TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



מצורע

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה

ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

מצורע

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



וְיָצָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע־הַצָּרַעַת מִן־הַצָּרוּעַ
"The Kohen shall go forth to the outside of the camp; the Kohen shall look and behold! — the Tzara'at affliction had been healed from the Metzora." (14:3)

R' Shmuel d'Ouzida z"l (Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; late 1500's) writes: It is well known that a patient's mental health affects his ability to recover from a physical ailment. One might have expected, therefore, that a Metzora would not be quarantined outside of the camp all alone, but rather would have been told to remain in the most comfortable surroundings possible.

The Torah is teaching, however, that Tzara'at is not a physical ailment but rather a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness. The cure for Tzara'at is not rest; it is Teshuvah.

This, explains R' Shmuel, is why our verse says, "*The Tzara'at affliction had been healed from the Metzora*." - If the Tzara'at is healed, it is "from the Metzora" himself; because he found the strength within himself to repent. (Midrash Shmuel: Introduction)

וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת. וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת. וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־ הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה - *"For the person being purified [from Tzara'at] there shall be taken two live, kosher birds . . . and the one bird shall be slaughtered . . . he shall set the live bird free upon the open field." (14:4-7)*



Why take a bird only to release it back into the wild?

R' Yehoshua Rokeach z"l (1825-1894 second Belzer Rebbe) explains: **The Zohar** teaches that Tzara'at is not only a punishment for speaking Lashon Ha'ra, it also is a punishment for those who, because of excessive humility, do not speak up when they should.

A person needs to know that there is a time for silence, but also a time and place for saying what must be said. This is symbolized by two birds–creatures that have a tendency to chatter. One is slaughtered, symbolizing the need to remain quiet, while the other is released, symbolizing the need to talk. (Sefer MaHaRY)

R' Eliyahu Dessler used to tell newlyweds that the key to a successful marriage is that each partner should always try to make the other happy. But when one constantly makes demands of the other, happiness will not be theirs. ~ Michtav MaiEliyahu

"Baruch Atah……..Shelo Asani Goy " Tzadikim said that a person can be B'Simchah the entire day merely from that fact that he is a Jew and is a part of Hashem's nation. ~ R' Avrohom Schorr

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ – '***This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification***.' (Vayikra 14:2)

R' Shimon Sofer z"l (1821-1883; rabbi of Krakow, Poland) asks: Why did the Torah not use a simpler phrase, **זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע** – '***This is the law of the metzora*** ...'?

He answers: If the Torah had stated, "This is the law of the metzora," it would have implied that there definitely would be a metzora in the future. The Torah did not wish to express such a pessimistic thought and therefore stated, "This shall be the law of the metzora" should the circumstance ever arise. (Michtav Sofer)

וּבָא אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ הַבַּיִת וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כְּנֶגַע נִרְאָה לִי בַּבָּיִת - "***The one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the kohen, saying, 'Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house'***." (Vayikra 14:35)

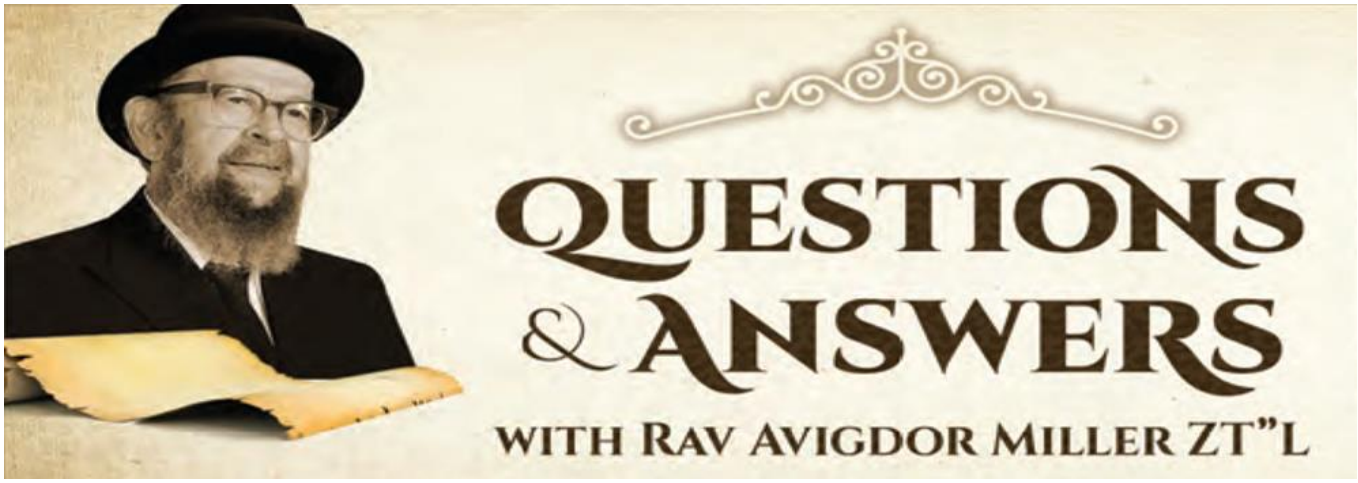
Rashi z"l comments: "Even if he is a learned man and knows for sure that it is a plague, he shall not decide the matter as a certainty saying, 'a plague has shown itself to me,' but rather, 'something like a plague has shown itself to me'."

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) observes that it is bad manners to appear certain of something, rather than unsure, as the Gemara (Berachot 4a) teaches, "Develop a habit of saying, 'I don't know'." (Da'at Torah)

וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֶרֶז וּשְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב - "***For the person being purified there shall be taken .. ezov/hyssop.***" (14:4)

One of the "pieces" of the metzora's sacrifice was an ezov, a type of grass. Chazal say that it must be a plain ezov, not an "ezov romi," nor an "ezov kuchli," and not any other type of ezov that has an adjective modifying its name.

R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita explains that the lowly grass represents humility. True humility is "plain," with no conditions (i.e., the adjectives). It is not "romi" ("high"), i.e., a false humility. It is not "kuchli" ("makeup"–from "kechol," a type of eye shadow), i.e., something that one "puts on" for others to see. (Ta'am Vada'at)





What should I think about on Rosh Chodesh Iyar?

You know, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan you were asking Hakodosh Boruch Hu, "Oy Hashem, please give us life." We're worried every Rosh Chodesh; who knows what's going to be. The people who passed away last month weren't expecting it.

Now, suppose someone would tell you, "My friend, I have a secret to tell you. I was listening in to the Beis Din Shel Ma'alah and they said that you're going to get a whole month of life for the coming month." Oh, what a happiness it would be! If someone would know for sure he's going to live the whole month, it's a happiness. A month of life is a gift. A month of life?! It's diamonds.

Are we happy? Sure; that's why we say Hallel. We're wild with happiness! We lived a month already! We look back at the past

month, the month of Nissan – all the hachonos for Pesach, and then the whole Yom Tov, and then after Yom Tov – we were busy all month and now the month came to an end. Boruch Hashem, no big troubles came during the month. So what's the question?! It's a happiness, certainly it's a happiness. It's the happiness of being alive. And now we ask Hashem for the next month in ya'aleh v'yavo.

I want to tell you something. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "You're asking for another month? It depends on how your attitude was to the past month. Did you appreciate the month of Nissan?" First you have to say to Hashem: "Hodu lashem ki tov ki l'olam chasdo," in Hallel. "We thank You Hashem, how good You were to us this past month. Now please give us another month."

"Oh," Hashem says. "That's what I want to hear." And if that's the case so He'll give us another month. So therefore Rosh Chodesh in itself is the biggest gift. Life is the biggest gift. The pashtus of what Rosh Chodesh means is enough for us to spend the day in gratitude to Hashem for having lived another month.



Should a yeshivah boy wear nice clothing even during the week? What about a tie?

Now, this question is in order. A yeshiva man always should be presentable because he has the responsibility of the Torah on his shoulders. He represents the Torah and therefore it's a heavy responsibility. Like the gemara (Shabbos 114a) says, **כָּל־מְשַׂנְאַי אָהֲבוּ מָוֶת**- Hashem says - 'All who hate me, love death.' (Mishlei 8:36). But our sages add another layer of meaning to this possuk. They say, **״מְשַׂנְאַי״, אֶלָּא ״מַשְׂנִיאַי״ אַל תִּקְרֵי** - don't read it as "those who hate Me," but "those who make others hate Me."

If you're known, if you're recognized as a yeshiva man, if you wear a black hat for instance, then the hat must be dusted, not dusty. Otherwise, wear a gray hat. Certainly people who represent the Torah, people with beards and so on must make a good impression.

What about a tie? It depends to which group you belong. Some groups don't have neckties.



What is something we can think about while we're busy with the preparations for Pesach?

One thing you can spend time on is appreciating that the Am Yisroel are *tzmei'im l'avodas yotzrom* — they're thirsty for mitzvos. Poshuteh Jews are keeping the Torah with all their hearts. Men and women boys and girls are getting ready for Pesach and it's not easy work but they're doing it anyhow.

Some people want to dodge their work for Pesach – they want to go to a hotel. But those who are thirsty for mitzvos don't dodge work. They want to work because it's a mitzvah. It's shver, it's not easy – heint it's doubly shver because erev Pesach is Shabbos but they're happy to do it. They're not going to dodge their responsibilities. Taking things in and out; bringing in the Pesachdige keilim, taking out the chametz – all kind of preparations.

Now, I'm not interested in changing the curtains. Changing the curtains is not necessary. You want to make a spring house cleaning, you want to change the curtains, I'm moichel that. But to prepare for Pesach – it's a very great mitzvah! And many, many, very poshuteh people are laboring to prepare for Pesach! You have to appreciate them. They're tzmei'im, they're thirsty for avodas yotzrom.

We're accustomed to seeing it and so we don't appreciate it but now is a good time to think about it. We should train ourselves to see the greatness of the Am Yisroel, how much people are willing to do in order to carry out the pratim of the mitzvos. And it's a very important shleimus to appreciate that.

No matter how great you are in avodas Hashem, how great you are in knowledge of Torah, you must add this information, this appreciation of the Am Yisroel to your personality.



The Candy that Saved the Baby - In Memory of the Skverer Rebbetzin z"l

The fugitives silently made their way in the smuggler's footsteps, under the cover of darkness.

Young parents, a baby, and a heartless gentile smuggler who was only in it for the money…

The smuggler knew very well that if they were discovered, they would be killed on the spot and without any justice, so he warned the small group in advance that they would have to hurry. He barely gave them time to breathe.

The father, Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Hager, who later served as the "**Yeshuot Moshe," the Vizhnitzer Rebbe z"l**, held his young daughter Chaya Chana and tried to calm her down from crying. But she would not calm down. And the smuggler, with evil and burning eyes, turned and searched in the darkness for the baby's head. For her throat…

He said she should be strangled to death, because if not – the whole group, including the smuggler himself, would be shot dead.

The father and mother begged, but to no avail. The gentile's movements were quick and brutal, and the baby still cried.

Suddenly, G-d ordered a colourful and sweet candy. The one-year-old baby calmed down on the spot, and by the grace of the G-d, the lives of all the members of the group were saved.

It was on the 7th of Iyar 5704 (1944), nearly eighty years ago. On that day, the day of the salvation of the Vizhnitzer Rebbe is celebrated. Already in Groswardein, he headed a large yeshiva, Talmud Torah school, and great enterprises of Torah and charity.

In Israel, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe restored the large and branched chassidic court, and he had more sons and daughters, of whom the sons and sons-in-law are revered rebbes, leaders of large and vast communities in Israel and in the United States.

His eldest daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Chana, the one who walked the path of horror with him in his escape from the Nazi inferno, had the privilege of marrying the Skverer Rebbe, also a Holocaust survivor, and together they founded one of the largest chassidic groups in the world, Skverer Chassidism, centered in New Skver, close to Monsey, New York, United States.



The Skverer Rebbetzin's funeral

Now, in the days of mourning for this righteous rebbetzin, who passed away at the age of 81 after years of suffering and hardships, many chassidim are gathering to comfort the mourners, amongst the rebbes of our

generation: her husband, the Skverer Rebbe; her brothers, the Vizhnitzer rebbes; and her sisters, the rebbetzins of Belz and Satmar.

They now speak with great admiration about this righteous woman, her good deeds, and her compassionate heart. She was a woman of action, and many charitable and benevolent institutions were under her management and presidency.



For example, take the amazing institution, by any standard, "Em B'Yisrael" (A Jewish Mother), the wonderful convalescent home for postpartum women that the rebbetzin founded without any profit. Perhaps a few pictures from the magnificent place will help to define the nature and character of the place, which is beyond words and explanations.







The Skverer Rebbetzin, who as a tender baby escaped from the jaws of the murderers, and just before the rescue almost met her death were it not for one sweet candy, dedicated her whole life to babies and their mothers. She would visit her institution, which was so close to her heart, and did everything she could for the benefit of the mothers and to ease their suffering.

May her soul be bound in the bonds of life.



צִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְלָקַ֛ח לַמִּטַּהֵ֖ר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִ֣ים חַיּ֑וֹת טְהֹרֹ֔ות וְעֵ֥ץ אֶ֖רֶז וּשְׁנִ֣י תֹולַ֑עַת וְאֵזֹֽב

'***The Kohen shall command to take for the person undergoing purification two live, pure birds (kosher), cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop***.' (14:4)

The commentators explain that the purification process is all about infusing the metzora with a sense of humility. The cedar wood represents his arrogant nature prior to his sin, with the crimson thread (crimson is the product of a dye taken from a lowly worm), hyssop, a lowly bush, atoning for his previous haughtiness (when these substances are dipped into the blood of the birds).

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl (cited by his son in Rav Schwab on Chumash), suggests that these three items: cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop represent three types of people who need to focus on the lessons of humility.

A Jew who has very little spiritual capital, who has not learned, who has not performed good deeds, and whose davening is equally deficient has very little – if anything – about which to be arrogant. He is likened to the lowly hyssop that has no value.

A Jew who has learned Torah, performed good deeds and davens as a Jew should – but acknowledges that he has sinned – is far from perfect. He is to be compared to the pure white wool that is stained crimson by the worm's blood. He is substance that has been besmirched (a victim of relying on his laurels and perhaps not doing enough).

The third person requires a different lesson in humility. He is a person of true stature, a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who has major spiritual achievements in his repertoire. Furthermore, he has

not sinned. He, too, must humble himself like the eitz erez, a branch (of cedar wood) taken from cedar tree. In comparison to the truly great people that preceded him, he is but a branch of a large tribe, a twig– a sampling from a large, powerful tree. He, therefore, has very little reason for pride.

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע – '***This shall be the law of the Metzora***.' (14:2)



Imagine working an entire lifetime on a project, building up a company from scratch until it is a global player, only to lose everything due to a simple, foolish error. It would be devastating.

The Chovas HaLevavos writes that, when an individual speaks lashon hora against someone – even if the "someone" is evil – the one who speaks forfeits all of his mitzvos, which are, in turn, given to the person against whom he has spoken. The speaker becomes the sorry "beneficiary" of the slandered person. It seems like an unfair trade, but, unfortunately, it is what it is. He has lost it all. What is worse, the other fellow -- with whom he apparently has issues -- has just been bequeathed all of his mitzvos and zchusim, merits. The "speaker" is left spiritually devoid of anything, while the "other guy" has just won the spiritual lottery!

Horav Yehudah Tzedakah, zl, applies this thought to explain an ambiguous phrase, part of the Tefillah, prayer, recited in the Hadran, upon completion of a Tractate of Talmud. **שֶׁתְּהֵא תּוֹרָתְךָ אֻמָּנוּתֵנוּ בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וּתְהֵא עִמָּנוּ לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא** - *"That your Torah will be our vocation in this world and will be with us in the World to Come."*

What is the meaning of this phrase? If Torah is one's vocation in this world, if he devotes his time to studying Torah, why should it not accompany him, acting as his source of merit in the World to Come?

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that one can arrive in Olam Habba empty-handed, despite having lived a life replete with Torah study and mitzvah performance. It might have been one foolish envy, which spurred him to compound his senseless behavior with a few choice negative comments about the person who was the subject of his envy. An entire life of observance – gone.

We ask Hashem to protect us, so that what we have achieved in olam hazeh accompanies us to Olam Habba. He had been insecure concerning his friend's success; he was troubled by an individual's lack of ethical/moral behavior. At the time, in his small mind, it might have seemed to be righteous indignation. Hashem considers it to be blatant lashon hora. The fellow whom he was trying to put down ultimately receives the reward and honor originally set aside for the one who ran off at the mouth.- Now, he really has something about which to be jealous.

כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם לַאֲחֻזָּה וְנָתַתִּי נֶגַע צָרַעַת בְּבֵית אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם – '***And I will place a tzaraas affliction upon a house in the land of your possession***.' (14:34)

Chazal teach that, when Klal Yisrael was informed that their homes in Eretz Yisrael would be visited with plagues, it was actually good news. Apparently, when the Emorites who had inhabited the Holy Land heard that the Jews were coming, they hid all of their treasures in the walls of the houses.

For forty years, as the Jews sojourned in the wilderness, the Emorites occupied themselves with hiding their gold and silver, lest the Jews find them. Now, when a Jew acts in such a manner that he deserves that a plague be delivered upon his house, it will ultimately

be destroyed, revealing the hidden treasures. In other words, the individual is first issued a warning concerning his behavior. Then, Hashem strikes his material assets, and, if the man does not take the hint, Hashem metes out His punishment on his body.

Here, we have a unique situation in which the punishment is the catalyst for reward. How are we to understand this?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, explains that no person leaves this world without his designated dose of yissurim, troubles. He might go through "dry" spells where everything seems to be going his way. Sooner or later, however, something will surface to spoil the "fun." The question is how one views the challenges, trials and tribulations which ruin his day.

Chazal teach us a practical approach towards viewing yissurim, a positive perspective to adopt in life. A man notes what seems to be a plague on the wall of his house. He summons the Kohen, who informs him that it be best that he remove everything from his house, lest it become tamei, impure. The man must leave his house, move into a motel and wait. The Kohen returns, looks at the plague, and notices that it appears to have spread. Removing a few bricks will not suffice. The malignancy has metastasized throughout the house. There is only one option: destroy the house.

The man must be miserable. Try living in a cramped motel room with a family. The lack of comforts, the expense, can be overwhelming. All this, only to discover that, at the end of the day, he no longer has a house in which to live.

Then, all of a sudden, he discovers gold! His entire attitude has changed. It has all been worth it. Did it have to be this way? If Hashem had wanted to reward him, He could have given him the winning powerball ticket. That certainly would have been easier than waiting in a motel for a few weeks, not knowing what the next day would bring.

Rav Karlinstein explains that Hashem wants to give this man a reward, but first, he has to pass the test of faith in Hashem. The Almighty subjects him to yissurim. How will he react? Will he rebel, or will he remain faithful, accepting, acquiescing to whatever Hashem throws at him?

It has all been a test. If he fails the test, if every step of the way every time something goes wrong, he complains, gives up hope, blames everyone and everything for his bad luck, then he has indicated that he reserved his faith in Hashem for happy times. When the going becomes rough, he is gone, his commitment has waned. Hashem will change the plague, so that the Kohen will purify the house. This will save the man's house, but he will lose out on the treasure. He does not deserve it.

We cannot run away from challenge; trial and tribulation are integral parts of life. One receives a "grade" for passing a test. Without the test, there can be no grade. Avraham Avinu passed ten tests, emerging triumphant, thus earning a place as our nation's Patriarch. Every great leader has his share of trials. These are the stepping stones in his ascension as leader.

When a person observes the back of a needlepoint, he sees disheveled threads every which way. Nothing seems to be placed in an organized manner. Yet, when he turns it over, he sees a beautiful image, a multicolored mosaic which captivates him.

Life is like that. In this world, we see the disheveled, inconsequentially laid-out threads. One day, we will be given the opportunity to look at the other side, filled with beauty and in perfect order. In other words, a test/challenge, is an opportunity for growth. If one passes the test with flying colors, exhibiting his faith and commitment, despite being subject to pain and anxiety, he will be rewarded with incredible reward – often discovering the hidden treasure which has previously been unbeknownst --and otherwise elusive -- to him.

The name Brisk conjures up images of Torah eminence at the highest level. The yeshivah world has been totally transformed by the Brisker derech, analytical approach to study. One can say that no area of Torah erudition has not in some way been affected by the House of Brisk.

The z'chus, merit, of serving as progenitor of this extraordinary Torah dynasty is awesome – especially since this individual started out neither as a Rav or as a Rosh Yeshivah, but as a G-d-fearing, Torah committed, wealthy layman.

In Williampole, a district of Kovno, there lived **Rav Moshe Soloveitzchik**, a wealthy industrialist, who had inherited large hardwood forests from his parents. He entered into the lumber business, which, at the time, was quite profitable. Despite his great wealth, he never forgot his less-than-successful brethren; his home became a beacon for tzedakah and chesed, charity and kindness, to all who entered it.

All went well until, one day, he made a bad investment. In the space of virtually overnight, he was transformed into a penniless person, who himself required tzedakah to support his mere existence. When the richest man in the community suddenly became a pauper, the people were left dumbstruck. What was the reason for this Divine Justice? Why did such a good man become the victim of misfortune?

Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, convened a special bais din, court, to determine the cause of Rav Moshe's sudden bankruptcy. After meticulous examination, it was determined that Rav Moshe had done one thing wrong. He had gone against Chazal's teachings that one not give more than twenty percent of his fortune to charity. Rav Moshe gave far beyond the twenty percent.

Although this was the decision rendered by the bais din, Rav Chaim could not reconcile himself to it. Thus, he left the matter hanging, waiting to see what would happen. In the meantime, not having a business to attend to, Rav Moshe did not fall into deep depression;

He took out his Gemorah and sat and learned all day in the bais hamedrash. Slowly, hidden talents began to surface, and, in a short period of time, he became recognized as an erudite Torah scholar. Eventually, he achieved the position of Av Bais Din of Kovno!

Years went by, and he encouraged his sons to follow in his path by devoting their lives to Torah study and dissemination. They listened and became accomplished talmidei chachamim.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner commented, "Now I understand why Rav Moshe lost his fortune virtually overnight. His great acts of tzedakah earned a formidable reward: to sire a dynasty of extraordinary talmidei chachamim. Such a family finds it very challenging to achieve such an extreme level of erudition amid the material comforts that accompany wealth. Thus, he had to lose his money in order to pave the way for the dynasty of which he would be the progenitor.

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik's son, Yosef, married the daughter of Rav Chaim Volozhiner. After his father's passing, he assumed the position of Av Bais Din of Kovno. He became sick shortly thereafter, leaving this world as a young man, passing the baton of leadership to his young son, Yitzchak Ze'ev. The young boy grew up and married his stepsister, Rivka Shapiro. Their son was Yosef Dov HaLevi, the famous Bais HaLevi.

Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev chose to be the consummate baal habayis, lay person – an outstanding talmid chacham, as well as a dedicated public servant. - The rest is history.

We must remember that this history was made possible only because, upon losing his fortune, Rav Moshe did not descend into a deep depression. Rather, he immersed himself in learning – accepting Rashi's decree. It was his acquiescence that catalyzed the metamorphosis of Torah learning for all time.

וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת. וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת. וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־ הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה – '***And for the person being purified there shall be taken two live clean birds… and one bird shall be slaughtered… and he shall set free the live bird upon the open field***.' (14:4,5,7)

As part of the process of purifying the metzora, two birds are brought as an offering to Hashem. Only one of them is killed, however, while the other one is set free.

Birds are used for the korban, sacrifice, because birds are constantly chirping, and the metzora had not stopped spewing his slander when he should have kept his mouth shut. This explains why one bird is killed, but what about the second bird? Why is it released?

The explanation as cited by the commentators is that the Torah is hereby circumventing a common error, thus imparting an important lesson.

If there was only one bird and it was killed, one might suggest that speaking is a bad thing. Keep your mouth shut. Only evil can result from speech. This is, of course, untrue. There is good speech and bad speech – a time to speak, and a time and place when one should not articulate his feelings and position.

Talking Torah – utilizing one's ability to speak to assist, guide and inspire others – constitutes good speech. Taking a stand for the Torah way – repudiating those who usurp the Torah and its disseminators – constitutes good speech. Just simple, friendly conversation can make someone's day.

The Torah is teaching us that the bird representing evil speech is killed. The other bird is released, because it represents the inherent good one can accomplish with his G-d-given power of speech.

Alternatively, we may suggest that both birds represent the baal lashon hora, slanderer. Together they impart a crucial message to

him: ultimately, the only one who will be hurt is you. The subject of your slander will eventually be vindicated. True, he might, as a result of your slander, suffer temporarily. After the smoke clears, the only one that will be destroyed is the slanderer. The other fellow, whom he sought to destroy, will "fly away" free and clear, expunged of the dirt that the slanderer attempted to throw at him.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, quotes Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zl, who explains that while a snake has two reasons/opportunities for biting – neither one delivers him any pleasure. Other animals attack their prey, but they, at least, derive pleasure from devouring it. The snake bites for the sole sake of biting – nothing else. Additionally, even when the snake consumes its enemy, it derives no pleasure. All that it tastes is dirt. The snake was cursed that, while its food would be plentiful, it would only taste like dirt.

Likewise, the baal lashon hora speaks vilely of his fellow for the sole purpose of inflicting his "bite" – not for any benefit or personal gain. He wants to make him hurt. - This is perhaps his source of pleasure – the other person's pain.

In another instance, the slanderer is bent on doing away with a competitor, attempting to climb the ladder of opportunity upon the shoulders of his fellow. The slanderer does not realize that Hashem decides who wins, who succeeds, and who loses. Thus, the slanderer has no gain from the hurt that he causes, because the final "word" is up to Hashem.

"People think that there's much bigger and better things waiting for them out there. They are often mistaken; The real gold is to be found in improving your situation where you are." ~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer Zt'l.

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ - "*This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification*." (14:2)

We do not realize the power of the words that exit our mouths. Indeed, it is possible that a simple, innocuous comment made needlessly can have a far-reaching effect, as demonstrated by the following story:

The Chafetz Chaim and another rav once set out on a three-day journey on a dvar mitzvah, a matter of religious significance. They stopped at an inn, whose impeccable kashrus standards were well-known, to have dinner.

After the meal, the proprietress of the restaurant came over and asked them if they were pleased with their dinner. The Chafetz Chaim immediately responded in the affirmative. His co-traveler concurred but added that a bit more salt would have enhanced the meal.

As the woman left, the Chafetz Chaim turned white and exclaimed, "I cannot believe it. All my life I have avoided hearing or speaking lashon hara. Now I travel with you, and I hear lashon hara. This is an indication that the purpose of the trip is not really a mitzvah. Otherwise, this would not have happened to me.

When his companion saw the Chafetz Chaim's reaction, he became flustered and frightened: "What did I say that was so bad? I only mentioned that a bit more salt would have been appreciated!"

"You do not realize the impact of your words," cried the Chafetz Chaim. "Our hostess probably does not do her own cooking. Her cook could very well be a poor widow who has been forced to take this job to support her family. As a result of your criticism, the owner will complain to the cook, who, in self-defence, will deny the claim and say that she did put in enough salt. This will escalate to an all-out argument between the owner and the cook, resulting in the poor widow's dismissal. So, you have caused unnecessary strife between

two people, as well as a loss of livelihood for a widow and her orphans. Look at how many sins you committed with your "innocent" words. You spoke lashon hara, and you caused the owner and myself to hear lashon hara. You caused the owner to repeat the lashon hara, which created a situation in which the cook was compelled to lie. You also caused pain to a widow, and an argument between the owner and the cook. Six sins: Is that enough?"

The rabbi looked at the Chafetz Chaim, smiled and said, "You know, you are carrying this a bit far. Surely a few words could not have caused such harm."

The Chafetz Chaim said, "Come, let us go to the kitchen and see for ourselves."

They turned towards the kitchen and entered, only to hear and see everything exactly as the Chafetz Chaim described it would happen. The owner was berating the cook, who, amid tears streaming down her face, was gathering her few things together and preparing to leave the employ of the restaurant.

The rabbi absorbed all of this and felt terrible. He immediately went over to the cook and begged her forgiveness for any distress he might have caused. He pleaded with the owner to reconsider her position vis-à-vis the cook, which she did. Indeed, she quickly remarked, "I only wanted to impress upon her the need to be more careful."

אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָתָּה וְאַצִּיעָה שְׁאוֹל הִנֶּךָּ - "If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in the lowest depths, behold, You are there." (Tehillim 139:8)

"No matter where you may find yourself in life, know that Hashem is right there with you." ~ Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע – '***This shall be the law of the Metzora***.' (14:2)



There is a famous Chassidic tale which addresses the ramifications of lashon hara, slanderous speech, that is well worth repeating:

In a small town in Eastern Europe a fine man lived who had one failing: he talked too much. He was well-liked and, thus, successful in his business endeavor. The problem was that when one is successful due to his personality, obviously a lot of talking is involved. Inevitably, it leads to talking about people, with the details often embellished to garner greater interest. This is lashon hara. Otherwise, the fellow was a real "nice guy."

One day, this "nice guy" went too far. He discovered something about a fellow Jew. It was not terrible, but interesting enough that he could not wait to share it with a couple of dozen of his closest friends.

Each time he related the information, he enhanced it slightly. Within a few days the entire town was aware of this lashon hara about another businessman. People refrained from visiting his business. His reputation was ruined – all because of a little lashon hara, coupled with a lot of simple-minded people.

The heartbroken victim of this senseless slander went to the town's Rav and complained. At least, the Rav should relate to Mr. "Nice Guy" the effect of his slander.

The Rav called in the baal lashon hara, who now felt terrible. What could he do to atone for his misdeeds? "Rebbe, I will do anything that you ask of me," the man said. He was sincerely distraught. He had never meant to hurt anyone. He was just having fun – at someone else's expense – but, regrettably, this is something we rarely realize until it is too late.

The Rav looked at him and said, "Bring me a feather pillow."

"How many do you want? Rebbe, I will bring you a whole box of pillows, if that is what it takes," the man replied.

"No, one pillow will do," the Rav answered.

The man returned later with a feather pillow, "Here, Rebbe, now, what should I do?"

The Rav said, "Slice open the pillow."

The man promptly slit open the pillow, allowing for the light feathers to swirl everywhere. In fact, many of them flew out the open window.

Ten minutes went by, and the Rav said, "Now, bring back all the feathers and place them back in the pillow. Not a single one may be missing!"

The man stared at the Rav in disbelief. "Rebbe, it is impossible. Once the feathers fly out, they are gone. Who knows where the wind carried them?"

"Now you understand the seriousness of lashon hara. Once gossip, a rumour, a secret, leaves your mouth, you have no idea where it will end up. It is no different from the feathers of the pillow."

The man was told to apologize to his victim and to everyone whom he had included in his lashon hara. He was also "encouraged" to study the laws pertaining to this most common of sins.

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן – *'This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification. He shall be brought to the Kohen.'* (14:2)



The Torah commands the people to bring a metzora to the Kohen. This implies that the metzora is brought even by force, if necessary. The Ibn Ezra explains that human nature's control over a person is compelling. The moment that he is healed from his illness, he no longer senses the urgency to attain his purity. Thus, he must be brought to the Kohen.

Horav Mordechai Gifter, Zt'l, feels that this applies to all areas of human endeavor. When the metzora is in pain, when he suffers various afflictions, he does anything to effect a release from his anguish. Yet, once his sickness has faded, and he has performed teshuvah, repentence, he is no longer as eager to complete the process to attain purity. Once the suffering is over, his attitude changes. He must now be compelled to go to the Kohen.

Is it any different with us? Do we pray only when it hurts, becoming lax in our attitude as soon as the circumstances have changed?

Perhaps if our attitude throughout our avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty, would be consistent, Hashem would not need to send us "little reminders."

"Our greatest accomplishment in this world is to think of Hashem and to be aware of Him at all times. If we attribute all our happiness to Him, we live joyful lives." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה – '***And he shall let the living bird loose into the open field.***' (14:7)

The process of purifying a metzora involves taking two live birds and following a detailed procedure with each of them. The Kohen slaughters one bird, while he sets the other bird free.

This procedure is unique to the concept of sacrifices, which previously had been applied only to offerings brought and sacrificed upon the Mizbayach, Altar. This is indeed a radical concept that begs elucidation.



Horav Baruch Halevi Epstein, zl, in his Tosefes Brachah gives a noteworthy explanation:

Until now, the victim was known as a tamei, impure person. He was an outcast who was relegated to cry out, "Tamei, tamei!" in order to ward off anyone else who might come near him. It was also done to encourage others to pray in his behalf. In any event, he was certainly not the most popular person in town. Now, however, he is released, he is clean, and he may return to society.

By sending away the bird free and clear, he is publicly announcing his newly found freedom. He, however, needs acceptance.

All too often, one who has erred and has repented experiences difficulty re-entering society. People tend to have long memories. Some do not forget; others do not forgive. - This person is no longer confined by the Torah. He should, likewise, no longer be confined by us.

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע '***This shall be the law of the metzora***.' (14:2)



The Midrash recounts the story of a peddler, who plied his wares in the villages surrounding Tzippori. He would proclaim, "Who wishes to buy an elixir of life?"

Understandably, buyers from the entire area sought to purchase such a desirable commodity. Rabbi Yanai, who was studying Torah in the proximity of the peddler's announcement, called down to him, "Come up and let me purchase your wares".

The peddler responded, "People of your calibre have no need for my wares."

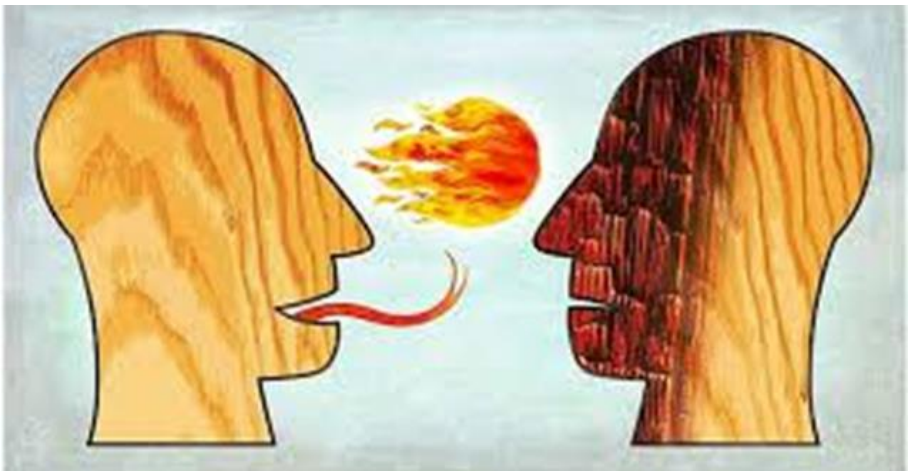
Refusing to be brushed aside, Rabbi Yanai was determined to see this elixir. Finally, the peddler deferred to Rabbi Yanai and came up to his study. He proceeded to a Sefer Tehillim (34) out of his sack and pointed to the pesukim:- מִי־הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים אֹהֵב יָמִים לִרְאוֹת טוֹב נְצֹר לְשׁוֹנְךָ מֵרָע וּשְׂפָתֶיךָ מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה - "***Who is the man who wishes life, loves days to see good.' Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from evil***."

Hearing this, Rabbi Yanai said, "All my life I have been reciting this pasuk, never realizing the simplicity of its message until this peddler came to enlighten me".

The Midrash concludes that this is the reason that Moshe exhorted Bnei Yisrael with the words, "*This shall be the law of the metzora*". The word מְצֹרָע is divisible into its component parts: **מוציא שם רע**, "*one who spreads rumors of a bad reputation*." - Moshe emphasized the law of the slanderer because lashon hara exacts a terrible toll on people.

This Midrash is often cited by the various commentators in order to elaborate upon the grave sin of lashon hora, suggesting the

preventive measures one must take to refrain from slandering others.



Probably the most significant lesson to be derived from here is that this elixir of life refers not only to one's spiritual life, but it applies equally to one's physical life. One who disparages, destroys others - and himself.

This lesson seems simple enough. What was the content of the peddler's exposition of the pasuk that effected such a change in Rabbi Yanai? What knowledge did Rabbi Yanai now possess, which he did not have earlier?

Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, addresses this question. He explains that although Rabbi Yanai understood the therapeutic powers of maintaining a clean mouth, he assumed that such a lesson/message could be learned only in the Bais Hamedrash. Such a healing elixir was not something one would typically find in a peddler's bag or in the streets of Tzippori.

This was the powerful lesson Rabbi Yanai derived. David Hamelech's message was so simple it could have been learned anywhere. It was basic. If one wants to live, he must be careful about what he says.

Second, we see how Chazal assimilated any form of knowledge. Any truth that was clear to them became integrated into their lifestyle --- immediately. If it did not affect the way that they lived, the way they interacted with people, then it was not meaningful to them. Hence, so long as Rabbi Yanai did not perceive the profundity of this pasuk's message, it was not manifest in his lifestyle.

וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְלָקַ֛ח לַמִּטַּהֵ֖ר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִ֣ים חַיּ֑וֹת טְהֹרוֹת֙ וְעֵ֣ץ אֶ֔רֶז וּשְׁנִ֥י תוֹלַ֖עַת וְאֵזֹֽב

'***The Kohen shall command; and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live, clean birds***...'(14:4)

Ibn Ezra contends that the Kohen "takes" from his own money to supply the necessary components for the purification process.

This is a bit unusual. When a person goes to a doctor to be healed, the physician expects the individual to pay for services rendered. Is the Kohen any different than a doctor? Why should he, the spiritual physician, pay for the healing process? The Torah should be as sensitive to the Kohen's money as it is to the metzora!

Al HaTorah identifies a practical reason for this distinction. The person who is stricken with tzaraas is an individual who has a loose tongue, who disparages others with ease. He is also selfish, filled with envy, never willing to share or help another Jew. Regrettably, the focus of much slander are the spiritual leaders, Rabbi's, Torah scholars, teachers etc.

In an attempt to punish the slanderer therapeutically, the Torah places him in the position to be the beneficiary of the Kohen's gift. Imagine, he will receive a gift from the victim of his disparaging speech!

Now the same tongue that has spoken evil will speak good. He will laud the person whom he has ridiculed. Furthermore, if the Kohen desires to succeed as a spiritual healer, he must possess a good heart, an open heart. He must want to share his with others, so that he serves as a role model for the people he seeks to help.

When we open our hearts to others, they will one day reciprocate.

"Hashem is always providing us with opportunities, but it's up to us to recognize and take advantage of them." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Last Names

For thousands of years, most Jews were called by their first name, then *Ben* ("son of") for a male, or *Bas* ("daughter of") for a female, plus the name of their father or mother. Jews are still referred to this way when they receive an *aliya* in shul, at weddings and when prayed for.

After the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, Jewish last names started to become more widespread. Some wanted to recall the places their families had left. As family names became more popular across Europe in general, more and more Jews began to adopt them, often choosing names that referred to local landmarks or places. This process accelerated under the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Joseph II, who ruled much of Europe from 1765–1790 and forced all his subjects to adopt German surnames.

Here are some telling facts from Jewish last names. For example, **כץ** is an acronym for **כהן צדק** ("righteous priest"). Another common surname for a Kohen family is Kopshitz: *Kop* in Yiddish means "head" and *shitz* refers to the *tzitz* worn upon the Kohen Gadol's head.

The last name **סמוט**, Samet is short for **סור מרע ועשה טוב**.

The family name **בל**, Ball, stands for **בן לוי** while the name **אמבש**, Ambush, is an acronym for **אני מאמין באמונה שלמה**.

The Maharam Shik (1807–1879) remarked that he had a tradition that when his family left the dominion of the king of Estreich (Austria), they had to assume a family name. Since the family head was concerned about the problem with using a secular name (which the *Kadmonim* say), he chose as his family name the name **שיק**, as it is an acronym for the phrase **שם ישראל קודש** ("Jewish names are holy").

Here are some other telling facts from Jewish family names. The last name **גץ**, Getz is an acronym for **גבאי צדקה** while **מץ**, Metz is short for **מורה צדק**. The name **זקהם**, Zakheim is an acronym for **זרע קודש המה** while the name **ישר** (Yashar) stands for **יחיה שנים רבות**.

Here is another interesting fact about Jewish last names: "-witz" is a German variation on a Slavic suffix "-vich," "-vic," "-wits," "-witz," or "-wicz," which means "son of," "child of," "family of," "clan of," etc. So, the last name Abramowitz means "son of (or "child, family, clan of") Avraham" (with variations that include Abramovich, Abraham, Avraham, Abrahams, Abrams, Abramoff, Abramsky, Abramson, Abramzada and Ben Avraham), Itzkowitz (also Isaacs) means "son of Yitzchak," and Jacobowitz translates into "son of Yaakov" (variations include Jacobs, Jacobson, and Jacoby).

Of course, this means that Manishewitz translates as "son of Menashe" (the son of Yosef) and Horowitz as "son of Chur."



Beneath the Surface by R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וְהָיָה֮ בַּיּוֹם֒ הַשְּׁבִיעִי֒ יְגַלַּח֙ אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָר֔וֹ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֥וֹ וְאֶת־זְקָנ֖וֹ וְאֵ֣ת גַּבֹּ֣ת עֵינָ֑יו - '***On the seventh day he should shave off all his hair – his head, his beard, his eyebrows***.' (14:9)

The Kli Yakar explains that the Torah enumerated these three parts of the body in particular (the head, the beard, and the eyebrows) because they are connected to the three sins for which one is afflicted with Tzara'as.

The head – to atone for arrogance - one who is haughty feels that he goes first and precedes everybody else.

The beard – these are the hairs that surround the mouth – to atone for the mouth that spoke maliciously.

The eyebrows – to atone for an evil eye – he craves something that someone else has. (Parperaos LaTorah)

Working on our Middos

Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, zt"l, known by his Sefer, the **Pnei Yehoshua**, was a Torah giant. The Pnei Yehoshua has been used by many students of Gemara, and it is a work of brilliance. - This is what motivated the Pnei Yehoshua to author such a work.

On the third of Kisleiv, 1703, in the city of Lvov, the Pnei Yehoshua was teaching a group of Talmidim. Suddenly, they heard loud shooting noises, which was followed by an explosion that set off a large fire. This fire destroyed a large part of the Jewish community. Apparently, the army had stored kegs of gunpowder which exploded, and this caused the fire.

The house the Pnei Yehoshua was teaching in was demolished, but miraculously, he and his Talmidim were spared. However, his wife, his daughter and thirty-four members of the Jewish community were not as fortunate. While he was in the middle of the wreckage that had once been the room he taught Torah in, the Pnei Yehoshua took a vow, that if he managed to survive, he would spend his days and nights in constant Torah learning.

He was twenty-three years old at this time. He survived, and shortly after, he started to write his Sefer.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, said about the Pnei Yehoshua that he had completed the entire Shas thirty-six times before he wrote his Sefer.

The Chasam Sofer said that from the time of the Rashba, no Sefer had achieved the prominence and distinction of the Sefer of the

Pnei Yehoshua. The Pnei Yehoshua's learning was so intense that he could sit in the cold and not even notice. One day, his students could not leave their homes due to the bitter, cold weather. When the sun came out later in the afternoon and it warmed up enough for them to go outside, the students found the Pnei Yehoshua still wrapped in his Tallis and Tefilin, learning Torah, with icicles hanging from his beard!

After the **Chida** once visited the Pnei Yehoshua, he remarked, "I was Zocheh to greet the Pnei HaShechinah! His appearance is like a Malach Elokim!"

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Fishel Schachter said a beautiful idea over from **Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, zt"l**. In Shemoneh Esrei, we say the word 'Sheleimah' three times: Teshuvah Sheleimah, Geulah Sheleimah, and Refuah Sheleimah.

The Rambam says that 'Teshuvah Sheleimah' means that one has to do Teshuvah on such a level, that if he is presented with the same situation, he will never go back to do that Aveirah again. – We want the kind of Teshuvah that we will never go back to our Aveiros again.

Similarly, we want the kind of Refuah that the illness will never come back again, and we want the kind of Geulah that B'Ezras Hashem we should never go back to the pain of Galus again!

L'Maaseh

Rav Binyomin Pruzansky writes that Chesed is not something to do only when it comes our way, but we need to seek out opportunities to do Chesed, hoping and looking for a chance to help another Yid.

The Chofetz Chaim says that just as one must make sure to learn Torah every day, he must also make sure to perform an act of Chesed

every day. In the following story, related by **Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein**, we can see what it means to look for opportunities to do Chesed, and the lasting effect it can have:

Reuven Minzer stood on a busy street in Bnei Brak, his eyes scanning the passing cars. Finally, he spotted a taxi and waved it down. After checking that the driver was willing to take him to Cholon, he got into the back seat and noticed something unusual about the driver.

This was not your typical looking Israeli driver, who was usually dressed casually. Here was a young man with a trimmed beard, wearing a suit and a tie. He looked like he was on his way to a wedding, not on his way to Cholon with a passenger.

"Excuse me for asking..." Reuven couldn't contain his curiosity. "But why are you all dressed up? Are you coming from a wedding?"

The driver answered, "No, I am not coming from a wedding. Actually, last night I got married, and I am in the middle of my Shevah Brachos."

Reuven wished him a Mazel Tov, and then said, "I am not sure if you are aware of this, but according to Halachah (Even HaEzer 64:1), a Chosson should not go to work during the week of his Shevah Brachos. He is supposed to stay home with his wife."

The driver replied, "I wish I didn't have to work, but I am over my head in debt. My wife and I both come from poor families. Our parents didn't have enough money to pay for the wedding, and it was agreed that all of the gifts we received would cover the wedding costs. Now we have no money to our name, so this is what I have to do to get by. - I have no choice. I am driving today to earn some money to bring home to my wife."

Reuven had never heard of such a poor Chosson, and could not imagine that someone would have to leave his wife the day after their wedding in order to put bread on the table. Determined to do something about it, he wrote out a check for 1,000 Shekels and gave

it to the driver. "Here is a wedding present. Promise me that after you drop me off, you will go back home to your wife."

Overjoyed by the thoughtfulness of his passenger, and very pleased with the gift, the driver assured Reuven he would go straight home to his new wife.

A few days later, Reuven received a letter in the mail. He did not recognize the return address. It said: Dear Mr. Minzer, You have no idea what you did for me, a brand-new Kallah. For years, I waited to get married, and finally, my dream came true. But the lack of money made me feel so sad inside. It was a struggle to prepare for the wedding, to buy all the clothes and housewares I needed. We borrowed as much money as we could, and I was happy to get married with dignity. But when my husband left the morning after our wedding, I burst into tears. A Kallah is not supposed to be left alone. Then, when he returned with the check that you so generously gave, it blew life back into me. - You made my marriage.

I got your name and address from the check, so I could personally thank you for giving me life, though I can never thank you enough. - It was signed by the wife of the taxi driver.

After reading the letter, Reuven was very moved. He said to himself, "Had I known the impact my check would make, I would have given them 3,000 Shekels!"

Several days later, he received another letter, with the same return address.

'After seeing what you did for my husband, and how religious Jews treat others, I have decided that from now on, I am going to light candles each week, as well as keep Shabbos. Todah Rabah!'

Rav Pruzansky commented, "If we live each day to help another, who knows what difference we can make in their lives?"

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן – *'This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification.'* (14:2)

No purification process is more extensive than the one for the metzora. As soon as the plague surfaces, the metzora is to go to the Kohen. He is then isolated for seven days to see if it will disappear. If it is clearly tamei, a nega, plague, for which one becomes ritually impure, he is sent out of the three machanos, camps. He must be completely isolated with no one nearby and sit, wearing torn clothes, to ponder how he has ended up in this miserable place.

Once the signs of impurity have disappeared and the metzora is declared healed, he prepares for his purification and eventual return to society. He offers the korbanos, washes his clothes, and, after seven more days, his hair is cut and more korbanos are brought, until, finally, he returns as a changed man! Why so much? No other sin has a purification process which is so demanding.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz zl explains this with a mashal: If a man were permitted to enter the surgical suite of a hospital, he would notice a marked difference between the preparation for a routine surgery and that of a transplant. When the surgery is major, the room is laid out with every imaginable tool: scalpels, forceps, scissors, retractors, with advanced procedures requiring specialized tools, such as laser devices or robotic instruments. The more serious and extensive the surgery, the greater the preparation.

The fact that the Torah goes into such detail and is so demanding of the metzora, we derive how egregious is the sin of lashon hora. Indeed, Chazal (Midrash Tehillim 52:2) teach that the sin of lashon hora is more harmful than the three cardinal sins. One who murders his fellow takes his life. The slanderer, however, destroys three lives: his own, the victim's and the one who heard the lashon hora.

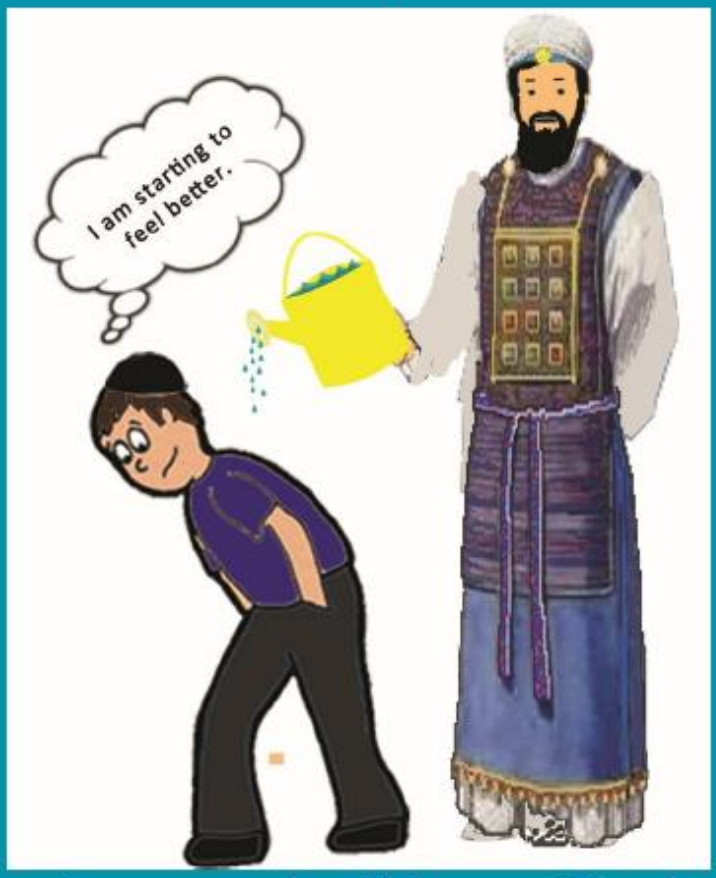


PARSHA THOUGHTS

By Mordechai Sapoznick *Flatbush*

L'zecher Nishmas Harav Chaim Leib Halevi Epstein ZT"L

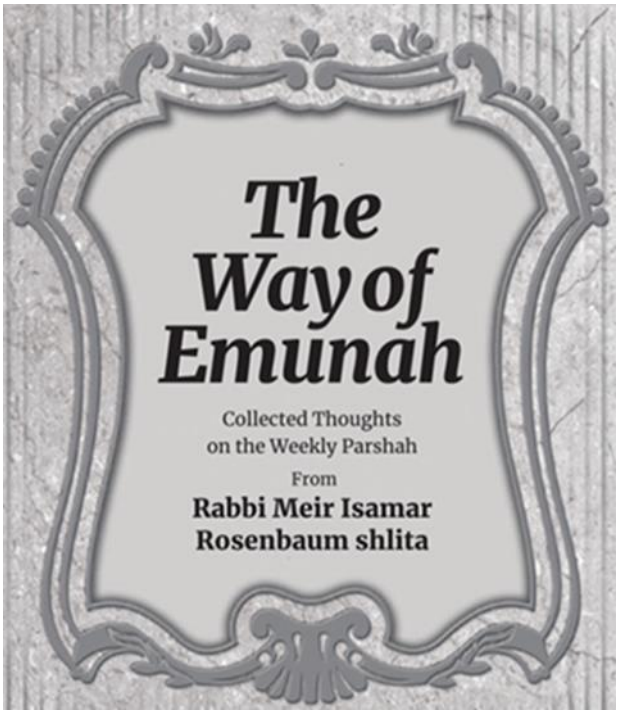
The פָּסוּק says, "אֶל כְּלִי חֶרֶשׂ עַל מַיִם חַיִּים - Into an earthenware vessel over spring water." Why does the Torah specifically say that spring water should be used in the process of purifying the metzorah? The metzorah is separated from everyone and feels embarrassed, and Hashem was concerned that this would cause him to feel depressed. Therefore, Hashem commanded that spring water should be used in the purification process which is something that can lift a person's spirits.



Dvar Torah from ספר עלינו לשבח

The head of a large company turned to R' Yisroel Salanter zt"l with the following question. He had only one free hour a day to learn. What should he learn during that time?

"Spend the hour learning Mussar," answered R' Yisroel. "If you do so, you will discover many more free hours in the day." ~ Sparks of Mussar



זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן – '***This shall be the law of the metzorah on the day of his purification, and he shall be brought to the kohen.' (14:2)***

● Healed Through Traveling to a Tzadik

The Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a explained this pasuk with the following story: **Rav Aharon Hagadol of Karlin zy"a** once sent a baal teshuva to the **Magid of Mezhritch** with a letter that said, "I am sending you the person carrying this letter. From his foot to his head he has nothing. He is full of bruises and wounds and he wants to get closer to the truth."

