walks of life can have an experience and believe in whatever they want. Yet, their interpretation reflects where they are limited.

This issue of tzoraas erupts on the skin reflecting that the problem is only skin deep, since internally everything is the Creator. Many say that the disease comes

by not being careful with your words and mentioning something about a fault in another person or persons (even if it is true.) This brings out bad, motzi ra, in creation. Most people will not feel the direct effect of this transformation. However, an extremely sensitive and refined person will realize the effects of the action.

Disregarding the importance of what is said is prevalent today. We find that many people say they will do something, promise something/give their word and then do not come through. They say things in order to be politically correct or what they perceive to be what other people want to hear. People waste much time in idle talk and have no concept of the effects of their words. Yet there are persons who see the difference and power in, and exercise caution when using, words.

When the Jews entered Israel, God put this tzoraas on the walls of houses. When they broke the walls to remove the disease they found all the buried treasures.

There was also an issue about the people who worshipped idols (and various powers or Gods) in the creation. As they built their homes they prayed to their various Gods. This allowed energy of disconnection from the Creator to exist in the house. The manifestation of tzoraas on the walls of these houses showed which houses had to be torn down. According to the Zohar, when a house was rebuilt, the new foundation was laid two tefochim (approx. six inches) away from the old foundation.

Another element is that sometimes the energy is in one place but then moves when a wall is being torn down. That would cause the disease to “jump” and show up in another area of the house. When this occurred, the whole house had to be destroyed so that the disease would no longer have a place to exist.

In Leviticus (14:2) it says: “This will be the guidance for the matzora on the day, his purification, and it (he) shall be brought to the Kohain (priest).” (14:3) “And the priest shall go outside the camp, and the priest shall look, and behold! – The tzoraas becomes healed from the afflicted.”

The way that the negative is removed is by transforming it in a spiritual way. This does not leave any room for a vacuum, which could allow for other energy to

come into that space. The time for this would seem to be on the day that the person decides that it is time for his/her purification. The eradication of the tzoraas is an indication that the individual has worked through and thereby resolved the spiritual issue.

There are times that a person wants to be cleared or healed, but cannot, as the blockage remains. The person does not understand why the blockage continues to exist. Then he should not wait and the notification should be brought to the priest. Here we are talking when the person knows what the issue is and has worked it through. Then the priest has to go to where the person is and finalize the healing.

When choosing someone to clear a person of energies of lower or various vibrations, it is important to choose someone who understands and can carefully explain the details and ramifications of such work. At times while in the process of clearing one force from a person, another then rears its head to take the place of the energy that was just voided. It is work that requires caution and proper guidance.

The name of this portion used to be called “This will be – zos tiheye” but in recent years we know it as “metzora”. It says in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b) that Moshiach will be a metzora. So whichever name it is called seems to indicate a future time.

It is also interesting that in this chapter it does not say ‘a person who is impure.’ Rather, it continually says ‘a person who is undergoing purification.’ This is a more refined manner of speech. It is sad that many people are so used to a harsh manner of speech that when something is said in a soft or refined manner they cannot even hear it.

The previous portion was tazriah – planting seeds. This portion is about the flowering.

One reason for “Tzoraas” is that it comes from a relationship of a nidda. The word has two parts, ‘nod’ (the letters noon dalet) which means to move

and 'hey' reflecting the light of wisdom (Chochmoh, which is the translation of word Breishis) or of the Creator. This means that the light has moved away.

Usually the word is translated as a woman having her menstruation. Here is another example where a word is always translated from a physical perspective when there is actually a spiritually deeper meaning in it.

"On the day of his purification" has a further meaning. When a person purifies oneself then he can share it with others. This way it is not saying anything bad about another person. It is showing an example to others of what can be done by a human to improve or even transform one's self. When we are nasty to a person it brings out the bad in them. However, when we are an example to them, we transcend the bad in creation.

We live in a world that has very deep blockages. These allow many people to talk themselves into various aspects of whom or what they are and/or how they are connected. The result is that they believe that they are very refined, truly not realizing how blocked they are. They simply do not see and there is no one who will be able to convey that fact to them.

In contrast to the conditions that exist today, in this portion we are talking about people who see and are of a high spiritual quality who only have an external blockage. Yet as we are intrinsically one, it is reflective of all people. Thus it also has lessons and meanings for us.

So in our society, where there are people who destroy others, we are also responsible. These days many issues have come up. We must respond to each in accordance with what is needed to correct (and not by our actions or inactions that exponentially exacerbate) each situation.

When a bad situation arises that catches our attention, we have a choice to make. We can choose to utilize our words to fuel the negativity of the situation. Or, we can take positive action to attempt to unblock or heal the situation with purity and love in mind. One choice brings tzoraas. The other brings purification. It is up to each of us as individuals, and all of us as people, to make the proper choice.

In the past, we have mentioned that the world was created with wisdom and it is up to us to fix it with love. In love there are many levels just as there are many levels in wisdom.

In creation pure love or pure wisdom is great but each is only one aspect. There needs to be a balance between the two, just as there needs to be a balance of mind and heart. Thus even though a person can ascend to a status of existence within a state of pure love or pure wisdom there is still a blockage.

It is interesting to note that the priests only served for one or two weeks a year. The rest of the year they were in training. This enabled them to recognize the vibrational energy of tzoraas and to learn how to handle it. This is also why it is said of the priest, "he can fix it with his eyes by seeing it." Attaining and maintaining this level of purity and understanding allowed him to effect the changes needed in very sensitive cases.

Today we do not have the Holy Temple, or the love and guidance of the priests who prepared all year long in order to be able to help us to clear us of our blockages. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to take caution, to stay as connected as possible, and to pray for the ability to stay strong in our convictions to do the best we can in all of the challenges presented to us.