



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

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RECONCILING WITH OUR NATIONAL צרעת

We open up מצורע מצורע, פרשת תזריע-מצורע, which discusses different forms of טומאה and טהרה. One of them is צרעת, a spiritual affliction that appears on a person's skin, clothing, or house. חז"ל explain that it is not a medical illness, but rather a response to spiritual failing, most famously הרע הרע. לשון הרע The מצורע is sent outside the camp-מחוז למחנה-and lives in isolation until healing occurs.

חז"ל describe the מצורע in extremely strong terms. He is compared to someone who is almost like a "dead person" (נדרים סד ע"ב), as אהרן הכהן says about his sister: (מרים) do not let her נא תהי כמות: be like one who is dead. Of all forms of, צרעת, טומאה is uniquely connected to this idea of death, even though the person is physically alive. The pain is not only physical, but deeply social and emotional: "בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב, מֵחוּץ לַמִּחָנֶה מוֹשְׁבֹו" - separation from community and belonging.

This creates a powerful idea: the deepest suffering in the תורה is not only illness, but isolation from others-a kind of social death.

On יום העצמאות, we celebrate the opposite reality. After centuries of exile and fragmentation, עם ישראל has returned to a state of national wholeness in ישראל. We are no longer scattered and distant from our land and from each other in the same way. We live as a people with sovereignty, language, and collective life.

In a sense, צרעת represents disconnection, while יום העצמאות represents reconnection. The מצורע leaves the camp; עם ישראל has returned to its camp.

Even if we do not experience צרעת today, the emotional truth remains: separation hurts, and belonging heals. On יום העצמאות, we thank הקב"ה for the ultimate form of healing: bringing His people back home - ה'הנה מֵה' "טוב וימה נְעִימָה שְׁכַת אֲחִימָה גַם יָחִיד."



GAVI GARDIN

11TH GRADE, JERUSALEM

FROM OUTSIDE OUR CAMP, TO WITHIN

Parshat Tazria and Yom Ha'atzmaut are deeply connected through the idea of exile and return. The Torah says of the metzora, "He shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling" (Vayikra 13:46). Chazal explain in ערכין ט"ז ע"ב that the metzora is sent outside the camp because lashon hara creates division between people. Since he damaged relationships and caused separation within the community, he is punished by being separated from the community himself.

This idea speaks powerfully to Yom Ha'atzmaut. After thousands of years of exile, Am Yisrael has returned to its homeland and rebuilt a Jewish state. But the parsha reminds us that simply being back in the land is not enough. The real challenge is whether we know how to live together inside the camp. A state cannot survive purely through strength,

technology, or military power; it also depends on the people's unity within. When Jews speak destructively about one another, it weakens the nation from within.

The tikkun of the metzora is not just physical healing; it is about changing how he speaks and how he connects to others around him. Rashi on Vayikra 14:4 explains that the purification process points to inner change and humility. He writes, "מה תקנתו ויתרפא" "שפיל עצמו" - that the way for the metzora to truly be healed is to humble himself.

That may be one of the most important messages of Yom Ha'atzmaut, especially during a time of war. If lashon hara can send a person into exile from the camp, then ahavat Yisrael, responsibility, and unity are what allow a people to build and sustain a state in their land. Having our own state is a gift. Whether it is deserved depends on how we treat one another. ■

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