The baal teshuva traveled for weeks until he arrived in Mezhritch. - When he showed the Magid his letter, the Magid read it a few times but was puzzled by its content, as the man did not seem to be in such bad shape. He then said, "The holy Rav Aharon certainly wrote the truth, but the man's travels must have removed some of his imperfections."

Accordingly, this pasuk can be understood to be saying that when a metzorah comes to be purified, he should be brought to the kohen, i.e., a tzadik, and the kohen shall see him and the negah will be healed – because the travel to the tzadik itself serves to heal a person's soul.

"The greatest tragedy is not realising the full extent of your potential. Don't settle for mediocrity when you are capable of greatness." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

● Shemiras Halashon

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l would travel from place to place to sell his sefarim. Since he was usually unfamiliar with the streets of the towns he came to, he would hire a local bochur to act as his guide.

In one city, he was walking around the streets with the bochur he had hired. As they walked, they came to the home of one of the wealthy residents of the city, and the bochur said, "A rich man lives here but it isn't worthwhile to go to him because he is very stingy and he won't buy anything."

As soon as the bochur said this, the Chofetz Chaim took out his wallet and gave him all of the money he had agreed to pay for his services for the full day. He pushed the money into his hands and would not agree to remain in his company for another moment.

● Those Who Speak Lashon Hara Have no Share in Olam Haba

A dispute once broke out in the Radin Yeshiva over a certain matter, and the yeshiva was divided into two camps. When the **Chofetz Chaim** heard about it, he was very upset. He walked into the bais medrash and gave a tear-filled drasha for two hours about how terrible machlokes is.

Amongst his words, he said, "**The Rambam** says that those who speaks lashon hara have no share in the World to Come. The reason I did not quote this in my sefer is because I did not want to include such a sharp statement. But the fact remains that it is the truth!"

He concluded his drasha by saying, "I love those who learn Torah very much, but I still must tell them that it would be better to close down 70 yeshivos than to have people speaking lashon hara in them!"

● A Twitch of the Nose



It is related that **Rav Moshe Midner zt"l** was once speaking with a certain talmid chochom. While they were talking, the name of a man whom they both knew came up. When the man he was talking to heard the name, he turned up his nose. He didn't actually say anything bad about him, but his expression showed his dislike for the man.

Rav Moshe immediately said to him, "Do you think it is permitted to speak lashon hara with your nose?"

Rav Moshe continued, "I have a proof that a gesture with the mouth or nose can be considered lashon hara, even when no words are spoken. - It says in the pasuk (Bereishis 49:6): **כִּי בְאַפָּם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ** - 'With their anger ('apam') they killed a man. The word 'apam' can also mean 'nose'. Thus, we see that one can kill a person with his nose."

● There is No Heter for Lashon Hara

The Chazon Ish zt"l once said in the name of the **Chofetz Chaim zt"l** that when a person comes to the World of Truth, and he is asked why he ate 'chodosh', he can excuse himself by saying that he relied on the opinion of the **Bach** that chodosh is permitted in current times (see Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 293:2). - But when he is asked why he spoke lashon hara, he will have no answer, as even the Bach forbids lashon hara.

"Don't be afraid to dream big and aim high. – Your potential knows no limits." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

● A Heter Meah Rabbanim for Lashon Hara

Rav Naftali Amsterdam zt"l (student of **Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l**) was very careful with his speech. When he would see people transgressing the prohibition of lashon hara, he would say, "I can't understand it. When people want to marry a second wife, which is only a cherem from Rabenu Gershom, they go to the trouble of obtaining a 'heter meah rabbanim'. Why don't they get a heter meah rabbanim to speak lashon hara, which is a severe issur d'ohraysa?"

● Every Second One Closes His Mouth, He Merits a Hidden Light

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l once asked a well-known Rov to speak at a certain gathering about a specific topic. Afterwards, the Rov told the Chofetz Chaim, "I did as you requested. I spoke for two hours and the bais knesses was full. But I still feel that my words did not create an impact and that my speech had no positive effect."

The Chofetz Chaim emotionally replied, "You certainly know that the **Vilna Gaon zt"l** said that every second that a person keeps his mouth closed, he merits a great hidden light. You just succeeded in keeping a room full of people from talking for two hours. Don't you think that it is an accomplishment?"

● The Destruction of Words

The Alter of Kelm zt"l explains the severity of speaking lashon hara with a parable of a sick man who wants to know how serious his condition is. The way to know this is to see what type of treatment is prescribed for him. If he sees the doctor coming into his room with surgical tools and the like, he will know that he has a serious condition. Some patients will get so frightened by this site that they will die from fear before the doctor can start the operation.

So too, when a metzorah sees how much is needed to cure him – two live birds, eitz, erez, shnei tola'as, v'eizov… - and how much of a procedure must be done, he should be able to realize how serious his transgression was.

● Speaking Less

From this Parshah, we see that a person should try not to talk so much, as one who engages in excess speech will easily come to speak lashon hara and rechilus.

Rav Bunim of Peshischa zy"a would say, "Just like a person who eats excessively is called a glutton, one who speaks excessively is called a glutton with his words!"

The Rebbe of Maglinitza zy"a would say, "If a person minimizes his words, he is already halfway towards his yeshua!"

The Gemara (Chulin 46A) says: "Rich men are miserly." - **The Chozeh of Lublin zy"a** asks how this can be true, as we see that many rich men are very generous.

He answers that the Gemara means that they are stingy with their words. They are careful with their words, and, in this merit, they are granted wealth.

"When a child runs into the middle of a busy street right into the path of oncoming traffic, and his father pulls him back and holds onto him – Does that mean that the child's freedom is being revoked? Of course not.

So too, the Torah is not servitude. It is our Father in Heaven holding us back and teaching us how to live." ~ Rabbi Simcha Wasserman Z'tl.

● Honor for the Kohen

וְיָצָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע־הַצָּרַעַת מִן־הַצָּרוּעַ – '***And the kohen goes out to outside the camp… And, behold, the nega of tzora'as has healed from the afflicted person.***' (14:3)

Sefer Sifsei Kohen explains why the Kohen Gadol has to personally go out of the camp to see the metzorah by saying that this man was sent out of civilization and everyone knows that he is a metzorah, which is a cause of great embarrassment for him.

Now that he received his punishment and did teshuva, Hashem wants to grant him some honor to offset his shame.

When the Kohen Gadol set out, people certainly saw him walking and accompanied him. Thus, everyone found out that the man had done teshuva and was healed, which was a big honor for him.

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים – '*Two birds.*' *(14:4)*

Because the plague of *tzaraat* comes in punishment for evil talk, which is an act of chattering, therefore birds are needed for his purification, because these chatter continuously with a twittering sound. (**Rashi; Talmud**)

וְעֵץ אֶרֶז וּשְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב – '*Cedar wood . . . and hyssop.*' *(14:4)*

Because he has exalted himself like a cedar . . . he should humble himself like a grass. (**Midrash Ancohuma**)

If the point is that he should show humility, why does he bring *both* a cedar and hyssop? - The true meaning of humility is not to broken and bowed, but to be humble even as one stands straight and tall. (**Chassidic Masters**)

A person should have two pockets in his coat. One should contain the Talmudic saying (Sanhedrin 37a) "A person is commanded to maintain: For my sake was the world created." In the second pocket he should keep the verse (Genesis 18:27) "I am but dust and ashes." (**Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa**)



◣ Pre-Op Instructions - Alter of Kelm

וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֶרֶז וּשְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב

"***Then the kohen shall command to take for the person being purified two live, clean birds, cedar wood and scarlet hyssop.***"

Studying Parshas Metzora is similar to visiting a doctor before an operation. If the patient sees that the doctor requires many surgical instruments for the procedure, it will frighten him. So too, the Torah gives us a long list of the items needed for the purification of the metzora; two living birds, pure and clean, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop. - The Torah continues with all the necessary measures to cure the metzora. - From this, one can perceive the gravity of lashon hara, and will be deterred from sinning.

◣ Standing Humbly Tall - Avnei Ezel

וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְלָקַ֛ח לַמִּטַּהֵ֖ר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִ֣ים חַיּ֑וֹת טְהֹרֹ֔ות וְעֵ֥ץ אֶ֖רֶז וּשְׁנִ֣י תֹולַ֑עַת וְאֵזֹֽב
"***Then the kohen shall command to take for the person being purified two live, clean birds, cedar wood and scarlet hyssop***."

The plague came as a punishment for arrogance. What is the remedy for healing? - Let him, abandoning arrogance, regard himself as lowly as a worm and as hyssop. (Rashi)

If the purpose of this ceremony of purification is to have the metzora abandon arrogance, what is the function of the cedar wood, which symbolizes pride?

To teach the metzora the proper attitude. Humility and submission do not mean that the body must be bowed. They imply that inner spiritual humility or contriteness can be present even while the body stands erect and unbowed. - As the **Baal Shem Tov** explains: "And all that stands before You shall bow" - one can bow even while one appears to be standing erect.

The cedar wood is used to teach sinners that they need not think they are required to go about bent over and cringing in abject humility. They can stand erect as a cedar and still be as "bent" and humble in spirit as hyssop.

◣ Shaving Away Sin - Kli Yakar

וְהָיָ֣ה בַיֹּ֣ום הַשְּׁבִיעִ֗י יְגַלַּ֤ח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָרֹו֙ אֶת־רֹאשֹׁ֣ו וְאֶת־זְקָנֹ֔ו וְאֵ֖ת גַּבֹּ֣ת עֵינָ֑יו - "***On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair - his head, his beard, and his eyebrows***..." (14:9)

The three principal transgressions punished with tzaraas are haughtiness, evil gossip, and an envious eye. Hence, in order to become clean again, a metzora must symbolically cleanse himself of these three sins. - He must shave all the hair off his head because he was haughty and wanted to be "at the head" of everything. Next,

he must shave off his beard because it failed to guard his mouth, which it surrounds, from uttering evil gossip. Finally, he must shave his eyebrows that failed to keep his eye from envy.



The Shanghai Miracle - A Daily Dose of Bitachon by Rabbi David Sutton



The Chovos HaLevavos brings an example from the life of Eliyahu HaNavi that illustrates Hashem's unconventional ways of sustaining us: Eliyahu and the hundred prophets of his yeshivah were being hunted by Achav. The wicked king Achav was determined to destroy any vestiges of real religion among the Jewish people, most of whom had defected to idolatry.

The prophet Ovadiah divided the prophets into two groups and hid them in two caves. G-d performed a miracle and Eliyahu HaNavi's yeshivah survived intact, obtaining their food in the most unlikely way: Ovadia, who was Achav's servant, supplied them from the king's own kitchen!

The story portrays Hashem's kindness to his prophet and his students, but He has done the same for baalei bitachon throughout the ages.

The Mirrer Yeshivah was founded in pre-war Poland. It continues to flourish today in two institutions, one in Eretz Yisrael and another in America, in Flatbush. How did this entire yeshivah manage to survive the Holocaust intact when no other yeshivah was able to do so?

The story started when a yeshivah student befriended a Dutch businessman named Jan Zwartendijk, who was the director of the Phillips Plant in Lithuania and was also the part-time acting consul of the Dutch Government in Exile. Both Mr. Zwartendijk and the Jewish student had been raised in the Netherlands and they had a common love of soccer. Because of this friendship, Jan ultimately wrote 2,345 entry visas to the Dutch-owned Caribbean Island of Curaçao for the Mir students and other Polish Jews who had fled to Lithuania.

Once they had entry visas, they needed a route out of Europe to get to Curaçao. Enter another righteous gentile named Chiune Sugihara, vice-consul to the Japanese Empire in Lithuania. (Why did Japan need a consulate in Lithuania? It was later learned that they had been spying on the Germans.)

Sugihara valiantly issued approximately 3,000 transit visas to the Mir students and other fleeing Jews, at risk to himself and his family. The Japanese permits allowed the yeshivah to travel through Japan en route to their destination of Curaçao.

Getting to Japan was the next hurdle. Remarkably, the Russians permitted the refugees to take the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the port of Vladivostok; from there, they sailed across the Sea of Japan to Kobe, Japan. They were quickly relocated by the Japanese government to Shanghai. Thus they found themselves penniless refugees in a strange, far-away city, but Hashem's plan was not finished.

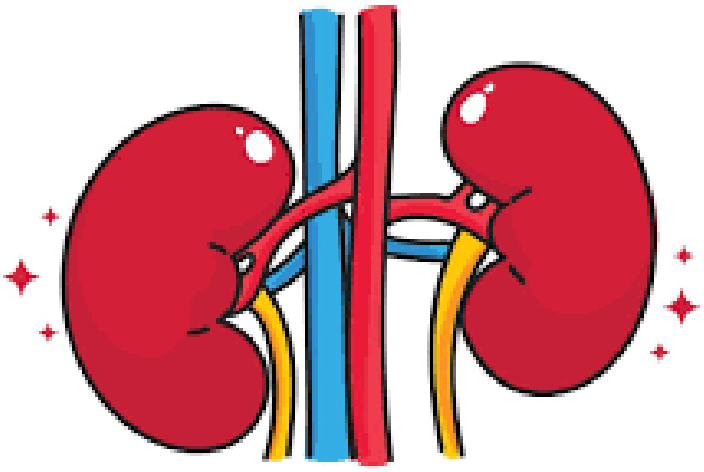
In Shanghai, there was a vacant synagogue, Beis Aharon, that had been built twenty years earlier by a man named Silas Hardoun. The shul was large enough to seat 400 people! Why was there a shul in the middle of Shanghai?

Mr. Hardoun was a wealthy but childless Iraqi Jew. He was spurred to build the shul when his deceased father appeared to him in a dream and requested that he build a synagogue for 400 people as a merit for him. Silas followed his father's wishes and hired the top architects of the time to design and build a most majestic edifice. At the time, people couldn't understand why he was building such a grandiose synagogue. After Hardoun passed away, the answer became clear. The Mirrer Yeshivah was able to move in and learn there for close to six years.

So… wonder of wonders, the Mirrer Yeshivah survived intact, just as the prophets in the time of Eliyahu HaNavi survived. The pieces of the rescue were put into place unbeknownst to anyone, but at the right moment, they came together with the precision of a perfectly crafted plan.

"If you recognize that every event comes from Hashem, then you possess the greatest wisdom. - True wisdom lies in understanding and acknowledging Hashem's presence, even as he hides himself in this world." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner



An opportunity we have to acknowledge the wonderful ways of the *Eibishter* and his marvellous creation, is every time we visit the bathroom and say the ברכה - אשר יצר את האדם בחכמה (who fashioned man with wisdom and created within him many openings and many cavities). We tend to spend just a few moments reciting this *brocho*, which, encompasses all the organs, arteries and body functions, etc, that play their part, continuously and silently, keeping our bodies healthy and functioning. It may, indeed be, when things are not quite as we expect it to be, that we begin to feel the discomfort or pain, and even that is part and parcel of the wonderful way in which the *Eibishter* created us all.

But in those few moments, can we begin to reflect and appreciate what each part of our bodies are doing, and really thank Hashem in a fitting manner?

The "Story of the Week" this week is actually a letter a patient in hospital penned (or recorded) on the way to the operating theatre, and was about to donate a kidney. It certainly got me thinking.

"Dear Left Kidney,

Today we say goodbye. I want to thank you for everything you have done for me. I'm embarrassed to say that for much of my 46 years, I didn't pay much attention to you and most certainly took you for granted. Even when my own mother suffered with kidney disease and I knew your significance, I didn't always appreciate your importance. And still, you showed up each and every moment and did your job. For 23 years I actually thought I would give you to my mother. She had one transplant and would surely need another. And I naively assumed I would be her saviour. But life doesn't always work like that

and when the time came that she needed you, we were no longer a suitable match.

With the help of 'Renewal', an angel came along and gave of himself so my mother could live, *boruch Hashem,* and then I knew what to do with you. I would give you to someone else who was in desperate need of a kidney.

I am sending you out today to help this man, a stranger and yet a brother to me. I beg you to work hard and help him live life to its fullest. Take good care of him, as you have done with me. The doctors say I won't necessarily miss you but I will never forget you…..**ברוך רופא חולים**.

Please daven for me **שיינדל אביבה בת איידל** that the surgery and recuperation should be smooth and that I should be a good **שליח** for my recipient **צבי בן חנה**, he should have a **רפואה שלמה** and be gezunt for many, many, many years to come.''

Boruch Hashem, we are healthy and can go to the bathroom on a regular basis. Maybe we can spend a few extra moments reflecting on the *Eibisheter's* wonderful creation within us.

ברוך רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות

Good Shabbos

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

Seeing the Beauty Within

In this week's Parsha (14:2), Parshas Metzorah, we learn about the purification process for the person who was stricken with Tzaraas. According to the Mishnah (Negaim 2:2), The Kohen must make every effort to not place the person in a compromising position. Any element that may cause the affliction to look brighter is discouraged.

The Mishnah lists several examples: When examining this person, the Kohen should not look with any artificial light. In addition, the

Mishnah says that he should not look in the wee hours of the morning, which may make a dull color look bright, rendering the person impure. The Mishnah also says that if the house is dark, the Kohen should not open the windows to bring in more light to see a potential negah – to see an affliction. The question is why? Why can't the Kohen look in the wee hours of the morning? Why can't the Kohen open the windows to see what's there?

I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita that the **Yalkut P'ninim** shares a phenomenal lesson: We must never be jaundiced. We must try to find merits and not flaws. We must try to see virtues and not problems – to love, not to judge. That's why the Kohen must see it in broad daylight. To not mistakenly think that the person has sinned.

The Chofetz Chaim was once traveling through Eastern Europe where he stopped by an inn. As he sat waiting to be served, a large man barged in, threw himself into a seat, cursed, and wolfed down his meal without a Bracha. The Chofetz Chaim walked towards this man who seemed to be Jewish. The innkeeper stopped the Chofetz Chaim and told him not to bother, because this man was a Cantonist (he was in the Czar's army as a child), and he had served in the army for twenty-five years.

Many people have tried to change this man before, but they have failed. His army years have distanced him tremendously from Judaism and turned him into a ruffian.

The Chofetz Chaim wasn't daunted by this warning. He sat near the man and asked him if he had been in the czar's army for 25 years and the man replied that it was true. The Chofetz Chaim said to him, "You must be a holy individual! It's amazing how you were able to retain your Jewish identity after all those years of you having gone through countless beatings and being pressured to convert to Christianity."
The Chofetz Chaim then said to the man, "You probably never had a

chance to study Torah while in the army, and yet still you held on. I wish I could have your merits. I wish I could have your portion in Olam Haba." The Cantonist burst into tears and kissed the hand of the Chofetz Chaim.

The Chofetz Chaim continued, "You will go to Olam Haba, but since you never learned Torah and you aren't keeping mitzvos, you will be embarrassed to be among all the great people. If you would improve in just a few areas, do you know how great you will be? There would be no one like you!"

Because of the Chofetz Chaim, the Cantonist turned his life around and did teshuvah. We must all work on finding the good in others! Let's try to find other's merits, not their flaws.



metzora by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses various laws pertaining to people who have contracted *tzaraas*. Poorly translated as leprosy, Chazal teach us that *tzaraas*, is not merely a physical disease that infects one's flesh but rather is an affliction that stems from a spiritual illness as well.

The gemara in Erchin 15 says that "*metzora*," the Hebrew term used for one who has contracted *tzaraas*, is actually an acronym for "*motzi shem ra*," one who gives another a bad reputation.

Chazal were very outspoken regarding one who engages in *lashon hara*. The gemara in Nedarim 64 says that a *metzora* is considered equivalent to one who is dead. Additionally, the gemara in Sota 42 says that people who speak *lashon hara* will not merit to receive the Divine Presence in the hereafter despite all the other good deeds or qualities they may have. The gemara in Erchin 15 calls one who

speaks *lashon hara* a heretic and testifies that even G-d is disgusted with such a person.

Why is the Torah so harsh and unforgiving in regards to *lashon hara*? Why does speech, an act that causes no physical damage or destruction, receive more criticism and incur more punishment than so many other *aveiros*?

The Rebbe of Slonim says that a reason why *lashon hara* is so awful in the Torah's view is that a person gets no real personal benefit or pleasure from speaking it. The root cause of most *aveiros* can easily be attributed to the frailty of man and the ability of animalistic desire to prevail over the intellect. However, when a person speaks *lashon hara*, he is simply testifying to his own evil. The motivation to speak *lashon hara* comes from negative character traits such as arrogance and jealousy.

The Chofetz Chaim writes that *lashon hara* stems from baseless hatred and that it was precisely this maliciousness of character that led to the destruction of the second Beis HaMikdash. Unlike other sins, one does not fall prey to *lashon hara* due to a lack of resolve or the feebleness of the human spirit. *Lashon hara* offers a person no gain and presents no pleasure whatsoever that is capable of alluring him to sin. When one speaks *lashon hara* it is one's own doing and one's own wickedness. Words of *lashon hara* are purely the product one's own negative choice.

So how can one eradicate the tendency to speak *lashon hara*?

Rav Meir Chadash tells us that Chazal in many places encourage us to have an "*ayin tova*," a good eye. Having a good eye means being content with what one has, not being jealous of others more privileged, and looking at others in a benevolent manner. To have a "good eye," claims Rav Chadash, one must train oneself to look positively at life. To have a "good eye" one must choose to "see well." The more one can learn to enjoy life and find happiness in what G-d puts in front of him, the more one will find oneself relieved of all of

the unpleasant feelings and ideas that lead to speaking *lashon hara*. When one learns to see only the good in life and in others, *lashon hara* becomes an implausible option, and it is impossible to find satisfaction in speaking negatively about anyone. To see things in a positive light in general is something that a Jew should always strive to do.

The Alter of Slabodka always aspired to find the good in others. Even though he was the Mashgiach of a busy yeshiva that constantly needed to probe incoming *buchrim* s to determine their compatibility with the yeshiva and how to help them, the Alter would always find a way to make the process a positive one. He would only ask about the good qualities of the *buchrim*. From the qualities he noticed were not mentioned, the Alter would infer that those would be the areas in which he would need to help the young *talmidim* improve.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman also was very outspoken in finding the good despite the bleakness of a given situation. After returning from America to Europe, Rav Elchanan was asked by an inquisitive crowd about his perspective on the current state and future of American Jewry.

Expecting to hear harsh words from Rav Elchanan due to the well-known slackness of American religiosity, the crowd was astounded to hear words of hope instead. "I was in America and I found that the youth there have tremendous potential," remarked Rav Elchanan. "Deep down they're searching for truth, and their souls yearn for Torah. They just need someone to teach them. If those who have the ability to spread Torah in America do so, there is a lot we can look forward to. The Jews in America have real potential to become tremendous *bnei Torah*." Baruch Hashem, Rav Elchanan's words have come true.

May we all be *zoche* to be protected from the sin of *lashon hara* and find the good in others!!!

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● Returning to Normalcy

נַפְשֵׁנוּ כְּצִפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפַּח יְקוֹשְׁים הַפַּח נִשְׁבָּר וַאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלָטְנוּ – *'We were saved like a bird from a trap; we were caught and now we escaped from that snare to freedom.'* (Tehillim 124:7).

As the metzora watched the bird flying away he's reminded of the trap that he himself had barely escaped and he recalls the one bird that didn't make it, the slaughtered bird that represented all those who did not get well – not everyone got well – and the healed metzora reminds himself what he escaped from.

And that's his happiness: "Boruch Hashem, I was set free!" he's thinking as he watches the bird fly away. And the truth is that's how everyone should think. Although this procedure is specifically commanded for the metzora, we shouldn't overlook the intrinsic lesson that applies to us too – how great should be our gratitude when we are healed from our illnesses.

Anyone who was sick and then recovered should say the same thing: וַאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלָטְנוּ – 'I'm like a bird that escaped from a trap.' You remember how you had a virus and you were lying in bed for days; you felt like you might never get better; and then finally you escaped. It's a tremendous happiness! Va'anachnu nimlatnu!

Anytime you escape, you should remember that forever. So here's a man, let's say, who tries to use the bathroom one morning and he discovers that he can't. He tried but nothing happened. But he has to! Now, that's not a comfortable feeling at all; it's like finding tzaraas on your skin. You can't fool around with such a thing!

So he calls out to his wife, "Something is wrong! Emergency! I have an emergency here!" So they take a taxi or an ambulance, whatever it is, and they rush to the hospital. And the nurses and doctors are rushing back and forth to different patients holding all types of instruments and each time he sees such tools he's panicked. But he's suffering terribly and he's thinking, "Oy, Ribono Shel Olam, **מֵאַיִן יָבֹא עֶזְרִי**"? From which tool is going to come my salvation? -And then finally they take a rubber pipe and smear it with vaseline and they force it in. Ah yah yay! It hurts like the dickens! Oh did it hurt! You can imagine the pleasure of such a thing! They're screwing in that rubber pipe and it comes up with blood as they force it in. He's screaming but then finally, blessed relief! He's able to urinate through that tube. - The yeshua came! He's restored to normalcy and the doctors tell him that it was a temporary blockage and that he can go home.

You should know that this man just received a big gift. And it's not only the gift of being able to function normally. That's important of course, but the true gift is the opportunity to recognize how good Hashem was to him before, when all was normal. That entire experience was a hundred percent waste unless he understands from now on what a great stroke of fortune it is every time he's able to use the bathroom normally.

● Learning To Fear

Now, you'll say, "I have to respect Hashem, yes; I have to love Him, I understand that. But to be afraid of Hashem?!" – but our Sages understood the depth of human nature more than anyone today. And they understood that fear is wonderful! To be afraid of being wicked

is a tremendous thing. Yes! Fear!– The first of all things you have to learn is to be afraid of Hashem! You know, all the little boys in the cheder who learn Chumash are frightened to death by the story of Ben Sorer uMoreh. They didn't yet learn the complexities of the Gemara and so when they learn the Chumash, k'pshuto, with their rebbi, they're frightened! "If I'm wicked, this could happen to me," the little boy is thinking. He doesn't know the lomdus in Mesichta Sanhedrin; all the conditions and chumrahs that make it impossible.

All the little boys in the Hebrew school don't know about that and therefore they are thinking that my father and mother might someday take me to the rabbi. And you don't know how many generations of little boys became good because of that! Certainly, for thousands of years the parsha exerted a beneficial effect on our nation. And that's because the effect of yiras ha'onesh is a great benefit for everyone.

Anybody who wants to succeed in this world must understand – really understand – that there is no such thing as getting away with wickedness. You want to be good? Then you must inculcate in yourself a straight, simple fear of Hashem. And fear of what? Not only yiras haromemus, fear of His splendor, but fear of consequences; fear of what chas v'sholom will happen to you if you are negligent in fulfilling His laws.

And that is one of the great benefits of the parsha of tzaraas for those who know how to learn Chumash properly; it makes you afraid of what could be if you make missteps. It's good to know that; it's good to know that if you are mean, that if you speak harshly to your wife, that you might get it in the kishkes. They might make a colostomy on you, and you'll have to walk around all your life with a hole in your side, with a bag hanging on your side. And don't think that these are depressing thoughts; this actually is the path to happiness. Because the more a man fears the consequences of sin, the more he watches his step and the more successfully he lives –

and the more successfully you live the happier you'll be, absolutely. Now, that's already an entirely new way of studying Torah. That's the type of learning that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants because that's the type of learning that changes a person.

So it means that when you come across pessukim like this, you should stop and spend a little time on the words and thinking about the lessons. Let other people hurry up and finish and go home – that's alright. But if you spend an extra minute, it's worth the investment – it's an investment in Olam Habo.

● Hidden Treasures

Every tzarah that comes on a person is a besurah tovah; every misfortune is a treasure chest. Like the man whose business was torpedoed.

A true story – a man in my shul. He took a big order from a Stop and Shop store, a chain store. And he didn't know that this store was already a customer of someone else, someone in the mafia. By accident he took away a customer from the Italian mafia and so they came the next night, and they firebombed his store. He's out of a job now. And he thought he was ruined. He was finished. But the truth is that the business was breaking his health. His nerves were frayed and his heart was sick – he was sacrificing his life for the store. But now nothing was left so he went out of that business, and he went and got another job; a nine-to-five city job where his health was maintained. And he had time even to start learning.

The man never learned Gemara before but as a result of the firebombing, he finally started learning Gemara. He became a talmid chochom, a shtikel lamdan too.

There are people who would have wasted their lives but their business went broke, so they said, "I'll just let it go. I'll sit in a kollel someplace and I'll be mistapek b'muat."I know a man like that. And then he spent his life, a long happy life, learning Torah.

Such things happen again and again. These stories are in the thousands only we're not accustomed to looking back and seeing how Hakodosh Boruch Hu is rescuing us and helping us. And that's the great lesson of **נָתַתִּי נֶגַע צָרַעַת בְּבֵית**– '*I will give you a gift of tzaraas in your home.*' - The tragedy leads you to the treasure.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

"I Owe Him My Life"

I attended a prestigious yeshivah gedolah that encompassed several hundred of the country's elite bachurim. Shiur aleph alone had over a hundred bachurim, each handpicked from the best yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael-bachurim with razor-sharp, incisive minds, depth, and capacity to learn for many hours a day without distraction.

Like many adolescents in that delicate stage of life, I wanted not only to learn, but also to shine-to prove myself as one of the top boys in the yeshivah, just as I had back in yeshivah ketanah. I wanted the guys to notice me, to number among the crème de la crème of the country's best yeshivah.

I had many plans and dreams of glory, yet very quickly I discovered that this was not like yeshivah ketanah at all. In yeshivah ketanah, I'd been the undisputed genius, but here, among my peers, there were many who outstripped me in knowledge, depth, and hasmadah. It wasn't that lagging behind, I kept pace with the shiur, and I made a solid group of friends-but I was still far from the top, and the lucky ones at the top formed a close-knit cluster and could spend hours debating intricacies in the Gemara that were, honestly, completely beyond me.

Rather than despair, I decided to focus on highlighting my tzidkus. I davened long and hard, completing Shemoneh Esrei sometimes well after chazaras hashatz; I was meticulous about every aspect of

netilas yadayim and Birkas Hamazon. But also in those areas I discovered that I didn't turn any heads. There were guys in my shiur who were natural tzaddikim, and they simply exuded righteousness and passion for halachah.

I felt awful, lost in a giant crowd. Instead of the shining star I'd always been, I felt like merely a number. Not bad, not good-just awfully, awfully average. Unable to stand this, I decided to hang out with the cooler guys, the ones who still spent seder in the beis medrash, but knew how to enjoy themselves during their free time. I found myself drifting toward a different crowd, but also there, I didn't particularly stand out. There were guys who were natural comedians, others with professional singing voices, and still others who knew how to create a matzav. I was a good guy with a decent sense of humor, but I didn't come close to those social stars.

After six months, I felt utterly worthless, lost in a sea of sparkling humanity. I didn't dream of going to a different yeshivah-because I'd never want to forgo the prestige of attending the place I was in—but I felt so forlorn. What had become of my talents and skills in learning? How had I plummeted from being the top guy in yeshivah to somewhere right in the middle or even slightly below?

One day, I was feeling so frustrated that I took a break from learning and left the building to air out. I ambled aimlessly up and down the familiar streets, with no particular destination, until I found myself outside a nursing home. I'd been gone for almost an hour, and I felt guilty having abandoned my Gemara for so long, but I couldn't bring myself to go back to the beis medrash.

On a whim, I entered the shul in the nursing home and sat down to learn. The atmosphere in the small shul was pleasant and cozy, and I felt safe and secure learning among the elderly residents. There was no competition, no rivalry, no need to prove myself. For the first time since entering yeshivah gedolah, I felt that I could just be

myself and learn, not for others, not to prove myself. Just to learn lishmah.

I recalled that Rav Shimshon Pincus would often say that while adolescents all have different hair colors-some have black hair, some have blond, some red, and every shade of brown-the elderly, in contrast, have one color that unifies them all: white. White is an original, natural, authentic color. Only when a person wants his hair to be a different color, does he dye it at will.

Bachurim, he explained, likewise manifest a range of color in their lives. Their minds are filled with an array of thoughts and desires, and they "color" their learning in a variety of shades so others will respect them, appreciate them, admire them, or even envy them. They dye their learning in bold colors so the rosh yeshivah will take them as a son-in-law or they'll get a good shidduch.

In the nursing home, no one was wondering whom the rosh yeshivah would choose for his daughter. There, they were able to just sit and learn in peace, and those whose eyesight was failing could just listen to an enjoyable shiur without worrying about who was going to test them next. All those white-haired men were learning purely, without ulterior motives or cheshbonos.

I was impressed, and I felt good learning at the nursing home. I enjoyed the pleasant, cheerful atmosphere, the soft, mellifluous voices of learning. Those men were all there because they wanted to be there learning Torah, not because it was the thing to do or because they were seeking to impress anyone. To me, it was the first time I'd observed the genuine fulfillment of the pasuk "Here I shall sit, for I desire it!"

Without saying a word to anyone, I stopped going to yeshivah and started learning regularly in the nursing home shul among men five to six times my age. For the first time since entering yeshivah gedolah, I was happy learning.

After a week, one of the elderly residents approached me and asked in a gravelly voice, "What are you doing here, young man? Why aren't you learning in yeshivah? I've noticed you over the past few days. At first I thought it was a onetime thing, but now I see that you're making a habit of it."

When I didn't immediately reply, the man continued resolutely, although his eyes were twinkling and kind. "You have a long way to go before you're entitled to join us here, this is not your chevrah."

I was stricken. I didn't want to leave this safe place that I'd begun to see as my haven. Gazing into the man's eyes, I saw two large pools of compassion, and I realized that this old zeidy was approaching me for my own good, not because he minded that I was taking up space in his beis medrash. Although I'd never been the type to cry, I suddenly felt my eyes well with tears, and my shoulders drooped.

He sat down beside me, and though he didn't ask, I found myself telling him everything. I confided how I'd always been one of the best but was now reduced to anonymity. I described my attempts to make it among the learners, the ba'alei chessed, and the cool guys, and how all my efforts had fallen flat as I revealed, for the first time in my life, that I wasn't particularly special in any way. My words tumbled over each other, full of sorrow and frustration, while the old man listened patiently, absorbing every word. His gaze was full of empathy and caring, and I knew he understood me.

"I'm just another foot soldier in a vast army," I concluded. "Just another number."

Unexpectedly, my last two words caused him to jump as if he'd been bitten by a snake.

"Can you read?" he asked me.

"Of course." I didn't understand the question. Of course I can read! "Can you read this number?" he asked again, pushing his sleeve higher to reveal a number on his arm. I gulped.

Fire blazed in the old man's eyes. "Hitler gave me this number, and now, you're continuing the job!"

I was appalled, unable to believe what I was hearing. No victim who'd endured the atrocities of the Holocaust could compare anything to the horrors he'd endured in body and mind-and here, facing me, was an elderly man, a survivor of the camps, who was accusing me of acting like Hitler? What had I done?

"Young man, you're doing exactly what Hitler sought to do. What he failed to do to our nation, you're doing to yourself!"

I didn't know how to react. What did this old man want from me? Was he calling me a Nazi?

Gradually, he settled down. The veins that had protruded from his papery skin retreated and he rested a gnarled hand on my trembling one.

"My dear bachur, I want you to listen very closely to what I'm saying. I am many, many years older than you, and I have a great deal more life experience. I've seen and suffered tortures that one should never have to see or suffer, and I've also been blessed with a great deal of nachas.

"You have much to learn in life, and you certainly will, but there's one thing that I want to teach you now. Hitler, yemach shemo, had a ruthless plan called the Final Solution. He knew that, physically, it would be difficult, if not actually impossible, to exterminate the entire Jewish nation. He would kill one million, two million, even six-but there would inevitably be survivors. That's why the very first thing he did upon bringing us to the camp in cattle cars was to tattoo a number onto our skin. Not a name, but a number. Why? To instill in us all the unequivocal knowledge that we are not people, but numbers-worthless, disposable, no more valuable than the cows in the barn that are stamped on their ear. Hitler wanted us to feel that

we were nothing but an eight billionth of collective humanity-anonymous, unidentifiable, inconsequential.

"Baruch Hashem, the war finally reached its end, and we left Europe. We were remnants of the ashes, yet we were all filled with a resolve to avenge our families and hometowns and nation. No, we would not fight a physical battle, but, with mesirus nefesh, we would marry and build families and produce generations-sons and daughters who would all shine with the purity and radiance of Yiddishkeit. We would do everything in our power to bring precious Yiddishe kinderlach into the world, and each one would be a brilliant star.

"Hashem has blessed me with ten beautiful children, and the first thing I taught them-the lessons that they absorbed with their mother's milk-was that each one is a ben yachid to the Eibishter. Each one is infinitely, ineffably precious and beloved to the Ribono Shel Olam, as if he or she were the only living being in the world!

"I taught my children that Hashem grants every individual unique strengths, talents, and attributes, and simultaneously, unique challenges, hardships, and struggles. Every person has his own tafkid, his own destiny, and if he does not realize his potential, then who will? There is no one else in the entire world with his qualities and strengths, with the capacity to fulfill his role in the universe. Every person is assigned a leading role in Hashem's Master Plan, and if he fails to live up to his mission, then creation itself is lacking and will not reach shleimus."

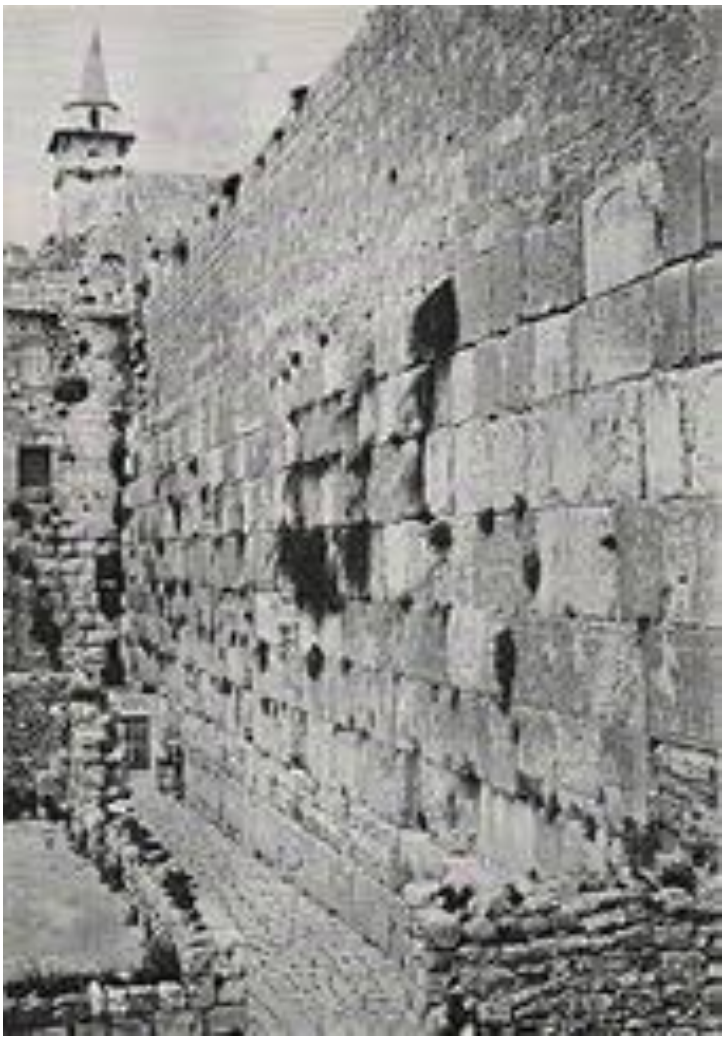
The old man paused, and I saw that tears were streaming from his eyes. He laid a shaking hand on my shoulder and said, "Please, I beg of you dear bachur. Stop looking right and left. Stop worrying about what the bachur ahead of you is thinking and what the bachur behind you is doing. Hashem granted you myriad strengths, talents, and tools. Use them well. Grab them and use them to go forth!"

He shook my hand and said, "Now run along, back to your beis medrash."

I thanked him with tears in my eyes and headed back to yeshivah. I took his words to heart, and they made a deep, lasting impression on my life. From that day and on, I stopped looking around and trying to prove myself, and instead just focused on being myself, moving forward inch by inch at my own pace, without accounting for others. I learned in order to learn, and strived in avodas Hashem and chessed so I could be a better person and enhance my yiras Shamayim.

This elderly survivor, whose name I never knew, taught me a lesson that remained with me with for a lifetime: Yidden are not one in a hundred, a thousand, or a million. Every Yid is a ben yachid to Hashem! And for this, I owe him my very life!

(Told by a distinguished talmid chacham to Rav Dovid Braverman)



In May 1948, Jordan's Arab Legion overran the eastern part of Jerusalem and occupied the Old City and its holy places. Following the 1948 War, Jordan continued to occupy East Jerusalem and what is now commonly referred to as the West Bank. This included the area the UN partition decision had allotted for an Arab state.

During the nineteen years of Jordanian occupation, Jordan refused to honor its undertaking in the armistice agreement to accord free access to the holy places, to cultural institutions, and use of the

Jewish cemetery on *Har Hazeisim*, the Mount of Olives. Jews were barred from the Old City and denied access to the *Kosel Hamaaravi* and other holy places.

The Jewish Quarter in the Old City was destroyed; fifty-eight synagogues were also destroyed or desecrated. Thousands of tombstones in the Jewish cemetery on *Har Hazeisim* were destroyed to pave a road and build fences and latrines in Jordanian army camps.

During the Jordanian occupation, Jerusalem was bisected by barbed wire, concrete barriers and walls. On a number of occasions Jordanian soldiers opened fire on the Jewish sections of Jerusalem.

A wedding was planned for *Rosh Chodesh Tammuz*, 5714 (1954). Many people were gathering in the *Bnos Yerushalayim* hall, as it was then known, in Jerusalem near the Jordanian border. Among the guests were **R' Yechezkel Levenstein *zt"l*** and **R' Aharon Kotler *zt"l*** - who arrived from New York to serve as *mesader kiddushin* for his student, the groom.

Suddenly, a great noise could be heard. Artillery boomed from the direction of the Old City. The Jordanians were shaking up the entire area. All the guests fell flat on the floor, and the lights were doused. From the street, strangers poured into the building. Tables were overturned, food and drink fell and spilled. There was noise and terror, both inside and out.

"We could hear the explosions clearly," **R' Sholom Schwadron *zt"l***, another guest, related. "Everybody was lying on the ground. The man next to me asked fearfully, 'What do we do now?'

"'We say *viduy*,' I answered."

Those were very difficult moments. One man scanned the crowd with his eyes, trying to locate his father; another shouted that he had lost his wife. The element of surprise had caused a terrible panic. There were no Jewish soldiers patrolling that area. The feeling of danger and peril was palpable. Every new sound aroused further fear.

"R' Aharon Kotler was also lying on the ground," R' Sholom continued to relate.

"And what did R' Aharon Kotler say? - What was the leader of the generation, the *Gadol Hador*, thinking about during the pandemonium and the terror?"

"Ahhh, R' Aharon ... R' Aharon was pleading with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to spare his life. '*Ribbono Shel Olam*, I want to learn your holy *Torah*!'"

One of his students was lying on the floor beside him; in fact, he was the one to later lift up R' Aharon. R' Sholom and others went to this student's house to ask what he had heard during those moments of prayer.

"After a long lull in the shooting," said the *talmid*, "I bent down to the *Rosh Yeshivah*, R' Aharon, to help him to his feet. I heard him say, '*Tatteh*, I want to serve You and work for You.' Then I heard a few more snatches, in which he seemed to be talking to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and saying that there was still work for him to do in this world."

About an hour after the shooting had commenced, the all clear sounded. The crowd breathed a collective sigh of relief. Then, R' Sholom stepped into the picture. In his deep voice, he recited, *"Lamenatzeach mizmor l'Dovid yancha Hashem b`yom tzarah ...."* The others echoed him, word for word - and their prayers flew straight up to Heaven. **(Heroes of Courage, Israel Bookshop)**

"Each Jew represents a letter in the Torah. A single missing letter renders a Torah scroll invalid, teaching us that every Jew – no matter how different – matters and is essential to the whole." ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

Transforming the Food We Eat into a "Holy" and Spiritual Experience By Daniel Keren

One of the featured speakers at the recent Martin Luther King Jr. Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event in Flatbush was Rabbi Benzion Schiffenbauer, Rav of K'hal Bnei Torah Bais Naftali. The topic of his lecture was "The Halachos of Brachos in Everyday Life."

Rabbi Schiffenbauer noted that so much of Yiddishkeit is based on food which appears at first glance to be so gashmius (materialistic) and that seems to be the opposite of our goal to be more ruchnius (spiritual).

The Ben Ish Chai (Chacham Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, 1832-1909) explains that the first aveira (sin) of mankind was Adam Harishon's eating of the forbidden fruit [of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.] Therefore, our tikun (spiritual remedy of that sin] is to utilize wine [and other types of food] in an elevated ruchnius, spiritual manner.

You can, Rabbi Schiffenbauer noted, enjoy wine by utilizing all five senses – (1) by seeing the drink, (2) feeling the cup in your hand, (3) smelling the fragrance of the wine, (4) hearing the wine [by clicking your cup to another person's cup] and (5) tasting the wine when we finally drink this special beverage.

When one does this, we should reflect on the gift of these five senses that Hashem has given us to enjoy. At least once a day, perhaps when we have our first cup of coffee, we should focus our mind on thanking Hashem for the gift of being able to appreciate our five senses [that enhance the quality of our lives.]

Rabbi Schiffenbauer told of the famous story of **Rav Yisroel Salanter**, 1810-1883, founder of the mussar, ethic movement. He once was in Paris, the famous cosmopolitan capital of France. He entered a fancy hotel and a waiter brought him to a table and asked

him what he wanted to order. Rav Salanter asked for a cup of water, which was brought to him along with a very hefty bill.

When Rav Salanter expressed his shock at the very expensive bill for a seemingly simple cup of water, the waiter explained to him that he was not paying just for a simple cup of water. Did not the rav notice the beautiful architecture of the hotel? Did the rav not notice the orchestra playing beautiful music for his pleasure? Did not the rav notice the array of beautifully selected paintings by world famous artists? Did not the rav notice that the waiter brought him the water with fancy white gloves and a beautiful glass?

Yes, Rav Salanter later told his students that this was an important lesson. Hashem has given us a beautiful world, and do we appreciate how much He has done to make our life enjoyable. Therefore, we owe Him the same thank you (shehakol) for an expensive steak as for the brocha one makes for a free cup of water. Without the cup of water, we can't live. You can't have just other types of food without the simple refreshing and life-sustaining water.

The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, writes (in Shemiras Haloshon) that when one starts thinking about others positively and then start speaking positively, they attract the same kind of attention from Hashem.

This is what the **Vilna Gaon** comments on the Pasuk in Mishlei (18:7) that says, "A fool's mouth is his breakdown, and his lips are a snare for himself." - The fool only hurts himself with negative thoughts and words. Yet, if someone's mindset is to build people positively, then they attract that kind of energy from Shomayim (Heavens) and end up building themselves.

"In the sea of chaos and uncertainty, faith is the anchor of the soul." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna (1806-1874)

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

One At a Time - One for the Books by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



In the hallowed halls of Yeshivas Etz Chaim, **Rav Aryeh Levin**, the tzaddik of Yerushalayim, stood out — not just in Torah and chochmah, but also in his boundless care for every child. Each morning, he would stand at the yeshivah's entrance, a warm smile upon his face, his eyes scanning the talmidim. Rav Aryeh wasn't looking to see who had done their homework or who had arrived on time. He was looking for something more. Which child seemed burdened? Whose face was clouded with sadness? Who needed a kind word or a boost that day?

If he saw a boy with torn shoes, he discreetly ensured that money was sent home to buy new ones. If a child carried an empty knapsack, Rav Aryeh understood it meant an empty lunch bag — and an empty pantry at home. Inconspicuously, he would see to it that food arrived for the boy's family.

Rav Aryeh's heart was so full of love for every Yiddishe neshamah that no detail escaped his attention. The following story stands out as a shining example of genuine chesed — a moving glimpse into Rav Aryeh's deep and constant drive to help others, regardless of how hard it may have been.

When Yehoshua was in fifth grade, the yeshivah administration decided to split the class into two groups. The brighter talmidim,

referred to as baalei kishron, who were, in this case, more motivated, were placed in one class. The weaker boys, those who struggled with their learning, and who, in this case, showed less enthusiasm, were assigned to another. Included in the second group was Yehoshua.

This decision troubled Yehoshua's mother. As the daughter of Rav Shlomo Tzvi Atik, a man whose home was filled with a reverence and love for Torah, the thought of her son being placed in the weaker class was unbearable. She feared it would affect not only his learning but also his self-worth, his future. In her mind, Yehoshua belonged in the higher class, among the boys who were thriving in their studies.

Determined to advocate for her son, Mrs. Kozlick approached Rav Aryeh Levin, the mashgiach of the yeshivah and the one responsible for these decisions. She presented her plea, describing her aspirations for Yehoshua and her desire for him to be in an environment that would challenge and motivate him.

Rav Aryeh listened intently. He didn't interrupt, allowing her to express every concern, every hope. When she finished, he nodded thoughtfully. "Leave it to me. I will take care of it."

Mrs. Kozlick left the meeting with hope. Surely, Rav Aryeh would move Yehoshua to the stronger class. After all, how could he refuse such a request?

Rav Aryeh had other plans, plans that no one could have anticipated. Rav Aryeh Levin Instead of transferring Yehoshua to the higher class, Rav Aryeh made a bold and unexpected decision. He chose to move his own grandson, Avraham Dov Levin, out of the advanced class and into the weaker one.

It was an extraordinary move, one that demonstrated Rav Aryeh's wisdom and commitment to the growth of every talmid. By placing Avraham Dov in the weaker class, Rav Aryeh achieved something

remarkable. His grandson, a capable and motivated boy, became a source of strength and inspiration for the others. His presence elevated the entire class, turning the dynamic from one of perceived inadequacy to one of potential and possibility; they no longer saw themselves as second-tier. They began to rise, their confidence growing, their learning revitalized.

Rav Aryeh did not simply rearrange students, he infused the class with a sense of purpose and pride. For Yehoshua's mother, this decision brought reassurance and relief.

Rav Aryeh's action was a clear statement: Your son matters; his growth and success are important. And though Rav Aryeh had not done exactly what she had asked, he had found a way to address her concerns while ensuring that the entire class, including Yehoshua, would benefit.

Decades later, Yehoshua would speak about this moment with admiration. "Rav Aryeh didn't just solve problems, he elevated people. He found ways to uplift everyone, to make each person feel valued, and capable of achieving greatness." - One talmid at a time.



A Shmoozer Can Also Be Meticulous About the Laws of *Lashon Hara*

The Torah describes the procedure that is to be followed when the healed *Metzora* completes his period of seclusion: "The Kohen shall command; and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live, pure birds, cedar wood, a crimson tongue of wool, and hyssop" [Vayikra 14:4]. The *Korban* that the *Metzora* brings when he finishes his period of *tumah* is a unique type of

sacrifice. Rashi comments on the fact that birds are uncharacteristically the key component of the *metzorah*'s offering: This is because *lashon hara* [evil speech] is the cause of the *negaim* [skin blemishes]. *Lashon hara* is loose speech, a kind of thoughtless chirping on the part of the person. The symbolism of the birds is that these creatures too constantly utter chirping sounds with their voices. Therefore, the *Kapara* [atonement] for the *Metzorah* is bringing birds. As a moral lesson for one who "chirped too much" he symbolically uses incessantly chirping creatures in his atonement ritual.

What does the *Metzora* do with these two birds? "…the one bird shall be slaughtered into an earthenware vessel over spring water. The live bird, he shall take it and the cedar wood and the crimson tongue of wood and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the live bird into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the spring water. Then he shall sprinkle seven times upon the person being purified from the *tzara'as;* he shall purify him, and he shall set the live bird free upon the open field" [Vayikra 14:5-7]. Essentially, he slaughters one of the birds and then dips the other bird into the blood along with the accompanying materials and then sends it away.

What is the symbolism here? Why does he not slaughter both birds, as we find with most other bird sacrifices? Here instead of slaughtering the second bird, he sends it free. What is the meaning of this?

The Kli Yakar alludes to an answer, but I saw an elaboration of the idea expressed in the Kli Yakar in a *sefer* called Avir Yosef. As we well know, the **Chofetz Chaim** "wrote the book" on *Lashon Hara*. He resurrected and resuscitated awareness and observance of the laws of *Lashon Hara* in *Klal Yisrael* with his *sefer* Shmiras HaLashon.

What type of personality did the Chofetz Chaim's have? Was the Chofetz Chaim a big *schmoozer* or a person who tended not to talk a lot? We might assume that the Chofetz Chaim, who was so

meticulous about the observance of *Shmiras HaLashon,* was **not** a big talker. However, those who knew him — and there are still people alive today who remember the Chofetz Chaim — testify to the well documented fact that he was a very big talker. He used to *schmooze* with people; he would talk a lot with visitors.

Why did he do that? The answer is that the Chofetz Chaim was trying to tell us something about *Lashon Hara*. A person does not have to be a "Silent Sam" to be meticulous about the laws of gossip and tale bearing. A person can be a talkative person, a person can be a friendly person, a person can be engaged with people and spend time with people and still carefully avoid any speech which is inappropriate according to Torah law.

In order to make this point that a person can be a conversationalist and a raconteur and yet be fully compliant with the *Halachos* of *Lashon Hara,* the Chofetz Chaim went out of his way to participate in conversation and social interaction.

