

**Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger**  
**Sfas Emes**  
**Parshas Tazria**

Vayikra, Tazria, 1	ויקרא, תזריע, א'
5631 (1871)	תרל"א
With the help of G-d, Parshas Tazria-Metzora, Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh Iyar	בהעזרת ה' פרשת תזריע מצרע שבת וראש חודש אייר
In the Midrash (WF: Midrash Tehillim 139), "Back and front You have formed me"—if meritorious, he inherits both worlds, etc.	במדרש אחר וקדם צרתני וזה נוחל שני עולמות כו'
The explanation: he draws a river and a connection from the root of vitality into the concealment and obscuration found in this world.	פרוש שממשיך נחל וחיבור משרש החיות אל ההסתרה וההעלם שיש בעולם הזה
Because the praise is not that he inherits this world alone,	כי מה שבח שנוחל עולם הזה
but that he connects this world to the higher world, as above.	אלא מה שמחבר עולם הזה אל עולם עליון כנ"ל
And it is taught: "All Israel have a portion in the World to Come" (WF: Sanhedrin 90a).	ואיתא כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא
Meaning: also in this world, all their deeds contain an inner portion of the hidden light stored within the physical act.	פרוש גם בעולם הזה כל מעשיהם יש בהם חלק פנימיות מאור הצפון שנגנז במעשה גשמי
And this was the intention in the creation of man in this world:	ונהיגה מכוון בראת האדם בעולם הזה
to repair all creation, to clarify that everything is sustained by the life of the Holy One, blessed be He.	כדי לתקן כל הבריאה לברר שהכל מחיות השם יתברך
And this is [the meaning of] "Back and front You have formed me" (Tehillim 139:5): last in deed but first in thought.	וזהו אחר וקדם צרתני אחרון למעשה וראשון במחשבה
For the complete person whose every act is with thought and cleaving to the source of life merits to elevate all creation.	כי אדם השלם שכל מעשיו במחשבה ודבקות בשרש החיים מזהב כל הבריאה
And therefore he was created last, for he completes everything.	ולכן נברא בסוף שהוא השלמת הכל
And thus immediately upon his creation, concealment and klipah (shell) came with him.	ולכן מיד כשנברא בא עמו הסתרה וקלפה
"And on the eighth day he shall be circumcised": through nullifying all seven middos (traits) to G-d alone,	וביום השמיני ימול: על ידי שמבטל כל ז' מדות בלתי
through this he cleaves to the higher world, above nature, and thus the klipos are cut off.	על ידי זה מתדבק בעולם העליון שלמעלה מן הטבע ועל ידי זה נכרתים כל הקליפות

