



### **Metzora: Coming Home**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

It is a prolonged process of rehabilitation and spiritual cleansing. The Metzora (individual stricken with Tzaraas) was examined and banished. In this week's parsha we are taught the reintegration process. There is another examination, immersion in a mikvah, sacrificial offerings, and blood applications. Once this is complete, the individual is permitted to resume normal life within the ranks of his people. Just as the initial examination requires a Kohen, the later one does as well.

*This shall be the law of the person afflicted with Tzaraas, on the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the kohen. The Kohen shall go outside the camp, and the Kohen shall look, and behold, the lesion of Tzaraas has healed in the afflicted person (Vayikra 14:2-3).*

These verses are a bit enigmatic. Firstly, which one is it? Is the individual brought to the Kohen, or does the Kohen come to the person? Furthermore, how can the Metzora be brought to the Kohen when he is still prohibited from entering the camp/community?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) explains that these verses are referring to two distinct aspects of purification. When the (second) verse states, "The Kohen shall go outside of the camp," this refers to the actual mechanistic process of purification. The Metzora cannot travel to the Kohen; the Kohen must go to him. The first phrase, "He shall be brought to the Kohen" refers to the inner process unfolding within the Metzora. The Metzora is a broken person. He has slandered others and damaged relationships. He has sown the seeds of discord which can often not be uprooted. He needs to introspect and understand why he behaved in this fashion. He needs to make a plan for a different kind of future. He needs to figure out what needs to change. But even before he begins this cognitive and emotional process, Hashem is already pulling him closer. We often think that the process of teshuva (repentance) begins with our decision to be different, but in reality, even before our first thought of teshuva, Hashem is already tugging at our neshoma strings to come back home. When the Torah states, "He shall be brought before the Kohen," it is referring to this process. The Metzora is brought, he is taken, he is led. Even before he knows it, Hashem is leading him back to the Kohen, to a better and holier life.

We all make mistakes and hopefully, we all find the strength to do teshuva. But even more than we want to repent, Hashem wants us to come home. This is why He begins our process of teshuva even before we have ever given it thought. He pulls us closer, long before we have thoughts of remorse, repentance, and return. He does not wait for us to get to it together. In His ultimate and overwhelming love for each of us, He initiates our journey home.