The Kli Yakar says that this too is the message of the two birds. He slaughters one and sends the other away. The one that he slaughters symbolizes *Lishna Bisha* — evil speech that was spoken in the past. The only solution for one who is engaged in such toxic conversation is *Shechitah* — such a bird must be eradicated. The bird that lives on represents *Lishna Tova* — good speech, constructive speech, friendly speech. The Torah's counsel to be observant in matters of*Lashon Hara*is <u>not</u> to become silent. A person needs to learn how to talk, but how to talk correctly. The message of the live bird that he sends away corresponds to the "good chirping" that a person is capable of and that a person should attempt to engage in. The trait of "chirping" does not need to be "killed". We can enhance, improve, and channel it. This is the message of the slaughtered bird and the bird sent away on the open field.

Rav Asher Weiss in his Minchas Asher on Chumash uses this idea to answer a question that everyone asks.

In a very famous Medrash, a peddler came to town and announced, "Who wants life?"- Everyone heard that a new peddler in town was selling an elixir of life and they flocked around him to inquire about his wares. He got up on a chair and recited the verse from Tehillim: "Who is the man who desires life who loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit." [Tehillim 34:13-14]. The Medrash says that Rav Yannai was there and he was so amazed from this peddler and the novel idea he taught. The peddler's words completely enamored him.

Everyone asks the same question: What did the peddler say that Rav Yannai did not already know? The peddler merely quoted verbatim a couple of *psekum* from Tehillim! He did not elaborate on the verses nor did he provide any new insight into their interpretation. What was so impressive to Rav Yannai?

The Minchas Asher suggests that the *chiddush* is not what the peddler <u>said</u>; the *chiddush* is who said it! Peddlers of old not only sold goods and peddled wares. They were the classic gossipmongers. In fact, when the Torah tells us not to speak *Lashon Hara,* the language it uses is *Lo Telech* ***Rachil*** *b'Amecha* — literally, do not go as a **peddler** in your nation! The way the peddler business used to work in Talmudic times is that the peddler would go from city to city and from house to house and he would garner pieces of information. He would garner pieces of dirt about everyone in town and then he would spread the tales of gossip from house to house and from town to town. This is how he would find favor with the people and have them welcome him into their homes and communities so he could ultimately sell them his material wares.

The *chiddush* of <u>this</u> peddler is that he was a peddler and **yet** he was meticulous about the laws of*Lashon Hara*. He did go from town to town and he did pick up pieces of information and he did have friendly conversation with his customers, but he did not engage in *lashon hara*. Indeed, he preached against it!

The *chiddush* was that he was like the Chofetz Chaim — a talker, a schmoozer, but not a *baal lashon hara*. There is *lishna bisha* [evil talk] that needs to be slaughtered and there is *lishna tava* [good talk] that needs to be kept alive.

The Kohen Picks The Birds For the Metzorah's Offering

When it is time for the Metzorah to go through his purification process, the pasuk says: "The Kohen shall command, and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live birds…" [14:4]

Rav Moshe Feinstein in the sefer Darash Moshe asks, why is it the Kohen who has to worry about the bringing of these birds? Let the Metzorah himself look into the Torah, see what offerings he needs to bring, and procure the offerings himself! Why does the Kohen need to prescribe the two birds for the Metzorah?

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote 8-10 volumes of his Igros Moshe responsa. He answered thousands of queries in his lifetime. But he used to complain. He used to say that he would get many queries about pretzels and about the details of Shabbos observance and other ritual laws. But he bemoaned the fact that rarely, if ever, would he be asked how to raise one's children or how to give charity. Certainly, everyone knows that one must give Tzedaka. But there are priorities. Who do we give to and who do we not give to? He was not asked those types of questions. The two smallest volumes of the Igros Moshe collection are from Choshen Mishpat (the section of Shulchan Aruch dealing with business matters). He used to complain that people did not ask him enough of the "right questions."

People confront so many spiritual matters in their lives. Too often, they don't realize that these matters are "shaylos" (require Rabbinic consideration) as well.

The Gemara tells us that the condition of Tzaraas comes as a result of a person being stingy (tzaar ayin) and not wanting to lend out his property. Tzaraas comes becomes someone does not know the difference between how to speak and how not to speak.

Rav Moshe explains that the Metzorah's problem was that he did not ask advice regarding how to conduct himself in life. He thought he knew how to treat his money and how to treat his speech. Therefore the cure for him is that he cannot even decide for himself which two birds to take for his purification offering. The Kohen must instruct him: "These are the two birds you should use for your offering."

This will hopefully send home to him the message that one needs to consult a Rov for ALL types of Shailos.

A shaylah is not only the laws of Shabbos, Niddah, and Pesach. Hilchos Tzedakah is also a shaylah. Therefore, specifically here by the Metzorah, who is lacking in this matter of taking counsel in matters which he feels he is competent to decide on his own, the Torah goes out of its way to insist that it is the Kohen who arranges the procurement of his birds.

Who Is The Man Who Wants To PRESERVE Life?

There is a famous Medrash on Parshas Metzorah which tells of a peddler who used to travel around the cities near Tzipori proclaiming that he was selling the "Elixir of Life" (sam Chayim). Crowds used to gather around him to hear more about the product. Rav Yannai also overheard this proclamation and asked the peddler to come over and sell him some of what he was offering.

The peddler told Rav Yannai "You and people like you do not need what I am selling." Rav Yannai persisted and insisted he wanted to know what the peddler was selling. The peddler came over, pulled a book of Psalms out of his pocket and showed Rav Yannai the pasuk, "Who is the man who wants life, who loves days of seeing good?…

Guard your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from speaking deceit." [Tehillim 34: 13-14]

Rav Yannai responded, "All my life I read this pasuk and I did not realize how to interpret it until this peddler came along and taught me who the man is who desires life!"

The problem with the Medrash is obvious. One does not need to be Rav Yannai to figure out what this pasuk is saying. One can be a simple Jew who knows basic Hebrew. What was so novel about the peddler's interpretation that Rav Yannai found to be so revolutionary?

The Chida offers a novel interpretation of the Medrash based on a careful analysis of the words of the peddler. The peddler did not say "Who wants life?" Rather, he advertised his wares by saying "Who wants 'Sam Chaim' (the Elixir of Life)? The Chida suggests that the word 'Sam' (literally drugs or medicine) teaches a great novelty. It would not be anything out of the ordinary to teach that if one wants Life, he should observe Torah and mitzvos.

When a person has a tremendous amount of grain, what protects it from being spoiled? There are certain preservatives that may be added to make sure that the grain does not rot. This is the way it is for all foods. Today we have foods that have long shelf-lives because of preservatives, but the basic concept is an idea that goes back centuries in time. The novelty of the peddler's sales pitch was that he had the secret for PRESERVING life.

The Chovos HaLevovos teaches something that should give us all tremendous pause: - One day we will all go to the Heavenly Court for the great accounting of how we lived our lives. On that frightening day, we will be shown an accounting of all the mitzvos we did during our lives and all the sins we committed. On that day, we will apparently find mistaken entries in the Heavenly Journal. We will find sins that we did not commit attributed to us and we will see mitzvos that we did perform missing from our accounting.

Likewise, we will find ourselves receiving credit for mitzvos that we know for a fact we never did!

We will protest. We never did these things! G-d will explain to us why mitzvos we never performed are recorded: "This mitzvah was done by someone who slandered you." The way the Heavenly System works is that a person forfeits his own mitzvos to the person about whom he spoke Lashon Harah.

This is a difficult concept to understand. The frightening downside of the system is that not only do we get "free mitzvos" done by those who slandered us, but by the same token, we may lose mitzvos that we spent the better part of our life trying to accomplish, when they are transferred to those about whom we spoke Lashon Hara. We will furthermore have their sins transferred to us!

Rav Yosef Karo had – in his lifetime – many detractors. It was said that an Angel came to learn with him on a regular basis and the Angel told him not to worry about his detractors because eventually he would wind up with the mitzvos done by all of his detractors!

The Chovos Levovos writes, "If people were aware of this Heavenly System, they would rejoice when someone spoke Lashon Hara against them, instead of being upset!"

The Chida explains that this very idea is what the peddler taught Rabbi Yannai. Guarding one's tongue from speaking evil is the medicine that PRESERVEs life. Rav Yannai had thought the intent of the pasuk was teaching that guarding one's tongue is a way to ACQUIRE life – i.e. – a person gets reward for it like for any other mitzvah. However, the peddler taught him that even someone who has earned great reward stands to lose it by speaking evil. The great novelty of guarding one's lips is that it is a PRESERVATIVE. It is the Elixir which keeps one's reward from being transferred to someone else!

If He Can Be Cured, So Can I

There is a famous Medrash in Parshas Metzorah which we have spoken about numerous times in previous years. We have offered various interpretations, and this year we are going to offer a new insight suggested by **Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin**.



The Medrash on the pasuk "This shall be the law of the Metzorah…" (Vayikra 14:2) says as follows: "About this it is written: 'Who is the man who wishes life?' (Tehillim 34:13)" The Medrash quotes a certain incident involving a *rochil* (peddler). The *rochil* used to circulate in the villages that were close to the city of Tzipori. He proclaimed, "Who wishes to buy the *sam chayim* (elixir of life)? Everyone crowded around him to see what he was offering.

Rav Yanai heard this peddler's sales pitch, and he too decided that he wanted to find out what the peddler was talking about. The peddler told Rav Yanai, "You don't need this *sam chayim* that I am selling." Rav Yanai persisted: "I want to know what this *sam chayim* is that you are talking about!" The peddler took out a Sefer Tehillim and pointed to the *pasuk* "Who is the man who wishes life? One who guards his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit." (ibid.). Rav Yanai exclaimed in astonishment, "All my life I read this *pasuk* and I never grasped the wisdom pointed out to me by this peddler!"

The obvious question is that the peddler added nothing to the *pasuk*. He just said over the literal translation of its words "*Mi ha'ish hachafetz chayim…*". That is what those words mean! Rav Yanai

obviously knew that! What was he so amazed about upon hearing this *pasuk* read to him by the peddler?

Rav Tzadok suggests that it is not so much **what** the peddler said but **who** said it. This means as follows: Why is a peddler called a *rochil*? The truth of the matter is that we see this from a *pasuk* in the Torah: "Do not go as a *rochil* (tale-bearer) in your nation." (Vayikra 19:16). This is the source of the prohibition of *rechilus*. *Rechilus* is going around from person to person spreading gossip. The reason a *rochil* is called a *rochil* (i.e., a peddler is called a peddler) is because he specializes in sharing gossip about everyone.

Every businessman needs to know the secrets of his trade. The secret of the trade of being a successful *rochil* is, in fact, to peddle gossip. This is exactly the source of the word ***rochil*** in the *pasuk* "*Lo selech **rochil** b'amecha*" – Don't be a peddler (of gossip) in your nation.

Rav Yannai was impressed that this *rochil* (peddler), who we would expect to be a gossipmonger, is the one publicizing the *pasuk* "*Mi ha'ish hachafetz chayim….*" He is the one preaching *shemiras halashon* (guarding one's tongue). That means he is a "recovered *rochil*." This peddler was showing Rav Yanai that a person can be a professional *rochil* – spending a lifetime in *rechilus* (gossipmongering) – and yet finally come to see the truth. Even a *rochil* can be rehabilitated.

The most successful person to rehabilitate another sinner is a person who has "been there and done that."

That is what impressed Rav Yanai. It wasn't the *pasuk*. There were no new *chiddushim* in the explanation of the pasuk. The novelty was that the *pasuk* was taught by a *rochil*. If he can be cured, so can I!

Lashon HaRah Begins Not with the Mouth, But with the Eye

Many times, we have quoted the Medrash about the peddler who came into the city proclaiming "Who wants life? Who wants life?" People thought he was selling some kind of elixir of life. The Gemara says that one of the Tanaim inquired about this elixir he was selling. The peddler read him the *pasukim* "Who is the man who desires life, who loves days, to see good? Guard your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from speaking calumny, depart from evil and do good, make peace and pursue it." (Tehillim 34:13-14).

מִי־הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים אֹהֵב יָמִים לִרְאוֹת טוֹב

In other words, one who wishes to live should avoid speaking *Lashon HaRah*. The Gemara says that the Amora said he never understood this and now this peddler revealed to him this amazing secret for acquisition of *Chayim* (life) called **נְצֹר לְשׁוֹנְךָ מֵרָע** (guard your tongue from speaking evil).

Everyone comments on this *chiddush* of the peddler, which is an open *pasuk* in Tehillim. We previously spoke out a thought from **Rav Nissan Alpert, *z"l***, that is worth repeating. The *chiddush* of the peddler was not merely this *pasuk* itself, but how one punctuates the *pasuk*. When we read this *pasuk*, the opening phrase is a question: "Who is the person that wants to live a long time…?" Where does the question end and the answer begin?

The simple interpretation of the *pasuk* is that the question mark is placed after the words "*Liros Tov*" – Who is the person who wants to live (a long time), loving days and seeing good? The answer is "One who guards his tongue from speaking evil…" The peddler taught that this was not the correct way to read the *pasuk*. The question mark belongs after the words "*Ha'Chafetz Chaim*" — Who is the person who wants to live (a long time)? The answer begins with the words "*Ohev Yamim Liros Tov*" – Loving days, **seeing good**.

The secret to living a long life is to have a **positive** attitude. If a person looks positively at matters and sees people and places and events in a good light, then obviously he will guard his tongue from speaking evil. He will not come to speak *Lashon HaRah*. One of the great myths of *Lashon HaRah* is that it starts with the mouth or the tongue. The true problem of *Lashon HaRah* does not begin with the **MOUTH**, it begins with the **EYE**.

If someone looks at people with an "evil eye" and sees only their dark side, that will prompt the person to talk ill about them. However, if someone always sees the positive side of his neighbor, he will not come to speak *Lashon HaRah*. Perhaps he will see something that the person should not be doing, but he will think to himself, "Ah, but the person has so many good qualities…"

The root cause of *Lashon HaRah* is having the personality trait of being a *Nirgan* – the complainer. *Nirgan* brings a person to see the faults in people and things. That is the sickness. The sickness is not the **mouth**, the sickness is the **eye** and how the person perceives things.

This was the *chiddush* of the peddler. The way to read the *pasuk* is: "Who is the man who wants life?" – **QUESTION MARK**! And the answer is "Someone who loves his days, seeing only good" (*Ohev Yamim Lir'os Tov*). If someone sees the good, he will have a long life because he will be prevented from speaking *Lashon HaRah*.

"Your mind is the canvas, and your thoughts are the paint. Create a masterpiece of resilience, hope, and joy. Focus on the good, celebrate small wins, and let your faith be the guiding light that leads you to a brighter, more vibrant work of art." ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).



There is a very cryptic message in the medrash in this week's parsha. The medrash says that a 'neggah – an affliction' is for non-Jews, but Jews are always 'b'simcha'.



What does that mean? What's the message of this medrash?

Last week I found myself in a hospital in London next to my father's bedside. He needed an emergency bypass – open heart surgery. Baruch Hashem he's doing much better now. As I was sitting with him on Friday night just before the operation took place, I asked him, "How did it happen? What led to this?"

He explained to me that a few months before he had tremendous pain in his legs. He was away at the time, and the doctor there thought that he had cellulitis, but ultimately ruled that out because it can't occur simultaneously in both legs. It was painful, difficult and annoying for him.

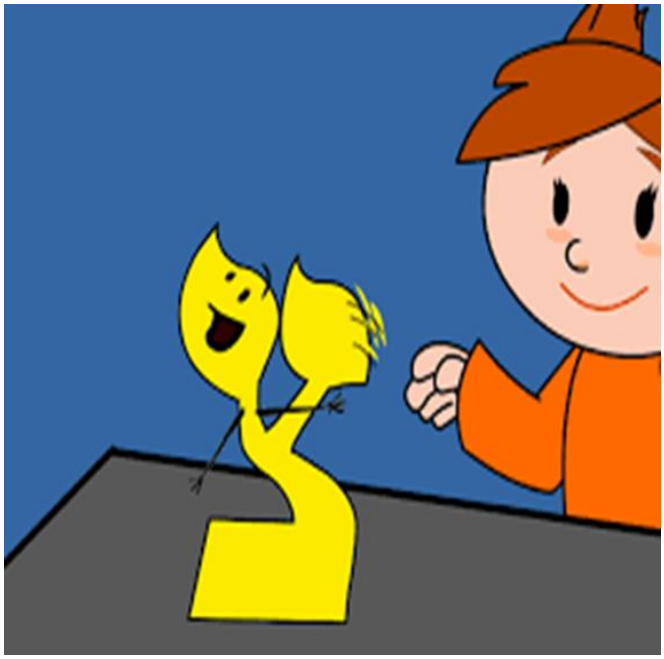
He told me that one thing led to another, and after various tests, they eventually found that he had a serious heart problem that required immediate surgical intervention. And, he said to me – "If not for that pain in my legs, who knows how it would have ended Chas V'Sholom. And, he said it with such simcha because he recognised that the pain in his legs was ultimately his greatest bracha which saved his life.

The Rambam says that a 'neggah – an affliction' that a person gets (usually a skin disease), is to show him what needs to be rectified. If only he pays attention to the message.

Perhaps, that's the answer to our cryptic medrash. – A neggah for a *goy* is just an affliction. It's painful and annoying. He'll wait until it's finished. He'll get over it. But for a Yid it's b'simcha because he recognises that everything that happens to him is for a purpose.

Next time something happens in your life that's painful or frustrating or annoying – Stop and think for a moment – there's a purpose and reason for everything. Sometimes the greatest pain is the source of the greatest bracha. And that brings real simcha.

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - The Talk of The Righteous And Wicked



In the Haggada we say **הקהה את שניו**; knock out his teeth. Similarly, it says **שני רשעים שברת**; You broke the teeth of the wicked. If we subtract (knock out) the word **שיניו** (376) from **רשע** (570) we get 204, that of **צדיק**. Is it any coincidence that **רשע** and **רעש** (noise) are the same letters as that is what he produces since it is not real speech. The letter **צ** represents a **צדיק** . Is it any wonder that there in Parshas Metzora there are 90 Pesukim, as a Tzadik guards himself from Lashon Hara. Hence, the letter that precedes the **צ** (Tzadik) is a **פ** symbolizing the mouth (as **פ** spelled out is **פה**) hinting to us to guard it.

Puffy Yeast

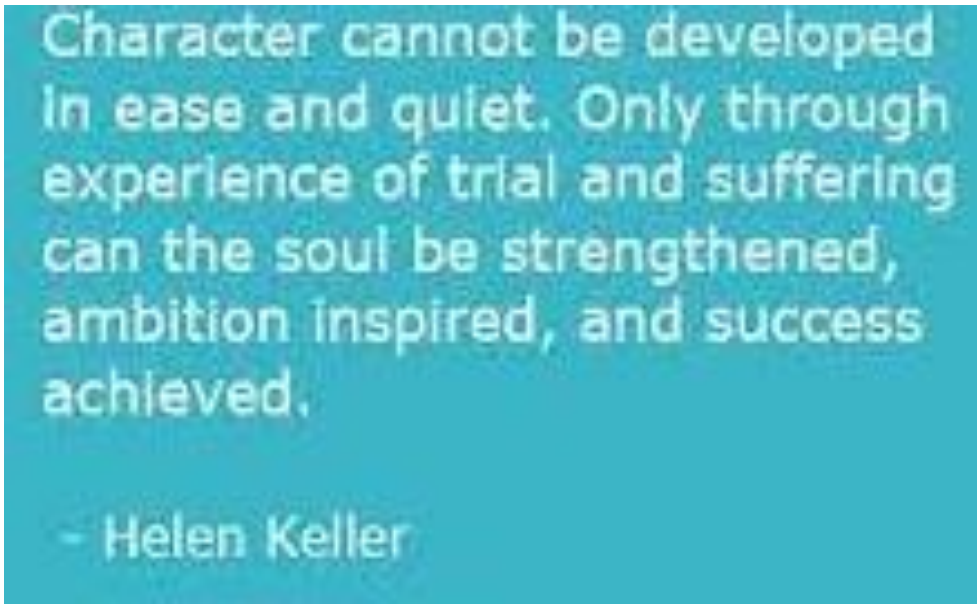


We are taught that the Metzora should shave off his hair- his head, beard and so on. The initials of these words in the Pasuk- שערו את ראשו ואת (simple meaning: he shall shave off all his hair) are **שאור**. This refers to the **שאור שבעיסה**; yeast in the dough (name for the Yetzer Hara) which represents **גאוה**; haughtiness as it is puffed up just as one who possesses **גאוה**. This is in accordance with Chazal who say that one of the causes of **צרעת** is **גסות הרוח**; haughtiness. Moreover, **ראשו** is composed of the same letters as **שאור**. This is hinted to by **צרעת** since as Rashi says bring **עץ ארז**; cedar wood because of **גאוה**. He therefore also brings **שני תולעת ואזב**; crimson thread and hyssop, so that he should learn humility from it. Hence, the Gemara teaches us the remedy for one who speaks Lashon Hara (if he is an **עם הארץ**) is to be **ישפיל דעתו** - strive for humility.

ראש symbolizes Gaava since the head is at the top. Indeed, rearranging these letters we get the word **שאר**. It says **מחץ ראש וגו**; crush the leader of the mighty land. **מחץ** is composed of the same letters as **חמץ** and **ראש** as **שאר** . This refers to the Yetzer Hara so **מחץ ראש** - crush that. Let us take the lesson from the Metzora and acquire the admirable trait of humility.

"When times are tough, it is important to always keep the proper mindset. Staying positive does not mean that things will turn out okay. Rather it is knowing that you will be okay no matter how things turn out."

Tribulations



Although at times we need to endure suffering we must trust Hashem always as in **בטחו בו בכל עת**. When one trusts in Hashem, he is able to bear suffering.

The Pasuk states **איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת**; a boor cannot know, and a fool cannot understand this. We can explain it in the following way: a true man is one who is a boor and is therefore **לא ידע** - meaning he realizes he doesn't understand the ways of Hashem and as it says **ואדם מה יבין דרכו**; what does man understand of his way. However, a fool doesn't comprehend this- **כסיל לא יבין את זאת** - as he thinks he needs to know everything.

In the 13 Middos, **ה' ה' (י- ה- ו- ה)** refers to the mercy of Hashem. Each **י- ה- ו- ה** has a numerical value of 26, referring to the 26 weeks of summer and winter. This symbolizes the good times (summer) as well as the rough times (winter). Even during the rough times, Hashem is in essence dealing with us with the attribute of mercy. Rashi teaches in regard to Tzaraas on a house- that the **אמוריים**; Amorites would hide treasures of gold in the walls of their houses. As a result of the Tzaraas, one would demolish the house and find these treasures.

The Piaseczna Rebbe (1889-1943) wonders why the house is initially quarantined for seven days and only afterwards the stones containing the Tzaraas are removed? Since the purpose is to get the treasure, once the Tzaraas is visible, it is known there is a treasure

there? He tells us this alludes to that everything Hashem does is good.

He writes in regard to his situation then- during the Holocaust- "Not only are we afflicted with physical pain but also with that which distances us from Hashem- no Cheder for children, no Yeshiva, no Beis Midrash to daven with a Tzibur, no Mikva and so on."

Just like the house is **טמא**; impure for seven days and then the treasure is revealed so too everything is for the best. Thus, by Tzaraas one says **כנגע נראה לי** - something like an affliction has appeared to me, even if he knows it is certainly Tzaraas.

R' Chatzkel Levenstein writes the situations that gave him pain were the cause of goodness.

The Shomer Emunim tells us if we realized what a kindness it is that Hashem sends us pain (**יסורים**) in this world, we would dance from Simcha. This can be compared to parents cleaning up after a child soiled himself. The child screams and cries. But if the child would know what the mother is doing, he would kiss and hug her.

Suffering can be compared to one who is ill and takes bitter medicine as the medicine cures him. This pain that the doctor is putting the patient through- with the bitter medicine- is surely considered good since it gives the patient life. Likewise, suffering is to cleanse us from our sins in order to merit the next world.

A man who suffered numerous misfortunes in his life, came to the **Pnei Menachem** (1926-1996) for encouragement. The Rebbe told him, "When I was very young, I went to the bank and saw someone give lots of money to the teller. I felt bad for this man because he was giving away an exorbitant amount of money. Another man came in and received money from the teller. I felt happy for him.

When I got older, I realized the one giving money to the teller was better off since it was for investments whereas the one receiving money from the teller was for a withdrawal. Life is the same way as

not everything that is taken from you is taken from you and not everything given to you is really given to you."

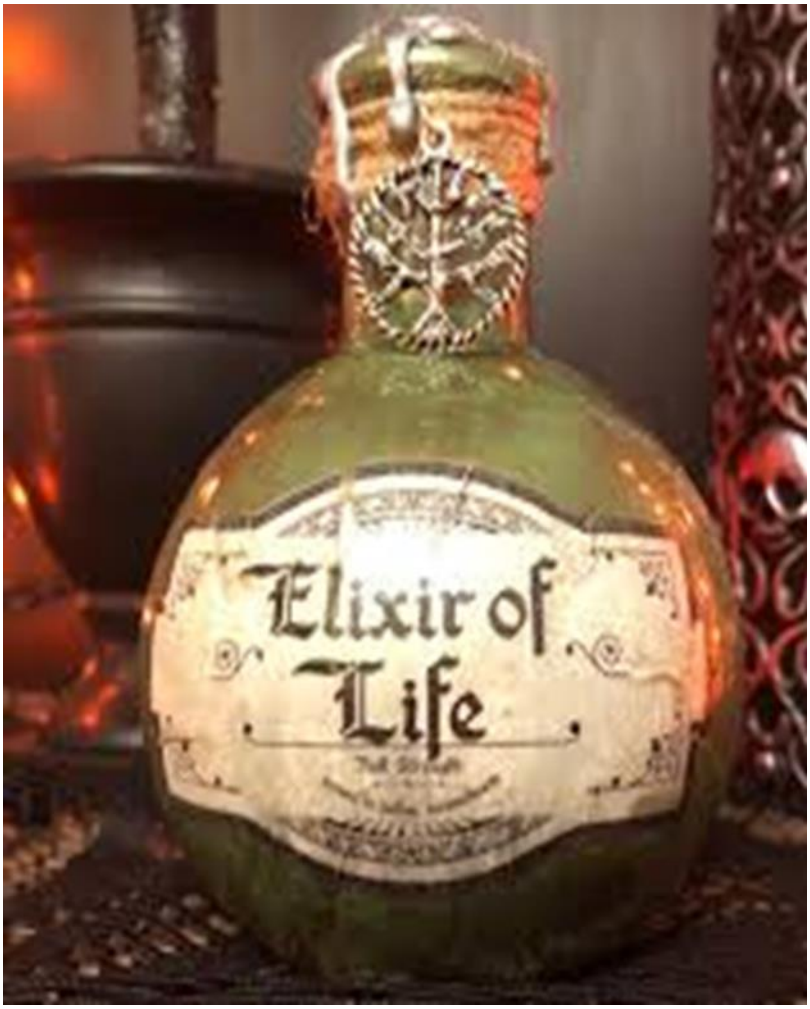
We can use the suffering we endure to build us. "Don't just go through things, grow through it." Let us keep in mind "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." A similar saying: "When life gives you rocks, build bridges, not walls."



A group of women that were learning Nach came to the Pasuk **מצרף ומטהר כסף** - smelting and purifying silver. The women wondered how this applied to Hashem? This question spurred one of the women to research the process of refining silver. She watched a silversmith at his work where he held a piece over the fire and let it heat up. He did this because in refining silver, one needs to hold the silver in middle of the fire where the flames are the hottest, in order to burn away all the impurities. The silversmith remarked he had to sit there the entire time it was being refined to watch it while it was in the fire since if the silver is left even for a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

Upon being asked how he knows when the silver is fully refined, he said when I see my image in it. So, if today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that you are in Hashem's hands and that He has His eye on you. He will keep holding and watching you until he sees his image in you.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport



זאת תהיה תורת המצורע 14:2

Parshas Tazria and Parshas Metzora focus on tzara'as – the different forms in which it can appear, the laws determining which afflictions are pure and which are impure, and the purification process for a person who was stricken with it. The Gemora (Arachin 16a) teaches that one of the primary causes of tzara'as is speaking lashon hara (slanderous gossip).

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 16:2) records that a peddler once travelled through the villages around the town of Tzippori and announced that he was selling an elixir that guaranteed long life. As people gathered around him to learn more about his miraculous product, the merchant pulled out a Sefer Tehillim and quoted the verses (34:13-14), "Who is the man who desires life, who loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit."

In his sefer Darkei Mussar, **Rav Yaakov Neiman** raises a glaring difficulty with this story. When the crowd of interested customers discovered that the peddler's "merchandise" was nothing but a couple of Biblical verses, they should have angrily chased him out of town for leading them on and wasting their valuable time, yet the midrash makes no mention of any feelings of anger or displeasure.

Rav Neiman suggests that it never occurred to the townspeople that the merchant was claiming to possess the waters of the mythical fountain of youth. When they heard him advertise that he was selling "life," they immediately understood that he was referring not to extra time in this transitory world, but rather to true life in the eternal World to Come. Accordingly, when they heard his presentation, they did not feel deceived, for his wares indeed delivered on their expectations.

My good friend Rabbi Dan Lifshitz adds that this insight challenges us to look inside our-selves and examine what is truly important to us. What do we define as real life, and what do we see as only secondary? Do we spend most of our time trying to help others and raise our children with appropriate values, or are we more concerned about our home décor, car model, and vacation destination? If we would hear a salesman advertising the key to long life, what would come to our minds, and how would we react if we found that he was "only" offering longevity in the World to Come? Dovid teaches us how to genuinely acquire life, if only we are willing to listen.

R' Shlomo Karliner zt"l (Quoted in Vedibarta Bam) would say: וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהֵר 14:9- Mikveh (for men) is not a mitzvah, and Atzvus (sadness, melancholy) is not an actual sin. However, sadness can cause the individual more harm than some of the most serious aveiros, whereas mikveh can accomplish for the individual more than some of the greatest mitzvos.

The Shelah Hakadosh writes: 'When one immerses in the mikveh, he should recite the posuk, **לב טהור ברא לי אלקים** - (Psalms 51:12), because through immersion in the purified waters, one becomes a newly created person. The first letters of **טהור ברא לי** spell out the word **טבל** - to immerse.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Listen to What I Just Heard About…!



"…[The severity of] causing a separation amongst brothers is learnt from Pharoah who caused a separation between Avrohom and Sarah…" (Vayikrah Rabbah 16:1)

Rabbi Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik (The Beis Halevi), the renowned Torah scholar who started the dynasty of Brisk, was born in the year 1820. He married at a young age. His father-in-law fully supported this renowned Torah scholar to enable him to continue his learning, uninterrupted. He was soon blessed with a baby daughter. His brother-in-law was very jealous at all the attention that he was receiving ever since he had entered the family. His brother-in-law looked for every opportunity to disparage him to his father-in-law. He said that Rabbi Yoseph Dov was not as religious as he had seemed. The poison finally worked and Rabbi Yoseph Dov's father-in-law demanded that he divorce his wife. His wife had also been poisoned by the slander and agreed with her father.

Rabbi Yoseph Dov refused any money that his father-in-law had offered and left behind everything his father-in-law had given him. He kissed his daughter goodbye and left town wearing his old suit, taking his few belongings with him. His mother-in-law was the only one who sided with him. She tearfully said goodbye to him. – *Based on The Quill of the Heart, published by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation* **Slander caused by jealousy ruined this marriage!**

The Midrash (Vayikrah Rabbah 16:1) lists seven actions which are punishable by the supernatural skin disease of tzoraas. The **worst** of those actions is speaking loshon hara because it is the cause of all other sins, including idolatry, adultery, and murder (Yefei Toar, commenting on the Midrash). Loshon Hara causes a physical or emotional separation between friends, between spouses, or between us and Hashem. The Midrash proves from Pharaoh that the punishment for causing this separation is tzoraas. Although Pharaoh did not speak loshon hara, his actions caused the same result as loshon hara. Pharaoh caused a physical separation by taking Sarah away from Avrohom Aveinu. Pharaoh wanted Sarah as his wife. Pharaoh also caused an emotional separation between Avrohom and Sarah.

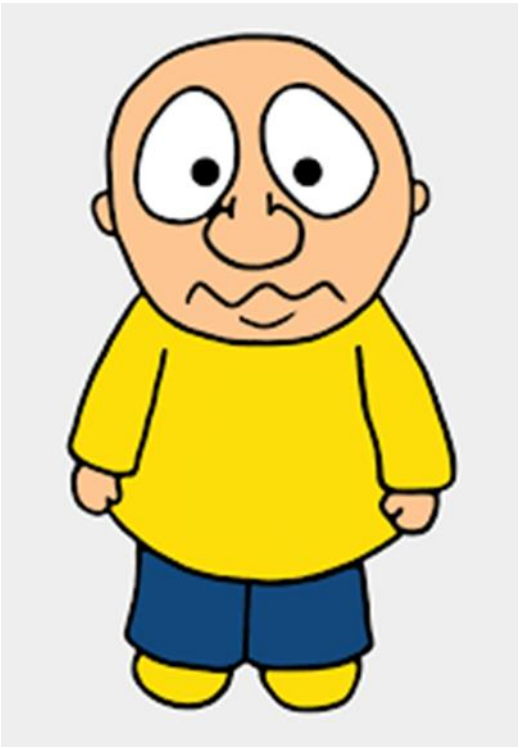
The Midrash (Lech Lecha 41:2) says that when Hashem told Avrohom to leave his birthplace, Hashem promised that He would bless Avrohom and make his name great. Sarah did not receive this promise but had faith that this would also apply to her. Had Avrohom been taken into Pharoah's palace together with Sarah, she would have felt secure. Now that she was in this predicament by herself, she had doubts if she would be saved. Sarah felt "upset" with Avrohom who was not together with her. As a result, she felt slightly insecure. This caused a slight emotional separation between Avrohom and Sarah. Furthermore, in attempting to save herself, Sarah told Pharaoh that she was married to Avrohom.

This revelation of Avrohom's secret could potentially have made Avrohom upset. Avrohom had made everyone think that he and Sara were brother and sister in order to protect himself from harm. Now the secret was known. (Sarah was Avrohom's wife. She was also his niece. Commentators explain that people would often call their close relatives their sister. During their travels to dangerous foreign countries, when Avrohom asked Sarah to say she was his sister, it was truthful).

These rifts that Pharaoh caused were only temporary and couldn't have been so bad. After all, Sarah wouldn't have stayed annoyed at Avrohom since it wasn't Avrohom's fault that he wasn't also taken captive in Pharaoh's palace together with Sarah. Avrohom could not have been annoyed that Sarah revealed his secret to protect herself. Despite this, Pharaoh was punished with tzoraas.

Pharaoh was punished with tzoraas for the separation he caused between husband and wife and NOT for the evil intentions he had in mind to do to Sarah. From this we see how serious it is to cause a physical or emotional separation between people.

We see how careful we must be. Speaking loshon hara can cause rifts between friends or spouses. Even if the rifts are only temporary, we are held responsible for them.



Torah Tavlin - R' Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz zt"l (Kli Yakar) says:

וְהָיָה֮ בַּיּוֹם֒ הַשְּׁבִיעִי֙ יְגַלַּ֣ח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָר֔וֹ אֶת־ רֹאשׁ֥וֹ וְאֶת־זְקָנ֖וֹ וְאֵ֣ת גַּבֹּ֣ת עֵינָ֑יו- Tzara'as came as punishment for three things: haughtiness, gossip, and jealousy. Thus, the cleansing process for tzara'as was done in the following order: First, the hair on the head was shaved off, because the person's excessive pride caused him to desire to be above others; second, the hair of the beard was removed, because he did not control his mouth and spoke slanderously against his fellow man; and third, the eyebrows were shaved off, as they did not prevent his eyes from looking narrowly and with avarice at the possessions of others."

Concepts In Avodas Halev From The Family Of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְשָׁחַ֗ט אֶת־הַצִּפּ֛וֹר הָאֶחָ֖ת אֶל־כְּלִי־חֶ֣רֶשׁ עַל־מַ֥יִם חַיִּֽים 14:5



In order for a person afflicted with tzara'as to achieve atonement and purity, he is required to sacrifice a bird and mix its blood with "Mayim Chaim" - natural spring water.

Why was it necessary to use special mayim chaim, natural spring water, as opposed to well water or any other kind of water, in order to purify the metzora?

I saw a beautiful pshat. The metzora was in seclusion for a while. And when a person is alone, he can sometimes grow despondent and depressed. To break free from such isolated and lonely feelings, one needs to be exposed to mayim chaim, in this case, a reference to the pure natural wellsprings of Torah, which can rejuvenate his spirits.

We don't have the privilege of having tzara'as nowadays, because it requires a high level of ruchniyus. But Hashem has many other ways of waking and shaking us up. We just have to respond correctly and shape up.

In a very practical sense, today we too are in solitude (some call it quarantine) and may feel alone and deserted, which may engender feelings of despair and hopelessness. However, if we can connect to the mayim chaim, the purest of purity, of Torah, mitzvos, and maasim tovim it will most definitely aid in keeping our spirits uplifted.

Unfortunately, frum communities all over the world have been hit particularly hard by this "nega." Perhaps the same way that Chazal saw that tzara'as was only for Yidden who can properly be misbonen and internalize Hashem's messages, this virus is also meant to help us reflect and become closer to Hashem. Let us takeh try to utilize the mayim chaim, thereby improving our Yiddishkeit and getting closer to Him through learning more Torah and doing more mitzvos. Let us be mispallel to Hakadosh Boruch Hu to end our tzaros, this current matzav, and bring Moshiach, b'karov!

וְיָצָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע 14:3



Although he was not from a Torah-observant home, **R' Aryeh Kaplan zt"l**, at the age of 15, decided to spend a few weeks in a yeshivah to "try out" Judaism.

After four weeks in Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, he did not see significant progress and decided it was not for him. He informed his roommates and the yeshivah that he would be leaving the next day. He woke up at five the next morning, and much to his surprise, found his roommates awake and dressed. He asked them what they were doing, and they explained, "We're going to come with you to the station." He replied, "Come with me? Don't you understand? I'm leaving the yeshivah and religious observance. It's not for me. Why do you want to see me off now when I'm leaving?"

His roommates answered, "It's sad you're leaving yeshivah, but you're still a Jew and should be accompanied." To this he replied, "If you're willing to do all this for me, despite my plans to leave, then there must be more to this than I thought, and I need to investigate it some more." He stayed in yeshivah, went on to the Mir Yeshivah,

Eretz Yisroel, and eventually became a great Marbitz Torah and mashpia in Klal Yisroel. He eventually authored over a dozen books and seforim, and was often regarded as a significant factor in the growth of the baal teshuva movement.

The metzora, as a result of contracting a disfiguring disease, has been exiled from the community. While this precaution may have risen from the desire to allow him to repent his iniquities, it undoubtedly left the metzora feeling emotionally, as well as physically, alone. Cured of his illness, the metzora is now permitted to re-join the community, but the period of isolation may have left him angry and withdrawn. The Kohen goes out to meet the metzora in part to draw him back into the community.

Every human feels the pain of isolation when he is alone, and we must try to accompany and greet others in order to always make them feel welcome.



וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְשָׁחַ֗ט אֶת־הַצִּפּ֛וֹר הָאֶחָ֖ת אֶל־כְּלִי־חֶ֑רֶשׂ עַל־מַ֖יִם חַיִּֽים 14:5

The city of Poznan was once the capital of Poland and is still today, the capital of the Wielkopolska region. Poznan lies midway between Berlin and Warsaw, which has helped make it an important town for centuries. The Larger Poznan Metropolitan Area is inhabited by close to 1.4 million people and is still a centre of trade and culture.

In "Naflaos Rav Akiva Eiger," a remarkable story is recorded. The King of Poland and his entourage were visiting the city of Poznan and there was a festive atmosphere in town. However, in the local hospital, a Jewish man was lying in bed wasting away. Doctors were hard-pressed to figure out the sickness he was suffering from and thus, they had no way to treat it. Their prognosis was grim, and they gave the man a few short weeks to live. The Rav of Poznan was the great **R' Akiva Eiger zt"l**, and he would visit the man in the hospital from time to time to cheer him up and give him chizuk.

One day, the Rav heard that the royal physician of Poland was visiting the hospital, and as he was generally accepted as the top doctor in all of Poland, the Rav made an appearance there on the same day. The royal doctor was given a tour of the facility and he had a chance to look at the Jewish patient with the mysterious disease. He examined him and conferred with the attending physicians, and he too, concurred that there was no treatment, and the man would die shortly.

Suddenly, R' Akiva Eiger came forward and asked to speak with the doctor. "Tell me, doctor," began the Rav, "if the King of Poland was laying here in this bed, what type of treatment would you administer to him?" The doctor was surprised with the question and remained silent for a minute. Then, he replied, "Honoured Rabbi, you are asking a good question. To tell you the truth, I have heard that there is a treatment for this disease. It involves capturing a rare and exotic bird which lives in a faraway forest. The skin and innards of this bird carry the cure. If one will cook this bird and make a soup out of it and feed it to the patient, it can cure him. "But" the doctor said sharply to the rabbi, "it is almost impossible to locate this bird. It would require sending out legions of hunters to track and capture this exotic bird and bring it back. Knowing the hunters, they'd get it wrong the first few times and keep going back until they find the right bird. By that time, most likely, the patient would be dead. It might be worth a try for the king - but for a simple person, it can never happen!"

R' Akiva Eiger thanked the doctor for his candour and went home. Once there, he took out a sefer Tehillim and poured out his heart to the Creator. With copious tears, the Rav was mispallel for close to an hour before he paused and listened carefully. Together with his household, they were able to hear the sound of a bird flapping its wings - the sound was coming from the chimney on the top floor. Immediately, the Rav sent someone onto the roof and told him to look inside the opening of the chimney on the rooftop.



The man went up and to his surprise, he saw a brightly-coloured bird trapped inside the chimney, flapping its multi-coloured wings, trying to extricate itself. The man carefully captured the bird and brought it into the house.

R' Akiva Eiger took one look at the unusual bird, and he broke into a wide smile. Then, he took the bird and raced to the hospital where he told the sick man's family to cook the skin and innards down into a soup and administer it to him. He also told them to save a few feathers from the colourful bird and give it to the hospital staff for safekeeping.

The family did as the Rav said, and to everyone's surprise, the soup worked, and the man was healed. Not long afterwards, he was released. Many months later, the royal physician found himself once again in the hospital in Poznan. Curious, he inquired about the Jewish patient with the rare disease and when he died. The staff told him that in fact, the man did not die but was cured with some mysterious soup.

The doctor was shocked and went to the man's house to see for himself. He could not believe his ears when he heard how the Rabbi came by with a special bird and told them to cook it and administer it as a soup. He needed to know which bird was used and the hospital staff conveniently produced a few feathers taken from the bird. They also told him how the rabbi prayed, and this bird became trapped in his chimney.

The doctor smiled and said, "This bird is rare indeed. But it is clear to me that the prayers of this great rabbi can do much more than an entire platoon of the king's finest hunters!"

R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk zt"l (Meshech Chochma) would say: וְאִם־דַּל הוּא וְאֵין יָדוֹ מַשָּׂגֶת 14:21 ***But if he is poor and cannot afford [these sacrifices],-***



Although a wealthy man should not bring the atonement sacrifices prescribed for a poor man, if he did, he still gets atonement. The Gemara (Yoma 41b) says that there is an exception by a Metzora where it does not atone. This is derived from the word **זאת** indicating 'this' and no variation. Why is a rich Metzorah different? Since Chazal tell us that one of the causes for Tzaraas is being stingy, if the wealthy man brings the less costly sacrifice that is designated for a poor man, he obviously has not repented his sin and is afforded no atonement - he is 'toveil v'sheretz b'yado.'"

The Last Word

"You believe in two gods and one world. But I believe in two worlds and one G-d; I am not impressed with your toy." – Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch, to a KGB officer pointing a pistol at his head.

Concepts In Avodas Halev From The Family Of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וְכִבֶּס הַמִּטַהֵר אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְגִלַּח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָרוֹ וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהֵר וְאַחַר יָבוֹא אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וְיָשַׁב מִחוּץ לְאָהֳלוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים



The Torah enumerates the different stages a Metzorah must undergo to achieve his tahara. The first step is **ישב בדד** – sitting alone in solitude. Another is **וְגִלַּח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָרוֹ**- he must shave his head. He must also bring korbanos with an additional **לוג שמן**. A long and tedious process. While we can perhaps understand the rationale behind these details, there is another step that would seem at first glance, somewhat perplexing. The Torah says **וְיָשַׁב מִחוּץ לְאָהֳלוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים** - he must sit outside his tent for seven days. What is the significance of this? One would think that after such a thorough introspection and such a humiliating few days, all vestiges of the **חטא** he committed would be gone. So why must he now sit outside his tent?

My machshava here is that before returning to society, the Metzorah has one more message to internalize. Says the Torah: Stop! Pause outside your Ohel, your home. Reflect on all that your Ohel, your wife, does for you, for the children and for the home. Reflect on all the good Hashem showered on your bayis. Your beautiful children, your grandchildren, and yes, your nachas. An abundance of undeserved goodness! That realization should generate feelings of hakaras hatov, feelings of such gratitude that his **עין רע** will transform to **עין טוב**.

With that message learned, he is finally ready to re-join civilization. Yom Tov is the appropriate time to reflect on how much our spouses do for us, and reciprocate with a present, or, at the very least, a nice Thank You note, a warm smile, generating good feelings. With these feelings of achdus and unity and not, chas v'shalom, discord, may we be zocheh to sing Hallel as we bring the Korban Pesach all together in Yerushalayim.



Concepts In Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Y Kofman Zt"L

Chazal tell us that the word **מצורע** is a combination of two words – **מוציא רע**. Hashem brings the sinner's evil deeds and words out into the open. Therefore, the punishment is Tzara'as (Leprosy).

Why is Tzara'as a punishment for a Metzorah? The Torah tells us in Parshas Kedoshim: **לא תלך רכיל בעמיך** - Do not be a gossiper. The gematria of these words is 883, which is the exact same gematria as **נגע צרעת**.

The Medrash relates that Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel sent his servant to the market and instructed him to buy him the best food he can find. The servant returned with a tongue. A few days later, Rabbi Shimon again told his servant to go to the market but this time, he ordered him to buy the worst food he could find. The servant again returned with a tongue. He asked his servant, "How is it possible for a tongue to be the best and the worst food?" The servant replied, "There is nothing better than a sweet tongue, a tongue that speaks only good words, and there is nothing worse than a sour tongue, a tongue that speaks only evil words."

Why does the Torah requires a Metzorah to bring two birds as atonement? Why birds? Because the gematria of **צפור** (bird) is 376 just as the gematria of **שלום** (peace) is 376. When a Metzorah truly atones for his sin of gossiping and Lashon Hara, he creates peace in the world.



The two birds that he brings allude to the two people who have now come together in peace, where they were once separated by the evil of malicious words. Shalom between friends, shalom between husband and wife, shalom between the sinner and Hashem Himself.

The gematria of **צפור** two times is 752. These three letters in Hebrew spell out the word **זהב**. A person who does real Teshuvah transforms his sinful lips into a "Golden Tongue", and he is now a man who brings shalom and goodness to the world.

Lashon Hara Is Like a Photograph



Toward the end of the Vietnam War, a photograph from the war zone appeared in American newspapers that touched off waves of indignation and opposition.

The photograph showed a general from the army allied with the U.S. pointing his gun at the head of a handcuffed prisoner. The caption beneath the picture solemnly informed readers that the prisoner was executed immediately after the picture was taken. The American people were horrified at their

country's alliance with such a cruel army, and public pressure mounted to withdraw the U.S. from the war.

The photograph won an award for photojournalist Eddie Adams, but its consequences for the general were devastating. The public exposure of his actions destroyed his reputation and cost him his position. But what the picture failed to convey was the event that provided the impetus for the execution: the handcuffed Viet Cong soldier had just murdered three Americans soldiers in cold blood. He was captured and summarily executed. Viewed in that light, the actions hardly seem to be as reprehensible as the picture alone might show. Adams later said, "I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are powerful weapons. People believe them, but photographs do lie. They are only half-truths."

R' Yochanan Zweig shlit'a explains that Lashon Hara is like a photograph that captures a single moment in time from a single perspective but fails to convey the context of that moment. Like that picture, Lashon Hara draws the listener's attention to a single misdeed or character flaw of the victim, emphasizing one negative piece of information without presenting the whole picture of who the person is, his personality and his background. (*Living Kiddush Hashem*)

R' Simcha Zissel Ziv ZT"L (Alter from Kelm) said: "Studying Parshas Metzorah is similar to visiting a doctor before an operation. If the patient sees that the doctor requires a large number of surgical instruments for the procedure, it will frighten him. So too, the Torah gives us a long list of the items needed for the purification of the Metzorah; Two living birds, pure and clean, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop. The Torah continues with all the necessary measures to cure the Metzorah. From this, one can perceive the gravity of Lashon Hara, thus deterring him from sinning."

R' Shimon Sofer ZT"L (Michtav Sofer) would say: זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע



What does the word תִּהְיֶה (shall be) come to add to this posuk? Couldn't the Torah have stated זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע to teach us the very same thing?

The answer is that had the Torah written it without this word and said, "This is the law of the Metzora," it would have implied that there definitely will be a Metzora (leper) in the future and we must prepare for it. The Torah did not wish to express such a pessimistic thought and therefore stated, "This shall be the law of the Metzora" - should the circumstance ever arise."

Torah Gems

Sometimes what seems like misfortune, turns out to be fortuitous providence. When Bnei Yisroel were to enter the Holy Land, they were informed that the plague of Tzaraas would engulf their homes, forcing the afflicted structures to be torn down. Rashi explains that contrary to the notion that this was a calamitous disaster, it was a good tiding: "The Amoriyim hid their wealth in the walls of their homes... through the plague the house was demolished and the money was found."

R' Binyamin Diskin ZT"L, the rav of Lomza, was buried in the cemetery of Lomza. A few years after his passing, the local authorities closed the cemetery because there was no more room. As a result, the Jewish community began using a different cemetery. When **R' Noach Yitzchok Diskin** went to pray at his father's grave a short time later, he noticed that one of the walls of the ohel

(enclosure) was about to collapse. He wrote a letter to his brother, **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin ZT"L**, chief rabbi of Jerusalem, and among other things, asked if the failing wall of the ohel should be repaired. In his response, R' Yehoshua Leib answered all the points in the letter except for the question of the ohel. In a follow-up letter, R' Noach Yitzchok again asked about the wall and in his reply, R' Yehoshua Leib again ignored the question about the grave. The wall was never fixed, but for years it did not collapse.

When R' Noach Yitzchok became ill and died, the chevra kadisha prepared his body for burial. Just then, a watchman from the old cemetery came running in to inform them that the wall of the old rav's ohel, R' Binyamin Diskin, had just collapsed. A relative with connections asked the mayor for permission to make an exception and bury the son next to his father, even though the cemetery had been closed for forty years. Since the wall had just fallen, there was now room for one more grave. Permission was granted, and they buried him there. Now, the Jews of Lomza understood why R' Yehoshua Leib had not answered the question.



Good Morning

As the Alter would walk by houses in the town of Slabodka he would say "good morning".

His Talmidim finally asked him why he did this since no one heard him!

He explained that the point of wishing a Yid well is as if to say to Hashem "please bless this person" Even if they don't hear it there is still a very big benefit!

Silence is Golden



One chasid, a rather simple Jew, kept the practice of assuming absolute silence once he put on his Talis for davening. Until he removed his Talis, one could not extract a single word from him. When asked why he kept this custom so stringently over all others, he responded, "I once heard that on Judgment Day the Heavenly Tribunal asks a person to relate all that he did during his lifetime, and final judgment is not meted out until one admits everything. If he does not admit, he is shown his sins and faced with incontrovertible evidence, a person is forced to reveal everything. "But since I will be buried in a Talis, I will simply indicate to the judges that I am unable to speak at all.

Since it was my practice throughout my lifetime never to talk while wearing a Talis, I doubt that they will force me to violate my minhag. In this way, I will not have to admit to anything, and I will be spared from Gehinnom." A short time after this man died, the Rebbe whom he had followed went into a deep meditative trance. When he awoke, he smiled and told his chassidim, "His strategy was successful. Indeed, he got away with it!"

"Silence is Golden" seems to be a matter of common sense. However, a Jew understands that even when he does talk, his words must be measured and dignified. Too many pious, religious, and fine Jews lose control of their mouth and lavish its use with idle talk, lashon hara and vulgar language. Berachos are not simply thanking Hashem for what we eat and what we have, but saying that we appreciate these gifts, that we could not survive if not for the kindness of Hashem. This is how we will win our individual judgments - by remaining silent.

R' Naftali Tzvi Hurvitz of Ropshitz ZT"L would say:



"When I was young, at first I thought I would not become a Rav, because a Rav must flatter the members of his community, in order for them to like him. Instead, I decided I would be a tailor. Then I saw that tailors, too, flatter their clients. I decided I would become a shoemaker. Again, I saw that shoemakers flatter those who buy their shoes. I decided to be a bathhouse attendant, and again, I saw that they too, flatter their clients. If that is the case, I said to myself, why is it any worse to become a Rav? And thus I became a Rav."