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And this is [the meaning of] "And on the eighth day he shall be circumcised," as explained.	וְזֶהוּ וּבִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל כִּנ"ל
And it has already been written elsewhere that This World and the World to Come are two forms of concealment:	וְדָבָר כְּתוּבֵנוּ בְּמָקוֹם אֲחֵר כִּי עוֹלָם הֵזֶה וְעוֹלָם הַבָּא שְׁנֵי הַעֲלָמוֹת הֵם
one concealment from the higher realms beyond comprehension (the World to Come),	יֵשׁ הַעֲלָם מִצַּד שְׁלֹמְעֵלָה מִן הַהִשְׁגָּה וְהוּא עוֹלָם הַבָּא
and one concealment from the klipos (this world).	וְיֵשׁ הַעֲלָם מִצַּד הַהִסְתָּר וְהַקְלָפָה וְזֶהוּ עוֹלָם הֵזֶה
And according to how one guards the inner dimension within This World, he merits to cleave to the World to Come, as explained elsewhere.	וְכַפִּי מַה שְּׁשׁוּמְרִים הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת בְּעוֹלָם הֵזֶה זֹכִים לְהִתְדַבֵּק בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא כְּמוֹ שְׁנִתְבָּאָר בְּמָקוֹם אֲחֵר
And this is [the meaning of] "Back and front You have formed me," for the intention of creation was for man to rectify and connect all the lower worlds to the source of the life of life.	וְזֶהוּ אַחֲרֵי וְקִדְּם צִרְתָּנִי כִּי מְכוּוֹן הַבְּרִיאָה שִׁיתָקֵן הָאָדָם וּיַחֱבִיר כָּל הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים עַד שָׁרֵשׁ חַי הַחַיִּים
And it is written (Yechezkel 46:1), "The gate of the inner courtyard that faces east shall be shut during the six working days, but on Shabbat it shall be opened and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened."	וְכָתוּב שֶׁעַר הַחֲצָר הַפְּנִימִית הַפּוֹנֶה קִדְמָה בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת כו' בַּחֲדָשׁ יִפְתָּח
Because during the weekdays the inner vitality hidden in everything is concealed, and this is the concept of "Back and front."	כִּי בַחֲל נִסְתָּר חַיּוֹת הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת שֶׁבְּכָל דָּבָר וְהוּא בְּחִינַת אַחֲרֵי וְקִדְּם
But by drawing the concept of Shabbos into the weekdays, one cleaves to the aspect of "Front," the gateway drawn from the supernal world beyond nature.	שֶׁעַל יְדֵי הַמַּשְׁכַּת בְּחִינַת הַשַּׁבָּת תּוֹךְ יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה עַל יְדֵי זֶה הוּא דְּבוּק בְּבְחִינַת קִדְּם שֶׁהוּא שֶׁעַר הַנִּמְלָשׁוּד מֵעוֹלָם עֲלִיוֹן שְׁלֹמְעֵלָה מִן הַטָּבֵעַ
And on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, this gate opens, as explained above.	וּבַשַּׁבָּת וְרֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ נִפְתָּח זֶה כִּנ"ל
And the Midrash says that the circumcision must be after a Shabbos has passed over the child,	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר בַּמִּדְרָשׁ כִּי הַמִּלָּה אַחֲרֵי שַׁבָּת שֶׁעָבַר עַל הַיֶּלֶד
for through the aspect of Shabbos, the hidden vitality within all created things is revealed,	כִּי עַל יְדֵי בְּחִינַת שַׁבָּת מִתְגַּלֶּה חַיּוֹת הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת שִׁישׁ בְּכָל הַנִּבְרָאִים
and through this one can break free from imprisonment and remove the externalities that obscure the inner point.	וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה יָכוֹל לְצַאֵת מִן הַמִּסְגֵּר וּלְהִסְרֵי הַחִיצוֹנִיּוֹת הַמַּסְתִּירָה וְקוֹדֶה הַפְּנִימִית

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And this is accomplished through the aspect of self-nullification: to be nullified to the inner vitality.	וְהוּא עַל יְדֵי בְּחִינַת הַבְּטוּל לְהִיּוֹת בְּטֵל לְפָנִימִיּוֹת הַחַיּוֹת.
And through this, that which was prohibited turns into permissible,	וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה נִהְפָּךְ אָסוּר לְהִיּוֹת הֵיטֵר.
and it becomes revealed that even within the concealment itself, there was hidden light.	וּמִתְגַּלֶּה שְׁגָם בְּהֶסְתֵּר עֲצָמוֹ יֵשׁ בְּחִינַת אוֹר הַנִּצָּעִל.
And this is [the meaning of] "And on the eighth day he shall be circumcised," as explained.	וְזֶהוּ וּבִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוּל כִּפְּ"ל
And my revered grandfather, my teacher and master, of blessed memory, said regarding the Midrash (WF: Midrash Tehillim 139) on the verse "I will raise my knowledge from afar..." and [the verse] "and he saw the place from afar" (WF: Bereishis 22:4):	וְאָבִי מוֹרֵי וְרַבִּי וְצִלְהָ"ה אָמַר עַל הַמִּדְרָשׁ אֲשֶׁר דָּעִי לְמַרְחֹק כּו' וַיֵּרָא כּו' הַמָּקוֹם מֵרַחֲוֹק כּו'
That it had been concealed from him (Avraham),	שֶׁהָיָה נִסְתָּר מִמֶּנּוּ
and afterwards, when he stood firm in the test,	וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן שָׁעָמַד בְּנִסְיוֹן
he gave praise for this, for he saw that it was all for the good:	נָתַן שִׁבְחָה עַל זֶה שֶׁרָאָה שֶׁהָיָה רַק לְטוֹבָה
to reveal the holiness even within the distance, etc.	כִּדְּי לְגִלּוֹת הַקְּדוּשָׁה גַם בְּתוֹךְ הֶרְיָחוּק כּו'
And through this he merited to be the hidden point within every Jew,	וְזָכָה עַל יְדֵי זֶה לְהִיּוֹת נִקְוֶדָה טְמוּנָה בְּכָל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
that it should always remain,	שִׁישָׁאָר תָּמִיד
and upon this we bless "Shield of Avraham" [in Shemoneh Esrei] on his account.	וְעַל זֶה מְבָרְכִין מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם עַל שְׁמוֹ
And this is [the meaning of] "Back and front You have formed me" (Tehillim 139:5):	וְזֶהוּ אַחֲרֵי וְקִדָּם צִרְתָּנִי
that it is within man's ability to find the aspect of "Front," from the Primordial Thought,	שֶׁיֵּהָא בְּכַח הָאָדָם לְמַצֵּא בְּחִינַת קִדָּם מִמַּחְשַׁבָּה הַקְּדוּמָה
through the aspect of distance in This World, which is the aspect of "Back," as explained above.	עַל יְדֵי בְּחִינַת הֶרְיָחוּק בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת אַחֲרֵי כִפְּ"ל
In Rashi it is written: "A cedar tree — because he became haughty, and a hyssop — because he must lower himself," etc.	בְּרַשִׁי עֵץ אֲרֵז שֶׁנִּתְגַּאֵה. וְאֲזוֹב שִׁישְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ כּו'
And why is a cedar tree mentioned regarding the atonement, which is an allusion to the sin and the corruption?	וְלָמָּה עֵץ אֲרֵז אֲצֵל הַכִּפּוּרָה שֶׁזֶה הוּרָאָה עַל מַה שֶׁחָטָא וְקִלְקַל?
But [the explanation is that] the humility must come precisely through the very thing by which he became haughty.	אַבָּל כִּי הַשְּׁפָלוּת צָרִיךְ לְהִיּוֹת עַל יְדֵי זֶה עֲצָמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְגַּאֵה

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That he must know: even if he is whatever he is, when he becomes haughty and imagines that he has a reason to be proud,	שֶׁצָרִיךְ לְדַעַת אֶף שִׁיְהֵא מַה שִׁיְהֵא, בְּשִׁנְתָּאָה וְנִדְמָה לוֹ שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ לְהִתְגַּאוֹת
he is in truth lowly, like a worm.	הֵרִי הוּא שָׁפֵל כְּתוֹלַעַת מִמֶּשׁ
Because the entire intention of the Holy One, blessed be He, is to bring him to the knowledge that everything is from Him, may He be blessed.	כִּי כָל הַרְצוֹן מֵהֵשֵׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לְהַגִּיעַ לוֹה לְדַעַת כִּי הַכֹּל מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְבָּרַךְ
And if this knowledge is lacking, everything else is vanity.	וְכִשְׁחָסֵר זֶה הַכֹּל הֵבֵל
And my revered grandfather, my teacher and master, of blessed memory, said in the name of the holy Rabbi from Peshischa (WF: Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa) on the verse (Tehillim 113:7) "He raises the lowly and lowers the haughty":	וְאָז מוֹרִי וְרַבִּי וְצִלְהָ"ה אָמַר בְּשֵׁם הָרַב וִ"ל מִפְּרִישִׁיטְסְחָא עַל מַה שֶּׁכְּתוּב מְגִבִּיהַ שְׁפִלִים וּמִשְׁפִּיל גְּאוֹים
Since He raises the lowly, why does He lower [people]?	מֵאַחֲרֵ שֶׁמְּגִבִּיהַ אֶת הַשְּׁפִלִים לְמַה מִּשְׁפִּיל
It is only in order to elevate them.	רַק כְּדִי לְהַגְבִּיהַ אוֹתָם
But [this means] that when He raises the lowly, they must remain humble even after being elevated.	אֲבָל שֶׁמְּגִבִּיהַ שְׁפִלִים שִׁישְׂאָר שָׁפֵל אֶף שֶׁהוּא מוּגֵבָה
And this is [the meaning]: one who truly, even if he is elevated, still knows that it is from the Holy One, blessed be He,	וְזֶהוּ מִי שֶׁבֹאֲמַת אֶף שֶׁיִּגְבֶּה יָדַע כִּי הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְבָּרַךְ
he is truly elevated through this knowledge.	הֵרִי הוּא מוּגֵבָה בְּיָדֵיעָתוֹ זֹאת
[And thus it is written (Yirmiyahu 9:22-23) "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom... but in this let him glory: that he knows Me."]	וְכִכָּה פְּתוּב אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל חֶכֶם בְּחִכְמָתוֹ כִּי כִי אִם בְּזֹאת [יִתְהַלֵּל הַמֵּתְהַלֵּל כִּי]
And similarly, He lowers the haughty because through their pride they become truly lowly,	וְכֵן מִשְׁפִּיל גְּאוֹים כִּי עַל יְדֵי הַגָּאוּהַ הֵרִי הוּא שָׁפֵל
because they are cut off from the root of vitality, for "I and he [the arrogant one] cannot dwell together" (WF: Sotah 5a).	כִּי נִכְרַת מִשְׁרָשׁ הַחַיּוּת שָׂאִין אֲנִי וְהוּא יְכוּלִין לְדוֹר כִּי
And similarly it is stated in the Zohar (WF: Zohar III 43b): "Whoever is great is [in truth] small," etc.	וְכֵן אֵימָא בִּזְהַר מֵאן דְּהוּא רַב הוּא זָעִיר כִּי
And whoever knows that everything is from the Holy One, blessed be He, and cleaves to the root of vitality, he is truly great.	וְכָל מִי שִׁידַע שֶׁהַכֹּל מֵהֵשֵׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ וְדְבוּק בְּשָׂרָשׁ הַחַיּוּת הֵרִי הוּא רַב
For certainly the goal is not that a person should be humble through false imagination.	כִּי בּוֹדָאִי אֵין הַמְּכוּנוֹן שִׁיְהֵא הָאָדָם עָנּוּ עַל יְדֵי דְמִיוֹן שֶׁקֶר
For it is written regarding Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, that he was "very humble" (WF: Bamidbar 12:3),	כִּי מַה שֶּׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָנּוּ מְאֹד

