

## Sudden Redemption

The Haftora for parshas Metzora, and Tazria-Metzora when they are together, is from the book of Melachim Beis (II Kings),<sup>1</sup> and is part of a string of miracles done by our prophet Elisha.

The setting of the Haftora is that Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, gathered his whole army and laid siege around the city of Shomron (Samaria), the Capital of the Northern Tribes. Aram didn't allow food into the city, and the people were starving. King Yehoram the son of Achav wanted to kill Elisha, because he was certain that Elisha could do something about the situation, by praying to Hashem, and he wasn't.<sup>2</sup> When he came to Elisha, the prophet told him, that by this time tomorrow, a se'ah of flour will sell for a shekel, and two se'ahs of barley will sell for a shekel. The king's officer scoffed at the words of Elisha, "Even if Hashem made windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" The prophet told him, "You will see it with your eyes, but you will not eat of it."<sup>3</sup>

In the Haftora of parshas Tazria, we read about how Elisha miraculously cured Naaman, the commander of Aram's army, from Tzaraas, a skin ailment. Elisha refused to take any payment, but his servant Gaychazi chased after Naaman and took his money. Elisha told Gaychazi, that because of what he did, he would now be afflicted with Naaman's Tzaraas.<sup>4</sup>

The Haftora opens with four Metzora's (a Metzora, is someone afflicted with Tzaraas), they were Gaychazi and his three sons.

The four Metzora's were outside the city, because a Metzora is not permitted to go into the city. They reasoned, there is no food in the city, so there's no use going there, and staying here is futile because we will starve to death. Let's go to Aram's camp, maybe there we could get something to eat. When they came to the camp, it was deserted. Hashem

made a miracle, they heard sounds of a great army descending upon them, and they panicked. Aram left everything behind and fled.

This was an opportunity for Gaychazi to do Teshuva, by not taking Aram's loot for himself as he took Naaman's money earlier. At first he made a move for the money, but then he came to his senses.

The Metzora's went and notified the guards at the city's gate, who notified the king. The king had some riders check it out and when they confirmed that it was true, the people went out and found so much food in the camp, that a se'ah of flour sold for a shekel, and two se'ahs of barley sold for a shekel, just as Elisha said.

The king's officer who scoffed at the words of Elisha, was appointed to stand by the city's gate. In their haste the officer was trampled<sup>5</sup> by the people who were rushing to get food, and he died. He saw the food but couldn't eat from it, just as Elisha said.<sup>6</sup>

The connection to our parsha is that parshas Metzora, and Tazria-Metzora speak about the Metzora. The Haftora tells the story of the four Metzora's. And the comparison teaches us, that

<sup>5</sup> II Kings 7:17, 20.

<sup>6</sup> See Sichos Kodesh 5729b pp. 293-294, 337-339, 5731a p. 291. In 1969 and 1970, the Rebbe noted this story, and its continuation, where Achav chased after Aram, trying to make peace with them, calling them "our brothers," and no good came from it. They continued their assaults, and we suffered because of it. The Rebbe asked why we didn't take a lesson from history? Why were chasing after the evil regimes that waged war against us, in the Six Day War, and offering them land and calling them, "Our brothers," when they are clearly a threat to our existence?

See also Sichos Kodesh 5737b pp. 75-80. In 1977 the Rebbe cites this story, and discusses at length the uncertainty and lack of clarity Israel's government has at the negotiating table, when it comes to their security, and how if they would turn to the Torah, they would have clarity. He also speaks about the Old City Jerusalem and Hebron, that we should have let the Arabs run away, when we captured those cities, which they were glad to do, but to their disbelief, we asked them to stay, and they have only made problems for us, including the murder of many of our Jewish brothers and sisters.

<sup>1</sup> II Kings 7:3-20.

<sup>2</sup> II Kings chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> II Kings 7:1-2, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> II Kings chapter 5.

even in the case of a Metzarah, there is good to be found and accomplished.

The theme of the Haftora is the miraculous sudden change from darkness and captivity to light and redemption. And this is a lesson to us, that Moshiach will also come suddenly and miraculously.

Most years Tazria and Metzarah are read together, and when they are, this Haftora is read. Metzarah speaks about the purification process of the Metzarah, which could be seen as a redemption. It also tells us, that when Tzaraas afflicted a house, the effected area had to be knocked down. Rashi<sup>7</sup> tells us, that the Emorites hid their valuables in the walls of their homes, and when we conquered them, Hashem put Tzaraas on the walls that had treasures hidden in them. When the walls were demolished, the hidden treasures would be revealed. This can be seen as a redemption as well.

However, Tazria speaks about pregnancy and birth, and then it goes into the details of diagnosis of a Metzarah. We must conclude that somehow Tazria is also about redemption. How is this possible?

In the Talmud there is a discussion about Moshiach. The rabbis say that he is the Metzarah of the House of Rebbe.<sup>8</sup> Here we see another connection between a Metzarah and Moshiach.

As mentioned above, Tazria speaks about pregnancy and birth. This exile is compared to a pregnancy, the suffering we endure is the pain associated with pregnancy. Now, at the end of the exile, it has become unbearable, this is the pain of labor. But soon Moshiach will come, like a baby that is born, we realize that it was all worth it. Redemption.

Tazria means to plant. That is what the exile is about. Our hard work, pain and suffering during the

exile, is what brings the redemption, when we will reap the fruits of our labor.

The same is true about Tzaraas. Of course Tzaraas is a horrible affliction, which was brought on by speaking badly of another. But getting Tzaraas was not the end, rather it was the beginning of a process of becoming a better person. He would be sent out of the city, and sit alone,<sup>9</sup> which gave him time to think about what he did and work on himself to become a new person. When he was healed, it too was the birth of a new person, and a redemption.

We each have our own ailments to break free from. Working on ourselves to become better is like planting seeds and the reward for your hard work is a personal redemption.

May our efforts to better ourselves, especially in our service to Hashem, by adding in Torah and mitzvahs, bring the ultimate redemption, the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

<sup>7</sup> Rashi, Leviticus 14:34.

<sup>8</sup> Sanhedrin p. 98b, the actual words are "Chivra dvei Rebbe," which Rashi translates as the Metzarah of the House of Rebbe.

<sup>9</sup> How was Gaychazi and his three sons together, if they are meant to be alone? According to some opinions, including Tzafenas Paneach on the Torah, Metzarahs sit together. But in the case of Gaychazi, even according to the opinion that they sit alone, perhaps because they were his children, they were obligated to honor him, and that is why they were together. (Lekutei Sichos volume 22 p. 74 footnote 49.)