Tzara'as

The Torah makes it very clear that the plague of Tzara'as (Leprosy) that afflicts one who speaks Lashon Hara, is not a natural occurrence, but rather a Divine retribution that is meant to punish the sinner. His only recourse is to absolve himself of this disease through repentance and a sincere effort to distance himself from his sin. The sooner he does Teshuvah, the sooner the plague will go away and no medication, ointment or healing remedy will have any effect on his ailing body since this disease is not a natural one.

This, says the **Alshich Hakadosh ZT"L**, is the deeper understanding of the posuk: *"And behold, the Tzara'as affliction has been healed ..... from the Metzorah."* In other words, it is up to the Metzorah to

rid himself of this plague through Teshuvah - not through medicinal or restorative means.



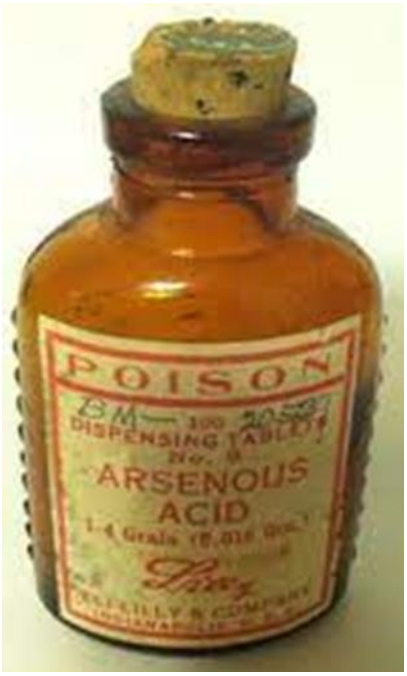
One of the most influential Orthodox lay leaders of the 20th century was undoubtedly **Rabbi Moshe Sherer ZT"L**. It was he, more than anyone else, who brought Torah thought, ideology and institutions to the public consciousness. Through Agudath Israel, he championed the cause of Torah and elevated it onto the world stage. As a young boy, he once fell ill and lay listlessly in bed. His mother called a doctor, who diagnosed his illness as a strep throat.

In those days, before antibiotics, strep throats were far more worrisome than today. The infection could worsen into rheumatic fever and cause permanent heart damage and even death. The doctor explained all this to Mrs. Sherer.

The doctor prescribed medication but warned the increasingly anxious mother that it was very expensive. Even after Mrs. Sherer had gathered all the money to be found in the house, she doubted that she had enough to pay for the medicine, but she nevertheless rushed to the pharmacy to plead her son's case. The owner was not in the store, so Mrs. Sherer begged his assistant to fill the prescription. The young man was moved by the concern of a frantic mother and agreed to prepare the medicine in exchange for all the money Mrs. Sherer had.

After filling the prescription, the pharmacist's assistant handed Mrs. Sherer the precious medicine. In her eagerness to get home and hasten Moshe on his way to recovery, Mrs. Sherer tripped over

a curb and watched in horror as the bottle flew from her hand and landed with the distinctive tinkle of breaking glass.



Mrs. Sherer burst into tears as she crawled on the pavement to retrieve the paper bag in the hope of still saving some of the precious elixir. But by that time, it had seeped out of the bag and onto the street. Her money and medicine gone, Mrs. Sherer rushed back to the pharmacy, still carrying the bag with the broken bottle inside, to once again plead for her little Moshe's life. By that time, the storeowner had returned, and he listened to Mrs. Sherer's sobs and offers to clean the store after hours if he would just refill the prescription.

Unable to resist her pleas, the pharmacist went to the back of the store to refill the prescription. He returned a moment later, ashen faced. "Angels are watching over your son," he told her in a tone of awe and amazement.

From the smell of the medicine absorbed by the bag, he realized that the original prescription had been incorrectly filled, and instead of the needed medication, Mrs. Sherer had received medicine that could have been life threatening to young Moshe. Shaken by the near disaster, he provided Mrs. Sherer with the proper medication and even returned the money she had originally paid.

Moshe heard the story of his miraculous salvation many times from his mother. She would tell him, "When I tripped and heard the bottle breaking, I thought my life was over. Little did I know that what I saw as an incomparable disaster, was really the greatest blessing from the Ribbono shel Olam. Throughout his life, Rabbi Sherer made frequent references to his mother's fleshel (bottle) of medicine.

כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם לַאֲחֻזָּה וְנָתַתִּי נֶגַע צָרַעַת בְּבֵית אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם 14:34

Rashi says that Hashem is giving Klal Yisroel good tidings by stating that the plague will afflict their houses: *"Because the Amoriyim (Canaanim) hid their wealth within the walls of their homes .... through the plague (and its consequences) the house was demolished and the treasure was found."*

Why was it necessary to close up the house for seven days and then demolish it and find the treasure? Since they would see the plague, wouldn't they know that there was a treasure hidden there? Why was there a need to close up the house for seven days?



R' Kolonymous Kalman ZT"L of Piatzetzna writes: We know and believe that all that Hashem does, is for our own good. However, when we see a time like now (the Rebbe wrote his notes inside the Warsaw ghetto, 1940), when the afflictions are not just physical ones, but even spiritual ones, we wonder how can Hashem cause us these terrible afflictions? There is no Cheder or Yeshivah here for children to study Torah. There is no shul to pray in or a mikvah. Is it possible that all this is for our own good?

The answer is that everything that Hashem does is for our good. Sometimes, though, a person doesn't realize it and thinks that it is a "plague," while in truth, it only appears like a plague. This is the lesson of the unclean house which must be closed for seven days. Even this was an affliction for the person's own good. Thus, the Torah says that the Kohen who sees it must say, "It appears like a plague"-not that it actually was a plague. For often a person is unable

to know what is truly misfortune, only that it appears to him as if it were bad. But the truth is that it is really good for Klal Yisroel and Hashem only wants to do good for us.

Chacham Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim of Bagdad ZT"L (Ben Ish Chai) would say:



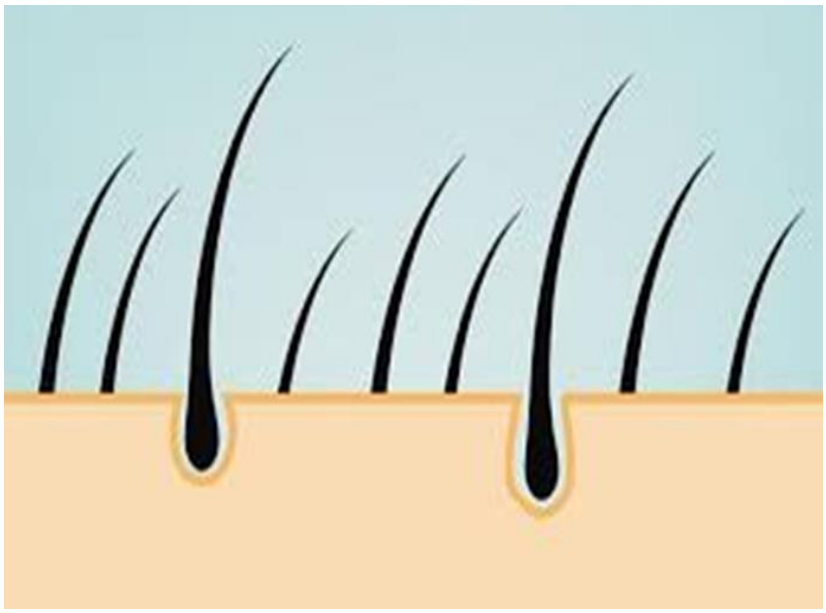
"A mikvah must contain forty סאה of natural water and this is learned from the posuk: ורחץ במים את כל בשרו - 'And he rinses in the water all of his skin.' The word כל denotes a measurement large enough to fit a person's entire body, and this measurement is defined as forty סאה. Another reference is from the word במים which would seem to be redundant. Yet, the Torah is intimating that when a person needs to purify himself in a mikvah, he should do so במי – מ - in water that totals forty - the forty סאה of a mikvah."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings Hishtadlus

A metzora shaves off all his hair, as it states in this week's parashah: וְהָיָה֮ בַּיּוֹם֒ הַשְּׁבִיעִי֙ יְגַלַּ֣ח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָר֔וֹ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֥וֹ וְאֶת־זְקָנ֖וֹ וְאֵ֣ת גַּבֹּ֣ת עֵינָ֑יו וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָרֹ֗ו יְגַלֶּ֔חַ ***"And it will be on the seventh day, he shall shave all the hair on his head: his beard, his eyebrows, and all his hair…"*** *(14:9).*

What is the purpose for this obligation? The gemara tells us that Hashem says, *"I've created many hairs in man; each hair has its own*

pore… If two hairs grow from the same pore, the person would turn blind…" (Bava Basra 16.)



The Ben Ish Chai explains that when a person has a lot of hair on his head, he doesn't realize that each hair has its own root. But when one shaves his head, he sees that each hair has its own source, and no hair is taking away that which belongs to its neighbour. As Chazal say, *"No one can take away what is destined for his friend, not even a hairsbreadth" (Yoma 38).*

The Ben Ish Chai explains: Lashon hara is the product of jealousy. When one sees that his fellow man has money or honour, he becomes jealous, because he believes that he should have these. This results with him finding faults in his fellow man, and with slander. The result of lashon hara is tzaraas. Therefore, the Torah tells the metzora to shave all his hair, to discover that just as every hair has its own life source, and no hair takes away from its neighbour, so too, each person has his own destiny, and no one can take away what is rightfully his.

One doesn't need to fear that someone may take away something that is rightfully his, because everyone has their own pore, from where he nourishes his parnassah, and no one can take this away from him. With this awareness, we can add that it is never necessary to do drastic measures for hishtadlus. The source for each person's parnassah already exists. When one makes hishtadlus, according to the guidelines of the Torah, he will get what is rightfully his.

R' Shimon Shkop ZT"L (P'sicha of Shaarei Yosher) would say:



"A person is granted wisdom not only for his own personal benefit, but also for the benefit of others. Thus, he is obligated to share his Torah knowledge with others. This is the understanding of the words of Chazal **תענית ז.** *'I have learned much from my teachers; from my colleagues, I have learned more than from my teachers; and from my students, I have learned even more than from all of them.'*

If one is a reliable teacher, a transmitter of wisdom to his students, the Almighty will bestow even greater wisdom upon him, in order that he may share it."

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

The Tefilah of the **Tosfos Yom Tov Rav Yom Tov Lippman Heller, zt"l,** the Rav of Cracow and the author of the Tosfos Yom Tov, composed a special prayer, a Mi Shebayrach, specifically for those who refrain from talking during Davening. The Tefilah of the Tosfos Yom Tov was composed during the Chmelnieki Massacres 1648-1649 (Gzeiras Tach v'Tat) where some 300,000 Jews were murdered by the Cossacks.

The Chida explains that it was revealed to the Tosfos Yom Tov from Shamayim through a dream, that the cause of this terrible tragedy was the sin of talking in Shul! We still recite the special Mi Shebayrach to this day in many communities throughout the world.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlit"a, advised that saying this Tefilah is a good thing to do!

The Novominsker Rebbe said that the effort that we make to stop talking in Shul, will be a Zechus to arouse Hashem's mercy to end all the problems that Klal Yisroel is suffering!



Irving Bunim Z"L would say:

"If a man can die smiling, that is good because it means he has no argument with the world. That's how it should be. When a baby is born, he comes into the world crying - yet the world rejoices and laughs.

A person should live his life so that he leaves laughing - and the rest of the world cries."

The Torah Scholar's Request For Just "15 More" Minutes

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rav, zt"l, related a story that illustrated true Ahavas HaTorah, love of the Torah.

Rav Avraham Burstein was the Rav of the city of Tevrig in Lithuania. During World War I, there was a curfew placed on the city which was enforced by the army. No one was allowed to have any lights on in their homes so that the enemy would not be able to see their homes and find their villages, and launch an attack on them.

Rav Avraham disregarded this warning and left on a very small light, enough for him to be able to see the page of the Sefer he was learning from. He believed with all his heart that keeping the lights on or off wouldn't draw the attention of the enemies unless Hashem wanted that to happen. He knew that Hashem was in charge and he

could not go one night without learning Torah, so he placed his trust in Hashem and continued learning.

Even though the light he used was extremely dim, the soldiers noticed it. They barged into his home and accused him of being a spy. Rav Avraham tried to explain that he was only using the light to study Torah, but the soldiers would not hear of any excuse. They demanded that he admit to his crime and that he was indeed a spy plotting an attack. Rav Avraham stood by his story and would not admit to doing anything wrong.

The soldiers were still determined that he must be a spy, and they prepared to shoot him on the spot. Just before they executed him, Rav Avraham asked for one last request, and the soldiers agreed. Rav Avraham said, "Can I please have just 15 minutes? That's all I need to finish up something."



They allowed Rav Avraham to have the time before they killed him. Rav Avraham opened a Sefer of the Rambam. He explained to the soldiers that he had been studying something and had not quite figured it out yet, and he needed a bit more time to work on it.

The soldiers were stunned that this was his dying wish, but they stood aside and let him learn. A few minutes passed and a loud siren blasted outside, which signaled for all the soldiers to come together immediately, as it was time for them to move on to the next village. Without a moment's hesitation, they immediately left Rav Avraham's house to follow their orders and move on, leaving Rav Avraham alive and well to figure out the difficult Rambam!

וְיָצָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה



For years, every morning after Shacharis, **R' Chaim Kanievsky Shlit'a** would visit his mother Rebbetzin Pesha Miriam who lived nearby. Often, she would insist on making him a small breakfast and whenever his father, the **Steipler Gaon ZT"L**, was there, they would share Torah thoughts. When the Rebbetzin passed away in 1973, her daughter who had been widowed at a young age, moved in with her father to tend to his daily needs. R' Chaim then stopped his daily morning visit.

A few weeks later, the Steipler commented to R' Chaim, "I, too, appreciated your daily visit." It was an off-the-cuff remark but R' Chaim perceived the twinge of pain his father felt when he realized that his son had curtailed his daily visits. R' Chaim understood that a person bereft of a close family member needs other family members for strength and assurance. For the next 12 years until the great Gaon passed away, R' Chaim visited his father every single day.

Every person, even one carrying the burdens of thousands, yearns for a bond with close ones. When the Metzorah is forced to sit outside the camp for seven days, his punishment is harshly felt since he is made to feel the loneliness that separates him from his family and the rest of Klal Yisroel. In this way, he will come to a complete repentance much quicker.

"It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one."



R' Shimon of Yaroslav ZT"L would say:

"I merited to live a long life because I never questioned Hashem's actions. When one questions Hashem, he is brought up to Heaven and shown that in fact everything is perfect and just. Since I have never complained, there has been no reason to take me up to see that all of Hashem's deeds are just!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Avraham Yaakov *HaKohein* Pam, *zt"l*, had a simple yet deep sense of what was right and what was wrong. He would urge his *Talmidim* to avoid extravagant lifestyles and celebrations.

Some speculated that Rav Pam's reason for this was that it was wrong to pursue such lavishness. However, when Rav Pam explained his reasoning, he gave a completely different thought. He would ask, "What other things can you do with the money?"

Anyone who knew him and of how simply Rav Pam's home was furnished knew that he lived the way he spoke. People marvelled at how he and his *Rebbetzin* deprived themselves of even simple pleasures that others take for granted because the money they had was always going for *Tzedakah* causes!

Talking in Shul

Much has been written about this terrible Aveirah:

◆**The Shulchan Aruch HaRav** (124:10 quoting the Zohar in Parashas Terumah) says that one who talks while the Tzibbur is praising Hashem Yisborach, for example, during Chazaras HaShatz, is showing that he wants no part in the praising of Hashem.

◆**The Mishnah Brurah** (124:27 quoting the Elya Rabbah) states, "Woe is to those that talk during Chazaras HaShatz, as many Shuls throughout Jewish history have been destroyed due to this sin.



◆**The Mogen Avraham** (151) writes that many Shuls have been turned into churches due to the fact that talking took place in those Shuls.

◆**The Chasam Sofer** (Drashos Vol. 2, Drashah for 7 Av) notes that one who talks during Davening makes his mouth impure, and when he then Davens with this mouth, it is as if he is doing Avodah Zarah — serving idols.

◆**Sefer Mei'Am Loez** (Parshas Bamidbar) writes that one who talks during Davening has no portion in Olam Haba, the World to Come.

◆**The Rebbe of Gur, the Imrei Emes, zt"l**, was known to have said that the tragedy of the holocaust that befell the Jewish people and cost us 6,000,000 lives, was brought about due to the sin of talking during Davening, and the reason the Sephardic communities were for the most part spared, was due to their being scrupulous in not talking during Davening (quoted in Sefer Tuvecha Yabiu, Vol. 2 Page 321).

◆**Sefer Yesh Nochlin** and **Rav Ovadia Yosef** both comment that talking during Davening is delaying the Geulah, the final Redemption, and the arrival of Moshiach.

◆**Sefer Yesh Nochlin** adds that talking during Davening is the worst Aveirah a Jew can do. It causes the Yetzer Hara to become empowered over the person, and one who talks during Davening is a sinner who causes others to follow in his ways and sin as well, and has degraded the Glory of Hashem.

◆**The Mishnah Brurah** writes (124:27) that every Shul should appoint a G-d fearing and committed person to be a Mashgiach over those who talk during Davening, and Sefer Birchas HaBayis (Sha'ar 42) adds that when the congregation supports and assists this Mashgiach, they will merit to have their Tefilos answered.

◆**The Chasam Sofer** writes, "One who speaks during Chazaras HaShatz causes the Shechinah to leave Klal Yisroel, and it is as if he sinned with Avodah Zarah."

Talking during Davening causes a Chillul Hashem, since it unfortunately lends support to the widely held perception that non-Jews are more careful than Jews to maintain proper decorum in their house of worship (Aruch HaShulchan 124:12)

L'Maaseh

When the members of the *Mir Yeshivah* fled Europe during World War II, they spent a number of years in Shanghai before they were able to relocate to *Eretz Yisroel* and America.

Although the people were generally treated well by the local Chinese, there was a group who did not like them and who plotted against them. They secretly arranged that the members of the *Yeshivah* would be taken onto a ship, and once the ship would sail out to sea, all the Jews would be thrown overboard.

One Chinese man who knew about this plot felt a certain closeness to the Jews. He had respect for the boys and knew that they were men of G-d. Therefore, he revealed the details of the operation to the authorities, and the plot was foiled.

However, the group that had planned the attack discovered this Chinese man who had ruined their plans. They tracked him down and when they found him, they beat him to death.

The entire *Yeshivah* was very troubled by this incident. After all, this righteous gentile had saved the *Yeshivah* from a catastrophe. He didn't do it for his own honour or for riches. Instead, he had saved them because he felt it was the right thing to do. Why had *Hashem* punished him in such a way?

Some *Yeshivah* boys decided to ask this question of their great *Mashgiach*, **Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, *zt"l***, to help them understand what had happened. However, as they approached the door to his office, they heard him crying out in *Tefilah*. He said, "*Ribono Shel Olam*! This gentile was a wonderful man— but he was a *goy*. This is the only time he helped the *Bochrim* of the *Yeshivah*, and You gave him a special gift. You gave him the chance to be *Mekadeish Shem Shamayim*, to sanctify Your Name and die by a *Kiddush Hashem*. But I, Chatzkel Levenstein, have served You faithfully my entire life! I have helped the *Bochrim* many times! I want this special gift from You so much! Why have I not merited to give my life for You?"

When the boys heard this, they understood that their question had been answered. *Hashem* had granted that the man was given the gift to sanctify *Hashem's* great Name and make a tremendous *Kiddush Hashem*!

Rav Uri of Strelisk never gave a brachah for wealth.- He explained that he wanted his Chassidim to remain human beings!

No middle ground when it comes to Gaavah!!

וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְלָקַ֛ח לַמִּטַּהֵ֖ר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִ֣ים חַיּ֑וֹת טְהֹרוֹת֙ וְעֵ֣ץ אֶ֔רֶז וּשְׁנִ֥י תוֹלַעַ֖ת וְאֵזֹֽב

"Then shall the Kohen command to take for the person to be cleansed two living clean birds, and cedar-wood and red wool, and hyssop."

Why does the Metzora specifically take these items? Rashi explains, since he spoke Lashon HaRa and was high and haughty like a cedar tree, he must lower himself like a worm (Tolaas) and a hyssop (Aizov).

Maskil L'David asks, why is it necessary for him to use 2 symbolic items to bring him to humility – the Tolaas Shani and the Aizov – wouldn't it have driven home the point with one?



Maskil L'David explains, although by other midos – character traits, we say that a person should take the middle of the road, not going to an extreme on either end of the spectrum, however concerning Gaavah – haughtiness – Chazal tell us "Miod Miod Havay Shfal Ruach" – one should be exceedingly humble. It is for that reason that 2 signs of humbleness were used – to stress that the Metzora should be exceedingly humble to atone his sin.

Excuses satisfy the person who makes them, but not the One to whom they are given. ~ The Dubno Maggid.

Me'oros Ha'tzaddikim

Why Did Hashem Create Flies? I spent just a few minutes researching flies. I couldn't find too much useful information about them. I learned that once the adult housefly hatches from the pupal stage, it has an approximate life span of fifteen to thirty days. I also learned that a female housefly can lay up to five hundred eggs in a three- to four-day period, and that although houseflies tend not to leave, they can travel up to six miles in twenty-four hours.



What I couldn't seem to find out was the purpose of the fly. What exactly does the fly contribute to nature and the world, or in short, why did Hashem create flies? What brought me to check out flies? Rashi points out that the order of the Torah seems reversed. In last week's parsha the Torah spoke about animals: "These are the rules regarding animals" (Vayikra 11:46), and in this week's parsha we begin to learn about rules for man. "Rav Simlai taught that just as the creation of man followed the creation of animals, so too do the rules for man (bris mila and tahara) follow the rules regarding animals (shechita and kashrus)" (Rashi, Vayikra 12:2).

Of course, the teaching of Rav Simlai begs the question: why, in fact, were animals created before man? A look in the Medrash (14:1) gives us the full answer: "Reish Lokish taught that actually sometimes man comes before animals, and sometimes animals come before man; this teaches us that if a man reaches his potential we can tell him, 'You have preceded every creation in the world,' but if he hasn't, we can tell him, 'Even a fly was created before you!'"

So I began to wonder how a fly could possibly be greater than a man. What possible lofty position can the fly have in Hashem's world that could give it precedence over man?

I learned that unlike all other animals and creatures, the fly cannot be trained, even after fifty years! So how can we possibly be worse?

I realized that the answer lies in the question. Reish Lokish, a great man who realized, late in life, that he had a noble purpose and a historic mission to fulfil in life, was trying to describe the condition of men and women who have never reached their potential. He searched the animal kingdom for a creature of Hashem that seemed to have no redeeming purpose, and he came to consider the fly.

The fly, he argued, is an accurate comparison to a certain type of human being. Every person is created with the ability to move mountains and shake the Heavens; each one of us has an entire potential to realize. But what happens if we don't? The answer is that we become something like a fly, of which everyone wonders: "Why did Hashem create that thing anyway?" On the other hand, seeing that Hashem did indeed create the fly, and did not give it the ability to choose between good and evil, we must believe that it was created for a purpose, and that somehow, by buzzing around on our windows, it is in fact accomplishing its mission!

This alone puts it one notch above the human who is going nowhere. Hence Reish Lokish's formulation that when man fulfils his potential there is no creature that can compare to him; he is true to his being created "in the image of Hashem". But if he decides to just sit around, exist and go nowhere, well then, a fly has one up on him!

In general, I am not obsessive; in fact, sometimes I'm afraid I'm a little too relaxed and laid back. I do, however, suffer however from the "fly syndrome". I am totally concerned that too much of life may go by before I get that "Aha!" moment, the moment of clarity where your raison d'être becomes apparent. There is another reason we were created last: so that by the time we get here, the entire world is already available, at our disposal and ready to help us reach unimaginable heights.

Etz Chaim - Stories of Gedolim



In his later years, the Rosh Yeshiva **Horav Reuven Grozovsky zt"l** suffered from a stroke which left him incapable of performing many daily tasks. The yeshiva in Monsey set up a rotation of students to assist Rav Reuven throughout the night, and to assist him in the morning with washing netilas yadayim and putting on his tefillin. The boys viewed the opportunity to assist the Rosh Yeshiva as a tremendous zchus and were delighted to be meshamesh (serve) a talmid chochom.

One morning, one of the younger bochrim was called upon to take care of R' Reuven's morning needs. With excitement and trepidation, the bochur waited for the Rosh Yeshiva to awaken. When R' Reuven did, the boy quickly went over to wash R' Reuven's hands. He tried to pour the water over the first hand, but unfortunately miscalculated and missed the Rosh Yeshiva's hand and wet the Rosh Yeshiva's bed.

Slightly shaken up, the boy tried again, but as a result of a stroke, the Rosh Yeshiva's hand sometimes moved involuntarily. As the boy was pouring, the Rosh Yeshiva's hand suddenly jerked up and the boy once again missed. Utterly embarrassed, the boy tried a third time and was finally successful.

Next was time for hanochas tefillin. The boy, ashamed of how he had wet the Rosh Yeshiva and failed so miserably at the previous task finished up the morning routine, wanting to put the entire episode behind him. The Rosh Yeshiva however, was in no rush to send off his benefactor and asked the bochur for his name. "Yisroel Belsky" came the reply. R' Reuven proceeded to ask about the boy's welfare and learning. Having calmed down a bit the bochur responded

to R' Reuven's inquiries and then left the Rosh Yeshiva happy and relieved.

When the bochur related the morning's events, he was met with surprised expressions. Never in all his life had R' Reuven Grozovsky engaged in any type of mundane conversation while wearing his tefillin! How could he have spoken with this young bochur after putting on his tefillin? And then they realized R' Reuven surely sensed the boy's embarrassment at having missed the Rosh Yeshiva's hand during netilas yadayim.

Although the bochur had unintentionally wet R' Reuven, he was no doubt ashamed at what he had done. Sensing this, R' Reuven spoke to the boy in order to calm him and uplift his spirits. Although he was always machmir not to speak idly while wearing his tefillin, R' Reuven overlooked this stringency to ensure that a bochur's feelings and self-esteem were upheld.

The bochur never forgot the tremendous lesson he had been taught and how carefully R' Reuven was with his dignity. He grew up to become **Rov Yisroel Belsky zt"l**, the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas, who also was known for his care of every talmid and sensitivity for their needs.

Vedibarta Bam

ורחץ במים את כל בשרו - *He shall bathe his entire flesh in water.* 15:16

Rabbi Shlomo Karliner once said, "*Mikveh* (for men) is not a *mitzvah,* and *atzvut* (**עצבות**) — sadness, melancholy — is not an *aveira*. However, *atzvut* can cause the individual more harm than some of the most serious *aveirot*, and *mikveh* can accomplish for the individual more than some of the greatest *mitzvos.*"

Why I Matter

וְיָצָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע־הַצָּרַעַת מִן־הַצָּרוּעַ

"The kohen shall go forth to the outside of the camp; the kohen shall look, and behold! -- the tzara'at affliction had been healed from the metzora." (14:3)



R' Shmuel d'Ouzida z"l (Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; late 1500's) writes: It is well known that a patient's mental health has an important effect on his ability to recover from a physical ailment. One might have expected, therefore, that a metzora would not be quarantined outside of the camp all alone, but rather would have been told to remain in the most comfortable surroundings possible. The Torah is teaching, however, that tzara'at is not a physical ailment but rather a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness. The cure for tzara'at is not rest; it is teshuvah. This, explains R' Shmuel, is why our verse says, "*the tzara'at affliction had been healed from the metzora.*" If the tzara'at is healed, it is "from the metzora" himself; because he found the strength within himself to repent. *(Midrash Shmuel)*

"True Emunah is not easily swayed by external circumstances or fleeting emotions. It is steadfast and unwavering trust in Hashem, even when faced with difficulties or hardships." – Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv.

וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת... וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה

"For the person being purified [from tzara'at] there shall be taken two live, kosher birds . . . and the one bird shall be slaughtered . . . he shall set the live bird free upon the open field." *(14:4-7)*



What is the purpose of taking a bird, only to release it back into the wild?

R' Yehoshua Rokeach z"l (1825-1894; second Belzer Rebbe) explains: The Zohar teaches that the tzara'at is not only a punishment for speaking lashon hara, it also is a punishment for those who, because of excessive humility, do not speak up when they should. A person needs to know that there is a time for silence, but also a time and place for saying what must be said. This is symbolized by two birds--creatures that have a tendency to chatter. One is slaughtered, symbolizing the need to remain quiet, while the other is released, symbolizing the need to talk. *(Sefer MaHaRY)*

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The prayers of an individual are always heard by Hashem when they are said in a Shul. (Brachos 6a)

A Wise Man would say: "A rainbow is not afraid of showing its true colours because it knows it is beautiful inside and out."

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah



This week's Parshah discusses how a Metzora has to bring two birds as part of his atonement (14:4). Why does he need two birds?

Rav Naftoli Halberstam of Tshokova explains that the primary cause of Tzoraas is Lashon Hara, speaking negatively about others, which causes discord amongst people. The word Tzipor, bird, had the same numerical value as the word Shalom, peace (376). His two birds correspond to Aharon seeking out Shalom and loving Shalom (Pirkei Avos 1:12). These birds atone for his actions which went against these principles.

Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh

יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה זְכֹרוֹ מִפִּיךָ אַל יָמוּשׁ. בְּשָׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׂגֶּה בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ, וּבְקוּמֶךָ וּבְהִלּוֹכֶךָ תִּמְצָאֶנּוּ, וַהֲקִיצוֹתָ בּוֹ תִּשַׂעֲשָׁע, וְהוּא יְיַשֵּׁר אוֹרְחוֹתֶיךָ

35. Day and night, do not stop your mouth from mentioning Hashem. When you lie down to sleep, be captivated with love for Hashem, and when you wake up and when you walk about, you should find Hashem. When you are up during the day, you should find delight in Hashem, and He will straighten your paths.

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, *zt"l*, taught that if one always keeps in mind throughout the day that there is nothing other than *Hashem* and there is nothing in the world besides *Hashem's* Will, then he will never have any questions or doubts which can weaken his love for *Hashem*. This is so because whenever anything happens, it is

perceived as being *Hashem's* desire for it to happen. By doing this, one will dismiss the thoughts that one's own efforts and work at something is what determines outcomes. This shows that one accepts *Hashem* as the King, and one does not question the acts of a king, as there is no authority above him.

The *Kitzur HaSh'lah* writes that whenever one speaks about what he plans to do, he should say: *'Im Yirtzeh Hashem'*, 'If *Hashem* desires', or *'B'Ezras Hashem'*, 'With *Hashem's* help'. This will plant within his heart the awareness that he is not in control of anything, but everything is in the hands of *Hashem*. Doing this will fulfil the words of the *Rosh*, that one should mention *Hashem* day and night.



When **Rav Chaim *Volozhiner, zt"l***, was the *Rosh Yeshivah*, it was almost unheard of for anyone to own a watch. In those days, watches were very expensive, and most people could not afford them. Once, late one night, Rav Chaim was learning with a small group of students, and he asked if anyone knew what time it was, but no one was able to tell him the time. Rav Chaim then said to them, "It seems that we don't have enough *Emunah*, faith in *Hashem*. If we had perfect *Emunah*, we would have a watch to know what time it is— even a good gold watch."

Rav Chaim then started teaching his students about the different aspects of *Bitachon*, trusting in *Hashem*. As the *Shiur* continued, the door to the room suddenly swung open and a young soldier entered and approached Rav Chaim. He said, "*Rebbe*, I need your help. I come from a very wealthy home, and I have been drafted to go into the Russian army. My father had arranged for me to be exempted by a

doctor, but there was a confusion and the doctor exempted someone else while I had to go report for service. Now it is too late and I have no choice but to comply.

Right now, I am the only Jew in my group. I have with me a very expensive gold watch, and I am very afraid that it will be stolen. I am too far from home to return it there, and I don't know anyone in this town. Could I please ask the *Rav* to hold my watch for me until I come back to claim it?"

Rav Chaim replied, "My son, I would very much like to help you, but my home is wide open to everyone, and I can't guarantee that your watch will be properly guarded." When he heard this, the young soldier said, "In that case, *Rebbe*, I am giving you the watch as a gift. I would rather it belong to you than to some thief!"

Before Rav Chaim had a chance to protest, the man took his watch and placed it in Rav Chaim's hand and ran out the door. Rav Chaim immediately ran after him, but he was unable to find him outside in the dark. Rav Chaim returned to his students and said, "As I told you. If we truly have *Emunah* in *Hashem*, He will supply us with all of our needs, and look, *Hashem* even sent us a nice gold watch!"

Short Story Of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The Sha'agas Aryeh Rav of Volozhin, once decided to go into self-imposed exile. He traveled anonymously from town to town, hiding amongst the poor. He reached Amsterdam where the local Rav recognized him and convinced him to stay by offering him a hidden, quiet room where he could learn with daily meals prepared for him.

The Sha'agas Aryeh agreed and the arrangement worked out beautifully until - one day - the Sha'agas Aryeh showed up at the Rav's home and informed him that "I am 72 years old and most of my life I have been poor; nevertheless, my lack of money has never negatively affected my learning. Today it did, and if so, I no longer

wish to be poor. I am sure that Hashem will take care of me in the near future."

The Sha'agas Aryeh explained that he had been learning as usual in the quiet room that the Rav had arranged for him. The woman who brought him food every day entered the room, placed the tray down on the table where he was learning, and left the room. The Sha'agas Aryeh totally didn't notice any of this, so engrossed was he in his learning. Suddenly, the Sha'agas Aryeh realized a huge, novel thought in the subject that he was learning, jumped up out of his seat in joy, and began dancing! Unfortunately, his sudden movement caused the food tray to fall to the floor. The woman heard the tray fall and the dishes break. She rushed back into the room and began yelling at him.

The Sha'agas Aryeh, who was totally engrossed in his learning and unaware of his surroundings, was shaken from his thoughts by the woman's angry cried and forgot that novel Torah approach which he had just discovered. Said the Sha'agas Aryeh, "if being poor causes me to forget my learning, I no longer wish to be poor." A short time later, a distinguished representation from the wealthy French town of Metz offered the Sha'agas Aryeh to become their Chief Rabbi. He accepted the offer, and for the rest of his life had enough money to learn undisturbed.

The Kohanim in the Mishkan were required to wear special clean clothing (Vayikra 6:4). Every Jew is required to wear special clothing on Shabbos, just as a Kohen did in the Mishkan.

The Yerushalmi (Peah 2:7) says that Rav Samlahei's students began crying when they heard this halacha, as they were too poor to own more than one set of clothing. The Shalmei Todah, ZT"L explains that the fact that they were poor was fine with them. They had faith in Hashem and were happy with what they had. It was only when they learned that their poverty prevented them from keeping a mitzvah, did they really begin crying. (This story was related by the Brisker Rav, ZT"L).

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

כנגע נראה לי בבית יד:לה Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house *(14:35)*

Why does the Torah use the expression of *'something like an affliction appeared to me in the house'*, instead of the simple expression *'an affliction has appeared to me in the house?*



The Imrei Emes answers based on Rashi to the previous Posuk (14:34), *"When you arrive in the land of Canaan… and I will place an affliction upon a house"* – 'This is a good tiding to them that afflictions are to come upon them, because the Amorites hid treasures of gold in the walls of their houses all forty years that Israel were in the desert and as a result of the affliction, he breaks down the house, and finds them.'

Thus, says the Imrei Emes, is why the Torah states 'something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house', for the reality is that because of the affliction he tears down the house, which is really good news for him. Therefore, this only seems like an affliction.

Old age, to the unlearned, is winter; to the learned, it's harvest time.

"The longest trip in the world is from the mind to the heart." – Rav Yisrael Salanter

Why Do We Have One Eye Weaker Than the Other? Written By Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: This shall be the law of the Metsora on the day of his purification: He shall be brought to the Kohen (14:2)



The Mishna learns from these words that even if the *Metsora* is a Kohen himself and capable of determining if such a blemish makes him impure, he is still required to seek the ruling of another Kohen as to his current state of purity and may not rely on his own ruling.

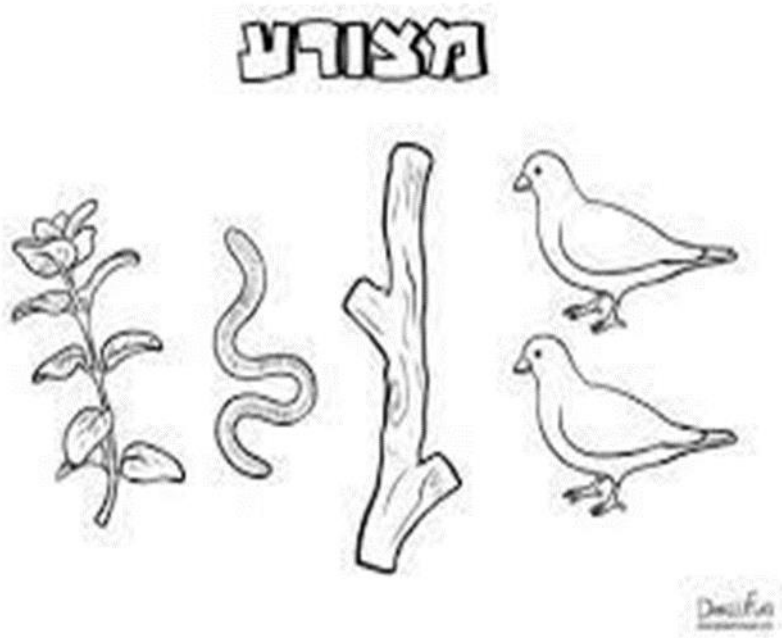
Why would this be the case, if the Kohen is knowledgeable to rule on other people's blemishes, why is he not trusted on his own?

The answer is that the purification process of a *Metsora* is not a medical process, it is a process of *teshuva*. Since the blemish stemmed from the *Metsora's* haughtiness (in that he treated his fellow Jew badly – an act that stems from over-evaluating his own self-worth), the *Metsora* must humble himself by asking another person about his blemish.

Another answer is that often, when we look at our own faults, we tend to justify them and overlook their seriousness, but when it comes to the faults of others, we are only too quick to judge unfavourably and look down on their transgressions. For this reason, the Kohen must ask someone else about his own blemish, because when it comes to his own faults, he may not be capable of seeing so clearly.

This is the conclusion that ***Rav Yisroel Salanter*** came to when he pondered why most people have one eye weaker than the other. He answered that the weaker eye is to see the faults of others, whereas the stronger eye should be used to see our own faults.

The Order - Written by Howard Jackson



וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְלָקַ֛ח לַמִּטַּהֵ֖ר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִ֣ים חַיּ֑וֹת טְהֹרוֹת֙ וְעֵ֣ץ אֶ֔רֶז וּשְׁנִ֥י תוֹלַ֖עַת וְאֵזֹֽב

And the Kohen shall order that for the person undergoing purification (from Tzara'at) there be taken two live birds, a piece of cedar, some crimson wool and some hyssop. *(VaYikra 14:4).*

Let's compare the order in the above verse with the following verse describing the person undergoing purification from coming in contact with a dead body: "And the Kohen shall take a piece of cedar, some hyssop and some crimson wool …" (Bamidbar 19:6).

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky explains that the verse in Bamidbar is written in order of decreasing size: the cedar is the largest, next the hyssop and then the crimson wool (whose dye comes from a worm). So, what about our verse in Vayikra?

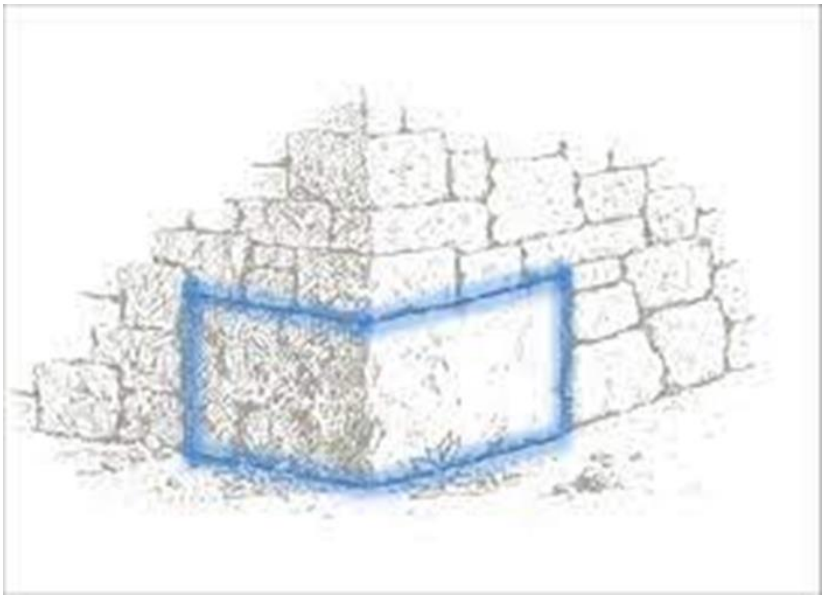
Rambam famously writes (De'ot 2:2) that the remedy for any bad character trait is to initially conduct oneself in accordance with the opposite extreme and eventually one will return to the middle path. For instance, if a person has a strong tendency to get angry, he should endeavour to behave in an extremely calm manner. After a

period of time, he will moderate back to the middle path, knowing when it is appropriate to display anger or extreme calmness.

The Gemara (Arachin 16a) teaches that one of the causes of Tzara'at (a spiritual disease with physical symptoms) was Gasut Haruach (arrogance). The cedar, a very tall tree and the largest item in the list of ingredients, symbolizes the arrogant person. He needs to move immediately to the opposite extreme, represented by the smallest item in the list, the crimson wool (whose dye comes from a worm). Only then, will the person return to the middle path. Therefore, the order for the person undergoing purification from Tzara'at is a piece of cedar, some crimson wool and some hyssop.

Bad Neighbours Written by D Fine

וְצִוָּה֙ הַכֹּהֵ֔ן וְחִלְּצוּ֙ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר בָּהֶ֖ן הַנֶּ֑גַע וְהִשְׁלִ֙יכוּ֙ אֶתְהֶ֔ן אֶל־מִח֥וּץ לָעִ֖יר אֶל־מָק֥וֹם טָמֵֽא In perek 14 :40, we are told that if bona fide tzara'as is found on a house, the affected stones must be removed and plonked outside of the city.



This poses problems when one lives in a semi-detached house; what happens when your neighbour's house has contracted tzara'as, and the adjoining (corner) stone which both you and your neighbour share has to be removed. Rashi (Sukkah 56b) cites the Midrash which confirms that the shared stones must indeed be removed.

But why must poor innocent you (we are always innocent!) suffer? Rashi seems to explain that it was because you had some hand in your

neighbour's sin – the tzara'as was caused by the fact that your neighbour looked at your material bliss with a stingy/greedy/jealous eye (a sin which can cause tzara'as). Had you have taken the time to develop a good, positive, friendly relationship with your neighbour then he would have been happy with your success. In some way or another, you were responsible for your neighbour's sin, so you suffer the consequences of losing a (shared) brick too.

Shabbos Stories for Parshas Metzora

The Love of Tefillin

In the summer of **תשע"ד** there was a very tragic story of three Bochurim in **ארץ ישראל** who were hitching when Arabs kidnapped them. For 18 days, Jews around the world poured out their hearts that they should rescue and find these three Bochurim.



The pain of the boys' parents is unthinkable. On the day the boys were found (unfortunately murdered), the mother of Naftoli Frankel (one of the boys) noticeably had some form of **נחמה**(comfort.)

What kind of comfort could a mother who went through such pain have? They asked her and she answered, "My son Naftoli had a special love for the **מצוה** of **תפלין** (mitvah of wearing tefillin) - he wouldn't miss a day of donning them. The brutal Arab kidnappers would not have allowed my child to put on his **תפלין** (tefillin).

Now that I found out what happened [that he was killed the same night he was kidnapped], I am at ease that my cherished child never

missed a day of putting on **תפלין** in his life. The Hebrew letters of his name **נפתלי** (Naftali), are the same letters as the word **תפלין** (tefillin)". *(Story heard from R' Pesach Krohn).*

Peninim on the Torah

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, arrived in Yerushalayim circa 1873. Shortly after his arrival, he went to visit the *Kosel*. He was accompanied by another Jew. *Rav* Yosef Chaim's reputation preceded him, and he was already known as one of the leaders of the *Old Yishuv*.



An Arab storekeeper noticed the distinguished *Rav* and decided to do what he did best. He threw a rotten orange at the *Rav*. At the time, the *Rav* was far from fluent in Arabic, so he replied in Yiddish, "*Ah sheinah dank;* Thank you!" The Arab recognised the Jew who was accompanying *Rav* Yosef Chaim, so, with his signature temerity, he asked angrily if the *Rav* had cursed him. "No, he did not." "So, what did he say?" the Arab asked. The Jew smiled when he replied, "He said, 'Thank you' in *Yiddish*." The Arab was now thoroughly confused; why would the *Rav* thank him for throwing a rotten orange at him? *Rav* Yosef Chaim explained, ***"I thanked you for not throwing a stone at me."*** The *Rav's* response was the precursor for an adjusted attitude by the Arab and his cohorts towards the new *Rav*.

Things happen in life – not always to our liking. People act in a manner which, in our mind, we consider inconsiderate – or even hurtful; when

we act kindly, we find out that we were being taken advantage of; and the list goes on. From the above vignette, we derive that it could always have been worse; what occurred was actually a chesed, kindness. We cannot fathom Hashem's scale of merit. We might consider ourselves deserving when we are not, or we are deserving, but there is a smidgen of impropriety which Hashem "kindly" expunges; only we do not realise this. Thus, vitur is not just a refined character trait; it is a vital, integral way of life.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Good Speech and Bad Speech

Rashi (14:4) writes, "*Tzaraas* comes from *lashon hara*, an act of chattering **מעשה פטפוטי דברים**. Birds are needed for the purification because birds are always chatting and whistling…."

The chattering birds atone for his talking *lashon hara*. One talking, whistling bird atones for *lashon hara*, but why was there a second bird? What does the second bird represent?



To answer this question, **Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l*** (*Leket Imrei Kodesh* p.51) tells us to study the following line from the *Zohar* (*Tazria* 46:):

כמה דהאי בר נש בגין מלה בישא כך עונשיה בגין מלה טבא דקאתי לידיה ויכיל למללא ולא מליל *"Just as one is punished for speaking lashon hara, so is one punished for the good words that came to his mind and he could have said them, but he refrained."*

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz explains that one bird atones for *lashon hara*, and the other bird atones for the kind words he could have said, but he refrained and didn't say them.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz explains that the bird that is *shechted* – and thereby silenced – alludes to the atonement he needs for speaking *lashon hara*. The other bird, dipped into the water and blood mixture and then used to sprinkle on the *metzora*, was set free. This bird continues chirping and singing, and it represents that we should speak many kind words to help our fellow man.

Another unique feature of the *metzora* is that oil was used as part of the korban *asham*. The oil was sprinkled seven times towards the kodesh kadoshim, and then it was placed on the earlobe, thumb, and big toe of the *metzora*.

What is unique about the *metzora* that he has to offer a wine and oil sacrifice?

Oil represents silence (see *Zohar* vol.3, 177:), and wine represents speaking loudly. As we explained, the *metzora* transgressed two sins: He spoke *lashon hara,* and didn't speak kind words, which would have helped his fellow man. Therefore, he has wine and oil in his sacrifice. The wine implies that he should get accustomed to speaking kind words to others, and the oil suggests that he must remain silent when it comes to lashon hara.

You do not fall because you are weak; you fall because you think you are strong.

"Even if you can't sing well, sing. Sing to yourself. Sing in the privacy of your home. But sing." - Rebbe Nachman Of Breslov.

The More Important Challah



Once, Rav Avraham Tannenbaum ate at Rav Yosef Tendler's house on a Shabbos night, and he saw that Rav Tendler first cut the smaller Challah, and then the larger one. It was pointed out that the Halachah is to cut the larger Challah, because it is considered more Chashuv, more important and significant than the smaller one. Rav Tendler responded, "The small Challah was made by my wife. Therefore, it is more Chashuv to me!" *(Torah U'Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

After a person with Tzora'as becomes healed, he comes to the Kohein who must verbally pronounce him pure. Why does his purification have to be spoken out?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that one of the main causes for Tzora'as is Lashon Hara, evil speech. Therefore, one must be purified through speech to emphasize that both purity and impurity, as well as life and death, are empowered within the realm of speech. Speech is indeed a tool which is so very delicate.

Do You Know What Time it Is?



When Rabbi Aharon of Belz, O"BM, was a young boy, he once received a pocket watch as a gift from his father. He kept it in his pocket, attached to his vest button by a chain.

As he hurried to the Yeshivah one morning, a passerby noticed the watch and asked young Aharon, "What time is it now?"

The boy removed the watch from his pocket, smiled, and replied, "ten minutes and thirty-two seconds past seven."

The man thanked him and went on his way.

A bystander who had observed the exchange asked the boy, "Why did you tell the person the time in seconds? Were you trying to show off?"

"G-d Forbid," the boy answered. "When someone asks a Jew for a favor, he must do it completely. If someone asks me the time, my answer must be exact and complete." *(Torah Sweets Weekly edited by Reb Mendel Berlin.)*



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"The same way that one must be a connoisseur to fully appreciate a diamond's magnificence - so must one have an acquired expertise to detect the beauty in a pure, simple Jew." ~ Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch.

Speech Is Very Powerful

When it is used for *lashon hara*, it is one of the worst *aveiros* of the Torah. Additionally, as we know, *lashon hara* causes *machlokes* and devastation. In contrast, when one uses his speech to help others, it does wonders. It is incredible how much good can be accomplished by saying a kind word.



The Shevet Mussar *zt'l* once met someone who was very sad. The Shevet Mussar wanted to cheer him up, so he spoke with him for a long time. Some days later, this person told the Shevet Mussar that he had been so sad and depressed. The Shevet Mussar's kind words saved his life. Therefore, the Shevet Mussar urges us to speak a lot to people who are sad and need chizuk.

Happy people are worthy to go directly to Olam HaBa because they made others happy (as the Gemara explains). That merit makes them worthy of Olam HaBa, immediately.

Rashi describes these people as **בני אדם שמחים ומשמחים**, ***"Happy people, who made people happy."***

The words **בני אדם** in Rashi seem extra. We can explain that with their humour and joy, they helped people feel that they are **בני אדם**, human beings.

Because sometimes, when people feel down, they hardly feel that they have a right to be called human. The joy that these people gave them helped them recognize their self-worth.

He calls these conversations "tzedakah that doesn't cost money."

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 9:) states, "Whoever gives a *prutah* to the poor receives six *brachos*. When he appeases him, he is blessed with eleven *brachos*."

The Maharal (*Agados*, ibid.) explains, "When you give a *prutah* to a poor person, it revives his soul for a short time. Because after he buys food and satisfies his hunger, the enjoyment is over.

However, when you say kind words to the poor, this encouragement will remain with him a very long time."

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-*Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



In this week's parsha, we read a lot about the **נגעים** - the afflictions that befall a person in various situations. The Torah clearly tells us why a person gets Tzaraas. **The Chofetz Chaim** famously says (brought from Chazal) that Tzaraas comes from speaking Loshon horah. This is what Rashi clearly tells us: **לפי שהנגעים באין על לשון הרע** 14:4 . What is interesting to note, that right over here the pasuk continues and says וְעֵץ אָרֶז and Rashi explains :- **לפי שהנגעים באין על גסות הרוח** - ***Because lesions of tzara'ath come because of haughtiness.***

But Rashi told us just a moment ago, that the reason for Tzaraas is Loshon horah? Why the change in reason?

Answers **Rav Shraga Grossbard** in *Daas Shraga,* that really these two reasons are the same. If we look at the root of why a person speaks Loshon horah, what's going on in his mind that he is willing to

share information, that is going to put someone else down? It is because he has **גסות הרוח**. It is because he thinks so highly of himself, or he wants to think highly of himself, so it is so easy to put somebody else down. Because by doing this, it immediately elevates himself.

This is what Rashi is telling us. There is no contradiction, both reasons are the same and are true.

Rav Simcha Bunim famously said, ***"a man was given two eyes. With one eye, he should perceive the positive qualities of his fellow man. With the other eye, he should scrutinise his own faults, but never to look at somebody else's bad points".***

A true *maaseh* happened here in Yerushalayim. I heard this from the Dayan that was on the Beis Din. Somebody took their neighbour to court for a huge noise that was coming from the next door apartment that was disturbing them immensely. There was a heated argument going on in the Beis Din, was it right or not. At one point in the proceedings, the lady that brought the case said to her neighbour's husband, " let me tell you something, if you don't tell your wife to put a stop to the bothersome noise, I have a group of sixty women that come into us from the entire neighbourhood that learn *shemiras halashon*, than I will tell them all about what your wife is doing".

This Dayan told me that he was sitting there, and he like – WHAT! You didn't even realise what you just said. You are going to tell Sixty women what your neighbour is doing? This is a terrible thing.

We all do the same thing. It is so easy to look at somebody else and see their bad qualities and speak about them. But is also sometimes comes about, because we want to elevate ourselves by putting somebody else down.

This weeks parsha teaches us that we have to realise the *yesod* that **גסות הרוח** - haughtiness, is a terrible thing. A person who is busy

building up his own pride, and looking only at himself, is automatically going to look badly at somebody else.