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and yet he certainly knew that he was the source of knowledge for all Israel.	אף שבודאי ידע שהוא הדעת של כל ישראל
But because he knew with absolute clarity that everything is from the vitality of the Holy One, blessed be He,	אבל על ידי שידע בהיטב שהכל מחיות השם יתברך
therefore even though in every act of service there is some aspect from man himself — namely, the will —	לכן אף שבודאי יש בכל עבודה נקודה מהאדם עצמו והוא הרצון
still, it was not recognized by the person at all how much was truly from himself, but rather everything was from G-d.	מכל מקום אין נכר לאדם כלל לדעת כמה יש בעבודתו מעצמו ורק הכל מהשם יתברך
And how can one become prideful over something that is not his?	ואיך יוכל להתגאות במה שאינו שלו
And pride itself is the sign that he is truly lowly.	והגאונה עצמה היא הסימן שהוא שפל באמת
And this is the hint in the cedar tree and the hyssop, as explained above.	וזהו הרמז בעץ ארז ואזוב כנ"ל
"You formed Your world from the beginning," as it is written.	אתה יצרת עולמך מקדם
As the Maharal explains, in everything there is matter and form.	כמו שכתוב במהר"ל כל דבר יש חומר וצורה
And the form is the inner essence.	והצורה היא הפנימיות
And this is the aspect of "Kedem" (Primordial), as it says in the Midrash (WF: Midrash Tehillim 139): "If he merits, they say: 'You preceded the World of 42.'"	והוא בחינת קדם שכתוב במדרש זכה אומרים אתה קדמת למ"ב
When the goal is completed and he is attached only to the inner form within the materiality,	כשנגמר המכונן ואינו דבוק רק בפנימיות הצורה שיש
this is called "merited."	תוף החקריות
Because in truth, man is higher than all other creations in his form,	זכה
but in matter — which is the material [the physical creations] — man is last.	כי באמת האדם למעלה מכלן בצורה
For the material is opposite from the form,	רק בחומר שהוא הגשמיות, שם האדם אחרון
like the analogy of a seal pressed onto paper,	כי החומר מהפך מהצורה
which receives the imprint of the seal in an inverted way.	כדמיון חותם על הניר
And when a person is attached to materiality and physicality,	שקבל צורת החותם מהפכת
he is truly the last,	וכשהאדם דבוק בחומר ובגשמיות
and even a mosquito preceded him.	הוא אחרון באמת
For man was created to be attached to the form.	ויתוש קדמו
	כי נברא להיות דבוק בצורה

**Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger**  
**Sfas Emes**  
**Parshas Tazria**

And behold, a person draws a soul for his child, and that soul is from the supernal world,	וְהִנֵּה הָאָדָם מְמַשֵּׂיף נֶשְׁמָה לְבָנוֹ וְהִיא מֵעוֹלָם עֲלִיוֹן
and thus there is a connection within him to the inner essence,	וְהִירִי יֵשׁ בּוֹ הַתְּקַשְׁרוֹת בְּפָנִימִיּוֹת
by placing all of his will and mind truly into it.	עַל יְדֵי שְׂמֻכְנִים כָּל הָרָצוֹן וְהַדַּעַת בְּאַמֶּת
And he has the power to cleave to a higher root, to bring about renewal.	יֵשׁ בְּכַחוֹ לְהִדְבֵּק בְּשָׂרָשׁ עֲלִיוֹן לְהֵבִיא תְּחִלּוֹת
And this is the explanation of the Midrash "Back and front You have formed me" (Tehillim 139:5), and "I will lift my knowledge from afar" (Iyov 36:3),	וְזֶהוּ פֶּרוּשׁ הַמִּדְרָשׁ אַחֲרֵי וְקִדְמֵי צִרְתָּנִי וְאַשָּׂא דַעִי לְמִרְחוֹק כּו'
how man has a connection to the hidden root.	אִיךָ שֶׁיֵּשׁ דְּבִקּוֹת לָאָדָם בְּשָׂרָשׁ הַנִּעְלָם
And behold, during the month and the Sabbath, when renewal is drawn down to the creations —	וְהִנֵּה בַּחֹדֶשׁ וּבַשַּׁבָּת שְׁנִמְשָׁף תְּחִלּוֹת לְנִבְרָאִים
because on Shabbos there is also an elevation and connection for everything into its inner source —	כִּי בַשַּׁבָּת יֵשׁ גַּם כּוֹן עֲלֶיהָ וְהַתְּקַשְׁרוֹת לְכָל דָּבָר בְּפָנִימִיּוֹת
therefore the aspect of the form becomes opened.	עַל כֵּן נִפְתַּח בְּחִינַת הַצּוּרָה
Because from there is drawn vitality for everything —	כִּי מִשָּׁם נִמְשָׁף חַיּוּת לְכָל דָּבָר
through the opening of the root, as explained above.	עַל יְדֵי פְתִיחַת הַשָּׂרֵשׁ כַּנִּל
And therefore, during these days, one can cleave more to the form,	וְלָכֵן יְכוּלִין בַּיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה לְהִדְבֵּק יוֹתֵר בַּצּוּרָה
which is the root of the inner vitality, as explained above.	שֶׁהוּא שָׂרֵשׁ חַיּוּת הַפָּנִימִיּוֹת כַּנִּל

**[NOTE: ✨ Summary**

This discourse explains the deep concept that every created being consists of **chomer** (material) and **tzurah** (form), with **tzurah** being the true **inner spiritual essence**.

Man's greatness lies not in his physical body — where he is last among creatures ("even the mosquito preceded him") — but in his inner **divine soul**, which is higher than all creation.

If a person clings only to materialism, he falls into the realm of "last."

But if he binds himself to his inner essence — to his **tzurah**, the divine form within him — he connects to the **highest source, the hidden root of creation**.

On Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, when spiritual renewal and elevation are drawn into the world, the **gateway to this inner form opens** even more, allowing a person to cleave more easily to his soul's root.

Thus, the mission of man is to use his free will and awareness to attach to the **primordial "Kedem"**, the divine form, even while living in the material world.

# Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger

## Sfas Emes

### Parshas Tazria

#### Practical Takeaway

- **Shift focus from external achievements to internal connection:**  
True greatness is not based on material success but on how deeply you connect to your soul and G-d. In practical terms, that means prioritizing **tefillah**, **learning Torah with depth**, and **mindful mitzvos**, rather than just external status.
- **Use Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh for realignment:**  
Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh are precious opportunities to "open the root" — times when your soul's bond to G-d is more accessible.  
On Shabbos, don't just rest physically; invest deeply in **feeling your neshamah** through singing, davening with focus, or studying something that stirs your inner world.
- **Internal humility leads to elevation:**  
Recognizing that all spiritual achievements are gifts from G-d — not personal triumphs — keeps a person truly great. Feeling humble doesn't mean thinking less of yourself; it means **knowing your true Source**.

#### True Chassidic Story

Once, the holy **Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa** (whom this discourse references) taught his students:

"A man should carry two notes, one in each pocket. On one, write: 'For my sake the world was created.'

On the other: 'I am but dust and ashes.'"

One of his close disciples asked him,

"Rebbe, when should a person look at each note?"

The Rebbe answered:

"When he feels broken, small, and worthless, he should read: 'For my sake the world was created.'

But when he feels pride and success swelling in his heart, he should pull out the other and read: 'I am but dust and ashes.'"

This balance is exactly the heart of our discourse:

Man, in his **form**, is rooted in G-d and can renew all creation.

But if he clings to **materialism alone**, he falls lower than the smallest insect.

**True greatness** comes by recognizing both your immeasurable divine source — and your utter dependency on G-d's vitality for every moment of existence. **END NOTE]**