



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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The *Parshiyot* of *Tazria* and *Metzora* focus primarily on the spiritual affliction of *tzara'at*, a mysterious rash or pock mark which can afflict one's skin, one's clothing or even the walls of one's home. Our *Chazal* suggest that this spiritual affliction is the result of *lashon hara*- inappropriate speech.

Tzara'at, as mentioned above, could appear on the walls of one's home. The *pasuk* states:

When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict an outbreak upon a house in the land you possess...

Rashi, based on numerous *maamarei chazal* offers a rather surprising explanation of this verse:

*This was a good sign for them, because the Amorites concealed **treasures of gold** in the walls of their houses during the entire 40 years the Jewish People were in the*

wilderness in order that they might not possess them when they conquered the land. However, upon the appearance of this affliction, they would pull down the house and discover these treasures.

This past week we commemorated *Yom HaAtzmaut* and expressed our joy and *hakarat hatov* for the incredible gift that is *Medinat Yisrael*. In our column last week we shared a beautiful teaching from one of the great religious personalities of the pre-state *Yishuv* and early years of *Medinat Yisrael*, the *Ohalei Yaakov* of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, zt"l, the *Admor of Husiyatin zy"a*.

In yet another stirring teaching from his first *Shabbat Tazria Metzora* in *Eretz Yisrael* in 1938, the Rebbe points to this particular *Rashi*, to offer his thoughts on both the burgeoning *Yishuv* in *Eretz Yisrael*, as well as how one should relate to both the building of a Jewish presence in *Artzeinu HaKedosha*, as well as those pioneers who might not be ritually observant. To paraphrase the Rebbe's powerful words:

"And how should we relate to those among us who seem distant from our faith and tradition, who are engaged in building and working to establish Eretz Yisrael once again as the eternal home of the Jewish People? Indeed it might pain us to see their distance from our mesora, and our preference certainly would be that all those laboring

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to sustain the Jewish Yishuv here in Eretz Yisrael, did so with a fidelity to our tradition. However, our holy Torah teaches us that the Amorites left great treasures hidden within the walls of the structures they built here in Eretz Yisrael, that ultimately the Jewish People were able to find upon entering those homes. If this was true then, for homes built by the Amorites, then certainly the same must be true for homes being built in Eretz Yisrael by Jewish hands-there will be great treasures which will certainly be revealed!

...Our way of understanding is that we must appreciate the great merit of those who are actively working to build up our holy land, and our way is to partner in this enterprise, first and foremost because it is a great mitzva to do so! Furthermore, the only way that we might influence others, and return them to an appreciation for the beauty of our tradition, is through love and unity-not through harsh words or arguments, and certainly not through any inappropriate speech, because after all, the Torah tells us that the afflictions affect our homes as a result of lashon hara!"

Yehi Ratzon, as we reflect on 73 years since the establishment of Medinat Yisrael, and as we emerge from very challenging and uncertain times, may we take to heart this powerful teaching from the Rebbe of Husiyatin zy'a, and realize that the recipe for bringing an end to an affliction, and to revealing wondrous treasures, is to see beyond our differences, realize the sacred value of unity, and to use the Koach HaDibur to share messages of hope and love, and not chas v'shalom to utilize speech in a way that is harmful or divisive. ■

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