Our mission is to look for the good qualities that other people have, and to be sensitive to their activities.

The Chofetz Chaim says to accomplish this, as Chazal tell us, we are just wating for people to stop speaking Loshon horah, stop speaking badly about other people. Stop gossiping, stop spreading the news.

Stop it all, because if we do, than we will have a Beis hamikdash Bimherah Veyameinu.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

The Jewish Weekly - The strength of a story By Pini Rubinstein

Chaim Tyberg, a man in his fifties was about to return to Israel after staying in America for a wedding. He was on the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, when, suddenly, from the right side a small black car came racing toward him. Chaim didn't even notice it, it crashed into Chaim's car, and from that moment, everything went dark, he did not hear anything or see anything or sense anything.

He was rushed to hospital, he was hooked up to numerous life support machines, the family was gathered around his bed, waiting and hoping for a Yeshuah (salvation).

Two weeks later, on erev Shabbat, Moshe Yosef Friedlander received a call. Moshe Yosef is a Jew, who is always willing to help a fellow Jew, whether it be food deliveries to the hospital, picking up and delivering medications, or financial aid, he is a Jew who is always available to help another. On the other end of the phone was a person telling him that there is a family at a hospital in New Jersey, it would appear without anything for Shabbat.

Moshe Yosef, didn't hesitate a minute, packed his car with a variety of food and goodies for Shabbat. He drove to the hospital and met the family who came from Israel. He saw, the wife, the children, the entire family sitting around the bed, shattered and broken, without a glimpse of hope.



Moshe Yosef asked the family if he can go into the room to tell Chaim a story of Reb Shayele. The family skeptically look at him and said, "a story? You could try but he doesn't hear anything, he is completely unconscious." Moshe Yosef went inside the room and recounted the following story;

In Hungary, back in the day, there was a boy by the name, Moshe Weiss. This boy, learned in Yeshiva. A false story was spread about this boy, for no apparent reason. This made him very depressed and downtrodden. Wherever he went, the gossip followed him.

Someone advised him, "You know what, Moshe, travel to the Tzaddik Reb Shayale, you have nothing to lose." He arrived in Kerestir, the waiting room was packed, lines of people were waiting to go in and speak with the Tzaddik. Moshe found a place in the back of the line. He stood there waiting, but the line wasn't moving. Puzzled, he asked another man, "what is going on? Why is the line not moving?" The man tells him, "the Rebbe does not want to receive anyone, until a person by the name of Moshe Weiss shows up." "Moshe Weiss??? My name is Moshe Weiss." "You are Moshe Weiss? Go into the Rebbe!"

He entered the Rebbe's room, Reb Shayale lifted up his arms, and looked him straight in the eyes, "Moshe, Moshe, I've been waiting

for you, I know what you are enduring, I know what you are going through. Move to another town, where an elderly man lives, go there, assist him, it will be good for you." "Moshe, Moshe, remember one thing, I will forever be with you, Moshe, I will forever be with you."

Moshe, left the room feeling like a new person. All went well for him, he had success, he got married, he began his life, as it ought to be. Many years later, after the gruelling war, Moshe arrived in Canada, and sadly, Moshe Weiss, had now become Howard Weiss, he abandoned Torah and Mitzvot, and followed a new lifestyle.

One Friday, Howard Weiss suffered a heart attack, he was taken to the hospital, and his wife was notified that he has just 2-3 hours to live. She should go home, prepare herself, because in two hours he will be gone.

About 15 minutes before Shabbat, she receives a call. "Hello?" "Yes, this is Howard speaking" "Howard?!! You are about to die!" "I am sitting here in the hospital, I am well, come pick me up!" She drove to the hospital, she entered the lobby, and she couldn't believe her eyes. She saw her husband Howard sitting there, healthy, normal, as if nothing ever happened to him.

She asked, "Howard, tell me. What happened here?" "Listen carefully" he responds, "I had nearly passed onto the 'next world', when suddenly, I had a dream, the Holy Tzaddik, Reb Shayele appeared in my dream. I questioned him, "Rebbe, Rebbe! How are you allowing me to die? I am so young, the Rebbe promised me, you will always be with me, and now, you allow me to die?!"

The Rebbe looked into my eyes and said, "I said, I will always be with Moshe Weiss. Now with the new person that you have turned into, if you promise me to always keep Shabbat, you will be well. Moshe, I will always be with you. "Rebbe! I promise you! from this Shabbat on, I will keep Shabbat!" "Moshe, if so, you will be healthy." And here I am, come, let's go home, we are going to keep Shabbat from tonight.

This is the story that Moshe Yosef said to the family at the bedside of Chaim, and ended it by saying, "With Hashem's help, by tomorrow, he will regain consciousness." On Motzei Shabbat, Moshe Yosef received a call from one of the family members. "Moshe Yosef, you won't believe this! 11 o'clock this morning, our father woke up, my father woke up! He is alive! He is here!"

This is the power of a story of a Tzaddik. Editor's Note: Reb Yeshaya Ben Reb Moshe, known as Reb Shaya'la of Kerestir zt"l's 96th Yahrzeit was Thursday, 3rd Iyar – April 15th of this year.

Vechol Maaminim

The Gates of Amen Open with the Purification of the Metzora זאת תהיה תורת המצרע... (יד ב)

Harav Noach Mindes, the mechutan of **the Gra**, explained: The holy Zohar (Vayeilech 285 2) explains from the passuk (Yeshayah 26:2): "Pischu she'arim vayavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim," that in the merit of answering amen with kavanah the Gates of Blessing from which good is bestowed upon Am Yisrael are opened. The Zohar calls the metzora (Yisro 80 1, and similarly in Onkelos here) 'sagira.' Based on this we can explain that the sin of lashon hara affects the tikkun that is done by answering amen, and causes the gates of abundance that are opened in the merit of answering amen to close - lisgor.

This is also alluded to by the fact that the acronym of the three partners in the sin of lashon hara – the **אומר נאמר מקבל** – the one who said it, the one it's about and the one who heard it, is amen.

Therefore, the metzora is purified by bringing birds and an eizov plant, **צפורים ואזוב**, as the acronym is **צא** which is numerically equivalent to 91 – and amen, because with the purification of the metzora with these, the gates of amen that were locked are opened. *Parparaos Lechochmah; see also Magen Avraham [Trisker Maggid]*



The Beis HaLevi zt'l would often open his tabak pushkah (snuffbox) and then immediately close it. One of his students was curious about this, so when he had the opportunity, he opened the snuff box, and he found the letters, **שפ״ו שמ״נ** written inside. He asked the Beis HaLevi about this. The Beis HaLevi replied that they are roshei teivos for **שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו**, ***"Someone who guards his tongue is protecting himself from troubles."***

The Beis HaLevi would open his snuffbox, read the message, and remember to be careful with his speech.

Lashon Hara



The Vilna Gaon writes in a letter to his family, "Throughout one's life, one must afflict himself. Not by fasting or other kinds of afflictions, rather just by controlling one's mouth and one's desires… This accomplishes more than all fasts and afflictions. Each moment one closes his mouth, he merits the concealed light, that no malach or creation can imagine."

What you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth. Words should be weighed, not counted.

L'Maaseh

Rav Dovid Sutton notes that when one puts their life at risk for a Mitzvah, Hashem repays that person back. He relates the following story which illustrates how one man's sacrifice for Shabbos rewarded him and resulted in a Kiddush Hashem.

A Talmid Chacham in Eretz Yisroel did not have much money, and his son took seriously ill on a Shabbos, R"L. He desperately needed a doctor, and there happened to be an excellent doctor, who was a secular Jew, who lived down the block from him. The doctor was called over to the man's house and agreed to treat the boy. However, he demanded that he be given a cheque as payment immediately, before he treated the child. The doctor said, "I don't trust religious Jews. I will tend to your son only if you give me a cheque for 500 Shekel right now."



Halachah clearly establishes that human life overrides Torah law, and so, the father wrote a cheque in an unusual manner (using a Shinui), and handed it to the doctor.

The doctor looked at the cheque and noticed that it was written for 1,000 Shekel. The doctor said, "Maybe you didn't hear me correctly. I asked for 500 Shekel, not 1,000. Besides, looking around your apartment, it does not appear as though you can afford to pay me extra."

The Talmid Chacham explained, "To write a cheque for 500 Shekel, I would have to write three words in Hebrew, 'Chameish Mei'os Shekel' (500 Shekel), whereas writing 1,000 Shekel required writing just two words, 'Elef Shekel' (1,000 Shekel). In order to minimize

the Chilul Shabbos, the desecration of Shabbos, I am prepared to double the amount you asked for."

The doctor was astounded. He had never seen anything like this in his life! Here was a poor person paying an extra 500 Shekel in order to write ONE word less on Shabbos. The doctor put the cheque in his pocket. He took out 500 Shekel and set it down on the table as change, treated the sick child, and brought the cheque home to show his wife.

After Shabbos, the doctor returned to the Talmid Chacham's home and said, "I was so moved by what you did today, and I decided that I wanted to learn more about Shabbos and Judaism." The Talmid Chacham began studying with him, and ultimately, the doctor became a Ba'al Teshuvah!

The Power Of Dan L'Kaf Zechut - Judging Favourably



Parshat Metzora famously begins, "*Zot Torat Hametzora* – this is the law of the individual who contracts 'tzara'at'" (the modern translation of "tzara'at" is leprosy, but **Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch**, among others, convincingly demonstrates from the laws of "tzara'at" that the affliction of *tzara'at* is not synonymous with leprosy or any other disease for that matter.

One of the positive mitzvos in the Torah violated by those who speak loshon hara, according to the Chafetz Chaim (Be'er Mayim Chaim 3:11), is "*b'tzedek tishpot et amitecha.*" This verse is the source of

the obligation to judge people favorably – i.e., to be "*dan l'kaf zechut*." In this vein, the Chofetz Chaim claims that all the episodes in the Torah concerning "lashon hara" – such as the spies and Miriam – were caused by a failure to observe the mitzvah of *dan l'kaf zechut*.

As it turns out, the trait of *dan l'kaf zechut* is not merely about avoiding premature judgment of others. It is much more than that. In a positive sense, the trait of *dan l'kaf zechut* holds the key to success in many spheres of life, including choosing the right *shidduch* (i.e., marriage partner), earning a *parnassa* (i.e., a living), and having *bitachon* (faith) in Hashem.

In his sefer *Chafetz Chaim*, the Chafetz Chaim provides a lengthy list of negative and positive commandments violated when a person speaks lashon hara. Indeed, the sheer length of the list helps explain the meaning of the statement in the gemara (Arachin 15b) that one who speaks lashon hara has sins that "reach to the sky."

Being dan l'kaf zechut somebody is not l'chatchilla – L'chatchilla a person should mind his own business. B'dieved, if you happen to be judging somebody, then – be dan l'kaf zechut!



A person told the Chazon Ish, Horav Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz זצ"ל, that he wants to try do better in his עֲבוֹדַת ה'.

He asked the Chazon Ish what he should try to work on. The Chazon Ish told him that he should work on two things: on his learning and to be careful not to speak lashon hora.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- How Did R'Shayele Help?



If we want to talk about Reb Shayala, where can we start? The nissim v'niflaos, the segulos and the yeshuos that throughout the years Yidden have seen every day. However for us to connect with this, let us understand this vort from the **Ramah Mipano**.

In the gemara, the word ***hilula*** refers to a wedding. ***Hilula*** in the Zohar Hakodosh refers to a yahrzeit. The Ramah Mipano asks, what is the connection?

Imagine there is a chuppah taking place and someone starts discussing a complicated sugya. The Rav will tell him to leave. Right now, we are only talking about Kiddushin. The same applies on a tzaddik's yarzeit. We should only be occupied with the sugya of that tzaddik.

Oy, what a sugya Reb Shayala! His life was all about kindness. Endless kindness for Yidden.

His grandchildren said, that they asked him towards the end of his life, what will be in the future with all those yeshuos? Reb shayala answered that, ***"as long as people will give tzeddaka, then all the yeshuos will continue".***

Reb Shayala once said, "today, I answered seven questions with one answer. How? A Yid came to me, distraught. He had no money, utilities had been cut off and there was nothing to eat in his home. He had seven children crying, asking, what can we eat? So I sent

over a wagon filled with all sorts of food and goodies. With this one wagon, I answered these seven children".

In the Medrash (Bereishis Rabah 49) it says – Reb Meir arrived at a town called Mamle, and he noticed that there were no old people amongst the towspeople. Reb Meir asked, "why is that? Are you from the family of Eli, who the gemara explains would die young?" The Townspeople asked, please pray for us that we should live longer!

Reb Meir told them, " Give Yidden to eat! Give them tzedakka, and you will merit a long life". As it says in Mishlei: **עֲטֶרֶת תִּפְאֶרֶת שֵׂיבָה בְּדֶרֶךְ צְדָקָה תִּמָּצֵא** – Do you want to live long? Give tzedakah! Give to Yidden!

This is what Reb Shayala was all about. Always giving for Yidden.

I heard a sweet vort from **R'Yaakov Sholom Freund Z"L**. He explains that when a tzaddik leaves the world, he is eventually forgotten. (Reb Shayala was niftar almost 100 years ago) However, if you bind yourself to the tzaddik, through speaking about him, and remembering his deeds and his life's essence, how much he cared by feeding hungry Yidden, Then, even when he is no longer here, we will not forget him, it is as though he is still here with us, giving, giving and giving! Then, it is as if Reb Shayala is here.

It is told that Reb Shayala once sent a needy person to a wealthy man. He told the needy person to ask him for a specific amount of money. When the poor man arrived at the wealthy man's house, he said to him that Reb Shayala asked that you give me this amount of money. The *gvir* said, "tell your Rebbe to stop sending people to me, I am not interested in giving charity."

The man returned to Reb Shayala and repeated what the *gvir* said. He isn't interested in giving. Reb Shayal requested that the gvir should come to him. He told the *gvir*, "I saw up in shamayim that when wealth is bestowed to this world, it goes to a person who will distribute his wealth to those Yidden in need. So I mentioned your

name, because I know that you are a good generous man and you will give to others. But if you are not interested, no problem, your wealth will go elsewhere".

Immediately, the *gvir* was repentant. "Of course, of course, I want to give". He now realised that he is just Hashem's middleman and should be careful to use the money as intended.

B'zchus R'Yeshaya ben R'Moshe, may his merit protect us and all of Klal Yisroel.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

Tefilos in the Manchester Yeshivah were meticulous and lengthy, yet long after the last Kaddish for Maariv was over, the Rosh Yeshivah, **Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, zt"l**, would finally complete his Davening. A student would then give the Rosh Yeshivah a ride home. However, for Rav Segal, the ride was not a gap in the day's schedule. He got into the car carrying a bundle of letters to mail.



It used to be that when the boys had letters to mail, they would give their letters to a Bachur named Eliezer to mail for them. One time, when they brought the letters to Eliezer, Rav Yehuda Zev asked if he could take them instead.

The Bachurim hesitated. Surely, this wasn't Kavod for the Rosh Yeshivah! But who were they to argue? Even the Yeshivah's driver asked if he could go out into the cold night instead of the Rosh Yeshivah to mail the letters, but Rav Yehuda Zev became very animated, and exclaimed, "I would give you a million pounds for this

Mitzvah! Mailing the letters is a Chesed for the Bachurim, and it brings great joy to their parents, who live far away."

So, every evening, the car would stop by the mailbox on the side of the road, and the Rosh Yeshivah would emerge and mail the letters. He would say "Hineni Muchan U'Mezuman… Behold I am prepared to do a Mitzvah of Chesed!" and he would mail the letters. When he got back in the car, he would say, "Look how Hashem gives Olam Haba away! For an act that is so small, you get so much!"

Learning from a Baby - Jack E. Rahmey



A few years ago, a couple in Bnei Brak was blessed with a new baby girl. After the baby was born, she would not stop crying and would not nurse from her mother or take any bottles. This concerned the head nurse, who looked in the baby's mouth and discovered that her lip and tongue were attached. This was a very severe case of this particular deformity. The nurse set up a feeding tube to give the baby necessary nutrients.

Right away, the parents discussed between themselves that though this was a tragic occurrence, it is from Hashem and clearly symbolic. Since the defect occurred in the baby's mouth, they took upon themselves to strengthen their *shemirat halashon—guarding one's tongue* and vowed to be more careful and refrain from speaking *lashon hara*. They also took upon themselves to learn two *halachot* a day of *shemirat halashon* and to make sure not to

speak or hear *lashon hara* as a *zechut* for the *refuah shelemah* of their newborn baby.

The parents then researched who was the best surgeon to perform this complicated procedure to fix their daughter. The parents brought their baby to the surgeon for the appointment a week after they took upon themselves to refrain from speaking *lashon hara*. The surgeon looked into the baby's mouth. He looked and looked inside with a serious expression, not saying a word, which made the parents anxious. Finally, the surgeon said, "I really don't know why you are here, there is absolutely nothing wrong with your daughter's mouth. Her tongue and lips are perfect, exactly the way they should be."

The Netziv and the Doctor



R' Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin known by the acronym, Netziv, never went to the doctor when he was sick. Once, though, when he experienced a prolonged period of not feeling well, he acquiesced to his family's urging and let a doctor visit. After the exam, the doctor gave him a prescription and the Netziv thanked him. No sooner did the doctor leave than the Netziv tore up the prescription.

"What are you doing?" asked his incredulous family.

The Netziv explained that instead of going to a doctor when something hurt him, he would think about which mitzvos are associated with that limb. He would then examine which of those mitzvos he has been lax in and make an effort to repair his wrongdoing, thereby strengthening that body part.

However, this time he could not identify exactly which part of his body caused him to feel weak. Once the doctor identified it, he no longer needed he doctors medicine. He would now cure it the way he always cured his own ailment – through teshuva.

Rav Avigdor Miller on The Sunny Side of Life

QUESTION: Is it possible to teach children to appreciate the world?



ANSWER: And the answer is absolutely! That's when it *should* be taught. You should teach a child and tell him, "Isn't it beautiful that the sun is shining right now?" Explain to him the benefits of the sun. In the summertime, the sun warms you. Walk on the sunny side of the street and walk on the sunny side of life. And the sun gives you vitamins as it hits your skin. The sun gives you light. And it's all free energy! No landlord will send you a bill. You won't be sent a bill for the daytime light. It's so beautiful, the sunlight.

It's a mashal of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The Gemara says the sun is a mashal of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Just like the sun floods the world with happiness and light and joy, so does Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so certainly you can teach children to enjoy sun.

We have to teach ourselves too, by the way. Let's enjoy the sun. The biggest bracha that we make in davening is on the sun. Doesn't that show the hypocrisy among us? The longest bracha in davening is on the sun — **ברוך אתה ה' יוצר אור** and it concludes **יוצר המאורות** and the malachim are so excited over the sun that they say **קדוש קדוש ברעש גדול**; with great excitement they're praising Hashem

— and we, we're the recipients of all this, and we're not interested. We're asleep.

So, there's a lot of work to be done on children and on ourselves.

Rabbi Tzvi Sytner



Imagine that you are walking down the street and you find a diamond. You can't believe it, a real diamond! And it's gorgeous. It's absolutely perfect. So you run to the jewelers and say, "How much will you give me for this perfect diamond?"

He looks at it with his loop and he says, "You aren't kidding, this is a perfect diamond." He was so excited.

The jeweler says, " I will tell you what, I will give you £5."

"What do you mean £5, you just agreed that it was a perfect diamond?"

He said, "You are right, it is a perfect diamond, but really valuable diamonds have certain imperfections. The fact that it is flawless tells me that it is not real. Part of what makes a diamond real and precious, is the fact that it has flaws. These imperfections are such an important part of a diamond, that jewelers don't even call them flaws, they call them inclusions. A little black dot, or a scratch. These are the inclusions, and this is what makes it real."

You know, every single one of us has flaws. Only when we identify ourselves with these flaws, it brings us down, so that we don't value ourselves.

Maybe instead of identifying the flaws as 'I'm no good', maybe we should look at them as 'our inclusions'. This is what makes us real and challenges us to grow and ultimately makes us great.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos says **וְאַל תְּהִי רָשָׁע בִּפְנֵי עַצְמְךָ** 'Don't look at yourself like a *rasha*' 2:13. **Rabeinu Yonah** explains that even if you do things that are bad, don't label yourself as bad. But rather, you are very good, but you have some flaws. These inclusions are part of what makes you real. And now, you can go and work on them from a place of strength.

So, the next time that you think that you are not a good person, remember, that it isn't who you are. Those are just your inclusions. It is what makes you a diamond. And the next time that you are thinking or speaking negatively about someone else, remember that they have inclusions, just like you. And that's what makes them a diamond too.

Why Do We Cry – Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein

The tragedy of death is the end of a person's potential. When a person dies, really, we should all be happy. We should make a party, because when a person did a lot in their life, they were righteous and did good things, so when they pass away to the next world, why are we sad? Why are we sitting shivah? Why are we ripping our clothing? It should be a time for celebration? They are going to a better place.

There is a Mishna in Pirkei Avos- "one second in the next world is greater than 120 years in this world" - **יָפָה שָׁעָה אַחַת שֶׁל קוֹרַת רוּחַ בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה** 4:17. So if that is true, then when a person dies, we should throw a party. They got to the other world. I am the one that is stuck. He is free in Gan Eden with all the tzaddikim and next to The Shechinah.

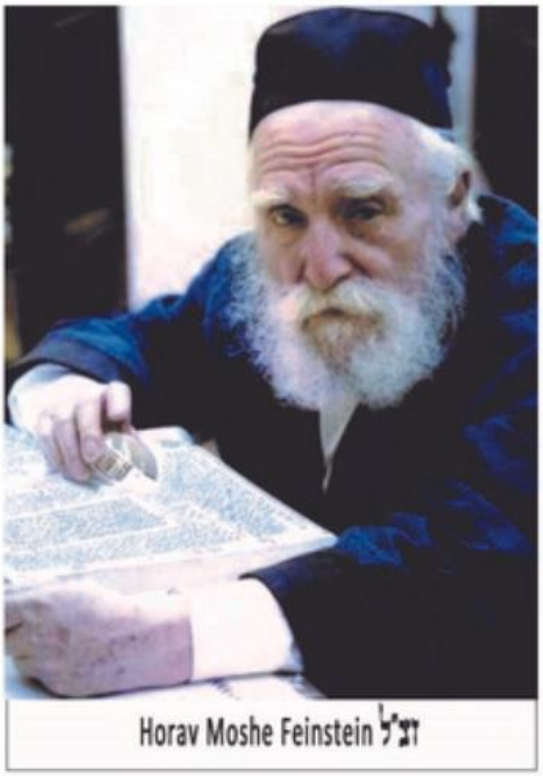
So why are we so depressed and we cry? Not only that, but there is a halacha that you **must** cry and sit on the floor and be an ovel. Why? He is in shamayim, in the best place.

The answer is that it is so important for this generation to realise that the greatest tragedy on this world is the end of potential. For the greatest tzaddik in the world, if he had another second in this world he would be able to do another mitzvah.

The same Mishna says **יָפָה שָׁעָה אַחַת בִּתְשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא** - that one second on this world doing mitzvos is greater than all of Olam Habbah. It is greater than Gan Eden, Moshiach, and the next world.

This is why we cry when a person passes away, because that person, even if he is a tzaddik, his potential is over. And the end of potential is tragedy. This is why a person sits shivah.

Dvar Torah from Artscroll Interlinear חמשי חומשי תורה


Horav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל

Many people wanted to pay Horav Moshe Feinstein **זצ"ל** for being mesader kiddushin or paskening shailos in halacha. Rav Moshe would thank them, but he would not take payment for these services. There were many times where people would insist on giving him the money! Whenever this happened, he would give all the money to either Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim or another tzedakah. He would support his family only with the modest salary that he got from the Yeshiva.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages



Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, once talked about the children of the Jews who came to America from Europe in the early 1900's, and how, sadly, they often stopped being *Frum* and observant. He explained that it was very hard to earn a living back then. Many times, people would have a new job every week because they would get fired from their job for not working on *Shabbos*. They would have to look for a different job each Sunday. They would come home each week for *Shabbos*, and complain about how hard it was to be a *Yid*! "

This was a very big mistake," explained Rav Moshe. "All the children heard about was how difficult it was, and they weren't told how nice it is. Unfortunately, this caused them to leave the beautiful Jewish way of life. The truth is, to be a *Yid* is a very beautiful thing! It's not difficult to be a *Yid*, it's so easy! Just let *Hashem's Torah* lead your life, and you will see how easy and beautiful being a *Yid* is!!"

B'Kitzur… A Quick Look at Hilchos Tefilah

It is a mitzvah to run when one is going to *Shul* or to the *Bais HaMedrash* to *daven* or learn Torah, as well as to run for any other mitzvah. Therefore, it is permitted to run even on Shabbos for the sake of a mitzvah. However, it is always forbidden to run inside the *Shul* or *Bais HaMedrash*. (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 12:11)

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair – A Knife in My Heart



If someone insults us, it is sometimes referred to as 'they put a knife in my heart'.

Really, a word is nothing more then a puff of air with a feeble soundwave attached to it. And yet, sometimes, it does indeed feel like a knife in our heart. How does a puff of air turn into a knife? The answer is that it is **we** that turn the insulting words of others into a knife.

There are few things that are as precious to us as our self-esteem. And yet for most of us, our sense of value comes from others. If other people ask our advice, we feel smart. If they seek our company, we feel likeable. If they criticize us, we feel demeaned. If they reject us, we worry that perhaps we are unworthy. Insulting words turn into knives because we allow those words to define us.

Imagine one day, an ant crawls across your car windshield and as it passes, it turns to you and shouts, "LOSER"

After you get over the shock of a talking ant, I don't think that this will make much of a dent in your self-esteem. Why would I let an ant define who I am?

Many feuds end a perfectly good relationship, which may be triggered by one single insult. An insult says much more about the person that says it than the person it is said about.

Either the insulter is frustrated or thoughtless and will never learn the destructive power of words. All of this is their responsibility to fix. But for us, if we want to live in peace with ourselves, we need to stop the insult in its tracks, when it is on the way towards us. We

need to tell ourselves, 'We will not be defined by another person's communication or insensitivities.'



But here is the thing, and it's magical. If we don't breath life into words of insult, they can slide by us like the puffs of air that they really are.

We can remember the lesson of the ant. We can stop letting others define us and define ourselves.

When someone says something that you find hurtful, say to yourself, " Your words don't define me, but my reaction to your words do."

Thoughts and Sayings of Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l



by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l (1904-1980) was a talmid of the Alter of Slabodka, who emphasized Gadlus HaAdam – in dealing with all people. Rav Hutner became the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chaim Berlin and helped mould and shape thousands of talmidim and talmidim of talmidim. Later in life, Rav Hutner established Yeshiva Pachad Yitzchok in Yerushalayim. On one of his trips to Eretz Yisroel, Rav Hutner's plane was seized by terrorists. He and his daughter Rebbitzen David were on the flight. The terrorists were Popular

Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorists, and the hijacking was part of the Dawson's Field.

What follows are some of his thoughts and sayings.

1. Struggle is not the opposite of growth; it is part of growth.
2. It is a grave error that when we discuss the greatness of gedolim, we deal only with the end product. We discuss their complete perfection, omitting all mention of the inner battles which they overcame yet raged within them. The impression one gets is that they were created in full perfection. [PY Igros V'ksavim #128]
3. Shlomo HaMelech said, (Mishlei 24:16), "The tzaddik **will** fall seven times and will rise." The simple person thinks he meant, "Even though a tzaddik falls seven times, he will still rise." A smart person, however, knows that he meant, "**Because** a tzaddik fell seven times, that is why he ultimately rose." [ibid]
4. Loving Hashem, and loving people are one and the same. One cannot have love of Hashem without loving people. And one cannot truly love people without also loving Hashem.
5. There is a very special type of Ahavah that is unique that we must have for all geirim.
6. When calling in a high school bochur from a very chashuva mishpacha who started becoming involved in girls, Rav Hutner did not call him out directly on it. Instead, he questioned the young man on the Mesechta he was learning, Bava Metziah. He then on last year's Mesechta, Bava Kamma. He then said, "I see that you are holding very well, k'nayna horah on seder Nezikin! Why, then, pray tell, are you being oisek in seder Nashim?" The bochur got the message right away and immersed himself in learning, stopping other extra-curricular activities. [Heard from the bochur].
7. I would prefer to produce a hundred baal Habatim than a hundred rabbonim — as rabbanim without people to follow them and

implement their vision, will be lost, but good baal habatim will always make sure to have a good rav.

8. After setting up a bochur on a shidduch, the bachur did not wish to date a second time, and was humming and hawing as to the reason. Rav Hutner was very intuitive and figured it out saying, "I see.. She did not have enough sheker and she also was lacking in Hevel.." [Heard from a talmid].

I'm Jealous of You... By R' Chaim Dahan ZT"L

Rabbi Shneur Kotler had a son called Meir who was married with a few children. At a very young age, he passed away. Rav Shneur, the Rosh Yeshiva was sitting shiva. Thousands of people came to be menachem avel. And the entire time, Reb Shneur was sitting there with his head faced down. Nobody could get him to talk.

A couple of days into the shiva, in came the famous **Bluzhever Rebbe**. He tells Reb Shniur, **"I am jealous of you!"** When Reb Shneur heard these words, he couldn't believe somebody could say such a thing at a time like this. A couple of moments later, the Bluzhever Rebbe repeated, Reb Shneur, I just want you to know, **"I am really jealous of you!"** Reb Shneur thought, how could a person say something like that to me at this time. How could a person be so inconsiderate? I have just lost my son. What is there to be jealous of? He picks up his head and he sees that it is the Bluzhever Rebbe standing there.

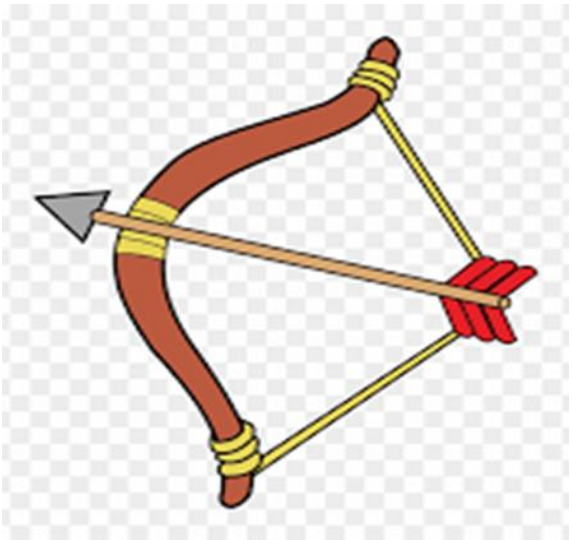
The Rebbe said, "I had a beautiful daughter who was lost in Europe during the Holocaust. And I have no idea where she died or when she died. I will never see a future from that daughter. But look at you. Baruch Hashem, you know where your son is buried. You have a kever to visit. You have a yartzeit to commemorate. You know what date he passed away. And you have grandchildren from your son. How lucky you are. I only wish that I had that."

He took a situation that was extremely painful for him, and he turned it around positively in such a way to comfort the Rosh Yeshiva.

Many times, we don't understand the losses or problems that we have in life. But Hashem says, "I gave it to you because one day, there will be a moment when you realise that this experience that you went through in life can be turned around to help comfort someone else."

After the shiva, Reb Shneur went to visit the Bluzhever Rebbe. He told him, "I want you to know, that at the shiva I was extremely depressed, and I couldn't snap out of it. And when you came over to talk to me with your strange words, you changed my whole perspective in life. And I started to realise that you are right. There is so much that I must be thankful for. "I appreciate what you said, as must have been very painful for you."

Even in the worst situation, there's what to be thankful for.



Your "Problem" In Life Is Often Your *Yeshua*

When *Shaul HaMelech* was killed, *Dovid* said: לְלַמֵּד בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה קָשֶׁת [שמואל ב, א יח] - We must teach the Yidden how to shoot "bows" and arrows.

The "bow" is a lesson in *Bitachon*. The more you pull back the arrow, it appears to be going in the "wrong" direction. Yet, in truth this force will cause your arrow to go even further in the "right" direction!

A Yerida failure in life can become *L'tzorech Aliya* part of an upward swing! *Aderaba*, your problems make you come out stronger and ahead.

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

ובא אשר לו הבית והגיד לכהן לאמר כנגע נראה לי בבית
***"The one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the Kohen, saying, 'Something like a plague has appeared to me in my house."* (14:35)**

QUESTION: Why must the homeowner say to the *Kohen* "*kenega*" — "something *like* a plague" — and not "*nega*" — "a plague"?

ANSWER: In the Polish city of Radin there lived the great *tzaddik* and *gaon* **Rabbi Yisrael Meir *HaKohen*, known as the "Chafeitz Chaim."** An individual who had heard many intriguing stories about him decided to visit the city and see him personally.



Upon arrival, he met an elderly bearded Jew in the street and asked him, "Could you please guide me to the home of the holy *tzaddik* and *gaon* the Chafeitz Chaim?" Graciously, the man told him to turn right at the corner and look for the first house on the second block. Then he said, "Incidentally, he is not such a *tzaddik*, nor is he a *gaon*." The visitor became enraged and slapped the elderly man across the face: "What audacity you have to speak in such a manner!"

When the visitor arrived at the home of the Chafeitz Chaim and was let into his study, he was horrified to learn that the man he had slapped earlier was the Chafeitz Chaim himself. Immediately he broke out in tears, apologized, and begged for forgiveness.

The Chafeitz Chaim smiled warmly and said, "There is no need to apologize; I deserved the admonition. I have dedicated my entire life to informing *K'lal Yisrael* about the terrible sin of *lashon*

hara (slander). Today, I gained a new insight: not only is *lashon hara* about others prohibited, but a Jew should not even speak negatively about himself."

In light of the above, we can understand why the person says "something *like* a plague." When one sees a blemish in his house he should not jump to the conclusion that it is bad, but he should be patient and say, "It appears that there *may* be a problem" and seek a solution. (**עיטורי תורה**)

Besamei HaTorah by *Rabbi Shmuel Winzelberg*



זאת תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו...
(יד:ב) ***This is the law of the metzorah on the day of his purification…*** (14:2)

תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו : תשובה ותפילה וצדקה

It is written in the *sefer P'sil Chayay* that afflictions come because of sins. *Tzara'as* comes upon a person because of eleven specific sins.

A person has to realize that if he is afflicted with *tzara'as* he must undergo self-examination and introspection to determine the cause of his sin and he must do *teshuvah*.

As we say in *Musaf* on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*:

תשובה ותפלה וצדקה – מעבירין את רוע הגזירה *'Repentance, prayer, and charity tear up the bad decree'*.

In our *machzorim* there are three corresponding words that appear above these three words - **צום, קול, ממון** — fasting, raising one's voice in *davening*, and giving *tzedakah*. The *gematria* (numerical

value) of each of these words is 136. The total of these three words (3 x 136) equals 408.

This is what our *pasuk* is teaching us: **זאת** , this— that is, **צום קול, ממון** —with a total numerical value of 408, which is *also* the same numerical value of **זאת** - will be the *'law of the metzorah'*. And if he does a complete repentance he will be cured of his affliction and become purified. (*Chaim shel Torah*)

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem



It was the job of the *shamash* in the *shul* in Baranovich to light a fire in the *shul's* fireplace early every morning so that the *shul* would be warm when people came to *daven Shacharis*.

Since many poor beggars spent the night in the *shul*, they were very happy to do the *shamash's* job for him and light a fire to keep themselves warm. The *shamash* was happy with this arrangement too, because he didn't have to leave his house early in the morning to start the fire.

Occasionally, however, it happened that the *shul* was empty for the night, and when the people arrived in the morning and found the *shul* cold, they would be annoyed with the *shamash*.

One day, **Rav Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky, *zt"l***, decided that he would do the *shamash's* job, and he began arriving at the *shul* early in the morning to light the fire. Everyone was happy. The people were

warm, and the *shamash* thought the beggars were doing his job for him. One morning, the *shamash* came to *shul* very early. He saw someone stirring the coals in an effort to get a fire going, and he went over to greet him.

Rav Yisroel Yaakov knew that the *shamash* would be terribly embarrassed if he knew who had been doing his job for him, so he didn't turn around and return the greeting. The *shamash* got angry that he was being ignored and yelled, "Why don't you answer me?!"

Rav Yisroel Yaakov quietly remained in his position over the fire, so as not to reveal his identity and make the *shamash* feel bad. Even when his beard began to get singed, he remained still, thinking of the shame the *shamash* would feel if he knew who he was yelling at. - Rav Yisroel Yaakov only left his position when the *shamash* finally stormed angrily out of the *shul* in frustration.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

In the marketplace in Prague, in side-by-side stores with an adjoining wall, were stores owned by a crooked fragrance dealer and an honest oil merchant. The Jewish oil merchant had a good reputation and his business thrived, while the crooked fragrance dealer struggled to bring customers into his store.

One night after the market was closed, the fragrance dealer drilled a small hole in the adjoining wall. He spent the next several days observing the oil merchant, and he noticed that each night the oil merchant would count his daily revenue and place it into a red pouch that he would hide. This gave him an idea.

The next day he ran into the street screaming that his money had been robbed and he suspected the oil merchant since he is the only one who knew that he placed his money in a red pouch!

Sure enough the police found the red pouch in the store of the oil merchant. Because of their respective reputations, no one really

believed the fragrance merchant was telling the truth, but he told a good story and a trial was set to take place.

The big trial was the talk of the town, and the streets were full of debate as to who was the thief. Even the children talked excitedly about the upcoming trial. The judge, however, was in a conundrum and didn't know who to believe.

On the night before the trial, the judge walked the streets and overheard some Jewish children playing "court". One child, whose name was Yehuda Lowe, presided over the case, while arguments were made by the other children pretending to be the two claimants.

The judge amusingly stood by listening to the proceedings. After hearing both sides, the young 'judge' asked them to bring him a bowl of water, and he said, "We will put the coins in the water. If oil spots come floating to the top, then we will know the coins were handled by the oil dealer, and he is innocent. If nothing floats to the top, we will know that the rightful owner is the fragrance dealer, and the oil merchant is a thief."

The very next day at the real trial, the courtroom was packed. After hearing both sides, the judge asked for a bowl of water, and explained that the coins in question will prove who is innocent and who is lying, just as he saw the night before. When the coins were placed in the bowl, small droplets of oil started floating to the surface of the water.

The oil merchant was proven to be innocent, and the fragrance dealer's fraud was discovered. When all the townspeople praised the judge on his incredible wisdom, he said, "Do not praise me, but praise the little boy who gave me the idea." That little boy, **Yehuda Lowe**, is better known today as the ***Maharal of Prague***. (*Zichronam L'Vrachah*)

L'Maaseh…

There is a great story on *Tiv HaKehilah*. A man writes, "My car is only used for doing *Mitzvos*, and it could be called a *Mitzvah* car. It is not used for any household purposes or for anything else, only to help the sick and people that need it. This why I travel from city to city to hospitals and look for other acts of *Chesed*.

My family knows that the only time I use the car for the family is during *Chol HaMoeid*, when the car is used exclusively for them, and I take them wherever they want to go. However, on the first day of *Chol HaMoeid* Pesach, the car broke down.



My children were disappointed, and even I was upset by this. After I consulted with a *Rav*, he ruled for me that under the existing circumstances, it was permissible to fix the car during *Chol HaMoeid*. I told my children to *Daven* that the car would be repaired quickly and there will still be time for some *Chol HaMoeid* trips.

I inspected the problem and determined that a gear had broken. I checked the cost at the local mechanic, and I was told that the cost for a new gear would be 18,000 *Shekel*. I was shocked by the price and I consulted with a friend who was familiar with cars, and he offered to transport the car to an authorized mechanic in Yerushalayim.

I trusted this friend, and I sent the car with him to be repaired in Yerushalayim. Two days later the mechanic called to tell me that the car was ready. I went to Yerushalayim to get the car, with fear and

Tefilah that the amount would go through on my credit card smoothly.

I went to the cashier to ask for the bill and the cashier told me that there was no charge for the repairs. I thought that there must be some mistake, and again I asked for the amount that I owed for the replacement of a broken gear. Then they explained the most amazing thing to me:

Recently, the manufacturer received many complaints about the gear that had broken in my car, and they issued an international recall. The gear would be replaced at an authorized garage at no charge for cars with less than 150,000 kilometers on them.

I was filled with great joy as I had just received a gift of 18,000 *Shekel*, as that is what the cost would be if I had used my local mechanic! I excitedly took the keys and got into the car, and I was shocked at what I saw—the odometer read: 149,670 kilometers. I was 330 kilometers away from 150,000! A one-day trip with the children would have put more than 330 kilometers on the car.

When I was originally disappointed that the car had broken down, I had asked myself why *Hashem* could not have waited until after *Chol HaMoeid* for the car to break down? However, if this would have occurred after *Chol HaMoeid*, I would have a tremendous bill for 18,000 *Shekel*. My heart was filled with thanks to the Creator of the world, for all His open kindnesses, and also for those that are hidden from our eyes!"

R' Shloime Halberstam ZT"L (Bobover Rebbe) would say:

"Why do we entreat Hashem to listen to the voices of our enemies? The answer is that our foes hate us because we are Jews – thus, we implore Hashem to listen to their cries, for on that basis it is clear that we are His loved ones and Hashem will accept our tefillos."

An Email Rabbi Lazer Brody Got and His Great Reply

Dear Rabbi, why does the Jewish religion seem to fuss over insignificant details? How much Matzah do we have to eat, which spoon did I use for milk and which for meat, what is the right way to tie my shoelace? It seems to me that this misses the bigger picture by focusing on tiny trivia. Is this nit picking what Jews call spirituality? I actually already sent you this question over a week ago and didn't receive a reply. Could it be that you finally have been asked a question that you can't answer?!

Signed, Rob

(Rabbi Lazar Brody's answer)

Dear Rob, I never claimed to have all answers. There are many questions that are beyond me. But it happens to be that I sent a reply that same day despite the fact that I've been away from home on a rigorous speaking tour in the USA.

sent you a reply, but I wrote your email address without the dot before the 'com'. I figured that you still receive the email, because after all is only one little 'dot' missing. I mean come on, it is not as if I wrote the wrong name or something drastic like that. Would anybody be so nit-picky as to differentiate between yahaocom' and 'yahoo.com? No, it is not ridiculous, because the 'dot' is not just a 'dot. It represents something. That 'dot' has a meaning far beyond the pixel on the screen that forms it.

To me it may seem insignificant, but that is simply due to my ignorance of the ways of the web. All that I know is with 'dot' the message gets to the right destination, without it the message is lost to oblivion.

Torah observance and Mitzva fulfilment contain a world of symbolism and every 'dot' counts. When the Mitzvot are performed with precision a spiritual vibration is emailed throughout the universe all the way to G-d's inbox.

If you want to understand the symbolism of the 'dot' study cyber tech. If you want to understand the symbolism of Judaism, study Torah. Yours always, LB

Bitachon Weekly - A Wise Person Appreciates the Value of Bizyonos, and Rejoices When He Gets Them



STORY #1

The son in law of the **Shomer Emunim [R' Ahron Roth Zatzal]** was a big Tzaddik. His name was **R' Avraham Yitzchok Kohn Zatzal**. His grandson is a Rosh Kollel and was a guest in my house. He told me a story, that when his grandfather had to walk the streets of Yerushalayim, he had different routes to get to his destination. He would Davka take the route that made him pass by a shul where his antagonists were located. Every time he passed by, they yelled at him and made fun of him. He had Simcha from Bizayon, and was looking for it! He is not alive anymore, but he was a tremendous Oved Hashem.

Nobody knows דִּין שָׁמַיִם – 'heavenly justice', in the next world, but one thing is for sure: Bizayon saves a person from all kinds of horrific Yissurim, in this world and in the next. He was a smart person and appreciated the Ma'ala of Bizayon.

The Arizal said that if people would know the benefit of Bizyonos, they would actually run after it.

STORY #2

His grandson told me another story about **R' Ahron Leib Steinman Zatzal**. He was also passing by a shul, where standing outside were some Bachurim who were screaming at him and making fun of him.

His Gabo'im wanted to disperse this unruly crowd, who were devoid of Derech Eretz for a Gadol B'yisroel.

R' Ahron Leib stopped them and said: Let the boys enjoy themselves. They appear to have pleasure in making fun of me; let them continue.

This sounds just like Shim'i ben Gera and Dovid HaMelech. When Shim'i was cursing Dovid and throwing stones at him, not only did Dovid not kill him, but he said: **הַנִּחוּ לוֹ וִיקַלֵּל [שמואל ב, טז: יא]** let him continue cursing!

R' Wosner Zatzal had tremendous respect for R' Ahron Leib, especially for his purity in Middos, e.g. no love for money, no Ka'as and no anger. We see how a person works on his Middos by not caring about Bizayon; and even having Simcha in Bizayon! Like the Chovos Halvavos says in Shaar HaBitachon:

וּכְל אֲשֶׁר יְבוֹאֲנוּ מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹקִים יִהְיֶה לוֹ לְשָׂשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה [הקדמה] - One should be happy with whatever Hashem sends his way.

L'Maaseh

Rav Mechel Handler relates an amazing story from the time of the Rishonim, told by the Or Zarua, which illustrates the great reward for Brachos that are recited properly:

I knew an elderly Jew from Worms, R' Bunim, who served as the town gravedigger. I heard from reliable sources, that one time he came to Shul early, and saw a person sitting in front of the building with a crown of grasses on his head. The sight frightened R' Bunim, since he thought it was a demon. After looking at him, he recognized the person, and asked, "Aren't you the person who just passed away, and I was the one who buried you?" The man replied, "Yes."

R' Bunim then asked, "How are you doing in the next world?" The man answered, "Very, very well." R' Bunim then asked him, "What Zechisum do you have? I remember you as a simple man."

He responded, "It is all in the Zechus of my saying Brachos in a pleasant voice in Shul. In this Zechus alone, they brought me into Gan Eden, and accorded great honour to me. And here is a sign that it is truly I who am speaking to you: You can see that the sleeve of my garment is torn. It was you who tore it while you were putting the shrouds on my body."



R' Bunim asked him, "And what is that crown that you are wearing on your head?" He answered, "These are perfumed grasses from Gan Eden that I placed on my head to block out the bad smell of this world."

The Or Zarua concludes, "I have recorded this story so that those who are in awe of Hashem should see and take it to heart, and make sure to recite the Brachos and sing the praises of Hashem in a pleasant voice and with Kavanah, and merit to enter Gan Eden!" Rav Handler further relates, a Yerushalmi father of nine was entangled in a complicated lawsuit, and was facing a false charge that could have resulted in a lengthy jail sentence. On the day that the judges were to render their verdict, the man approached Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, head of the Eidah HaChareidis, for a Brachah and some advice.

The Rav opened his desk drawer, took out a candy, and handed it to the man. He instructed, "Keep the candy in your pocket, and when the judges enter the courtroom, be oblivious to everything that is going on. Take out the candy and put all your effort into reciting the Brachah of Shehakol Nehiyeh Bidvaro, with all the Kavanos that you know. And when you reach the end of the Brachah, remember that everything, including the court decision, is determined 'Bidvaro', by

the word of Hashem." Rav Fisher Bentched the man that in the Zechus of his Emunah, Hashem would grant him a favourable outcome.

When the judges entered the courtroom, the man closed his eyes and made the Brachah of Shehakol with all the Kavanos he could gather. Meanwhile, the prosecutor was asking for a 12- year sentence, and the man's lawyer was seeking to settle for three or four years. It seemed that asking for a lighter sentence than that was out of the question.

In the midst of the proceedings, the chief justice turned to his two fellow judges, and after a brief discussion, declared that they were taking a recess to deliberate. The defendant kept thinking that everything is determined by the word of Hashem, Shehakol Nehiyeh Bidvaro.

Twenty minutes passed, then thirty minutes, and after nearly an hour, the judges returned. They stated that they had discovered a contradiction in the testimony of the principal witness, and the case was dismissed!

When the man returned to Rav Fisher to inform him of the miraculous outcome, the Rav told him, "See how powerful one Brachah is! If you work on saying all your Brachos with more Kavanah, you could turn over entire worlds!"



"The experts say that very often, the thing you dislike doing may be a sign that you should be doing just that [if you can]. Only thorns [difficulty] produce a beautiful rose."

A Faint Whiff Of Hashem's Unlimited Wisdom And Kindness



A wonderful function that we have through our palms and through our hands, is that they protect us. If a person sees something flying in his direction, or is about to fall, he automatically puts his hands out in front of him to protect his body.

There are different things in the body that are more sensitive, like the head; and there are different parts that can get hurt and be dangerous for the body. The hands go out to protect a person extremely quickly. If it would take a while, it would be too late. If a person thinks about putting his hands in front of him it can take a third of a second, and that's pretty quick. When a person doesn't think about it but he feels threatened that something is dangerous, he can put out his hands much quicker. It can be in a fifth or a sixth of one second and the hands are already there to help protect the person's body.

A person's hands help protect his body in many different ways. If a person walks into a room and there is a strong, blinding light shining into his eyes he takes his hand and covers his eyes.

Another example is, if a person goes into a place that has a terrible smell, he can take his hand and close his nose. Also, if a person is in a place that has a very loud noise or high-pitched noise, like from a microphone, a person can take his fingers and close his ears.

Just like this is true in gashmiyus, it is also true in ruchnius. Like the Gemara says in Kesubos, when a person hears something that is not good for his neshama he should put his fingers into his ears. A person can also use his fingers to protect his body. If a person has a mosquito or something that is annoying or hurting him, he uses his

fingers to remove it or just to scratch something that is itchy. The hands and fingers help us out in so many different, wonderful ways! Clearly we can see the wisdom and kindness of Hashem!!

Rabbi YY Jacobson - Sing Their Song



Somebody once asked a wise and deep man, "What is love?" He answered, "Love is learning the song in another person's heart, and singing that song to them when they forget it."

When I heard that insight, it reminded me of a story that happened in my youth. I grew up in Brooklyn and there was an elderly Jew, a survivor of Stalinist communism. He lost his family, he was a lone man, and together with it all, he was a very sincere Jew. His name was Reb Zalman Teibel. He introduced to the Chassidic world a very famous song – Ana ana avda d'kudsha b'rich hu." We recite this as we take out a Sefer Torah. This was his song that he brought to the Jewish world. He wrote it in the 60s.

Years later, as I remember him, he was already a man in his high 80's or low 90s, and unfortunately, he suffered from Alzheimer's. He was somewhat senile, so they put him in a home for assisted living in Williamsburg, called Eshel Avraham. He didn't have immediate family, but fine, good Jews took care of him.

One year, right before Yom Kippur, somebody in Eshel Avraham said, "You know, Rabbi Zalman is very close to the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**. Let me bring him to the Rebbe to get a piece of honey cake before Yom Kippur and receive a blessing for a good and sweet year.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe had a custom on the eve of Yom Kippur, after Mincha, to stand in his room, whereupon thousands and thousands of Jews would come by. Everybody came by for a split second, received a piece of honey cake and a blessing for a good and sweet year. The line stretched down Eastern Parkway, went up Brooklyn Avenue, and extended sometimes even further, but it moved quickly. There were many, many people, suffice it to say.

Reb Zalman was brought from Williamsburg in a wheelchair into the room of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This was the first time the Rebbe was seeing him after not seeing him for quite a while. But the Rebbe observed immediately that he was mentally absent. He was just not present, and the Rebbe started to talk to him and bless him.

The Rebbe wanted to give him cake, but sadly, Reb Zalman didn't seem receptive to it. He wasn't fully coherent. Time inched forward, and now it was very close to him Kippur.

Suddenly, the Rebbe stopped the line and started to sing. The Rebbe had a beautiful voice. What did he sing? Reb Zalman's tune – "Ana ana avda d'kudsha b'rich hu."

In middle of the song, Reb Zalman suddenly came back to life. Sometimes, ordinary words cannot trigger the subconscious core that is very aware of everything. But a niggun, a melody, that comes from a person's early years, is embedded in the deepest parts of their brain, of their own neshama. And with the niggun, Reb Zalman was back, just like the good old days.

Suddenly then, he looked at himself and he saw that he was standing in front of his Rebbe. The feelings of a chassid to a rebbe and a real rebbe to a real chassid are not describable. The love, the commitment, the loyalty on both sides. Reb Zalman went into a state of ecstasy. He couldn't believe it. He's here, right there.

The Rebbe was so moved, and that was when he gave him the piece of cake, and showered him with beautiful, stupendous blessings for

a healthy year and long years. And indeed, he lived quite a few years more.

And then I understood what it means, "Love is learning the song in another's heart, and singing that song to them when they forget it."

Every single person has a song. Reb Nachman says every bush, every tree, every animal, every plant, every insect has a song. Certainly every Jewish soul has a song. Every soul has its unique song. Ahavas Yisroel doesn't just mean I like you, I get along with you, let's unite as words or slogans. Ahavas Yisroel is the courage for you and I, and each and every one of us, to learn the song in another person's heart.

Learn the song in your wife's heart, learn the song in your husband's heart. Learn the song in each of your children's hearts. Learn the song in the hearts of every person you encounter, and when they forget their song, instead of getting angry, instead of getting judgmental, instead of getting critical, instead of retreating to fear or ridicule, instead, take a deep breath and sing that song back to them, so that they can resume singing their own beautiful song.

When we look to unite as Jews, when we look at the mirror and say that there's been enough division, enough fragmentation, enough mistrust, that splits, the hatred and the tunnel vision that makes us so narrow and restricted dissolves. The Jewish people are looking for expansiveness to infinity and to enter the room with G-d where there is space for every soul, which has its song Hashem wants to hear.

Every single person you meet, sing their song to them, and enable them to come alive.

"The entire purpose of our existence is to overcome our negative habits." - Vilna Gaon

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Marvellous Month

Nissan is no ordinary month rather it is extra special. This is how the Ohr Hachaim explains **ראש חדשים**, Nissan, as **ראש** is the choicest as in **בשמים ראש**, choice spices, since Nissan is the greatest of all months.

The Siduro Shel Shabbos writes that **ראש חדשים** refers to the head like the head of a person where the powers of the body and its vitality come from the head.

In the Sefer Maggid Masharim, the Magid tells R' Yosef Karo that **עתך עת דודים** - your time was the time of love, refers to the holy days of Nissan.

R' Tzadok Hakohen teaches that the month of Nissan includes all the Kedusha of the 12 months. **The Shela** informs us that each day in Nissan is like Rosh Chodesh as it says **החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים**, each day of this month is like a Rosh Chodesh. As a result, there is no Tachanun this entire month.

In a letter dated Motzai Shabbos, Parshas Acharei Mos in the year **תרמ"ו** (1886), the **Avnei Nazer** writes to **R' Chaim Berlin**, who asked him questions on matters regarding Pesach, "It is hard for me to answer because these days of Nissan are so precious as it is **שעה כיום יחשב**, an hour is like a day. However, since I was asked very much for an answer as it is for his Oneg and Simchas Yom Tov, I took a little time to answer."

In fact, the **Shem Mishmuel** testifies about his father, the Avnei Nazer, that in the days of Nissan he would go around in the upper worlds and because of the great Kedusha of these days, he didn't need to sleep!

Peninim on the Torah

The heroine of the story was living in Germany in the late 1930's, when Hitler's anti-Semitic diatribes were becoming more virulent and the Nazis were carrying out threats with impunity. She was living with her husband and two children in a small town, and decided that if they were going to survive, they had to leave the country. Without a visa, however, it was impossible to leave.

The good news arrived in the way of information that a small number of visas for Jews was available in the office in Berlin. Her husband could not leave his job, so she decided it was her responsibility to do what she could to save her family. She boarded the train for Berlin with the hope that she would return that night with four visas. She arrived in Berlin and immediately took a taxi to the address where the visas were to be available. When she reached the designated office, she was greeted by dozens of men and women who were also applying for the precious visas – to no avail.

One mean-looking, bored German bureaucrat was sitting at a desk. He refused to acknowledge anyone. Hours passed, and the people suffered in silence. It was foolish to complain. The Germans did not require an excuse or a reason to punish a Jew. Suddenly, after waiting all day, the bureaucrat stood up, looked at the people and, with a loud contempt-filled voice, announced, "No more visas today. Come back tomorrow!" The thought of going through the same ordeal again pushed some people to the brink, but what could they do?

Our heroine had to find a place to spend the night. She was at her wits end, but she had to dig in and try again. Without visas, she and her family's lives were at stake. She found a room for the night, and bright and early the next day, she presented herself at the office. The line was shorter because some people had lost patience. She did not have that luxury. She had no idea how many visas were available. Despite the people who had left, a crowd was still waiting. Hours passed in fear and silence. These people knew what going home

without a visa meant. The bureaucrat continued to ignore them as if they did not exist, as he continued with his paperwork.

Late in the afternoon, the bureaucrat broke the silence when he stood up and made another loud announcement: "No visas today. Everyone must go home!" The people were crestfallen; the shock too much to bear. They could no longer hold their quiet, and they responded with declarations of anger. Their pent-up emotions were frazzled, and with raw anger, they exploded at the bureaucrat.

The woman was tired, starved, and emotionally spent. How could she return home empty-handed? It was a death warrant for them all. She was about to join the chorus of despair when she decided to do something else – something that no one would have expected. She went over to the bureaucrat's desk, leaned over and said to him, "I would like to thank you for all your time. I am sure that your job is not easy. I would like to wish you a good day." She then slowly turned around and walked out of the room. She walked down the hall with the little strength she had left, her head held high, knowing that she was returning to despair and possibly worse.

Suddenly, she heard a voice calling out to her. She turned around to see the bureaucrat running towards her with a handful of papers, "Here, I have visas for you!" She was saved, because she had controlled her emotions and said something kind to a man who probably did not deserve it. She realised that he must have had a small number of visas about which he had to decide to whom he would give them and whom he would ignore. Whatever he would do would cause a riot. So he ignored everyone. She had no idea what prompted him to act in such an ignoble manner, but she was not about to allow his despicable manner to shape her character.

Neither should we. We come across people who are good at bringing out the worst in us. We should not permit their contemptible actions to influence our character.

L'Maaseh

The Chidushei HaRim had a brother named Reb Moshe Chaim, who was a wealthy man. He was once on his way to visit his aging parents in Warsaw, when he noticed an elderly woman carrying a load of straw on her shoulders. To his shock, he suddenly realized that the woman was his own mother!

Jumping from his fancy carriage, he ran to his mother, inquired how she was, and asked "What are you carrying?" The elderly Tzadeikes responded with a smile, "This is for a poor Kallah who is an orphan, and she has no bed to sleep on. Am I not obligated like everyone else to do the Mitzvah of Hachnosas Kallah?"

Reb Moshe Chaim responded, "My dear mother, please put down the heavy package. I will gladly pay for the Kallah's bed and much more. Just please don't carry such a heavy load!"

However, his mother responded, "My dear child, please put the money toward this poor girl's wedding and other needs, and I will still provide the straw!"

~~~~~~~

Rav Yitzchok Meir of Kapytshnitz would visit his Chasidim all over Galicia, usually travelling by train. He would travel in the second-class compartment, because the cheaper third class generally contained lower elements of society who were often drunk and violent.

When his son, Rav Avraham Yehoshua, would travel, his father would also give him money for a ticket in second class. However, Rav Avraham Yehoshua did not travel in second-class. He would buy a third-class ticket, despite the fact that it would be uncomfortable to travel among the rude and uncivilized individuals. With the extra money that he had, he would give it to Tzedakah.

On one of Rav Avraham Yehoshua's trips, one of his Mechutanim came to meet him at the train station in Galicia after a trip to
~~~~~~~

Warsaw. The second he saw him, Rav Avraham Yehoshua's eyes lit up. He said, "I am so glad you are here! Please distribute this money to Tzedakah before Shabbos," and he handed him the difference between the second-class and third-class tickets!

~~~~~~~

The Pnei Menachem of Ger had a unique custom of trying to give money to a person collecting for Tzedakah, before that person actually asked for a donation. It was a special sight to see the speed and the Zerizus with which he removed money from his pocket and placed it in the hands of a collector, before the person even had a chance to ask or hold out his hand. During Minchah, when the Rebbe Davened together with the public, he often noticed a poor person collecting Tzedakah on the outskirts of the crowd. As soon as he saw such a person, he would run over and place a substantial sum of money in his hands.

One time, one of the Gaba'im urged a collector to head towards the Rebbe before the Rebbe could reach him, so the Rebbe would not have to walk so far, but the Rebbe would not hear of it. He exclaimed, "Do you want to detract from my Mitzvah? One receives S'char for every single step he takes to do a Mitzvah!"

~~~~~~~

Rav Chaim Zeitchik writes that the Rebbetzin of the **Alter of Novardok** would relate that every Erev Shabbos, after her husband would return from the Mikvah, he was always missing his shirt. When she would ask him what had happened, he would give various explanations as to how he would always give it away to a poor person. She said, "He literally gave the shirt off his back to the poor every week!"

~~~~~~~

Rav Chaim Brisker was tremendously devoted to Tzedakah and Chesed. **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky**, a close Talmid of his, once
~~~~~~~

related, "I was once in Rav Chaim's home when two wealthy residents of Brisk came by, and handed him a sealed envelope. That week, the two had celebrated the wedding of their children, and Rav Chaim had been Mesader Kiddushin. They came to give him a donation in honour of his efforts, as was customary in those days, where Rabbonim would receive support, as payment for these services.

While they were there, a poor person entered and asked Rav Chaim for some Tzedakah. Without thinking twice, and without even looking to see how much money was inside the envelope, Rav Chaim gave the poor person the sealed envelope. The two wealthy men observed all of this, in complete shock!"

~~~~~~~

On one of **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky's** trips to Eretz Yisroel, he met an old friend. During their conversation, the friend related that he would soon be marrying off his daughter, but unfortunately, even after making every effort to obtain funds and borrowing as much as he could, he was still missing the last $5,000 needed to close on the apartment for the young couple. Rav Yaakov sympathized with him, and said that he would keep the matter in mind, to see if there was a way that he could help him.

A few days after Rav Yaakov returned to Monsey, he was visited by a well-known Baal Tzedakah, who related that he had a daughter of marriageable age, but all the Shidduchim suggested for her had not worked out for some reason. The man was discouraged, and told Rav Yaakov that he had tried everything, and did not know what else he should do. Rav Yaakov replied that although he could not think of a fitting Shidduch, perhaps, if he would help another individual marry off his daughter, it would serve as a Segulah for him to be able to marry off his own. Rav Yaakov then told him about his friend in Eretz Yisroel, who was missing $5,000 that he needed to marry off his daughter. Rav Yaakov said, "Possibly, if you give that sum of money to him, you will have a Zechus."
~~~~~~~

The wealthy man agreed to write a cheque from his Tzedakah account, but Rav Yaakov told him that if he really wanted the Segulah to work, it was better to give the money from his personal account, not from funds set aside for Tzedakah.

The man did so, and within three weeks of his donation, his daughter was engaged!"

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - It was Like, Negah!

Rabbi Paysach Krohn loves to tell the beautifully haunting story of the woman who left Rusk Institute with her child who was in a wheelchair. It was a wintry day and the chill that pervaded the young boy's fragile bones declared its chilling presence with the icy frosting it left on the exposed metal of his wheelchair.

Waiting at the bus stop on the corner of 34th and 2nd Avenue, three large city busses whizzed by, unable to accommodate the mother and the child and his special chair. It was only after a half-hour wait that the mother flagged down a bus and insisted to the driver that he allow them to board.



As the poor woman struggled to lift the wheelchair into the narrowly impatient doors that waited to slam like the jaws of a tiger, the driver shouted at her, "Lady you'll have to wait for a bus with a lift! I gotta go!"

Immediately a few passengers jumped to her defence! "It's freezing out there. We will wait!"

Embarrassed into submission, the driver acquiesced. As the mother and child settled in their place on the bus, one said to her, "Your child is not handicapped. It only seems that way. In truth it is the driver that has a handicapped mind!"

The Torah is telling us an important foundation in negativity. When one seemingly has a blemish or sees a blemish in his own home, he has no right to declare it as such. He may have a problem but should never declare it until seeking spiritual confirmation. One may think it is a blemish, it may even appear as a blemish yet until confirmed by the compassionate kohen, it is only like a blemish. However, until confirmed with counsel, it is not.

If one goes to the kohen and learns to utilize the impairing experience to grow, to become more patient, more understanding, and perhaps more sensitive to others, then the hindrances that he or she experience may be troublesome, they may even be disheartening, they may even be like a handicap — but they are truly not. Because the handicap is only in the mind; and what is on the body is only like a blemish that can fade away like the whiz of a speeding bus on 34th Street.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes that when a person davens, their deeds are examined to see whether they deserve that their requests be granted. However, when one praises Hashem, the praises can't be stopped. Hashem wants to listen to these praises. Therefore, the wise pray to Hashem by praising him. - These tefillos will undoubtedly go up to heaven and will be answered. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman (Torah Wellsprings)

Parshah Pearls (*Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah*) - Why the Snake is Tahor



In Parshas Shemini, we discussed a number of reasons as to why the snake is listed among the Tahor 'rodents'.

Rabeinu Bachye asks this question too. This is how he answers it.

The Pasuk in question (11:42), he explains, lists three creatures among the forbidden species of rodents: the snake, the scorpion and the centipede (see Rashi). All of these contain species that are dangerous. Based on people's deep awe of Tum'ah, G-d therefore suspected that if he were to include these species among those that are Tamei, they would hesitate to kill them, to avoid becoming Tamei. So, in order to encourage a person to kill them, should they threaten him, G-d in His compassion, declared them Tahor.

Note, that all the eight species of Tamei insects are indeed non-threatening.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, would say, that people do all kinds of Segulos, but the biggest thing one can do for Parnasah is to do kindness with others!

Hope for miracles, but don't rely on one.

Wake-Up Calls

Ironically, tragedies help people praise Hashem because then they realize that nothing can be taken for granted and they start noticing all the good they have.



There is a person who was in an accident, and both his feet were shattered. As he lay in the hospital for two months, his discussions were primarily praises to Hashem. He focused on how much he enjoys seeing, hearing, tasting food, etc. He praised Hashem for things that he had taken for granted his entire life. He found joy in "trivial things" that most people ignore.

Chazal (Brachos 54:) discuss the four categories of people obligated to praise Hashem. They are (1) those who cross a sea, (2) those who traverse a desert, (3) people freed from jail, and (4) those healed from a dangerous illness. These people were in a dangerous situation, and Hashem saved them.

The Alshich HaKadosh (Vayikra 7:11-16) explains that ***everyone*** must praise Hashem, not only these four categories of people. But sometimes, people have to go through life-threatening situations, r'l, to learn to recognize Hashem's kindness in all areas of their lives.

The wise recognize Hashem's kindness beforehand (before they endure hardships) so they won't need to endure these dangerous situations to realize how much they must praise Hashem.

Make new friends, but don't forget the old ones.

Last Ship from Nazi Germany



Life in Frankfort in the 1930s was like the morning before a thunderstorm - clear blue skies and a brisk breeze, with threatening gray clouds massed on the horizon and ominous rumblings of thunder in the distance. Nevertheless, the Jews of that city managed to maintain a normal existence, and their children for the most part enjoyed a carefree childhood. The famed Hirsch Realschule continued to educate children as it had for generations, while being careful to keep the Jewish children off the streets when the gentile children got out of school. In such a society did Berta, and her siblings grow up.

As the years passed and Hitler rose to power, many Jews attempted to leave Germany before it was too late. Although some managed to escape, it was soon clear that for the vast majority there were precious few places to run. The world was turning its back on the Jews. The wise teachers would say to Berta's class, "There is nowhere left for us to go. G-d is over us all. If He wishes to save us, He will."

Then came Kristallnacht.

Berta's father, a Polish emigree, was shipped to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, from where many never returned. Frantic, as their father's fate hung in the balance, Berta's family discovered that many detainees were being granted their freedom on the

condition that they leave the country immediately. But where could they go? The doors of the world's great democracies were slammed shut in their faces.

Berta's family managed to obtain false Venezuelan visas, and thus armed, the 16-year-old Berta made her way to the SS headquarters to plead for her father's life. She was granted his freedom on the condition that he leave the country within 24 hours. Germany does not have many ports, however, and that day only one ship, the Orazio, was leaving the country from Hamburg. Berta contacted the shipping company in the hopes of securing place on board for the family, or at the very least for her imprisoned father, but the anti-Semitic shipmaster refused to allow a Jew on board. The desperate family pleaded for standing room in any corner available, even in the bathrooms, but to no avail.

Defeated, Berta returned the next day to SS headquarters, only to be greeted by an incredulous Nazi captain. "Are you still here?" he questioned, and then burst out laughing. "Your G-d must be watching over you. The ship that you did not board yesterday exploded as it left the harbour."

Impressed with Berta's courage, he permitted the family to travel to Italy, where they boarded the Augustus, the last ship to leave Europe before Italy joined the war. As the ship steamed towards the unknown world of Venezuela, Berta once again repeated her teacher's wise words, "G-d is over us all. If He wishes to save us, He will."

"Emunah is the foundation of hope, providing us with the courage to face the unknown with unwavering confidence." – Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

35:14 ובא אשר לו הבית והגיד לכהן לאמר כנגע נראה לי בבית

Environmental Influence

Although a person's body may be stricken with tzara'as to punish him for his actions, why is a house afflicted with tzara'as and



destroyed if it is an inanimate object which lacks free will and which never sinned?

The Beis HaLevi explains that a person's actions influence his physical surroundings. If a person does mitzvot and kind deeds, his environs are uplifted, and if he sins, his surroundings are negatively affected. Conversely, a person is also influenced by his environment.

Noach's generation became so wicked that they corrupted the entire world, leaving Hashem with no choice but to obliterate it and begin again anew. In the case of the house, its owner spoke so much lashon hara (see Rashi - Leviticus 14:34) that it permeated the very walls and foundation of the home, rendering it impure to its core.

As if that weren't bad enough, the house has become transformed into a place with the potential to corrupt even pure and innocent people who enter its doors. As a result, just as in the times of Noach, there is no choice but to seal it off and destroy to prevent any further damage from occurring.

Etz Hachaim – C T Blau – Am I Really Humble

The Great Rosh Hayeshiva Of Lakewood **HaGaon HaRav Aron Kotler** זצוק״ל once explained that the reason the **Chofetz Chaim**'s Tzidkos was so widely known throughout the world, as opposed to the fact that he was such a huge Talmid Chochom basically unmatched in his generation, was because the Chofetz Chaim knew that he was a Talmid Chochom, so he davened that Hashem should hide it from people since he did not wish to receive any honour or fame.

Whereas the Chofetz Chaim never saw himself as an extraordinary Tzaddik, just someone who worked on himself doing the Ratzon of the Master of the world. Therefore, he never davened that his tzidkus should be hidden and therefore the fact that he was such a great Tzaddik became famous and widely realized and known throughout the world.



Focus on the Good

Shabbos HaGadol is a day to praise Hashem for the miracles He performed for us.

To praise Hashem, you first have to recognize all the goodness you enjoy in life. If you do not focus on the good, you will think you have no reason to praise Hashem. Therefore, instead of thinking about how much you lack, consider all the good you possess.

With this in mind, you will be able to praise Hashem. Of course, this is easier said than done because people tend to take all the good they enjoy in life for granted. They think that it couldn't be otherwise and don't feel compelled to thank and praise Hashem for all the good He bestows upon them.

There was a gadol in Yerushalayim who wanted to help parents recognize the goodness in their lives, so when someone came and told him, "I get a mazal tov! My wife just had a baby," he would respond, "That's wonderful news.

How many fingers does the baby have?"

"Ten."

"Ten? Baruch Hashem!

Mazal tov! Mazal tov! You should have much nachas!"

He would mention the ten fingers to remind the parent that he should thank Hashem for that, as well.

Once, a baby was just born, and the parents watched in horror as the doctor painstakingly examined each of the new-born child's fingers.

"Doctor, is something wrong?" they asked.

"Everything is fine," the doctor replied. "It is just that as a doctor, I must check the child's health and report it in writing. Part of my job is to count and make sure that the child has all ten fingers. So I was looking at the fingers and counting them."

Yes, we must be thankful for that too, and for the billions of other miracles Hashem does for us each day.

Reb Shlomo Brevda zt'l was walking down the stairway from his second-floor apartment and slipped. He could have fallen all the way to the street below, but with Hashem's help, he grabbed onto the handrail. He considered this a miracle and was sure that he would never be the same person anymore. His Torah, his tefillah, and everything he does would be different.

But soon enough, he forgot about the salvation and went back to serving Hashem as he had before.

He went to the **Chazon Ish zt'l** to ask him why this occurred.

The Chazon Ish replied, "Do you think miracles happen only to you? Everyone experiences miracles. That's why we say in Modim **על נסיך שבכל יום** '[We praise You] for the miracles You perform for us each and every day.'

But there is a yetzer hara that is appointed specifically to cause people to forget. That's what happened to you. You forgot the miracle. A person's avodah is to remember the good chasadim that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does with him, all the time."



I heard about an eighty-seven-year-old man who was hospitalized and was placed on a respirator. Two weeks later, when he recovered, the hospital personnel told him, "Your condition became critical, and we were in an emergency, so we put you on a respirator. But now that you are well enough to be off the machine, you will need to pay for it. It will be ten thousand dollars..."

The old man began to cry. "O.K., we'll give you a deduction." He cried some more. "You know what, we'll charge you half because we see that it is so hard for you to pay for it."

He replied, "I wasn't crying over the cost. I was crying because when I heard that to breathe for two weeks the cost is ten thousand dollars, I realized how thankful I should be to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who enables me to breathe all the time. And Hashem gives it to me for free and without any pain. How thankful I should be to Hashem!"

Bitul b'Rov

Someone sent a letter to **Reb Matisyahu Luria zt'l**, in which he complained about all the hardships he was going through. Reb Matisyahu replied, "If a person would put everything that he should be thankful for on one side of a scale, and on the other side, his frustrations and pain, the good will far outweigh the bad. He will laugh at himself for making an issue over his troubles, since there is so much blessing in his life."

The Kav HaYashar (ch.18) writes, "There isn't a person who doesn't experience miracles. Especially in these generations when there are so many tzaros. There are evil decrees, frightening wars, hunger, captivity, and many kinds of illnesses. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu showered His kindness on you and saved you from all the above, you must always remember Hashem's kindness. You can't be a kafuy tovah."

Because when you focus on the good, you can be happy, no matter how bitter your lot is.

The Way Of Emunah – Rabbi Isamar Rosenbaum

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן ***This shall be the law of the metzorah on the day of his purifying. And he shall be brought to the kohen.*** (14:2)

Don't Look at The Past or The Future, Only The Present

Sefer Divrei Shmuel says that this pasuk is teaching us about how to be clean and pure. He explains that when it states: "This shall be the Torah of the metzorah on the day of his purifying", it means that the Torah of the metzorah is dependent on "the day of his purifying".

This day, and this day alone, is what he must focus on. He should not worry about yesterday or tomorrow. He should not think too much

about his sins of the past or worry about what will happen in the future. Rather, he should place his focus on today, "the day of his purifying". He should think about today. Today, he is permitted by the Torah to learn, daven and serve Hashem. This is the day that is important. Today is the day that must be the centre of his attention.

Rabbi Tzvi Sytner - Small Miracles



There is no such thing as a small miracle. A miracle is a miracle, period. Indiscriminate of its magnitude, if something happened beyond the realm of the ordinary, extended above the sphere of the expected, it is miraculous.

Who's to say that you should have woken up today able to see with your eyes, hear with your ears or walk with your feet? No one. If you are, G-d handed you a present. He handed you a miracle. Is it the size of the Splitting of Sea? You might say that it isn't. But think of it differently. A miracle is a miracle, no matter the shape or size.

If you have a family, a job, or a home, it's not because that's how life is meant to be. You could have exactly the opposite – no family, no job and no home, and just the same, it can be said, "That's how life is meant to be." It's not nature that's organically running your life. It's a symphony of people and places being set up for you, an orchestrated harmony of parts and pieces being designed for you. By G-d to you and for you.

That's what we call a miracle.

Human tendency is to notice the outliers, to be in awe of the colourful supernatural. But that tendency is born out of

desensitization to what we see any day, every day. And we do see people breathing, walking, and talking every day. That daily scene grows on us and dulls our sensitivity to the ordinary.

But that doesn't take away from the miracle that we call life.

Big or small, it's the same G-d, giving you the same result – a miracle, a blessing. It's His love, and it knows no bounds.

That's all there is to it. A bona fide miracle.

Hakaros Hatov

There was once a boy that went to learn in Yeshiva. It was hard times for the Yeshiva and the bochurim did not have enough sleeping arrangements nor food. As a matter of fact, the new bochurim would sleep on the floor in the beis medresh, since older bochurim already had the reserved benches. In the summer months they managed the hard floor but then when winter came along the cold floor with no blanket or mattress was almost unbearable.

One day this young bochur received a telegram from his uncle who was childless stating that he would be delighted to train him into the business and after he dies, *he* would inherit the entire business. Due to the unbearable circumstances the boy decided to take his uncles offer, but he decided to wait one more day before leaving the Yeshiva. That night the bochur thought to himself "This will be my last night that I will be sleeping on the freezing cold floor".



Suddenly, at about mid-night a woman came to the door of the bais Hamedrish and since this bochur was having trouble sleeping he was the only one still awake at that hour. The woman told this bochur "Listen, I am a widow and I

just got up from the shiva of my husband". "Please" she said, "My husband left me without having any children and my husband had a business that manufactured blankets. I have found in my home a few of the blankets and now have decided to come here to give them to a yeshiva student".

The boy happily accepted the offer and for the first time since he came to yeshiva had a decent night's sleep. Now his lack of sleep was not an interruption for his Torah learning and he made up his mind to continue learning Torah in yeshiva and not to join his uncle's business.



This boy ended up growing up to be the leader, the manhig of klal yisroel, the great gaon and tsaddik **Harav Elazar Menachem Man Shach זצוק״ל**. This widow may have thought at the time that she was giving a cover for one lone bochur, when in fact **she was giving the covering for all of klal yisroel**!

Fast forward to the year **תשל״ו**. About 46 years ago. On a very cold wintery rainy day, Rav Shach asked to be driven to the old cemetery in chaifa, where there was a funeral that he wished to attend. It was a very small levaya of barely a minyin of men. Rav shach stood there the entire time in the freezing rain and after the burial said kaddish.

After the kaddish the attendant of Rav Shach assumed that Rav Shach would immediately go back to the car to get out of the freezing wintery rain, but Rav shach just stood there. The cold wind was blowing and finally after a bit of time Rav Shach started to head back to the car.

When they got home Rav shach explained "This was the levaya of the lady who because of her kindness I remained in Yeshiva. For years I followed about her whereabouts. Now that I found out about her funeral, I felt it as an obligation to go and attend.

The attendant asked Rav Shach "Rebbe, but what was the purpose of the prolonged stay in the cold?" Rav Shach replied "The reason why I stood there was I wanted to physically feel and remember the feeling of better cold that I felt at that time, before this woman gave me those blankets. Why so? In order that I should properly feel the real value of Hakaros Hatov that was befitting to be given to this lady.

The Hidden Light - Rabbi Jonathan Rietti

A friend of mine recently came out of prison after 10 years and made the claim that the biggest contrast from before and after, was the cell phone and other tech devices.

Hashem has revealed to us in the last 100 years technology that can harness an Ohr Haganuz- hidden light that is literally invisible. It can't be seen. For example, sound waves, and now we have the telephone. Or sunrays, and now we have solar panels that are capable of powering the whole electric grid. It is claimed that just one day of solar energy would actually have enough energy to keep the whole world going for a thousand years, if we could harness that energy.

Hakadosh Baruchhu has created an Ohr Haganuz that enables us to see more and more that it really is real. We had somebody as great as the Baal Shemtov about who it was claimed that he could see thousands of miles away. Because his eyes could see beyond physical objects.

In the *midbar,* we could see through items similar to X-rays which are a type of light. These are realities.



The medrash says that when a person is **חותם פיו** – he keeps silent. For each moment he keeps his mouth sealed and doesn't say the lashon hora that he could have, he is zoche to the Ohr Haganuz.

The Ohr Haganuz that we receive is not the type above but is spiritual in nature. It is a mazel that we can be zoche to that no creation or *malach* could ever imagine. Just by keeping quiet for one moment. Health, wealth, family. Simcha, and it's all from one moment of silence.

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Fishel Schachter frequently says over anecdotes from his personal life which usually depict some type of disaster that somehow manage to turn out for the good.

He said, "I've been asked, 'Reb Fishel, how is it that so many stories happen to you?' And I answer, 'they happen to you too, you just have to watch out for them.'"

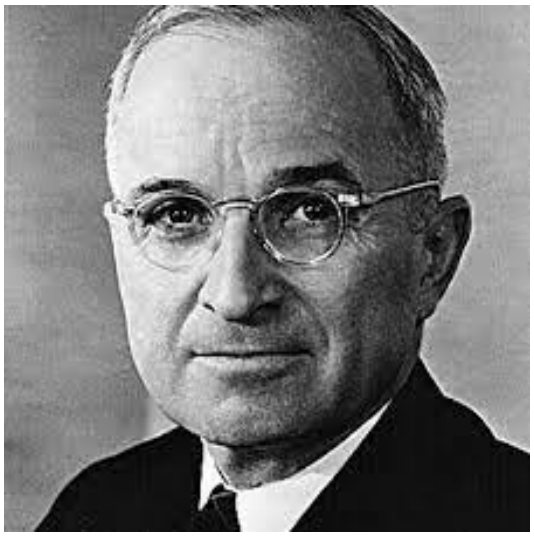
Rav Schachter relates, "Someone once came to the Manchester Tzadik, **Rav Yehudah Zev Segal, zt"l**, to discuss a certain personal issue. Rav Segal recommended that when he says the words from Shemoneh Esrei in Modim, 'וְעַל נִסֶּיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ - '*and for all the Nissim that Hashem performs for us each day*,' he should have in mind a particular miracle that happened that day.

The fellow asked, 'But what if I can't think of any miracles that happened to me that day?'

Rav Yehudah Zev replied, 'Then you're not thinking hard enough!' These types of things are happening to us constantly. We just have to open our eyes to them!"

English Weekly עץ החיים

© כל הזכויות שמורות נלקט ע"י ח.ל.בלוי



During president Truman's term, he would give a weekly speech on Friday nights to be in touch with the nation. A European born woman; Mrs. Nettie Necha Berl, was very troubled by this. She saw the nisayon involved, as many would want to see and hear the news. Yet it was Shabbos, and it was causing great decline in the honor of Shabbos, since many Jewish people were enticed to turn on their machines.

She decided to write a letter to the President himself to address the issue. Anyone who heard about her idea told her she was wasting her energies and her time, yet she was undeterred. She reasoned, "It is up to Hashem if the President will or will not read the letter, or even be concerned about it, I have to do my part."

She had studied English and was already a very talented writer. She wrote to President Truman about the importance of his speech and how much it meant to the Jewish Community, as well as the issue they were facing etc…

A short while later the president's secretary actually responded. He wrote that he will definitely take her words into to consideration. The following Friday night President Truman announced that his weekly address to the nation will now and onward be changed to Tuesday nights!

The story doesn't end here.

Years later, this story was written up in the Jewish newspaper. There was a man who had unsuccessfully tried to start a Daf Yomi Shiur several times. He was ready to abandon the idea.

He 'happened to' come across this article, was inspired and decided to try again just one more time. He thought, "If a woman could accomplish something so major, all the more so I can." This time he was successful…. All credit to an act done by this woman more than fifty years earlier.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב זצ"ל- נפטר כ׳ט שבט תשע׳ד



Over 25 years ago, my Rebbe, **Rav Chaim Kaufman Zt'l** said that he has retold the following vort in 5 out of the 6 continents. He said that he had never been to Africa. Me, coming from South Africa, thought it would be a good idea to attempt to make it happen.

That summer, he went to South Africa to speak at various gatherings. He said as follows:

Some say that the reason why we say Pirkei Avos during these weeks, is a preparation for Kabbalas HaTorah and Matan Torah.

The Mishna in Avos 6:6 says **וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנֵית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנָה דְּבָרִים** that there are 48 'kinyanei HaTorah.' If a person looks carefully at these 48 'kinyanei HaTorah', he might think that to receive all this, you must be a gaon, an amora, a tanna – who could possibly be *koneh* the Torah?

Shlomo HaMelech asked the same question. In the last perek in Mishlei, it writes the poem of **אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל**. There is a difference of opinion as to who actually composed it.

One Medrash says that it was Avrohom Avinu who wrote it as a hesped for Sarah Imeinu. Another Medrash says that Shlomo HaMelech wrote it for his mother. Another Medrash says that Shlomo HaMelech wrote it about the Torah.

חיל is gematria of 48. Who has all 48 'kinyanei HaTorah'? Not one person.

If you look at the end of the kappitel, it says - **רַבּוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חָיִל** - If there is a gathering of people, and each one appreciates the good in everybody else, and realises that there are virtues and good qualities in others, then if each person has some of the kinyanim, then collectively, you will acquire all 48 'kinyanei HaTorah' as a combined unit.

With that, we will have our ticket to enable us to be koneh the Torah, in all its glory.

[This could be the source of **The Rama MiPano's** bombshell revelation as to the origins of **כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא** -"All of Israel has a share in the World to Come"]

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



The Metzorah brings two birds for his korban - **שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים**. This is symbolized by two birds--creatures that have a tendency to chatter. But surely one bird would have been sufficient for us to get this message?

The Zohar teaches that he really gets a double punishment. He gets punished for saying something bad about another Yid. Additionally, he gets punished because he could have

said good, but he chose not to. This is why his korban is symbolised by bringing two birds. Had this Yid been **דן לכף זכות**, he wouldn't have spoken lashon Harah at all. So the Zohar says, that he brings one bird for what he said wrong, and one for the good words that he could have said but didn't.



Don't just be 'not a Metzorah', but say good things. That is the power of a good word. We will never truly appreciate the implications of what a good word could do to another person. A person needs to know that there is a time for silence, but also a time and place for saying positive words.



Rav Gadol Eisner Zt'l was on one of the Nazi death marches. If you didn't keep moving, you were shot and killed on the spot.

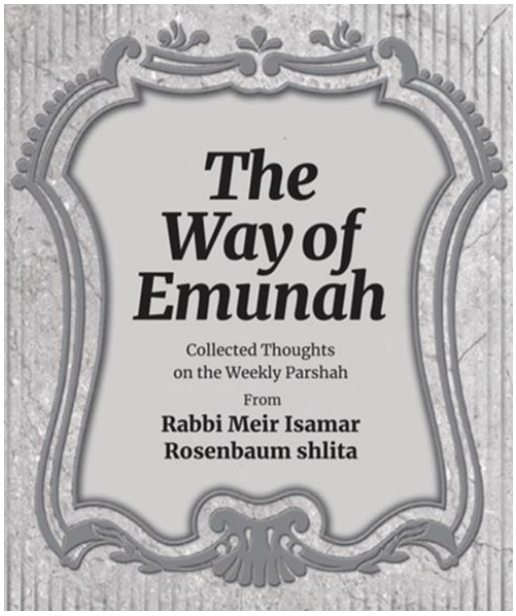
At some stage, he was completely exhausted, he had no strength left to continue. He fell to the ground and said, "Riboino Shel Olam, this is it, I am now being Makriv myself to You!"

Just before the fatal shot was fired, somebody ran past him and shouted, "Gadol - *Laufen, Laufen* (run, run)."

These words encouraged him to somehow find the renewed strength to get up and continue the march and survive the war.

The Metzorah Asks Others to Daven For Him

Sefer Medrash Yehonasan asks why a metzorah needs to publicize his pain to the public more than anyone else who is suffering.



He answers by citing the pasuk (Bereishis 21:17) that says regarding Yishmoel: "And Hashem heard the voice of the lad."

Rashi states that we learn from this verse that the prayers of a sick person for himself are more effective than the prayers that others pray for him.

The Medrash Yehonasan says that this is true regarding most sick people but is not true regarding a metzorah.



The Zohar Hakadosh (Chelek 3, 53A) says that a metzorah is called "musgar" (literally "closed') because the gates of Heaven are closed to his tefillos. Therefore, he must ask others to daven for him because, as opposed to all other sick people, his prayers are blocked from being heard in Shomayim.

Rav Gadol Eisner once said, "the past is a chalom (dream), the future is dimyonos (fantasies), and the present is nisyonos (actual life tests).

Rechilus Ends Up Being Heard by The One Who Was Slandered



The Chofetz Chaim zt"l once said to a group of people: One can learn how terrible speaking rechilus is from the process of sending a letter by mail.

If one wants to send his friend a letter, he has to write his friend's full name and address and attach a stamp. If he makes a mistake in the name or address, or forgets to put on a stamp, the letter will probably not be delivered. Even if everything is done correctly, one still cannot be guaranteed that his letter will be delivered because many letters are lost in the mail, even though the post office employs many people to sort the mail and to try to deliver every letter.

The opposite is true in regard to rechilus. When a person speaks badly about his friend, even if he doesn't mention his name and only hints to whom he is talking about, and even if he doesn't say where his friend lives, and even if he doesn't pay anyone to tell his friend what he said about him, and even though no one is employed to make sure that the words are "delivered", one can still be assured that the words he said will end up reaching the ears of the man who was spoken about because that is the power of rechilus.

"Never underestimate yourself. You are capable of achieving great things because you have the support of Hashem behind you." – Rabbi Noach Weinberg

Inspecting One's Words Before Speaking

The Medrash states (Koheles Rabbah 5:3): "A word worth a selah. Silence is worth two."



The Chozeh of Lublin zy"a explains that Chazal are teaching us an important lesson. Before a person opens his mouth to speak, he should filter his words like one filters fine flour ("soles"). Furthermore, it is not sufficient to filter one's words once, rather they should be sifted twice, meaning that one should think twice before speaking in order to determine whether the words he wants to say should be spoken aloud.

Thus, the Medrash is saying that one's words are worth a selah, meaning that they are valuable, only if they are sifted twice, meaning that one thinks about them twice before speaking."



The Last Word - A One-Liner Worth Remembering

"Never underestimate the power of a tzaddik. His slightest action can affect the entire world, and for generations!"

~ The Shpola Zeide



The *Koznitzer Maggid, zl*, had a *chassid* who was a well-respected *Rav* in Cracow. He was a *halachic* decisor of note, loved and admired by all of Cracow. Everything seemed to be going well, except for one dark cloud in his life which plagued him. He and his wife had yet to be blessed with a child.

The *Rav* made numerous trips to petition the *Maggid's* blessing for a child. Sadly, the *Maggid* averted his request.

Finally, the *Rav* broke down and asked, "Why can the *Rav* not bless me? Am I different from all the others who have been blessed, and who are today embracing their child?"

When the *Rebbe* heard this, he looked deeply into his *chassid's* eyes and said, "My dear friend, I would do anything in my power to help you. Alas, all of the gates in Heaven are sealed to your blessing. I have tried and tried, but I have been unsuccessful in opening them."

When the *Rav* heard this, he was visibly shaken. "Does this mean that there is no hope for me to have a child?" he asked dejectedly.

"No, there is one person whose access to Heavenly favour is great. His name is Yosef Drudick. Go to him and petition his blessing."

When the *Rav* heard the name Yossele Drukick, he was bowled over. Who did not know the elusive Yossele? Rather, nobody knew him because he refused to interact with people. He was the most feared person in the community. He was introverted and wanted nothing to do with anyone. Children ran from him in terror. How could such a person be his only option for a blessing?

But when the *Koznitzer* spoke, it was not to be questioned. He would make it to Yossele's broken-down shack on the outskirts of town and petition his blessing.

No one had ever seen the inside of the shack that Yossele shared with his wife and children. It was where Yossele remained enclosed in his own world, isolated from everyone. During the week, however, he would go out and travel from village to village repairing pots and pans.

The *Rav* figured that he would just show up at Yossele's door *Erev Shabbos* and say that he had nowhere to spend *Shabbos*. Could he be their guest?

The following Friday he implemented his plan, arriving at Yossele's house just before *Shabbos*. He knocked on the door and was met by a woman who asked what he wanted. He related his tale of woe and pleaded with her to allow him to stay for *Shabbos*.

Her response was an emphatic, "No." "My husband does not allow people into the house."

After tearful begging, she said, "You can stay in the back with the horses, but the house is strictly off limits."

He went to the back and made himself comfortable with the two old horses that would pull Yossele's wagon. This was not his idea of *Shabbos*, but he must listen to his *Rebbe*.

Just before sunset, as he was about to usher in *Shabbos Kodesh*, he heard a loud knock at the door. He opened it to come face to face with the dread Yossele. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

The *Rav* began to stammer out his story. "You can remain here, but under no circumstances may you come to the house," Yossele warned.

That *Shabbos* was one to remember. The *Rav* had some *challah* that he brought with him. It was to be his meals, which he ate in solitude together with the horses. On Friday night, he was fitful, as sleep was hard to come by between the odour of the horses and the cold that seeped through the old broken walls. *Shabbos* morning was no better. Indeed, he was counting the minutes until he could escape from this misery.

All day, he was disconcerted by the thoughts coursing through his mind. Why was he here? To get a *brachah* from a man whom he had (like so many others) shunned and reviled. He had erected a wall between himself and the Yosseles of this world – and now he needed him. It was the Yossele whom he had avoided that held the keys to his becoming a father.

He introspected on this: "I have erected a wall between me and 'them'. They have neither been accepted nor welcomed, because they were different."

The *Rav* said to himself, "I am really not deserving or worthy of Yossele's blessing. I have shunned him, and now I ask for his favour? This is hypocrisy!"

When he realised his shortcomings vis-à-vis those who did not fit in his "circle," he broke down in bitter weeping.

It was at that moment that he felt a tap on his shoulder.

He turned around to behold a man with a silver-white beard that seemed to glow. His eyes shone brightly and (he felt) bore through him to the core of his soul. The image was metaphysical.

"Come into my home," the man smiled. "Let us wash for *shalosh seudos*."

He walked into the house as if in a trance. There was a table covered with a clean, white tablecloth. There was challah, wine and gefilte fish, but above all, it was a welcoming, although other-worldly, scene. The *Rav* just sat there and listened to the beautiful melodies emanating from Yossele's mouth.

Suddenly, Yossele stopped singing and moaned, "Oy, *Srultche Koznitzer ken mir shoin oichet*, "Oy, the *Koznitzer Maggid* also knows about me." (Apparently, Yossele was one of the *lamed vav*, thirty-six, holy *tzaddikim*, who grace each generation. They seek neither recognition nor acclaim. They devote their lives to unblemished devotion to Hashem.)

Yossele asked the *Rav*, "How can I help you?" "I request a *brachah* for a child." "You will be blessed with a child" was Yossele's immediate response.

"There is one condition. You must name him Yossele."

The lesson is quite clear: If we bond with others, we will not speak negatively. Hashem will then listen to our prayers.

Honouring Parents - Long Life in The Merit of The Mother



Sefer Orech Yamim relates a story that he heard from a righteous woman who lived a very long life and passed away in 5757 (1997) at the age of 100.

She related that when she was a young woman, she became very sick. She became delirious and the doctors gave up hope for her life. Suddenly, she woke up and told the people around her that she had been in the Olam Ha'Elyon and had seen her grandfather there. He told her, "There is a bais din here. Go inside and tell them what you want."

The woman walked into the bais din and said, "I would not ask for more years of life for myself. However, I have an elderly mother who is 90 years old. She needs me to take care of her. For her sake, I am asking to stay alive."

The bais din agreed to grant her request and allow her to continue fulfilling the mitzvah of kibbud eim. They returned her to this world, and she remained healthy for many more years.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ואיש אשר יגע במשכבו יכבס בגדיו ורחץ במים וטמא עד הערב ... (טו-ה)

After the fall of Czar in 1917, and the defeat of the Bolsheviks in 1923, the Communists conquered all opposition and were in full control of what became known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). While the Communists were opposed to all forms of religion and especially Judaism, they were too preoccupied in the formative years of their regime to make a concerted effort at subverting religious practices.

There was, however, one section of the Communist Party that from its inception, expended great effort to destroy Jewish religious life. This was the "Yevsektsia", the notorious "Jewish Section." The Yevsektsia advocated the death of the Jewish religion. They opened a network of kindergartens, schools and youth clubs where there was no mention of Jewish history or faith and where "G-d" was treated as a superstition of backward people. Instead, Communist ideology and culture was taught with enthusiasm and fervour. As time went on, yeshivos, chadarim and mikvaos in Russia were forced to close and teaching Torah to the young became a crime against the State.

The Rav of Luban, R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l, with his quiet, respectful manner and his avoidance of public encounters with the Communists, remained in relatively good standing with the regime and its supporters. Though there was no doubt where the Rav stood on religious issues, the government could tolerate a man who did not, at least publicly, attempt to show the fallacy of their brutal policies. In private, though, R' Moshe continued to study Gemara with the men of the town, while inspiring and encouraging his people to remain strong in their faith and observance of every mitzvah, despite the persecutions.

One particular incident illustrates both R' Moshe's courage and effectiveness during those years. With a combination of ingenuity,

personality, daring and most importantly, emunah, he succeeded in having a mikvah built with the aid of the Communists themselves.

In the city of Luban, officials decided to demolish the old mikvah building on the pretext that it was unhygienic. In its place, they planned to build a modern bathhouse, designated for mixed swimming. R' Moshe prevailed upon the non-Jewish contractor to build the pool in such a way that it would be a kosher mikvah. He bribed the man to arrange to have ice or snow placed in the empty bath. The pool was initiated with forty se'ah of kosher water, since when there's no choice, one may even place snow in the empty mikvah via vessels.

With the construction taken care of, a problem of a different sort had to be solved. Men and women were expected to use the pool at the same time, something no religious Jew in Luban would ever dream of doing. Unless this situation could be changed, the pool would be useless as a mikvah.

R' Moshe approached a high-ranking official, whose respect he had earned, and put the dilemma to him this way: The Jewish community wanted very much to enjoy the new sanitary facilities generously provided by the government but would not bathe in mixed company.

The gadol put forth a convincing argument. "These new ways may be good for some, but Jews have always lived with a deeply ingrained sense of modesty, and we won't bathe in a mixed bathhouse. This stands to endanger everyone since not bathing is unhygienic and tends to breed all sorts of disease. The best solution is to allow separate bathing at least once a week."

The official agreed and the Jews had themselves a mikvah, the only one for miles around. In the entire region surrounding Minsk, a radius of hundred of kilometres, Luban possessed the only real mikvah. Since most people didn't have access to transportation in those days, there were people, men and women, who walked all the

way to Luban, in some cases a journey of three days, to use the precious mikvah.

Although several leniencies had to be relied upon to validate the new mikvah, R' Moshe's allowed everyone to make use of it, since it was vital for the Jews of Luban and the surrounding areas to see that their esteemed rabbi held from it in order for them to have confidence in the kashrus of the mikvah.

Many years later, R' Moshe wrote a responsum in Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim I §126) that began with, "***In our city Luban, it became possible, through Hashem's kindness, to construct a mikvah (during the years of evil decrees) in a public bathhouse run by the government, which was unaware that it was, in fact, a kosher mikvah ...***"

A Taanis Dibbur That Led to Frivolous Words

The Kotzker Rebbe zy"a once met a chasid who was in the middle of a taanis dibbur (a "fast" from speaking). However, he could see with his ruach hakodesh that after his taanis dibbur was done, this chasid was going to speak many frivolous and unnecessary words, which would far outweigh that day's silence. Therefore, he told him to end his taanis dibbur and, instead, to be careful with the words he does say.

He told him, "It's better to speak a little every day than to be silent one day and speak a lot the next day."

Those close to the Rebbe later asked him, "Isn't making a taanis dibbur a very good thing? Why did you tell him to stop?"

The Rebbe answered, "I'm not afraid of his fasting. But I am afraid of his 'oisfasten' (what he will do when his fast ends)."



For the Shabbos Table

וְאִם־דַּל הוּא וְאֵין יָדוֹ מַשָּׂגֶת "***If he is impoverished and without the means***" (Vayikra 14:21)



Halachah dictates that a metzora must bring a korban of three sheep. If the metzora cannot afford it, he can suffice by replacing two of the sheep with turtle doves instead. One who has the means to bring sheep but brings birds instead, has not fulfilled his obligation.

The Chofetz Chaim comments on how we may erroneously compare ourselves to others in our mitzvah performance. Some may feel bad that they are doing less than others. Some may content themselves by doing only just as much as others around him.

This halachah demonstrates the fault in this attitude. A person is obligated to "give" not based on what society around him is doing, but rather according to his own means and strengths. One must take stock of his own talent and resources, and act according to what he can do.

Strange Altar-Fellows, by Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky





Parshas Metzora deals with the purification process of the person afflicted with tzora'as. After the disease healed, the formerly afflicted person is instructed to bring a sacrifice that includes two very diametrical items. **וְלָקַח לַמִּטַהֵר שְׁתֵּי־צִפֳּרִים חַיּוֹת טְהֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֶרֶז וּשְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב** -"***And he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop*** (14:4)."

The Torah details the offering and all of its intricacies, leaving the commentaries to ponder the symbolism of the wood of the tallest of trees bound together with the lowly moss of the hyssop.

Rashi explains that, "the hyssop symbolizes the humility that the metzora should have," and the cedar," he explains, "is a symbolic reminder that he who holds himself as high as the cedar tree should learn to lower himself like the hyssop."

However, wouldn't hyssop alone teach us this characteristic or at least symbolize humility? What point is there in bringing cedar? And, in fact, if bringing moss represents the need for humility couldn't the offering of cedar represent the need for pride? Perhaps there is another explanation for the two attributes to be joined.

A few years after **Rabbi Shneur Kotler** succeeded his late father **Reb Ahron** as the Rosh Yeshiva of the Lakewood Yeshiva, the Yeshiva's enrolment began to expand. No longer was Reb Shneur able to sit and study in the large Yeshiva all day. He was suddenly forced to raise funds day in and day out often leaving early in the morning and returning home way past midnight.

A brief respite was the annual convention of Agudath Israel at which nearly 1000 laymen and rabbinical leaders would gather for a long weekend to discuss the state of Torah affairs. My grandfather, **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky**, the oldest member of the Council of Torah Sages would often highlight the keynote session. As the eldest of the world's Torah sages, Reb Yaakov would find a way to sneak up to the dais, usually through a back door, to avoid having the entire crowd arise upon seeing his presence as is required by Jewish Law. Yet this year things were different.

Reb Yaakov engaged the much younger, Reb Shneur in conversation outside the large ballroom and waited until everyone took his or her seats. Then he took Reb Shneur by the hand and said, "I think it is time we took our seats."

He proudly held Reb Shneur by the arm and escorted him to the dais as the throng of people rose in awe. Reb Shneur, stunned by Reb Yaakov's departure from his trademark humility asked him why he did not go through the back as was his usual custom.

"Reb Shneur," he explained, "your Rebbitzen is sitting in the auditorium. The entire year she sees you in a much-dishonoured light. You run from donor to donor in order to keep the Yeshiva open, you have hardly any time to prepare your lectures, and all she sees are people knocking on your door with their problems. Yet she stands beside you faithful and unwavering. It is time that she sees that you get a little kavod (honor).

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir of Gur (1799-1866) explains that sometimes people become so humbled to the point of forgetting that they can

actually achieve wonderful accomplishments. Often, humility breeds self-effacement that may lead to despair.

Of course Rashi is correct in explaining that those who are haughty as the cedar must humble themselves as mass, but one must also bear in mind an equally important fact – that at times after one has been humiliated as low as the hyssop he must rise in his own eyes to the height of a cedar and proudly exclaim that he can and will accomplish the lofty and far reaching goal to which he or she aspires. And those are goals that only the cedar's limbs can touch.

So, perhaps the lowly hyssop must be bound with a seemingly mismatched and more supercilious counterpart, the cedar. Because when they are offered hand-in-hand, they may have a lot to learn from each other.

The Pecking Bird On the Windows-Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

There is a true story of a man who lives in Israel who recently had a very strange problem.



One day, out of nowhere, a bird began to peck continuously on the windows of his house. Nothing he did succeeded in getting rid of the bird. He called all kinds of experts but no matter what they did, the bird kept coming back.

After weeks of this with no solution in sight, he went to the Kotel to pray and to beg Hashem to show him what to do to solve the problem. He understood that this was some sort of message from Hashem but he couldn't figure out what it was.

While he was praying and saying Tehillim, he suddenly remembered something. His family had a custom to learn two halachot of lashon hara every day, but they had recently had a wedding in the family, and with all the preparations and commotion, they had neglected to learn the daily halachot. Even after the wedding had passed, they never restarted their learning program.

The man remembered a very interesting Targum Yonatan on this parashah and was convinced that this was the problem. When the Torah describes the purification process of the mesora (who was guilty of speaking lashon hara), it says that he brings two bird offerings to the Kohen. One of the birds is slaughtered and the other is set free.

On this pasuk, the Targum Yonatan comments that if the mesora sins again by speaking lashon hara, the bird that was set free will come to this man's house as a reminder to him that he should do teshuvah.

The man rushed home, convinced that this was the answer, and the family immediately resumed their previous custom to learn two halachot of lashon hara every day.

The first day, the bird came to the window, but it just sat there and watched, without pecking at the window. After that, it left and never came back.



One must be extra careful to watch his tongue. Since it is in a wet, moist place, he's bound to slip from time to time.



"Hashem's presence may be concealed, but His fingerprints can be seen in every aspect of creation." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.





A New Look

It is interesting that in most years these Parshios fall out during the yemei aveilus of the Talmidei Rebbe Akiva about whom Chazal say that their passing was because of a p'gam in Bein Adam L'Chaveiroi. Basically all negaim are directly caused by some form of Bein Adam L'chaveiroi.

Now, if twelve thousand pairs of talmidim were all *niftar* during this time period because they were not **נוהג כבוד** to one another, the greatest and most opportune time to work on going to the opposite extreme in our relationships with others is NOW. Let us start with the practice of finding no blemish in others – seeing the good.

If we can find the root of Lashon Harah we can avoid the issue. What is the root for all Lashon Harah? The answer is jealousy of others and not judging others favourably.



Rav Matisyahu Solomon z'tl speaks this out as well, that the main cause of Lashon Harah is jealousy. Rav Matisyahu explains that deep, deep down, there is something we are jealous of and we may not even realize it. What happens next? Our subconscious jealousy causes our mind to think of negative things about the person that we **never** would have dreamed of if we didn't have some form of jealousy.

But what does it have to with judging favourably? I will show an example.

There was a story about a fellow who was *redt* a shidduch to a wonderful girl. He was an orphan and a Rebbe who knew him very well was taking care of his shidduch. A few weeks later they were engaged. During the engagement the Rebbe received a very strange call. "I just want to let you know that I heard that your Talmid was once put into jail and therefor he must be a criminal. You might want to think again if you should allow him to continue with this shidduch."

The Rebbe knowing his talmid very well did not understand how this could possibly make any sense. thanked the fellow and hung up. Not knowing what to make of it, he called his talmid directly. "Where you ever put into prison?"

"No!" The talmid responded.

"Okay, because I received a strange phone call from someone saying you were locked up one time."

The Chosson started laughing. "I will tell you what they must have been referring to. One time, me and a few bochurim went away and I was driving and I got pulled over. The policeman asked me for my license and I realized that I had left it in the place that we were staying. The police took me to the police station just until the license was brought – that was the *gantza maysah*."

Here we see that someone heard part of the story and jumped to a conclusion and then almost broke a shidduch of a Yasom. All this *motzie shem ra* - how? Because he did not give this bochur the benefit of the doubt.

Rav Dov Yaffe זצ״ל said that just like when one loses something they will irrationally keep on looking in the same areas where they may have lost it again and again, even if they looked there already. So too, the same must be done when being don likaf zchus, one must

keep checking again and again trying to find a way to make the fellow an unblemished fellow.

There was a Yid who once davened in a shul in Brooklyn. After davening someone approached him and asked him why he had taken off his Tefillin and changed them to his Rabbeinu Tam's Tefillin at a certain point in davening which he felt was questionable.

The Yid replied, "This is what my father did and his father and his father…" The man said, "If so, "Heim rishaim" – (they are wicked.)

Shocked and bewildered he just ignored the comment. Whenever this Yid saw this man afterward, he was so upset and hurt, that he would avoid him, sometimes even specifically walking on the other side of the street.

After a while this man got the feeling this Yid was upset with him for some reason, although he did not know why. One day, he approached him and asked him, "Are you by any chance upset with me for some reason?"

The Yid replied uncomfortably, "Yes." He told him "Do you recall that you called all my Zaydas Rishaim!?"

The man could not believe his ears, he then apologized immensely for causing him that pain and then told him as follows "I just want to tell you that what I said was "***heim ra shaim – They are correct, not heim rishaim- they are wicked***!

Emunah Leads to a Long Life

It bears mentioning that emunah in Hashem is a segulah for a long life. **The Kotzker Rebbe zy"a** would explain the words of davening: הָאֵל תַּאֲדֶרֶת וְהָאֱמוּנָה לְחֵי עוֹלָמִים- (Strength and emunah are to He who lives forever)", by saying: "If a Jew is strong in his emunah, he will be 'chayei olamim'. He will live long!"

A Message from the Kalever Rebbe - Simcha on Shabbos Removes Pain

וְהָיָה֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י יְגַלַּ֖ח אֶת־כָּל־שְׂעָר֑וֹ "*And it shall be, on the seventh day, that he shall shave off all his hair*". (4:9)



The reward for joy

There is a distinct emphasis to rejoice on Shabbos . As we sing in the Zemiros , "On Shabbos, be happy and rejoice ." Similarly, we say during Shabbos davening: "They will rejoice in Your kingdom – those who preserve Shabbos."

There is a unique reward for those who enjoy experiencing Shabbos , as Chazal taught (Shabbos 118a): "anyone who rejoices on Shabbos receives a boundless portion".

Throughout the generations, we have seen the transformative impact of Simcha on Shabbos . As the Jerusalem Maggid, **R' Yitzchak Parchi** wrote in Motik Midevash (Chapter 6): "With our own eyes we have seen countless times a tragedy or stressful challenge happen in one's life on Erev Shabbos . However, when they welcome Shabbos with simcha and joy, that sorrow and worry is removed from

their lives; the pain is transformed into simcha, and the darkness into light".

Simcha in every situation

The daughter of **R' Tzvi Hersh from Rimenov** once fell ill on a Friday. Everyone was concerned about her condition. However, once Shabbos arrived, the Rimnover Rebbe went to shul and passionately and jubilantly sang the Shabbos tefilos . He danced during Lecha Dodi with a joy that was incredible, just as the Rebbe did weekly. During the meals, he was joyous and everyone around him felt the simcha . There wasn't even a semblance of concern for his daughter's health.

During the meal, those close to him cried out asking the Rebbe to seek mercy for his daughter from the Heavens. The Rebbe replied, " The pasuk says, 'I entreated the L-rd at that time, saying ...(Devarim 3:23)' Moshe was davening for those who are in times of sorrow to have the ability to "say". Meaning, Moshe wanted the Jews for all time to find the faith and trust in Hashem that will enable them to remain steadfast in their love and empower them to daven , to speak to Hashem , even during the most difficult times. Their sorrow should never diminish their love for Hashem ."

Then the Rebbe added a prayer, "Hashem , every soul is in Your hands! What does it matter if you delay taking my daughter's soul back until after Shabbos so that the pain would not deprive me of simcha on Shabbos!"

The Rebbe continued the meal with the same intense joy. And, his request was answered and his daughter lived.

The root of Alesk

The community in Belz had decided to find a new Av Deis Din . They drafted a letter of termination for the current Rav and asked the secretary to deliver it to him on Friday. However, the assistant, not wanting to impact the Rav's Shabbos decided to wait. When he

finally delivered the letter to the Ruv, he explained that he delayed until after Shabbos.

The Rav gratefully asked, "Please tell me, what can I bless you with?"

The assistant replied, "My wife and I are childless. Would the Rav please bless us for children?"

The Rav happily obliged and said, "Since you protected my simcha on Shabbos , you will give birth to an exceptional child."

The following year, the couple had a son, R' Yitzchak, who would grow up to be a tremendous Torah scholar and the Av Beis Din in Belz and who's righteous descendants became the leaders of the holy dynasty of Alesk.

The root of of Koznitz

There was once a Jew named R' Shabbatai who was a bookbinder by trade. He was barely able to support his family and they lived in poverty. One Shabbos, they had nothing in the house to eat except beans. So, his wife prepared the beans for their family's Shabbos meal.

When the time came for the fish, the wife served beans. And, after eating the beans, R' Shabbatai began joyously dancing in honor of Shabbos . Now was time for the soup. And the wife served more beans. Again, after eating the beans the husband started dancing. Beans were served instead of meat and, yet again, R' Shabbatai got up and danced a third time.

At the same time, the **Baal Shem Tov** was sitting in his home and with his prophetic vision he saw what R' Shabbatai was doing. And, each time the Baal Shem Tov saw R' Shabbatai dancing, he laughed.

After Shabbos the Baal Shem Tov explained to his students why he had laughed three times. And, they all travelled to the home of R' Shabbatai and the Baal Shem Tov told him, "The simcha that you expressed during Shabbos, despite having very little, brought

tremendous nachas to Hashem . In the merit of that simcha, Hashem is going to entrust you with an incredibly holy son." The following year a son was born who would become my holy ancestor the **Koznitzer Maggid**.

The reward from the King

In Taharos HaKodesh, an analogy is offered to explain this concept:

There was a king who sent a message to one of his subjects informing him that the king was coming for a visit. Naturally, the subject is overwhelmed with joy. The preparations are burdensome, but the subject is excited. And, when the day finally comes for the king's visit, the king clearly sees how much joy, care and excitement his visit roused in this subject. As a result, he provides him with many gifts to show his appreciation. On the other hand, if the subject looks worried, and burdened, the king responds accordingly.

So too, on Shabbos, the King of Kings visits the home of every Jew. If the Jew seems joyous, if he sings and dances, if his prayers are filled with excitement, then Hashem provides him with limitless blessings.

This idea is alluded to in this pausk . The Hebrew word **והיה** - And it shall be" denotes simcha. And, "on the seventh day" is referring to Shabbos.

The Seforim HaKedoshim describe din, judgements in this world, as "hairs". Therefore, the message of the pasuk is: if you rejoice on Shabbos , you will merit to remove all of the "hairs", the judgement from your life. All the pain and suffering will go away and be replaced by goodness. As the **Zohar** taught that Shabbos removes all the din from your life and leaves only Hashem's kindness and blessings.

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

When One Gives a Kvittel, He Must Speak

וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כְּנֶגַע נִרְאָה לִי בַּבָּיִת ***And he tells the kohen, saying, "Something like a nega has appeared to me in the house."*** (14:35)



A man once came to **Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz zy"a** and handed him a kvittel, which had a list of names ritten on it. The Rebbe asked, "Why didn't you write any bakashos (requests) on the kivttel?"

The man answered, "I believe that when the Rebbe reads the kvittel, he knows everything that is needed."

The Rebbe told him, "You are correct but, still and all, the Torah says that you must speak. When the kohen goes to a house that has a nega, he can see the spot, but it still says that the owner of the home must speak up and tell him that he saw something that looks like a nega.

So too, when one gives a kvittel to a Rebbe, he must speak and say what his problems are and what he needs."

"לָשׁוֹן הָרָע הוּא הַמַּכְשׁוֹל הַגָּדוֹל בְּיוֹתֵר שֶׁבּוֹ נִכְשָׁלִים רֹב בְּנֵי אָדָם." - "***Lashon hara is the greatest stumbling block in which most people fall.***"

The Chofetz Chaim writes repeatedly that *no other aveirah* destroys so many mitzvos at once. A single sentence of lashon hara can violate 17 separate prohibitions, harm another Jew's livelihood, damage reputations, and create rifts that last generations. He emphasizes that Hashem created the tongue with two gates—teeth and lips—to remind us that speech must be guarded more than any other limb.



The Guardians - bringing Jewish history to life!

📖 The Book That Marks a Turning Point in Jewish History

In Jewish learning, there is a quiet but decisive line. Before it stand the Rishonim. After it, the Acharonim.



The Rishonim, from roughly the 11th to the 15th centuries, include giants like Rashi, Rambam, Ramban, Tosafists and others. The Acharonim follow them, shaping halacha and Torah thought from the late 15th century onward. - This division is not just historical. It defines authority. A ruling by a Rishon carries a different weight than that of an Acharon.

The transition itself did not happen in a single year. It unfolded gradually, roughly between the late 15th and early 16th centuries, around 1490–1510.

Instead, there is a moment.

The first book ever printed whose author is universally considered an Acharon is a volume of halachic responsa by Rabbi David HaKohen of Corfu, known as the Radach. It was printed in Constantinople in 1538, by Eliezer Soncino, son of the legendary printer Gershom Soncino.

A printed book that quietly signals the end of one era, and the beginning of another.

📜 Sometimes, an entire era turns on a single book.

The Other Side of the Story As told by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in the name of Rav Yaakov Galinsky zt"l



There was a kiruv organization that carefully assessed families who were open to becoming closer to Yiddishkeit. They identified a doctor and his wife—refined, thoughtful people—who genuinely wanted to grow spiritually. The organization arranged for them to be invited to a warm, welcoming Shabbos home. - The Friday night meal went beautifully. They came again a second time. And a third time.

Each week, after the seudah, the hosts would walk their guests to the door. The doctor and his wife lived in the same apartment building, so they would go downstairs and that was that.

The fourth time, however, the hosts decided to be extra warm and respectful. They walked the couple all the way downstairs. And then they saw something shocking. As they reached the street, a taxi pulled up. The doctor waved it down. He and his wife got in. And the taxi drove off.

The hosts were stunned. "A taxi? On Shabbos? On our block?" They felt crushed. "We're trying so hard," they said to each other. "We invite them, we host them, and right after leaving our house they take a taxi? Obviously, we're not reaching them—or they're not getting us."

They called the kiruv organization. "Please give us someone else. If they can take a taxi right after leaving our home, we're clearly wasting our time." - The organization reassigned the couple.

A full year passed. One day, the kiruv organization called the hosts again. "You should know," they said softly, "the doctor passed away

suddenly. His wife always enjoyed coming to your home. Perhaps you could go be menachem avel—pay a shiva visit."

The hosts were shocked and saddened. The doctor had been a good man. They went to the shiva. While sitting there, they asked gently, "Was your husband ill?"

The widow answered, "No, not really. This time he just didn't make it to the hospital in time."

"This time?" they asked.

"Yes," she said. "You remember the night we came to your house, and you walked us downstairs?"

Of course they remembered.

"My husband was a doctor," she continued. "As we walked down the stairs, he realized he was having a heart attack. The moment we reached the street and saw a taxi, he flagged it down. The cab rushed us to the hospital, and his life was saved."

The room fell silent.

"This time," she said quietly, "he didn't get there in time."

The hosts left the shiva broken. For an entire year, they had cut off contact with this couple—not because of what actually happened, but because of how it looked. They hadn't judged them l'kaf zechus—favorably.

Rav Yaakov Galinsky would say: It's not always easy to judge someone favorably, especially when what you see looks wrong. But you must always say to yourself, "Maybe there's something I don't know."

Who knows how much kiruv, how much connection, how much growth was lost—simply because they didn't give the benefit of the doubt. That's the lesson. Always judge a person l'kaf zechus.

Twenty Years Later As told by Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld - Brought to you by Stories to Inspire

This story takes place in Israel and involves two neighbours—two women who lived on the same floor of an apartment building.

One day, many years ago, the two women became involved in a dispute. During that argument, one of them publicly humiliated the other. The woman who was shamed—Esther—chose not to respond. She remained silent. But from that day on, the pain stayed with her.

For the next twenty years, the two neighbors did not speak. They passed each other in the grocery store. They saw each other on the street. They even stood together in the elevator. But they avoided eye contact. No words were exchanged. Just silence—year after year.

In 2001, Leah, the woman who had caused the embarrassment, was celebrating a joyful milestone: her son became engaged. She was filled with hakaras hatov—gratitude to Hashem—and felt a deep desire to do something meaningful with that gratitude. She decided it was time to make peace.

One evening, Leah gathered her courage and knocked on Esther's door. Esther opened the door and was stunned to see Leah standing there. "How are you?" Leah asked warmly.

"Baruch Hashem," Esther replied.

Then Leah said, "I came to invite you to my son's wedding. It will take place, im yirtzeh Hashem, in a few months."

Esther invited Leah inside. They sat down and began talking—naturally, warmly—as if there had never been a dispute between them at all.

At one point, Esther asked, "What's the exact date of the wedding?"

"May 24th," Leah replied.

Esther hesitated. "Oh… I feel bad," she said. "I have a medical procedure scheduled for that day and the day after. I'll be in the hospital. I won't be able to attend."

A few minutes later, the women embraced. Leah left, feeling that although peace had finally been made, Esther still wouldn't be able to share in the simchah.

That night, Leah approached her son. She asked him if he would consider changing the date of the wedding. She explained why making it earlier wasn't possible and admitted that pushing it off would not be easy. The chosson was hesitant. He didn't want to delay the wedding. But when his mother explained why—that changing the date would allow her to fully repair a relationship that had been broken for twenty years—he agreed. The matter was discussed with the kallah's family, and the wedding was moved two days later.

Once everything was finalized, Leah returned to Esther's apartment and invited her again—this time, to the new date. Esther was overwhelmed. "You changed the wedding… for me?" Both women were in tears. A twenty-year dispute—finally healed.



But the story does not end there. On the night of May 24th, 2001, a terrible tragedy occurred at a wedding hall in Talpiot. A large section of the floor collapsed. Dozens of people fell two stories. There were serious injuries and fatalities. That was the very hall—and the very night—on which the wedding had originally been scheduled to take place.

Because Leah humbled herself. Because she sought forgiveness. Because she refused to ignore the pain she had caused—even after twenty years— They were spared.

People's feelings are fragile. Embarrassment cuts deeply. And when we cause someone pain—even unintentionally—we must do everything in our power to repair it. And if, chas v'shalom, we have ever humiliated someone, the responsibility to seek forgiveness does not expire. Humbling ourselves for the sake of peace is precious in Hashem's eyes. And when we overcome our instincts to do His will—the reward can be far greater than we could ever imagine.



Hashem Never Forgets a Single Act of Kindness by Rabbi Shlomo Farhi - Brought to you by Stories to Inspire

A Letter to a Grandfather

Rabbi Grossman, from a yeshiva in Far Rockaway, once shared a story that happened in front of his own eyes.

A man from the community, Mr. Acker, came to speak to the students. In his hand, he held a piece of paper — a letter he had treasured for many years. Before reading it, he said, "Let me tell you the story behind this letter."

Years earlier, during a severe economic downturn in Israel, there lived a woman named Henni. She worked in an office and was deeply grateful for her job — because she was the only source of income in her household. Her husband had been unemployed for six months. Her brother, who lived with them, also could not find work. Jobs were scarce. The economy was struggling. To make matters more difficult, Henni was pregnant with her first child. She worried constantly. What if I'm replaced while I'm on maternity leave? What if I lose everything?

One evening, the company held a gathering. People were talking openly about their lives, their struggles, and their fears. When it

was Henni's turn, she spoke honestly. She said how grateful she was for her job — and how frightened she was of what the future might bring. She mentioned her maiden name. She mentioned that her family had once lived in East Flatbush.

Suddenly, the owner of the company stopped her. "Who was your father?" he asked. - She answered.

The owner excused himself and left. When he returned, his eyes were red from crying. "I need to tell you a story," he said.

When I was a child, my father was an electrician who struggled to find work. Another electrician in the neighborhood — your grandfather — was part of the union and had steady jobs. Despite that, he treated my father with dignity. They walked home together. They spoke as equals.

When my father passed away, your grandfather came for shiva. He asked my mother how she was managing. She said everything was fine. - He didn't believe her. He opened the refrigerator — it was empty. Without saying a word, he filled it. And every day of shiva, he came back to restock it.

Later, my mother tried to repay him by selling my father's tools from the basement. Instead, your grandfather spent three weeks organizing everything, arranged a sale, and gave her every dollar. That money saved our family.

The employer looked at Henni and said, "You will never lose your job here. Tell your husband and your brother to come tomorrow — I will hire them."

That night, Henni went home and wrote a letter. "Dear Grandpa, I am so proud to be your granddaughter."

Mr. Acker held that letter up in front of the students. Hashem remembered.



Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, Mashgiach of Yeshiva Torah Va'Daas in Brooklyn, who was renowned for his piety, shiurim, and close connection with the Rebbe, passed away at the age of 99.

Rabbi Moshe Wolfson (1925–2024), the Mashgiach of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas, had several well-known medical and spiritual encounters with the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**. - He maintained a deep, "inner" connection with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

When Rabbi Wolfson suffered a serious heart problem that required surgery. He sought the Rebbe's counsel and bracha regarding the procedure.

The Rebbe told him in Yiddish, "***a Yid who heals the hearts of the Jewish people needs to have a healthy heart***." When Rabbi Wolfson reported that cardiac catheterization was needed, the Rebbe said the doctor would find "***a heart filled with love for Hashem***." To the doctor's surprise, the results were positive, and confounded them.

During a later period of health issues and difficulties with his synagogue (Emunas Yisrael), the Rebbe blessed him with יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים עַל מַמְלַכְתּוֹ - that he would have long and prosperous years. - Rabbi Wolfson lived to be 99.

Rabbi Shraga Kallus - The Pink Pearls



There was once a young girl whose father gave her a small amount of spending money. With great excitement, she used it to buy a necklace of pink pearls. They were not real pearls, but to her they were precious. She admired them constantly and felt proud and happy wearing them.

One evening, her father came into her room, sat beside her on the bed, and gently asked, "My darling daughter, who do you love most in the world?" "You," she answered without hesitation. "More than anything else?" he asked. "Yes. More than anything." "Even more than the pearls?" he continued. "Yes," she said confidently.

The father smiled, extended his hand, and said, "Then give me the pearls." Her face fell. "The pearls?" she whispered. "Not that." And so it went, night after night. Each time, the same question, and each time, the same hesitation.

One evening, her father asked, as he had so many times before, "Who do you love most in the world?" She answered, as always, "You." "Even more than the pearls?" he prodded. But this time, the response was different. With a tear rolling down her cheek, she slowly unclasped the necklace and placed the pink pearls into her father's hand.

At that moment, her father reached into his own pocket and pulled out a small red velvet box. Inside were genuine, radiant pink pearls that were real and far more precious than the ones she had given up.

"My darling," he said softly, "when I ask you for something out of love, you will never lose by giving it. You will only gain."

Hashem asks us to give up the synthetic pleasures of life, the illusions that glitter but do not last. And yet He promises that when we do, we make room for something far greater.

A person never loses by protecting their kedushah, by guarding their *neshama*. By choosing something of greater value, we open the door for real joy, real depth, and real blessing. And those are gifts that only Hakadosh Baruch Hu can give.

And we can be sure; they are far greater and precious.

The Chofetz Chaim's Biography

There is a powerful story that Rosh Kollel, Rabbi Shlomo Diamond, shared.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman *hy"d* traveled to America in the late 1930s to raise funds for his yeshiva in Baranovich, Poland. On one occasion, he stayed in the home of a wealthy supporter, who was thrilled to present him with a gift. It was a newly published book about his Rebbe, **the Chofetz Chaim**.

Beaming with pride, the man said, "While I make you some tea, please sit down and read it." Rabbi Wasserman sat on the couch and opened the book. Less than two minutes later, he rushed into the kitchen holding it in his hands.

"You can burn this with your chametz," he said sharply, dropping the book. "This is not my Rebbe." The host was stunned. "What's wrong? It's a book about the Chofetz Chaim!"

Rabbi Wasserman explained, "I open these books and they describe greatness as if it were something people are born with. Any child who reads this will think my Rebbe emerged perfect, without struggle. That is false. My Rebbe worked on himself. He worked immensely hard and that is how he grew."

"Yes," he continued, "he surely had extraordinary potential, but so do many children. And they must know that greatness is not inherited. It is earned through effort and struggle."

There are many beautiful *seforim* written about the greats of yesteryear and today, Rav Diamond mentioned, but we must be careful not to feel diminished by them. Rav Yerucham Levovitz is recorded to have said that a person living today who is holding a *sefer* in his hands and navigating the challenges of our generation may, in certain respects, be greater than the very tzaddik whose *sefer* he is learning. If a person stands firm in these *nisyonos*, he may be reaching the generation of giants.

Such is a message for our time. Never give up hope. Growth is always possible and struggle does not spell failure.

It is greatness itself.



The Royal Potch

A young boy was once playing outside the Lederman Shul in Bnei Brak, causing trouble. **The Steipler Gaon, Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky**, motioned for him to stop, but the boy completely ignored the great sage. Suddenly, the Steipler reached out and lightly potched the boy. The stunned little troublemaker looked up at the Steipler and figured it was best for him to quickly head home.

When he ran into his house and told his mother what had happened, she nearly fainted. "*The Steipler potched you!?*" The young woman was horrified that her son had disturbed one of the leading Rabbis of the generation enough that he felt her son deserved to be potched. She could not wait for her husband to come home to tell him what had happened. She had to act now. She had to understand the deeper meaning of this terrible episode.

She walked out the door and noticed a sage nearby. She stopped him in her panic and screamed out, "*Help me! The Steipler just smacked my son! What is going to become of him?*" The woman was in a state of hysteria.

The Rabbi told her not to worry and tried to settle her down. When she was finally able to calm down, he told her a fascinating story. "When I was a young boy, I used to play around the house of the **Chazon Ish, Rav Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz**. One day, I must have gotten a bit carried away with my behavior, and I disturbed the Chazon Ish while he was learning. After a number of warnings, the Chazon Ish called me over and gave me a light potch. I tried to run away but the Chazon lsh took me to my parents' house. He knocked on the door and told my mother that I had been misbehaving and did not listen when he told me to stop. Then he told my mother that he had smacked me.

My mother was shocked. '*The Chazon Ish smacked my son? Oy vei!*' But what the Chazon Ish told my mother next really caused her to panic. 'Rebbetzin…this is the first time I have ever smacked a boy in my entire life.'

My mother did not know what to do. She could not believe what had happened." The Rabbi finished his personal story and then added one more important point. "But I have to tell you something. Anything that has ever become of me is all because of the smack I received from the Chazon Ish."

The sagely storyteller who received a potch was none other than **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**, nephew of the Chazon Ish, son of the Steipler Gaon, and beloved leader of our generation. [Reproduced from "Touched by Their Tears" by Rav Yechiel Spero.]

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

אַגְרָה

Rav Michel Barenbaum, *zt"l*, was the *mashgiach* of Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim, otherwise known as MTJ, under Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*. After Rav Michel passed away, many grandchildren and greatgrandchildren were born to his family. But none of these babies were named "Michel."



Someone asked one of Rav Michel's children why this was happening. Didn't they want to carry on Rav Michel's great name?

The answer was an astounding peek at the shining *chesed* in a Jewish heart: Rav Michel's wife had passed away before he did. But other grandfathers from other branches of the family had passed away during Rav Michel's lifetime. He thought about the other grandfathers' widows. Unlike his wife, who was enjoying her reward in the Next World, these women were still living in this world. - Wouldn't it make them happy to see babies named after their husbands?

So, when Rav Michel wrote his will, he left these instructions: As long as these widows were alive, whoever wanted to name a baby for a grandfather should name for a grandfather whose wife would be able to appreciate it. - He knew that eventually, as his generation passed, he'd have plenty of children named after him. But while the widowed grandmothers were still in this world, he wanted them to enjoy the honor.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE
A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

A Revelation Realized - The Maggid On Tefillah By Rabbi Paysach Krohn

אֵלּוּ דְבָרִים



Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, the chief rabbi of Belgium, who many said had a photographic memory, told me this incident about himself. In his lifetime, whenever I repeated it, I did not mention his name, as I did not want to bring upon him an ayin hara.

Decades ago, R' Chaim became gravely ill. He was taken to a hospital, where he underwent a dangerous procedure. The family waited anxiously for the surgeon's diagnosis, and when it came, they were devastated. The doctor informed the family that although the medical team had done everything possible, they did not feel optimistic about the Rav's future health. They simply could not see him recovering from his illness.

The Rav remained in the hospital for some time, but eventually he was able to return home. Ever so slowly, he began to regain some strength, and when he was up to it, he went to Eretz Yisrael to visit the **Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky** (1899–1985), in Bnei Brak.

R' Kreiswirth explained the nature of his illness to the Steipler, mentioning his doctor's gloomy forecast. He pleaded with the Steipler to give him advice on how to merit rachamei Shamayim (mercy from Heaven).

Although the Steipler was very hard of hearing, he understood everything R' Kreiswirth said. After a few moments of thought, the Gaon spoke. "There is a bit of advice that I can give you. Become involved with the mitzvah of hachnasas kallah (providing for a bride)."

The Steipler went on to explain. "A question is asked about a passage from the Talmud (Shabbos 127a). - The passage lists numerous mitzvos for which a person receives reward both in this world and in the World to Come: כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם (honoring a father and mother), הַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים (hospitality to guests), בִּקּוּר חוֹלִים (visiting the sick), הַכְנָסַת כַּלָּה (providing for a bride), and לְוָיַת הַמֵּת (escorting the dead).

"Why," asked the Steipler, "is the precept of providing for a bride placed between that of visiting the sick and escorting the dead? It seems to be out of sequence."

The Steipler answered his own question. "It is placed there because if someone wishes that there be an interruption between his status of being sick and visited by others, and being buried, he should involve himself with the mitzvah of hachnasas kallah." - And then the Gaon added, "Especially with helping provide for an orphaned bride."

R' Kreiswirth told me that he was taken aback, for he had recited this passage thousands of times in his daily morning Shacharis recitation of Eilu Devarim, but he had never understood it that way.

He followed the Steipler's advice and raised considerable amounts of money for poverty-stricken brides. Eventually he recovered completely from his illness. R' Kreiswirth lived for almost twenty years after the doctor's dismal diagnosis, and he relished repeating this episode so that others could learn from it as well.

May Hashem, in His compassion, bring cure and healing to all those who suffer from illness or ailment.

Great Jewish History

Gutenberg Invents Printing Press; Jews Immediately Use It To Disseminate Torah Torah Views And News



One of the major inventions of all time was undoubtedly the modern printing press invented by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany, in 1439. It enabled the proliferation of books and information to the masses and changed the course of world history. - No longer would books need to be written by hand, which was time-consuming and expensive, and affordable only by the privileged few.

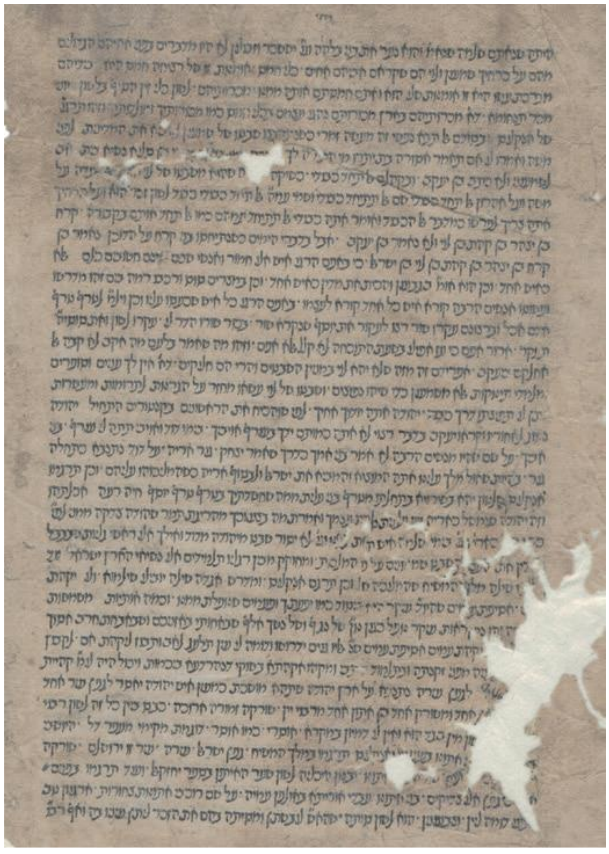
With the advent of the printing press, books could be disseminated to the general public both in quantity and relatively inexpensively. Those books printed in the first years after the invention of the printing press, until the year 1500, are known as *incunabula*, meaning cradle books, as they were the infancy of publishing.

Not surprisingly, the "People of the Book" seized the opportunity to print books for the study of Torah. Jewish publishers began printing *sefarim* around twenty years after the Gutenberg press was invented.

The sheer number of Jewish books printed since has been astounding, and until today thousands of Torah works are produced each year.

Torah Views And News - The Right of the Firstborn

The Ramban (1194-1270), in his introduction to his commentary, writes of **Rashi** (1040- 1105), "To him, indeed, belongs the right of the firstborn."



Reggio di Calabria edition of Rashi's commentary

The Ramban is clearly referring to the preeminent status that Rashi's commentary earned in the world of Torah. But Rashi was accorded another "first" in history, nearly four centuries after his passing. The earliest books did not have their printing dates indicated; the first to be dated was Rashi's commentary to Chumash.

It was printed by Avraham ben Garton in southern Italy (at the tip of Italy's "boot"), in the town of Reggio di Calabria, on February 18, 1475. It was 116 pages with 37 lines each, and consisted of just Rashi's commentary, without the actual Chumash.

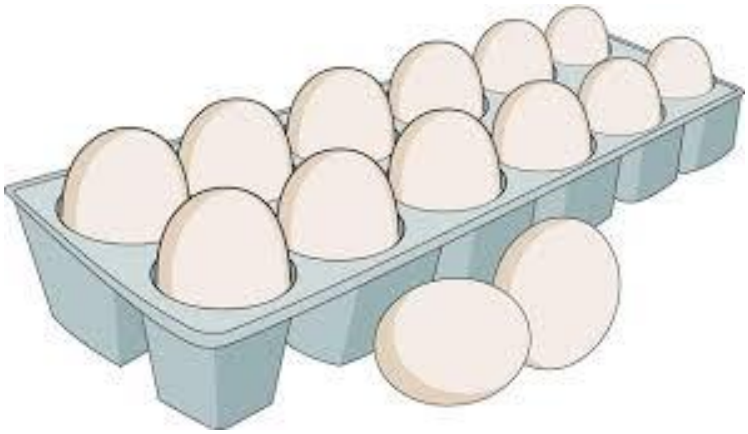
This copy also contributed what is famously now known as "Rashi script." Contrary to common opinion that those distinctive fonts were invented by Rashi himself, they actually emanated from the Reggio di Calabria edition of Rashi, whose typeface was based on an Italian-influenced Sephardic semi-cursive hand.

Still Need a Rebbi

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) cautions those who think that since nowadays we have so many printed sefarim available to us, and everyone has a Shas and a Shulchan Aruch, it is no longer necessary to attend yeshivos.

This could not be further from the truth, he says, for it is not enough to have Torah in sefarim — one needs to know how to accurately understand what is written in the sefarim! This is what a yeshivah is designed to accomplish — to have a rebbi, a mesorah. This is what Torah Shebe'al Peh (the Oral Law) is all about…

Eggs-emplary Behavior By Rabbi Yosef Weiss z'l



A survivor of the flames of the Holocaust, R' Shmuel Grunbaum left war-torn Europe and emigrated to America, where he made a home for himself in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. After various attempts to find a job, R' Shmuel found a position working in an egg store. It was a dependable job, but the salary was minimal. R' Shmuel had to devise an additional means of income.

Building on his current position, R' Shmuel began an innovative service: he would sell and deliver eggs directly to the customer. Business began slowly, with an order here and an order there. Word of R' Shmuel's prompt and ethical business spread, and soon R' Shmuel received his first weekly customer.

One afternoon, R' Shmuel was busy making his scheduled deliveries. He walked up the narrow flight of steps and carefully

placed the carton of eggs on the doorstep of his weekly customer. R' Shmuel walked down the steps and began making his way down the street. Quite unexpectedly, there was a tap on his shoulder.

"Excuse me, can you help us make a minyan for minhah?" The man motioned toward the basement entrance of the building R' Shmuel had just left.

"Certainly, I will join you."

Within a few minutes, the afternoon service commenced. Their small minyan of ten grew as the prayers progressed. All proceeded normally until the middle of the hazan's recitation of the prayers.

A sudden movement at one side of the shul caught R' Shmuel's attention. A man was entering the low-ceilinged shul with a large carton in his hands. R' Shmuel had no trouble recognizing the carton - it contained the eggs he had just delivered!

R' Shmuel watched in confusion as the man circulated the room. Each person took a few eggs from the carton and put them aside until the end of minhah.

When his turn came, R' Shmuel waved the man on, indicating that he had no need for eggs. He looked at the eggs in the man's hand, then stared around the shul. Each man there was now the proud possessor of one or two eggs.

R' Shmuel was flabbergasted. What was the reason for this strange ritual?

When the services were over, R' Shmuel approached the man with the now empty carton. "Tell me, where does this custom come from - to give out eggs during prayers?"

The man smiled at his puzzled expression. "This is the Skwere shteibel," he explained. "The Rebbetzin, who lives upstairs, wanted to support a fellow in the wholesale eggs business. She places a weekly order, but she doesn't really need so many eggs. So, she

asked me to give them out to the minyan so they won't go to waste. Understand? It's as simple as that."

R' Shmuel nodded thoughtfully. "Oh yes," he said fervently, "I understand a lot better than you think."

R' Shmuel thanked the man and ascended the stairs into the waning sunlight. His burden had been lightened by the discreet concern of the Rebbetzin of Skwere. ("Visions of Greatness VII")

Rav Chaim's Advice to the Jewish Plumber



A plumber came to fix one of The *Gadol Hador* Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's pipes. After he finished, Reb Chaim quoted the *Pasuk* which tells us to pay our workers on time and happily paid the plumber for his service.

Then he gave him a lesson. He asked the plumber how does he pray for his *parnasa*, does he ask that other Jews should have plumbing problems so that he could have money?

The plumber was silent.

Reb Chaim told him, let me teach you how to pray for *parnasa*. You should say, "Hashem, if it has been decreed that someone must suffer, let it not be either physical or spiritual suffering, but only with a burst pipe or something of the sort. This way everyone will benefit, it's good for them and it's good for you."

A hug is like a boomerang - you get it back right away.

One Cannot Departmentalize Middos



R' Avigdor Miller (in *Toras Avigdor*) brings the **Gaon**, who starts off *Sefer Even Shleimah* with this: "***All of a person's service of Hashem depends on the refinement of one's midos***…".

He explains that the reason why midos are the foundation of the Torah is because a person has only one set of middos. Therefore, the same relationship you have with people will be your relationship with Hashem.

If a person is appreciative, positive, and loving with people, he will be the same with Hashem. If he is loyal and honest with people, he will be the same in his responsibilities toward Hashem.

Chazal say that if a person is ungrateful to his fellow man, he will end up being ungrateful to Hashem. - Why is that?

Because it's impossible to departmentalize and say, "To people I'm not grateful, but to Hashem I'm grateful."

Don't deceive yourself by saying, "Although maybe I am not such a fine person in my dealings with others, at least my relationship with Hashem is in good order." It's impossible. The way you are with people is the way you are with Hashem. One cannot departmentalize his character. - And so this is the test of someone who claims that he loves Hashem… let's see how he loves his wife, his family, his neighbors.

You have to succeed with your children, neighbors, with the goyim on your block, then you can succeed with Hashem. Because your relationship with Hashem depends on your character. - So middos are a fundamental criterion of a person's relationship to Hashem.

The Quiet Art of Preserving Dignity

One man in the Chevron Yeshiva *kollel* was a great *talmid chochom*, yet lived in dire poverty, having failed in every business attempt. Someone suggested to **R' Yechezkel Sarna** that he be hired to say *kaddish* for donors who paid the yeshiva for this service. - R' Yechezkel refused. *Kaddish*, he explained, was usually said by the *shamash*, and giving such a task to a *talmid chochom* might be demeaning. Instead, R' Yechezkel astonished everyone by announcing that he himself would say the *kaddish*. - No one questioned him.

Four weeks later, the reason emerged: R' Yechezkel asked the secretary to tell the impoverished *talmid chochom*, "The Rosh Yeshiva has been saying *kaddish* but no longer has the strength. He would like you to take over." Since R' Yechezkel had done it first, the role carried no shame—only dignity. (Gut Voch)

One Track Minded

There is a concept that people are one track minded in a negative way and there is a way to be one track minded in a positive way as well. For example, there can be people that are one track minded in Torah…Like in the following amazing story about **Rav Chaim זצוק'ל**

A leading American Rosh Yeshivah recalled sharing a tender with Rav Chaim back to Bnei Brak after an event many decades ago. When they reached Rechov Rashbam, they had to pay the driver, and the others in the car started looking through their pockets for money.

Rav Chaim turned to the Rosh Yeshiva and asked what he was looking for so frantically. "Shekalim," he replied, and Rav Chaim said he would go get from his house. - He ascended the steps and came back a minute later, his hand outstretched, and handed the rosh yeshiva a Mishnayos, *Meseches Shekalim*!

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - Seven Priceless Dollars



One *bein hazmanim*, when I was a seventeen-year-old *yeshiva* bochur, I took the only money I had and which I had saved up for a long time—seven dollars—and traveled all the way to the Lower East Side. I had one goal: to buy a *sefer*, Bnei Yissaschar, written by the great Rebbe of Dinov, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov.

After searching, I finally found it. I brought the *sefer* to the counter, took out my seven dollars, and waited. The bookseller opened the *sefer*, looked inside, and said quietly, "I'm sorry. This *sefer* costs eight dollars."

He didn't know that seven dollars was all I had. He didn't know how long I had saved up, or how far I had come. I felt crushed. But what could I do? I thanked him, placed the *sefer* back on the shelf, and began walking toward the door.

Just as I opened the door to leave, he called me back. A woman behind the counter, likely his wife, motioned for me to return too. And from beneath the counter, he took out another copy.

"This," he said, "is also a Bnei Yissaschar. But it's defective."

He showed it to me. The first pages were missing and there were double-printed pages, pages layered on top of one another. The text only began properly on page thirty-three. From there, most of the *sefer* was intact. He opened the front cover and showed me the price written inside: **seven dollars.** I placed my seven dollars on the counter, as he then handed me the *sefer* and asked if I wanted a bag. I knew I didn't need one. I wasn't letting go of that *sefer* for anything.

For years, that worn, imperfect volume was more precious to me than any other *sefer* I owned. Others might have looked at it and

said, *pasul*. Damaged. Incomplete. Not worth much. But to me, it was priceless.

Years later, a *yeshiva* wished to honor me. They told me they wanted to present me with a magnificent new edition of the *Bnei Yissaschar*—leather-bound, beautifully printed, my name embossed in gold. I thanked them deeply, but I declined. Hashem had already given me *my* Bnei Yissaschar. And I would not trade it for all the money in the world.

In life, never judge a book by its cover. Not a *sefer*. Not a person.

Because, truly, everything and everyone, despite it seeming to be defective, can be more priceless than you ever imagined.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter - Mother Won



My mother *a"h* had a quiet, unwavering habit. Whenever she left the house, whether to the store, on a walk, even on a picnic, she took food with her. Not just food for herself, but extra food, in case someone might ask.

No one ever did.

Years passed. Decades passed. Still, she never went out without food to give. I never understood why, until one day, she told me.

My mother rarely spoke about the war. But she had survived the death marches. They walked for days in wooden clogs through freezing mud. Girls collapsed constantly, and if someone fell, you couldn't help them. To stop was to be shot.

At one point, they passed a German woman standing by the road, holding food. The girls begged her—just a piece, just a crumb. The

woman spat at them and said, "You don't ask people for food on the street, you miserable Jews," and walked away.

Moments later, one of the girls collapsed and died. The pain, the hunger and the humiliation all converged in that instant. And at the sight of that, everyone began cursing the woman who hadn't given this poor Jewish woman a morsel of bread.

Everyone—except my mother. She said to herself: "What will I gain from cursing? Nothing." And then she made a vow." "If I survive this war," she promised Hashem, "I will never leave my house without food to give to someone."

That was why she always carried food.

After the war, she met my father. On paper, they had nothing in common. They came from different countries. They didn't even speak the same kind of Yiddish. The only thing they shared was homelessness and loss. My father told her his own war story. Once, starving, he went to someone's house and was turned away. While others cursed, he made a promise of his own: "If I live, I will never eat unless I have a guest."

My mother smiled and said, "Perfect. I made the same promise. Let's get married."

Fast-forward many years.

My mother was seventy-four. I was taking her to medical treatments in Manhattan. It took time to get her into the car with her walker and we were already running late. As we were driving, the nurse called, asking where we were. I said, truthfully, that we were on our way. Then, as we approached the highway, my mother suddenly said, "Turn around."

"Ma, why?" "I forgot to bring food." I said, "Ma, no one has asked you for food in seventy years. I'll buy something on the way." "No," she said. "Turn around." We turned back. She went inside, got food, and only then would she leave.

We arrived very late. The doctor was upset. The reports were not good.

On the way back, my mother asked me to park a block away. We walked slowly together. On the corner, where for years there had been a bank, a drugstore, all kinds of shops, there was an old man sitting silently on a milk crate. I had seen him there countless times. I had never heard him speak.

As we passed, he looked up and said, "Mrs… do you have something to eat?"

My mother didn't say a word.

She reached into her bag and handed him the food. In that moment, everything became clear. Forget the doctor. Forget the reports. Forget the Germans. Forget the war. They never succeeded in making her curse. They turned her into someone who *gave*.

At that moment, my mother won the war.

We all carry pent-up emotion, the likes of anger, pain, resentment. The instinct is to release it on someone else. But if we pause and say, "Hashem, I'm holding it back—and I'm choosing to use it for good," we have no idea how much life and how much blessing Hakadosh Baruch Hu just added to our years.

What a tragedy it would be to waste such an opportunity. Because if we use the moment for good, it will last for eternity.

Appreciate What You Have

"If you don't appreciate what you have, you'll never appreciate what you're going to get, for you'll get used to that as well." ~ R' Moshe Meir Weiss

בס"ד

למודי משה

עניני שידוכים ונישואין

The *Chazon Ish* once saw a *bochur* who had reached the age of *shidduchim* and he saw that the boy wasn't looking. The *Chazon Ish* asked him why he wasn't busy with it?

The *bochur* said to him: I am like Ben Azai whose soul yearns for Torah. - The *Chazon Ish* replied: Is it not good enough to be like Abaye and Rava...?!

One of the *berachos* we say during *Sheva Berachos* is: **שמח תשמח רעים האהובים כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם** - "*Gladden intensely, the companions who are beloved, as You gladdened Your creation in the Garden of Eden from days of old.*"

The question is: What special joy was there in the first marriage, that we bless every subsequent marriage to be like this?

Some answer: Many people have worries about livelihood after marriage, which involves many expenses, so the marriage brings worries about livelihood. Therefore, we say that if they merit their marriage should be like Adam HaRishon, about who we find in *Sanhedrin* (59b): Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima says, "Adam HaRishon was in the Garden of Eden, and there were ministering angels roasting meat for him and filtering wine for him", we see that he had no worries about livelihood, therefore, we bless the *chosson* and *kallah* that they too should have no worries (*Admor* of *Sanz shlita*, cited in *Madanay Asher* 1028).

Once a father came with his son who was a *bochur* to the **Steipler** and the *bochur* told the Steipler that he is currently learning in *yeshiva,* however, he doesn't feel that not being married is disturbing him in any way. The Steipler shouted at him and said: "Are you a *malach*? Hashem created man with a desire that he wants to get married, therefore, you should get married as soon as you can." (*Me'achorei Hapargud,* pg. 343)

One time someone came to **R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l*** and said that he married off his daughter and promised to give a large amount of money for the *shidduch* (400,000 *shekel*). However, after the *chasunah* it turns out that the *bochur* wasn't as good as he thought, he had *yiras Shomayim,* but his learning wasn't any better than average [and perhaps the *shidduch* was a *mekech tous,* bad sale].

R' Chaim asked him: Does he wear *tefillin*? The father said: Yes, certainly. R' Chaim said: If so, he is worth much more!

The *Minchas Todah* (*Al HaTorah*) relates that someone once send a letter to R' Chaim asking if he can promise to give a certain amount of money, if he doesn't know how and where he will be able to pay it back from. R' Chaim answered in short like he always did: **פחמע"ד**.

The asker didn't understand what this meant, and he asked R' Chaim to clarify what this stood for. R' Chaim explained that it stood for: **פוק חזי מאי עמא דבר** – "Go out and see what everyone else does" and the reality is, that people marry off their children and promise large amounts of money more than they can possibly afford, and each one has his own miracle of how it worked out in the end.

R' Chaim added in the name of the *Chazon Ish,* that the biggest miracle in today's generation, is that Bnei Torah succeed in marrying off their children!

The *Takonah* of the *Lev Simcha*, and Why Gifts Are Different

The *Lev Simcha* of Ger *zt"l* made *takonas* [enactments] for the sake of everyone, that *chasunah* expenses must be within reason, and not to extravagant. However, there is one exception and that is the gifts that the *chosson* and *kallah* give to each other, for this there is no *takonah* (*Neimos HaChaim*, pg. 201).

The Admor of Ger *shlita* said in the name of his father (*shmoozen*, Chayei Sorah) that the reason for this is, that it is clear in the Torah by Eliezer and Rivka that extravagant gifts were given, and it's clear from the *Taz* (*Yoreh Deah* 117:1, and *Orach Chaim* 588:5) that we can't make enactments against things the Torah explicitly allows.

A Special Gift

Reb Yaakov Kaplan *shlita* (*Luach Bnei Yaakov*, 12th of Tamuz 5775) relates that the Tur (the son of the Rosh) was very poor, as is clear from the Tur (*Orach Chaim* beginning of 242) where he asked his father the Rosh if he could make his Shabbos like a weekday. Due to the extent of his poverty, he had nothing to give his wife on the occasion of the wedding, and in great sorrow he cried to Hashem about this, and he was granted the privilege of writing his *sefer* and he gave it to her as a gift.

Reb Aharon David *shlita* often tells over a story with Rabbi Aryeh Levin *zt"l* who was known to be very poor. On his wedding day, he told his wife that he had nothing that he was able to give her as a present, and even the clothes that he was wearing were borrowed on a short-term basis. All that he was able to give was himself and the fact that he would always give in to her. His *kallah* also gave back the same wedding gift, that she would always help him and give in to him.

How Can *Litvaks* with *Chassidic* Wives Have *Shalom Bayis*? - "Let Them Eat Cake!"



The custom of Jews from *Chassidic* communities is to eat *mezonos*, cake or cookies, on Shabbos morning after *kiddush*. [Gift stores in Borough Park sell "*challah* covers" that are embroidered with the blessing for cake (*borei minei mezonos*) rather than bread (*hamotzi*), for use during the Shabbos morning *kiddush*.] The Shabbos morning custom of Jews originating from Lithuanian and German communities is to start the meal with the blessing of *hamotzi* on bread, immediately after *kiddush*.

Rabbi Pesach Diskind a grandson of Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky once related the following:

One Shabbos morning when he was a guest by his grandfather, he noticed that after *kiddush*, Reb Yaakov's Rebbetzin [wife] served cake to Reb Yaakov and he made a *borei minei mezonos*. Afterwards, they went to wash for the meal.

Rabbi Diskin knew that his grandfather was not a *chossid*. He was, in fact, a dyed-in-the-wool *Litvak*. Rabbi Diskin asked his grandfather from where he picked up the custom to have *mezonos* after *kiddush*. Reb Yaakov explained the origin of this custom to his grandson. Rab Yaakov, who had lost his first wife, was now married to his "*zivug sheni*" [2nd wife]. Reb Yaakov's second wife came from *Chassidic* background. Both her father and her first husband were from *Chassidic* backgrounds. She was accustomed to having *mezonos* with Shabbos morning *kiddush*. If he would not have *mezonos* after *kiddush*, she would feel something was lacking in the *kiddush*.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was 70 years old when he married his second wife. That means that for 50 years he made *kiddush* in the morning without *mezonos*.

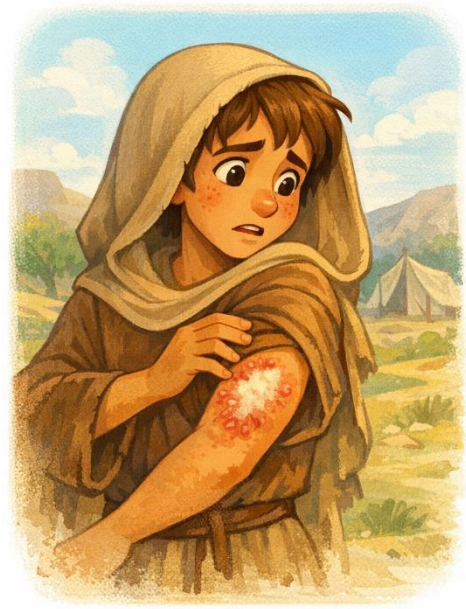
How many of us would change after doing something for fifty years, and for what? "Because with my wife, this is how *kiddush* is made".

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky changed. To Reb Yaakov, it was worth changing a 50-year-old practice for *shalom bayis* — for the feelings of his wife. This should serve as an insightful lesson for all of us.

עוד ישמע בערי יהודה קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה

May we merit to take part in many simchos together, and ultimately the arrival of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdosh speedily in our days!!!

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Sparks of Inspiration





The central theme of this week's parasha, is of course tzoraas and **לָשׁוֹן הָרָע**, which is the primary punishment for it.

Now the question is, why is **לָשׁוֹן הָרָע** called **לָשׁוֹן הָרָע**?

If you think about it, Lashon Hara just means bad talk. There's lots of bad talk. There could be **מוֹצִיא שֵׁם רָע** (spreading false, damaging statements about another person). **רְכִילוּת** (gossip or tale-bearing). **חֲנֻפָּה** (flattery or insincere praise). **שֶׁקֶר** (falsehood or lying). **נִיבּוּל פֶּה** (vulgar or improper speech)

But yet, Lashon Hara is very specific in its definition. Lashon Hara means true negative comments about a person. Why is that called Lashon Hara, which is more of a generic term?

I once heard a fabulous idea from Rabbi Hartman. He said the following:

רָע doesn't only mean bad, but רָע can also mean to break down. For example, Chazal use the expression of a כּוֹתֶל רָעוּעַ, a shaky wall, a wall which is about to fall. Or, for example, a תְּרוּעָה. One of the blows of the shofar is a תְּרוּעָה, which is a broken staccato type of noise. It's one single note which is broken into pieces.

That's what לָשׁוֹן הָרָע is. Lashon Hora is language used inappropriately.

דִּבּוּר is meant to build and strengthen relationships. Lashon Hara does exactly the opposite. Because when you focus on the negative, true points about another person, that corrodes and breaks down a relationship more than other types of bad speech.

If it's not true, then that will come to light and therefore it won't have the same damaging effect. But if you're talking about the true negative aspects of another person, that weakens and spoils a relationship. And therefore, of all the different types of speech, it is specifically לָשׁוֹן הָרָע, which is called לָשׁוֹן הָרָע, not only because it's bad, because it breaks down the relationship.

Interestingly, טוֹב is the antithesis of רָע. Not only is it good compared to bad, but טוֹב also means קִיּוּם. For example, the Ramban says in Bereishis, that the Pasuk says, וַיַּרְא אֱלֹקִים כִּי טוֹב - HaKadosh Baruch Hu created light and it was good, says the Ramban, that it was enduring.

Furthermore, the Gemara says in Bava Kama daf 54b, why is it that by the first Luchos, it doesn't say the word טוֹב. Only in the second Luchos does it say טוֹב, but it doesn't appear by the first Luchos. Why is that?

The answer is, because the second Luchos lasted. The first Luchas were broken.

So **טוב** connotes not just good, but also something which endures. And therefore, Lashon Hara, which has the ability to break down a relationship, is not only bad talk, but it's talk which can weaken and break down a relationship.

The antithesis to that, of course, is Lashon Tov. It's not only good talk, but positive and speech which will strengthen and enhance and build and connect, which is really what **דִּבּוּר** is meant to do.

The Dangers of Speaking And Listening To Lashon Harah by Yisroel Rudman



Imagine entering a massive textile factory, with 248 massive machines performing various tasks in perfect, fragile harmony to manufacture the final product. Additionally, there is one central instrument upon which the entire production depends – a machine whose value outweighs that of every one of its counterparts. Naturally, the factory employees devote significant attention to this machine above all the others in the factory, being that it is the most important. Unless this single component runs properly, the rest are rendered completely useless. - Simply put, the "life and death" of the entire operation hinges on this one machine.

The **Chafetz Chaim**, says the Torah commands us to observe 248 positive commandments. But the most important "machine" in a Jew's spiritual apparatus is his power of speech. As Shlomo HaMelech teaches us (Mishlei 18:21), "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." The power of speech is our most precious resource, and we must guard it vigilantly. As the Pasuk says (Tehillim 34:14), "Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from uttering deceit." Our spiritual strength hinges on how we utilize our power of speech.

Rav Shlomo Gantzfried, (Kitzur S.A. 30:5) writes, "*What remedy does a person have to protect him from transgressing the Aveirah of* ***לָשׁוֹן הָרָע****? If one can learn, he should engage in Limud HaTorah. If he is unable to learn, he should act with greater humility*"

The Torah wants us to speak to others, sharing an encouraging word, a Dvar Torah, elevating even our mundane conversations. Shemiras HaLashon doesn't require one to be a recluse. Rather, we are called to speak within the framework of Torah, Middos, and Yiras Shamayim.

In this light, it is incumbent upon every one of us to study and become proficient in the Halachos of proper speech, particularly from Sefer Chafetz Chaim. He authored this legendary work at the behest of **Rav Yisroel Salanter** ZT"L, who would always travel with a Mesilas Yesharim and a Chafetz Chaim in his valise.

Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, ZT"L, famously urged people to study this Sefer. He said, ***"I have never seen a person who studied two laws from the Sefer Chafetz Chaim each day who did not see some sort of salvation, whether regarding his children, Shidduchim, finances, or health…I guarantee that if a person studies two laws from Chafetz Chaim each day, I will act as his advocate to plead his case in Shamayim!"***.

Each of us should ask ourselves, "Am I utilizing my power of speech to its fullest?" The effects of our words are so far-reaching. A compliment to another person can change their entire day. Do we use the power of speech to make the lowly feel important? Do we use the power of speech to show our loved ones that we are thinking about them? Do we use the power of speech to express our gratitude to all the people in our lives who do so much for us every day? May we all merit to purify our speech, both by avoiding the perils of the **מות ביד הלשון** and by embracing the beauty of the **חיים ביד הלשון** !

Short Story of The Week By Yoni Schwartz

Some time ago, when Yeshivah Torah Voda'as was building its new location in Williamsburg, they decided that they wanted to start off the yeshiva on the right foot. For the first seven days, they were going to have bochurim learn in the Beis Midrash 24/7 to maintain an atmosphere of holiness.

Everything went well until Friday night came. Since all the boys went to eat at people's homes, and nobody wanted to wait a couple of hours to start their meal, none of the bochurim were able to stay and learn.

Rav Shlomo Heiman, ZT"L, the Rosh Yeshiva at the time, knowing that his wife would have no issue waiting a little to start their meal, offered to stay. He sent one of the bochurim to tell his wife that he was going to be late. Immediately afterward, he sent another boy to call him back. "I'll tell her myself," he said.

The boys were a bit shocked. "Does the Rav not trust us?"

Rav Heiman explained: "When my wife opens the door, the first thing she'll see is bochurim, and she'll be worried that something happened to me. Then the bochurim will explain the situation, and she'll realize that everything is okay. However, for those couple of seconds, she's going to be very worried, and I don't want her to go through that."

The bochurim were amazed by the Rav's thoughtfulness and consideration for others.

Comment: In this week's parshiyos, Tazria and Metzora, we learn about tzara'as, the affliction a person would receive for speaking gossip. "'Love your fellow like yourself' is a central theme of the Torah," says Rabbi Akiva. Sometimes, loving another with whom we quarrel may be too difficult in the moment, but at the very least, the Torah expects us to have a basic level of consideration for others: that we will not say things to or about others that we would not like to be said about us.

The Rosh Yeshiva Gave Up His Bed by Rabbi Joey Haber

Rabbi Lezor Stefanski once told over a story from his youth— When he was a young boy, he joined the yeshiva in Lakewood. Back then, Lakewood was not what it is today. The streets were rough, and the dormitories were several long blocks away from the yeshiva.

For this young boy, walking alone at night was frightening. He simply couldn't do it. So instead, he slept on a couch in the yeshiva.

Now, the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Aharon Kotler**, was only in Lakewood for Shabbat. During the week, his room was empty. Someone suggested to the boy that he sleep in the Rosh Yeshiva's room during the week. And so he did. All week long, he slept in Rav Aharon Kotler's room. Then Thursday night came, and Rav Aharon returned. The boy went back to the couch.

The next morning, Rav Aharon saw him and asked, "Where did you sleep last night?"

"On the couch," the boy answered.

"Why?"

"I'm afraid to walk to the dorms at night."

"And where did you sleep all week?"

"In the Rosh Yeshiva's room."

Rav Aharon paused. "You slept in my room all week?"

"Yes."

"So why didn't you sleep there last night?"

"Because the Rosh Yeshiva came back…"

Rav Aharon responded, "Just because I came back… why does that mean you can't sleep in my room?"

That Friday afternoon, a message came: Rav Aharon Kotler wanted him to sleep in his room. That night, the boy entered the room of

the Gadol HaDor. There were two beds. He got into one—but there was no pillow.

Rav Aharon said, "Take mine. I don't need a pillow." And he gave him his own pillow. Not for one night—but for weeks—until he found him a safe place to stay.

That is greatness. Not just in learning, but in feeling another person's fear. Because true greatness is not how high a person stands— but how low he is willing to bend to lift someone else up.

180-Degrees Mid-Way By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg



Rabbi Efraim Roitman, the founder of the *Hashem Loves You* hotline, once shared with me an extraordinary story — one he knew firsthand. Its lesson offers remarkable inspiration. It can be applied on both "good days" and "bad days," but perhaps it is most vital precisely on the difficult ones.

Many years ago, Rabbi Efraim received a call from a middle-aged man. The moment he heard the man's voice, Rabbi Efraim sensed that something was wrong — very wrong.

The caller had initially reached out because of Rabbi Efraim's experience helping couples with *shalom bayis*. But only a short time into the conversation, it became clear that the situation ran far deeper. Before the matter of *shalom bayis* could be addressed, many other issues had to be confronted.

The man confided that he was unable to maintain steady employment. His lack of a consistent job not only strained his finances but also

shattered his self-esteem. Whenever he encountered adversity, he would lash out in anger. His reactions pushed people away, making it nearly impossible for anyone to want to hire him.

Rabbi Efraim now faced the challenge of somehow guiding this man through the tangled mess of his life. And the damage extended far beyond his livelihood and his *shalom bayis*. Even his family had begun to build a quiet resistance toward him. The slightest perceived disrespect — a glance, a whisper, even a harmless gesture — could ignite a sudden flame of anger.

Rabbi Efraim's goal was to help the man reach a place where he once again felt safe, valued, and capable. Perhaps, he hoped, that would unlock the bolts of the wall that had formed between him and the people around him, allowing him to flourish again with the abilities he truly possessed.



As he searched for a way forward, Rabbi Efraim recalled a story he had once heard from Rabbi Eitan Feiner, the Rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway. Years earlier, at a *Shabbos HaGadol drashah*, Rabbi Feiner had prefaced the story with an opening remark: Although the incident involved a non-Jew, its message carried a powerful lesson — one that anyone could learn from.

Rabbi Efraim hoped that Rabbi Feiner's lesson would help this struggling man as well.

Judge John Kralik once found himself at a very low point in life. His law practice was failing, his personal life was strained, and he felt overwhelmed by everything that seemed to be going wrong.

One day, while reflecting on his situation, he had a simple but powerful idea. Instead of focusing on what he lacked, he would focus

on what he had. He set a goal to write one handwritten thank-you note every day for an entire year.

At first, it felt awkward. But slowly, something remarkable began to happen. As he forced himself to search for people to thank, he began noticing kindness everywhere — from friends, colleagues, family members, and even strangers.

Even more surprising, the greatest change did not happen in others — it happened within himself. His outlook shifted from frustration to appreciation, and the relationships in his life began to improve. Kralik later described this experience in his book, where he reflects on how such a small daily act transformed the way he saw his life.

This story reflects a fundamental Torah value: *hakaras hatov* — recognizing and appreciating the good we receive.

"Human nature tends to focus on what is missing," explained Rabbi Efraim to his caller. "Yet, when a person trains themselves to notice the good, their entire perspective changes. Chazal teach that gratitude is not merely good manners; it is a core *middah* that shapes a person's character.

"Often, we think life must improve before we can feel grateful. But the lesson is the opposite. When a person becomes grateful, life itself begins to feel full of blessing. When we practice *hakaras hatov* — toward the people around us and toward Hashem — we begin to see that our lives are already filled with countless acts of kindness."

The man on the phone took well to Rabbi Efraim's idea.

The very next morning, after his children boarded their bus to school and his wife left for work, he sat down at his quiet dining-room table. From his pocket, he pulled out his gel pen, placed it against a blank sheet of paper, and began to write.

He wrote letters to many people — even those he wasn't on good terms with. At first, it was not easy. But he did it anyway.

A few days later, some replies began to arrive. Each returned letter became a small stepping-stone, helping him slowly climb out of the mire he had been trapped in.

Just two weeks later, he attended a family *bar mitzvah*. The guests were in for quite a surprise. Their uncle — who had spent years finding fault in everyone around him — suddenly seemed different. He began speaking warmly with relatives. He asked about their lives. He showed genuine interest in their wellbeing and expressed real compassion. It was a side of him that no one had seen in over twenty years.

Six weeks later, Rabbi Efraim received another phone call.

"I got a job!" the caller exclaimed excitedly.

"That's wonderful," Rabbi Efraim replied. "But…who is this?"

In his line of work, Rabbi Efraim often spoke with many people anonymously and would usually recognize them by the tone of their voice. But this voice sounded entirely unfamiliar. Only after the man identified himself did Rabbi Efraim realize who he was speaking to — and only then did he truly grasp the depth of the transformation that had taken place.

How this change ultimately affected the man's *shalom bayis*, Rabbi Efraim does not know. But one thing he does know: It has been more than a decade since that conversation, and the man has never needed to call back for assistance.

Our words produce consequences we must ultimately "consume." Use speech to build, teach, and uplift, and it will yield lasting benefit; misuse it through negativity or slander, and it returns as harm. - The tongue is a tool - its outcomes depend entirely on how you choose to use it.

Rambam (Hilchos De'os 7):

"הַמְסַפֵּר לָשׁוֹן הָרָע עוֹבֵר בְּלָאו." - One who speaks lashon hara transgresses a prohibition."

The Rambam explains that lashon hara is not merely "bad manners"—it is a Torah violation that erodes the moral fabric of a community. He compares the baal lashon hara to a destroyer, because words can ruin what armies cannot.

He adds that even listening willingly to lashon hara is a sin, because it empowers the speaker and spreads the damage.

Chazon Ish (Emunah u'Bitachon 3:7)

The Chazon Ish writes that the root of lashon hara is a lack of emunah. A person who trusts that Hashem runs the world has no need to belittle others, expose their flaws, or "correct" the world with their tongue. He says that guarding speech is one of the greatest expressions of yiras Shamayim, because it requires constant awareness of Hashem's presence in every conversation.

Rav Yisrael Salanter (Ohr Yisrael)

Rav Yisrael Salanter taught that lashon hara is often spoken not out of cruelty but out of carelessness. A person thinks, "I'm only telling the truth,"Yet truth spoken without compassion becomes a weapon. He stressed that the damage of speech is irreversible—once words leave the mouth, they cannot be retrieved.

He famously said that a person can destroy another's entire world "with a few light words spoken over tea."

The Distance We Create

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Vayikra 14:9) writes, "Nothing distances a person from his Creator more than lashon hara."

Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l

Rav Chaim would often say that the easiest way to accumulate zechuyos is to guard one's tongue. He explained that every moment a person restrains himself from speaking lashon hara, he earns a mitzvah that "shines in all the worlds." He also said that many people seek segulos for yeshuos, but the greatest segulah is shmiras halashon.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l

Rav Shlomo Zalman taught that lashon hara is often disguised as "helping," "informing," or "just being honest." He warned that the yetzer hara dresses lashon hara in noble clothing. He said that before speaking about another person, one should pause and ask: "Is this for their benefit, or for mine?" If the answer is unclear, silence is the safer path.

The Vilna Gaon (Mishlei 21:23)

"שׁוֹמֵר פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ שׁוֹמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ." "One who guards his mouth and tongue protects his soul from troubles."

Expanded teaching (paraphrased): The Gra writes that guarding speech is the foundation of all spiritual growth. He says that a person can learn Torah day and night, but if he does not guard his tongue, his Torah becomes weakened. Conversely, one who guards his speech elevates every mitzvah he performs.

The Ride That Came Back 17 Years Later Rav Yitzchok Aryeh Epstein

I want to share with you a remarkable story. It's a story about a simple Yid… a quiet act of kindness… and how nothing — absolutely nothing — is ever lost.

There was a Yid who had become a baal teshuvah. When he discovered Torah, it hit him deeply. He felt that he had lost years — years without learning, without Gemara, without connection. And he made a decision. He was going to rebuild.

Every single day, he woke up early, went to learn in the Beis Medrash, stayed until Mincha, and then went home for a short break. From 2:00 PM until midnight, he worked as a taxi driver to support his family. It was a grueling schedule. But he was disciplined. He protected his time so he could continue learning the next day.

One night, he got a call. A Rav had been speaking in the north of Eretz Yisrael, and his car broke down. They needed a driver to pick him up, take him all the way down to Be'er Sheva — and then head back home.

He quickly calculated. He wouldn't be home until 2:00 AM. So he called his wife. "They're paying well… and I'll get a chance to sit with the Rav and speak in learning." His wife agreed. So he went.

After completing the trip, he began heading home. It was around 1:30 in the morning. As he passed a bus stop, he noticed something unusual. An elderly woman was sitting there with a Tehillim. At 1:30 in the morning.

He made a U-turn and came back. "Safta… what are you doing here?"

She explained that she had gotten off at the wrong stop and was now stranded. No buses were coming.

He said, "Come in. I'll take you home."

She said, "I don't have any money."

He said, "I'm not charging you."

He called her son to let him know she was safe. The son insisted on paying. He refused. "I'm not taking a penny."

He brought her home. They thanked him and gave him their name: Kokus. "If you ever need anything, call us."

Time passed. The story was forgotten.

Seventeen years later, he and his wife travelled to America. They needed a place for Shabbos but couldn't afford the options they found. They searched desperately until they found a home with a mezuzah and knocked on the door. A man welcomed them in warmly. They had a beautiful Shabbos together.

During the meal, the host mentioned that they had once lived in Eretz Yisrael for ten years to take care of his elderly mother.

"What's your last name?" the guest asked.

"Kokus."

Suddenly, everything clicked.

"Was your mother once stuck at a bus stop late at night… and someone brought her home?"

"Yes…"

"I'm that driver."

The man jumped up, hugged him, and said: "I've been waiting 17 years to thank you." "And now Hashem brought you to me for Shabbos."

Nothing is ever lost. Every act of kindness remains. And when the time is right… It comes back.



" מִלָּה אַחַת יְכוֹלָה לַהֲרֹס —וּמִלָּה אַחַת יְכוֹלָה לִבְנוֹת עוֹלָם."* - *"One word can build a world — and one word can destroy it." ~ Chofetz Chaim.



UK for TORAH @gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Battling the Storm

Collected Insights from Rav Yisroel Elya Weintraub

Yisroel Elya Weintraub was an intensely private individual who did not wish for biographies to be written about him. Nevertheless, a brief outline of his remarkable life helps illuminate the greatness of the person whose Torah and teachings influenced so many.

He was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and studied first in Yeshivas Mir of Brooklyn and later in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, where he formed a close bond with the Rosh Yeshiva, Yitzchok Hutner. During his years in the yeshiva he published his first sefer, *Pischei She'orim*, an in-depth analysis of dinei sfeikos. Rav Hutner wrote an enthusiastic haskama and famously remarked that the work spared American Jewry embarrassment, as it demonstrated that a profound Torah sefer could emerge from a completely American-raised talmid.

After his marriage, Rav Weintraub continued learning in the kollel of Chaim Berlin before moving with his family to Bnei Brak in Eretz Yisroel. There he joined the famed Kollel Chazon Ish and developed close relationships with many leading talmidei chachomim of the city.

Although he possessed a deep interest in matters of hashkofa and their application to contemporary affairs, Rav Weintraub deliberately avoided becoming a public figure. In his writings he described himself simply as "a learner in Kollel Chazon Ish." Despite this modest self-description, great Torah leaders recognized his stature, including Elazar Shach, Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, Chaim Kanievsky, Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman, Shmuel Auerbach, and Moshe Shapiro.

The Rav devoted himself to Torah study with extraordinary intensity. His children recalled seeing him learning for hours with his

feet placed in a bowl of water so that he would not fall asleep. When absorbed in learning, he often became completely unaware of his surroundings.

Alongside his deep immersion in Gemara and Poskim, he also pursued the study of Kabbalah. Over time he began delivering private va'adim to carefully selected groups of talmidim on these topics, though he insisted that these gatherings remain discreet. He strongly rejected the popular image of the "mekubal" as a mystical guru and avoided any publicity surrounding his learning in this area.

For more than forty years, select groups of serious bnei Torah from Bnei Brak, Yerushalayim, and beyond studied under him and regarded him as their rebbe. Among those known to have learned from him were Shimshon Pincus and Moshe Twersky, who studied with him for decades.

Only toward the end of his life did Rav Weintraub become somewhat more widely known, largely because of the reputation of his heartfelt tefillos and brochos—especially those given on Purim. Even then, he resisted publicity and was deeply distressed when a charitable organization publicized him as a "mekubal" without honoring the conditions he had set.

Throughout his life he endured significant personal hardships, including serious health difficulties and the loss of his eyesight in later years, as well as illness within his family. Nevertheless, he continued to produce numerous Torah works. Some were published during his lifetime, while many others appeared after his passing from manuscripts and recorded teachings. In total, about fifty volumes of his writings exist across many areas of Torah.

Rav Weintraub passed away on the 11th of Nissan 5770. Since then, many who never met him have discovered his writings and teachings, drawn by the remarkable clarity, depth, and precision with which he illuminated Torah and hashkofa.

❖ Vignettes and Perspectives

Those who encountered Yisroel Elya Weintraub often felt that they were in the presence of an individual of extraordinary purity. His refined middos and deep awareness of Hashem left a profound impression on all who met him. Even simple interactions with him conveyed a powerful sense of Yiras Shamayim and inner serenity.

Silence in Adversity

One of the Rav's most striking traits was his ability to remain calm and silent even in the face of intense suffering. During periods of severe pain he would remain composed, as if any complaint would imply dissatisfaction with the will of Hashem.

On one occasion he required surgery and requested that it be performed **without anesthesia**, explaining that sedation would prevent him from learning Torah for many hours. The surgeon agreed only on condition that if the Rav moved even slightly anesthesia would immediately be administered. Throughout the procedure he remained perfectly motionless. A nurse later assumed he had been sedated, but the surgeon confirmed that he had remained fully conscious the entire time.

Humility

The Rav's humility was genuine and absolute. He truly believed that there was nothing extraordinary about his accomplishments; learning Torah, he felt, was simply the obligation of every Jew.

He strongly objected when people referred to him as "Rebbi." Once when someone addressed him that way, he insisted that he instead be called simply "Rabbi Weintraub," remarking that the title "Rebbi" caused him personal discomfort.

His self-criticism was also intense. When an avreich once sought his advice regarding medical treatment abroad and the treatment ultimately failed, the Rav blamed himself deeply. For several days he suffered physical illness while repeatedly reproaching himself for

having given the advice, until his talmidim reassured him that his guidance had been sound.

Integrity and Truth

The Rav could not tolerate dishonesty or pretense. His home was open to anyone sincere in seeking truth, whether a seasoned talmid chochom or a new baal teshuvah. However, he had no patience for those who attempted to impress him with superficial displays of learning.

Even regarding himself he insisted on objective judgment. Once, when he was clearly ill before a fast day, he still asked a physician to determine whether he was truly exempt from fasting, explaining that a person cannot always trust his own judgment regarding his personal interests.

Tefillah

His approach to tefillah reflected extraordinary seriousness. On one occasion while staying in Tzfas, he awoke very early and insisted on going to shul an hour before the minyan. When asked why, he explained that because he was tired after a restless night, he needed extra time to concentrate so that he would not miss even a single word of the davening.

Since he was almost completely blind, nearly everything he learned and davened was from memory.

Diligence in Torah

The Rav possessed astonishing diligence and breadth of knowledge. When someone once suggested that the minimum obligation of Torah learning might simply be acquiring the ability to learn a page of Gemara independently, the Rav responded that one must strive to learn **everything written by Chazal**.

When it was suggested that such a goal was impossible, he replied simply and humbly:

"It is not so difficult—I have done it."

His remarkable fluency was evident when discussing the Maharsha; he could respond to questions anywhere in Shas as if he had just studied the sugya moments earlier.

Gratitude

Although he concealed his greatness, the Rav made great efforts to express gratitude to others. On one occasion after a long day during which someone had assisted him, he remarked that merely saying "thank you" could almost be considered insufficient. He explained that gratitude requires an ongoing sense of indebtedness, not just polite words.

Near the end of his life, he emphasized to his talmidim the importance of **hakoras hatov**, urging them to strengthen their concentration when saying *Modim* during Shemoneh Esrei.

These glimpses into the life of Rav Weintraub reveal a personality shaped by humility, self-discipline, truth, and unwavering devotion to Torah and avodas Hashem. Even brief encounters with him left a lasting impression on those privileged to witness his conduct.

❖ **Insights into Hashkofa**

The teachings of Yisroel Elya Weintraub were distinctive in both style and depth. Like his rebbe Yitzchok Hutner, he addressed issues at their root (shoresh) rather than discussing surface-level problems or practical instructions. His maamorim were intended to provide the intellectual framework through which a Torah thinker could understand complex issues.

Because of this approach, the Rav often spoke in conceptual terms without spelling out practical conclusions. His teachings were directed primarily toward serious talmidei chachomim capable of applying the ideas themselves. As a result, those unfamiliar with his style sometimes misunderstood or misquoted his writings.

Although the Rav devoted significant effort to explaining matters of hashkofa, he did not see this as his primary role. His main aspiration was constant immersion in Torah learning. However, he felt compelled to address ideological confusion affecting Klal Yisroel, much as one must occasionally interrupt learning to remove disturbances.

Zionism and the Era Before the Geulah

One of the central topics he addressed was Zionism and the spiritual nature of the era preceding the Geulah.

Already in the early 1960s, while learning in Kollel Chazon Ish, Rav Weintraub published writings analyzing the concept of **Ikvesa D'Meshicha** and the role of the **Erev Rav**, drawing heavily on the teachings of Elijah ben Solomon Zalman. He gathered and organized numerous passages from the Gra's Kabbalistic writings that had not previously been systematically presented.

In these writings he argued that much of the ideological confusion surrounding Jewish leadership and national movements was rooted in the spiritual turbulence of the final era before redemption. According to this view, the ascendancy of secular leadership over the Jewish people reflects a phenomenon described by the Gra as the **dominance of the Erev Rav during Ikvesa D'Meshicha**.

His most influential work on this subject was *Hatekufa B'saaras Eliyohu*, published in 1975. In it, he sought to explain the role of modern political developments through the lens of Torah sources.

While many Gedolei Yisroel had already voiced opposition to Zionist ideology, Rav Weintraub's contribution was distinctive in its **systematic conceptual framework**, connecting contemporary events to classical Torah sources and the teachings of the Gra.

The sefer made a strong impression among talmidei chachomim, offering a deeper understanding of the spiritual struggles of the era and the challenges faced by Torah Judaism.

❖ The Rav's Legacy

Despite his lifelong effort to remain private, the influence of Yisroel Elya Weintraub continued to grow after his passing.

Throughout his life he avoided publicity and sought only to learn Torah and guide a small circle of dedicated talmidim. Yet those who encountered him recognized an unusual combination of profound Torah knowledge, penetrating hashkofa, and exceptional personal refinement.

Many of his teachings were preserved through recordings and notes taken by talmidim. After his passing, these materials were gradually edited and published, making his ideas accessible to a much broader audience than he had ever intended during his lifetime.

In total, dozens of volumes of his writings and lectures have appeared, covering a wide range of topics in Gemara, machshava, and Kabbalistic thought. These works reveal the remarkable breadth of his learning and the clarity with which he approached even the most complex subjects.

For his talmidim, however, his lasting legacy was not only intellectual. They remembered his extraordinary diligence in Torah, his humility, and his uncompromising commitment to truth. His life demonstrated that the deepest Torah scholarship could coexist with profound modesty and spiritual sensitivity.

Although he avoided public recognition, the impact of his teachings continues to spread among those seeking a deeper understanding of Torah and the spiritual challenges of the modern era.

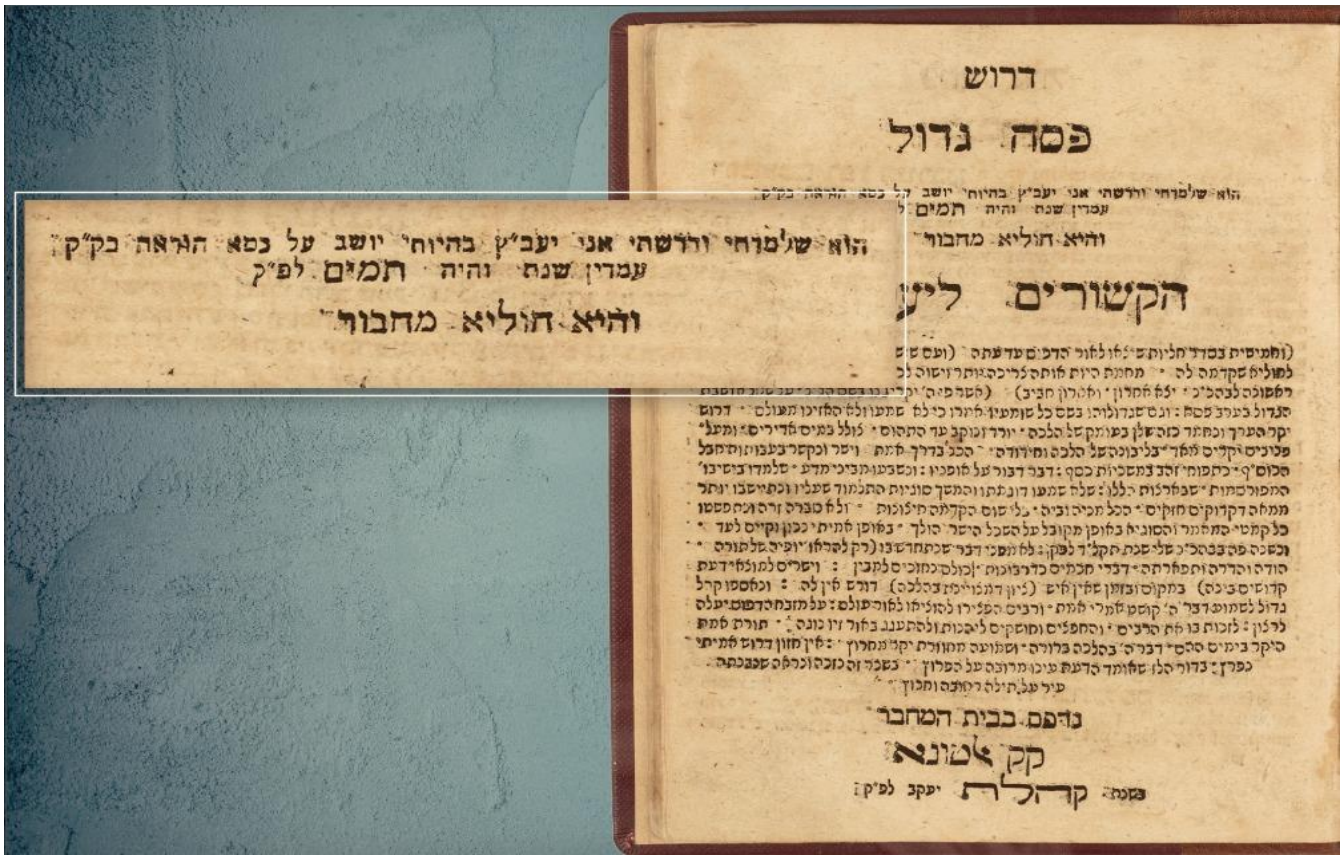
"Evil speech wounds the soul more deeply than physical injury. The tongue can inflict damage that no physician can heal, and only restraint can prevent that harm." ~ Rambam.



The Guardians - bringing Jewish history to life!

The Drasha Repeated Word for Word After 44 Years

Some drashot are forgotten immediately. Some are remembered for years. But a drasha repeated exactly forty-four years later is an entirely different story.


דרוש
פסח גדול
והוא שלמרחי ורדשתי אני יעב"ץ בהיוחי יושב על כסא הגראה בק"ק
עמדין שנת והיה תמים לפ"ק
והוא חוליא מחבור
הקשורים לי
נדפס בבית המחבר
קק אטונא
פתח קרהלת יעקב לפ"ק

In 1730, at just 32 years old, **Rabbi Yaakov Emden** delivered the Shabbat HaGadol drasha as the rabbi of Altona. The Yaavetz was at the beginning of his public life yet already known as a brilliant scholar. The drasha left a profound impact on the Torah scholars of the city.

Shortly after, the Yaavetz left the official rabbinate. His uncompromising dedication to halacha led him to step away from public positions.

Forty-four years passed. By 1774, he was one of the most revered figures in the Ashkenazi Torah world. After much pleading, he agreed to deliver the Shabbat HaGadol drasha once again.

What did he say? It was not a new speech. It was not an adaptation. He repeated the exact same drasha he had delivered in his youth.

This time, it was not the local speech of a young rabbi, but the Torah of a leader of the generation. Requests poured in to print the text. In 1775, he printed it on the private press located inside his own home. It became one of the final works he published in his lifetime. The Yaavetz passed away just a year later.

The title page carries a powerful description. It states that scholars from famous yeshivos swore they had never heard anything like it, and that it resolved more than one hundred difficult questions.

One drasha. Two deliveries. A forty-four-year echo between the first and the second.



The Greatest Act of Leadership By Rabbi Joey Haber

I want to tell you a story of greatness. And it's a story of greatness because it's about a man who was one of the greatest leaders of his time, who changed the world. But that to me is not what shows the greatness. A story like this does.

There was a young boy who was studying for his Bar Mitzvah in Israel. In most communities, studying for the Bar Mitzvah just means he reads the Haftarah. The Haftarah is the portion that we read after we read the Sefer Torah on Shabbat. This boy had a lot of learning disabilities. So the father prepared with his son this Haftarah for two years. Two years they prepared.

A week before he was due to say the Haftarah, a man comes over to the father and says, you know, your son is so lucky because this year Shabbat falls out on the day before Rosh Chodesh, which means he gets to do the Haftarah called Machar Chodesh, the Haftarah of tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh.

The father says, what? We prepared the regular Haftarah. We didn't prepare Machar Chodesh. They check the calendar and sure enough, Shabbat was the day before Rosh Chodesh. If I don't take into account my son's disabilities, there's no way he can prepare a new Haftarah in one week. We spent two years preparing this. What am I going to do?

So he goes to one of the great Gedolim and Poskim of the time, **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.** He says, Rabbi, this is what my son prepared, what should I do?

The Rabbi says, listen, since anyway that's connected to the Parashah, he can say the Haftarah he prepared. And he says, here's what I want you to do. When you go to shul on Shabbat, I want you to announce that Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said that we are allowed to read this Haftarah so that nobody objects.

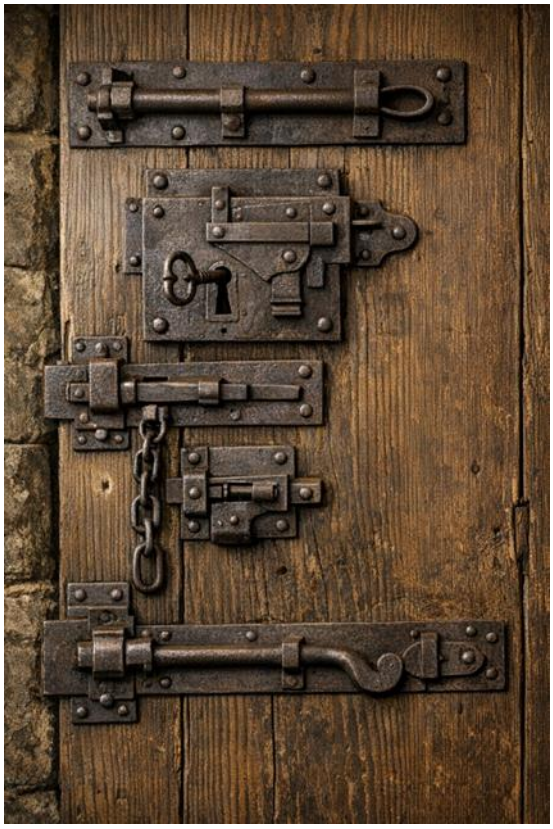
Shabbat comes. They walk into shul. And sitting in shul is Rabbi Auerbach himself. The father says, Rabbi, why did you come?

He says, I was thinking about it during the week. I realized that you're going to get up and say that we are reading this Haftarah. And I know how people are. They get very particular. They might say it's the wrong one, it's not correct, and they might argue. And this poor Bar Mitzvah boy is going to stand there and watch all of that. So I figured, if I'm here myself, no one will say a word. That's why I came. I want to hear him read.

That is an act of purity. That is greatness. That is leadership.

"The tongue is the pen of the heart. When the heart is pure, the words that emerge uplift; when the heart is clouded, the tongue becomes a source of harm." ~ Sfas Emes.

Rabbi Mordechai Finkelman - My Home



"My dear chassid," said **R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk**, "I cannot simply remove the distracting thoughts that enter your mind during davening and learning. I am not a magician.

"However," he continued, "I have a *chassid* who lives a few hours away. He possesses the secret of mastering the mind. Go to him."

That very afternoon, the *chassid* set out. A few hours later, he arrived at the address his Rebbe had given him. He approached the door, pulled the rope to ring the bell—once, twice, repeatedly. But there was no response.

He circled the house and peered through the window. Inside, he saw a man seated at a table, deeply immersed in a *sefer*. The *chassid* knocked on the window. The man briefly turned, glanced at him, and returned to his learning.

He knocked again. No response.

Perplexed, the visitor thought, "Perhaps this is not the homeowner; perhaps just a guest who cannot open the door." With no other option, he left, found lodging for the night, and returned later that evening.

This time, when he rang the bell, the very same man opened the door warmly with a welcoming smile.

But the *chassid* did not enter. "You were here earlier," he said. "I knocked. I rang the bell. Why did you not open the door?"

At this, the man grew visibly upset. "You are the one who disturbed me?" he said. "I am a busy businessman. I take a single hour each day

to come home and learn. During that time, I do not interrupt for anything, unless there is a true emergency. I saw you. You appeared well. There was no reason for me to stop."

He continued. "This is my home. I open the door when I choose and to whom I choose. If you knock and no one answers, you leave." Then, softening slightly in tone, he asked: "Now, what can I do for you?"

The *chassid* explained that his Rebbe had sent him, seeking guidance on how to rid his mind of intrusive thoughts during davening and learning. The man shook his head. "You need a *tzaddik* for that," he said. "I am just a simple businessman trying to serve Hashem."

The next day, the *chassid* returned to his Rebbe. The Kotzker Rebbe looked at him and immediately sensed his frustration.

"Tell me what happened," he said. The *chassid* recounted the entire story. And when he reached the point where the man declared, "This is my home. I open the door when I want and for whom I want," the Rebbe leaned forward.

"That," he said, "is exactly why I sent you to him. That is your answer."

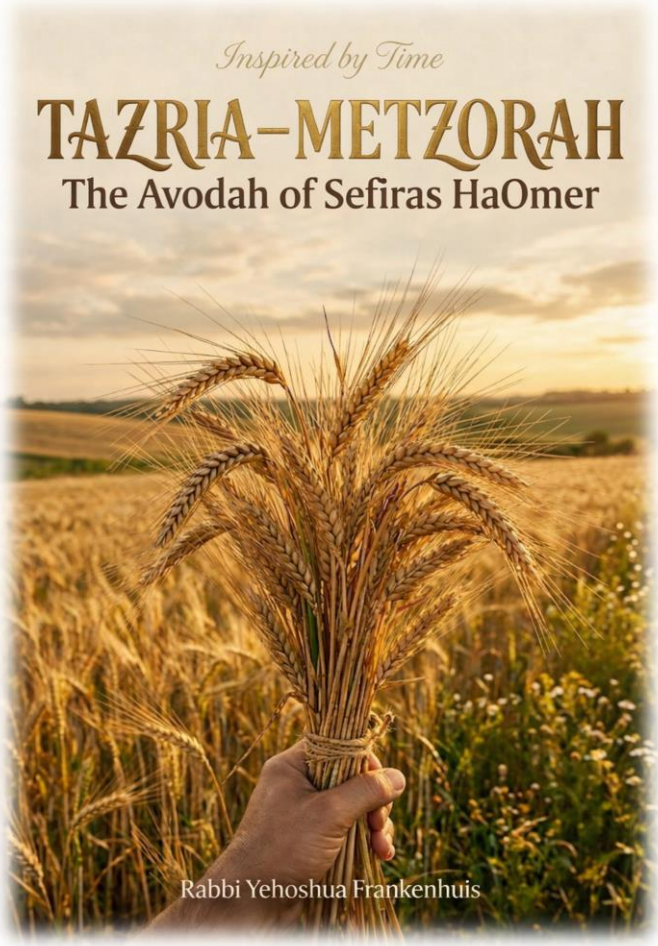
"Your mind is your home. It is the most sacred part of your being—the *Kodesh HaKodashim* within your personal Mikdash. And HaKadosh Baruch Hu has given you doors. You have eyelids—to close your eyes. You have ears—to guard what you allow in. You have lips—to control what you say and consume. You have senses—each with boundaries. And with all of them, you have the power to say: "This is my home. I decide what enters."

If you allow every thought to enter unchecked, you will struggle in your *tefillah* and in your Torah. But if you learn to guard your inner world—to open the door selectively and with intention—you will begin to experience clarity, purity, and presence.

The goal is not to eliminate thoughts entirely. The goal is to choose which ones you let inside. And when a person lives with that

awareness—when he becomes the gatekeeper of his own inner Mikdash—then his *tefillos* become more focused, his learning more refined, and his connection to Hashem more real.

Guard the doors. It is your home.



The Biggest Vessel Ever!

כֹּה אָמַר ה׳, זָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ, אַהֲבַת כְּלוּלֹתָיִךְ—לֶכְתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בַּמִּדְבָּר, בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה

Hashem recalls, with deep love, the early devotion of Klal Yisrael – how, after leaving Mitzrayim and before receiving the Torah, we followed Him into a barren, unknown wilderness. No provisions, no guarantees, no clarity about what lay ahead – and yet we went. That willingness to step into the unknown, simply because Hashem called, is described as **חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ** – the youthful devotion, the foundational love of our relationship with Him.

And in truth, that is exactly where we are standing now.

We have just emerged from Pesach, a time of immense spiritual elevation. Hashem lifted us from the depths, from the lowest levels, and brought us to extraordinary heights in a moment of divine revelation. But then the Yom Tov ends – and the light recedes. Now begins a different kind of journey. A quieter one. A harder one.

The journey of Sefiras HaOmer.

These forty-nine days are not about being carried – they are about walking. Step by step, day by day, to rebuild, through our own effort, what we were given as a gift on Pesach. And that is not easy. Each person knows where their *avodah* lies – in Torah, in *midos*, in greater *dikduk b'halachah*. Often, it feels like entering a barren land. We have not yet succeeded there. The path is unclear, yet – we move forward anyway.

That is the voice of Hashem, זָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ. It is specifically this movement into the unknown, this willingness to try again, to push forward despite uncertainty, that is cherished. Not perfection. Not arrival. But the journey itself.

Iyar

This sheds light on the nature of the month we have just begun – the month of Iyar.

Nissan is filled with open miracles and divine elevation. Sivan culminates in the giving of the Torah. But Iyar appears, at first glance, to be empty. No major Yom Tov, no dramatic moment. And yet, that is precisely its greatness.

Iyar is the month of *avodah*.

It is the space between inspiration and transformation. It is where what we received on Pesach is tested, built, and internalized. It is the quiet, consistent work that defines who we become.

The essential *avodah* of the *Sefirah* is the profound preparation for *Matan Torah*. The holy *Reb Simcha Zissel* of Kelm discusses the tremendous idea of utilising each of these 49 days to acquire one of the forty-eight *kinyanei haTorah* (with the last day for *chazarah* before the day of Shavuos). Our ultimate goal is to reach Shavuos on an elevated spiritual plane, fully prepared to receive the Torah anew from Hashem.

However, there is a curious, other side to these elevated days: Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students all perished because they did not accord

proper honor to one another (*lo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*). Why did this occur specifically during the *Sefirah*? To this day, we observe the laws of mourning during these weeks to commemorate this loss.

In the realm of Torah, there are no coincidences. As we journey through these days of intense preparation toward Shavuos, elevating ourselves to be worthy of Matan Torah, we must ask: How do these two themes—the internal acquisition of Torah and the necessity of communal honor—intersect? What is the connection between them?

The sin of separation

In truth, the resolution to the mystery of the *Sefirah* tragedy lies within the heart of this week's double parsha—*Tazria* and *Metzora*.

The Torah describes the *Metzora*, a person who uses speech to harm others. We are acutely aware of the severity of *Lashon Hara;* the Chafetz Chaim famously detailed the immeasurable reward for those who guard their tongues and the frightening consequences for those who do not. Yet, we must still ask: What makes this specific sin so uniquely severe that it warrants a punishment unlike any other?

When a person is declared *tameh* due to *Tzara'as*, the Torah mandates an extraordinary decree: *"Badad yeishev, michutz lamachaneh moshavo"*—he must sit alone, isolated, and cut off from the community. While many forms of impurity require a purification process, only the *Metzora* is physically expelled from the camp.

Rashi provides the definitive reason: Since this individual created separation between people through his words, he must now experience separation himself.

This is more than *middah k'neged middah*. It is a revelation of the spiritual reality he created. By speaking disparagingly, he didn't just utter words; he dismantled the bridges that hold a community

together. His isolation is the physical manifestation of the social vacuum he left in his wake.

Speech has the power to build, but it also has the power to fracture. A single word can introduce doubt, distance, tension. It can quietly unravel relationships, cooling what was once warm, dividing what was once whole. What seems small on the surface carries enormous weight beneath it.

Klal Yisrael is not just a collection of individuals. It is a unified entity, bound together by an inner oneness. There is a shared heart that connects every member of the nation.

When a person speaks in a way that drives people apart, he is not committing an isolated failing. He is tearing at that shared heart. He is weakening the very fabric that holds Klal Yisrael together.

And that unity is not just important – it is essential. It is the foundation upon which everything stands. It is the vessel that allows all spiritual greatness to exist.

Shopping with broken bags

Every day, we stand in *Shemoneh Esrei* and ask for everything. Torah, *parnassah*, *refuah*, *geulah* – every need, every hope, every request is placed before Hashem. Eighteen *brachos*, each one building, each one deepening our dependence on Him.

And then, at the very end, we conclude with one final request: *sim shalom* – place peace upon us.

Why does it all end there?

And even after that, we add *Elokai netzor*, where we ask for something so specific – guard my tongue from evil, from *lashon hara*. After asking for everything, why do we finish with peace – and with speech?

Rav Shlomo Miller offers a vivid *mashal*.

It is Erev Pesach. The store is packed. Carts are colliding, lines are stretching, voices are rising. In the middle of it all, Moshe is moving with purpose. He has a list, but more than that – he has a mission.

He goes aisle by aisle, carefully choosing each item. He checks every hechsher, compares brands, calculates quantities. Time passes. His feet ache. His mind is full. But slowly, steadily, his cart fills.

This is not just shopping. This is preparation for the Seder.

Finally, after all that effort, he makes his way to the checkout. He places item after item onto the counter. The total climbs. He pays. It's done. His cart is full. Everything he needs is here.

And then, just as he's about to pack, an announcement cuts through the noise:

"We apologize – the store has completely run out of bags."

For a moment, he doesn't react. Then it sinks in.

No bags? - He looks at his cart. Dozens of items. Fragile, heavy, important. How exactly is he supposed to get this home?

Around him, the store erupts. People are arguing, searching, calling employees. Some try to carry things in their arms. Others just stand there, stunned.

All that time. All that effort. And now – nothing to carry it with.

Suddenly, a worker appears, holding a small bundle. A few final bags, found somewhere in the back. There's a rush. Moshe manages to get some. - Quickly, almost frantically, he begins packing. One bag, then another, then another. He double-checks everything. Arranges it carefully. Balances the weight. Finally, he lifts them.

Heavy, but manageable. He walks out of the store, toward his car, a quiet satisfaction settling in. He did it. Everything is ready. And then, halfway there, he notices it. - A tear.

In a single instant, everything shifts.

His stride breaks. His hands tighten around the handles. What moments ago felt secure now feels fragile. Every step becomes deliberate, cautious. Because he knows – it doesn't take much. That small tear can widen at any second, and everything he worked so hard to gather can come crashing down, shattered and lost.

And in that moment, almost instinctively, a tefillah forms in his heart:

Hashem… please don't let the bags tear.

This is not just a story. It is our reality.

We stand before the *Ribbono shel Olam* in *tefillah* and we ask for everything. We plead for *chochmah*, for *refuah*, for *parnassah*, for *yeshuos* in every corner of our lives. We pour out our hearts, asking for an abundance of *shefa* from Above.

But then comes the question that determines it all: What will hold it? What will carry all of this *brachah* so that it remains, so that it does not slip through our hands?

And suddenly, the final words of our *tefillah* are no longer a conclusion – they are the foundation.

Sim shalom. Place peace upon us. - Because without that, everything is at risk.

So we turn to the *Ribbono shel Olam* with a deeper plea: - Let there be no tears in the bag.

Let our homes be filled with peace and quiet strength. Let our words be careful, gentle, and kind. Let nothing we say, no small comment, no passing remark, create even the slightest opening in the vessel that holds our *brachah*.

A Level Deeper

This *mashal* is powerful. It gives us a deeper appreciation for the closing *brachos* of *davening*, and it sharpens our awareness of how

careful we must be with our words, so that we do not lose the *shefa* and *brachah* we receive.

But it goes far deeper. It touches the essence of these days – the days of *Sefirah*, the preparation for *Matan Torah*.

When Klal Yisrael journeyed to Har Sinai in order to receive the Torah, the Torah describes their arrival in a striking way:

וַיִּסְעוּ מֵרְפִידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר׃

At first, everything is described in the plural – *they* traveled, *they* arrived, *they* encamped. And then suddenly, the Torah shifts to the singular: **וַיִּחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל**

Rashi immediately explains: **כאיש אחד בלב אחד** – as one person, with one heart.

Until this moment, the encampments were often marked by tension, complaints, and division. The people moved as individuals, sometimes at odds with one another or even with their leadership. But here, something extraordinary happened. Twelve tribes, millions of individuals, countless differences – and yet all of it fell away. No arguments. No separation. They became one nation, with one heart and one desire:

The huge vessel

The Torah seems to be teaching us something profound here. This was an incredibly dramatic moment – millions of people standing together in perfect unity. Why did this happen specifically at that time? And more than that, is this

unity the most essential preparation as they were about to receive the Torah? Why was this transformation so necessary at that exact moment?

Whenever a person wants to receive something, he needs a vessel. The larger the gift, the larger the vessel must be. A small amount of oil requires only a small bottle, but a gallon needs a much larger

container. So what does one do when faced with something as massive as the Torah? One must find an enormous vessel capable of receiving it.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, in *Alei Shur* (Chelek Beis, Sha'ar 3, Perek 9), explains that Klal Yisrael had arrived ready to receive the Torah. Hashem was prepared to give it, and they were ready to accept it – but to receive the Torah, a fitting vessel was required. Who among Klal Yisrael was large enough to contain it? No individual. The Torah is infinitely greater. So what did Hashem do? He formed one vessel large enough – the combined heart of every single member of Klal Yisrael. This was a massive kli: the unified heart of 600,000 Jews who all desired to receive the Torah together. That alone was sufficient. Even one less, and the vessel would be incomplete.

As it says, "*Hashem oz l'amo yitein, Hashem yevarech es amo bashalom.*" *Chazal* teach that *oz* refers to Torah. When does Hashem give Klal Yisrael the Torah? When we are blessed with *shalom*. Because it is *shalom* that fuses separate hearts into one *kli* – a vessel large enough to receive the Torah. Only then can we stand together *k'ish echad b'lev echad* and declare *na'aseh v'nishma*.

As we return to the days of Sefirah, we are once again preparing to receive the Torah. Yet no matter how great a person may be, he must recognize that on his own, his heart is not a vessel large enough. *Achdus* is not just a nice ideal – it is the very essence required to receive the Torah.

This was the critical *avodah* of the students of Rabbi Akiva – not merely to learn more Torah, but to unite as one heart. When they failed on their level, it revealed a fundamental flaw in their preparation for receiving the Torah.

We now stand in the month of Iyar, the time when we commemorate *Lag BaOmer* – when the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying. But even more significantly, it marks the emergence of the five students who rebuilt the Torah

of Rabbi Akiva. Though they were few in number, they were united in heart. From that unity, Torah was rebuilt, and the Torah we have today was re-established.

We too must take this lesson from the days of *Sefirah*, as well as from the parsha. It is not only about the severity of harmful speech, but about recognizing that during this time, we are building the vessel for blessing. Not merely external vessels, like the bags we carry, but something far deeper – our shared heart. When we unite, we create a vessel capable of proclaiming together *na'aseh v'nishma* and truly receiving the Torah.



The Pesukim He Refused to Skip - Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky

I want to share with you a story that I heard from a rabbi in Lakewood. A story that, on the surface, seems simple… But carries a message that goes straight to the heart.

This rabbi was teaching his class the pesukim dealing with tzaraas. In the class, there was a boy who had gone through chemotherapy. As a result, he had lost much of his hair. And understandably, he was embarrassed. He would often keep his head covered with a hoodie, trying not to draw attention to himself.

One day, the rabbi was preparing to teach the halachos of tzaraas on the head. One of the signs is that the hair begins to fall out. The rabbi had already written the pesukim on the board. Everything was ready. He was about to begin. And then it hit him. "If I teach this…" "The boys might connect it." "They might say — if hair falling out is a sign of tzaraas…" "Then what about this boy?" "They might laugh." "They might make a comment." "And he will be crushed."

The rabbi froze. He didn't know what to do. On one hand — these are pesukim. On the other hand — a child's dignity. He stepped out

of the classroom and went to the teachers' room. He asked another rebbe for advice. "What should I do?"

The answer was immediate. "You have to skip those pesukim." "It's not worth embarrassing him."

The rabbi went back into the classroom. "Boys," he said, "we're skipping these pesukim today."

Suddenly, one of the boys stood up. "Rebbe, we can't skip them!" "If we skip these pesukim, we won't finish the parsha properly." "I want to make a siyum on the entire parsha." "Please, Rebbe — we can't skip them."

The rabbi looked up. And he was stunned. It was that boy. The very boy he was trying to protect. The rabbi didn't know what to say. He wanted to tell him: "My dear child… I'm doing this for you." "I don't want you to be embarrassed."

Instead, the rabbi stepped outside. He became emotional. And he turned to Hashem and said: "Don't we do the same thing all the time?" We daven. We wait. We hope. We're waiting for a yeshuah. And we feel… Skipped. But perhaps Hashem is saying: "I'm not skipping you." "I'm protecting you." "I'm preparing something better."

So don't give up. Keep davening. Keep believing. Because everything… Is exactly as it needs to be.

"From the laws of tzaraas we learn how precious peace is before Hashem. For a single word of lashon hara, a person could be sent outside the camp, separated from family and community. If distance is the punishment for divisive speech, then closeness is the reward for guarding the tongue. Every word of kindness rebuilds the camp of Israel." ~ Chofetz Chaim, (Shemiras HaLashon, Shaar HaZechirah ch. 6)

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמְּצֹרָע בְּיוֹם טָהֳרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן 14:2

The word Metzorah can be seen as an abbreviation for the words 'Brings out bad' - or one who uses his tongue to speak Loshon Horah and slanderous words.



R' Tzvi Hirsch Auerbach ZT"L once fell ill and was bedridden for many days. His family finally called a doctor who arrived and immediately began to check the patient. As with most doctors, he ordered R' Tzvi Hirsch, "Open your mouth and stick out your tongue."

He did, and after a short pause, the doctor intoned in a serious tone of voice, "Rabbi, you should just know, that after looking in your mouth, I see that it isn't clean."

R' Tzvi Hirsch gave a loud groan and said, "Do you think I don't know this? This is a problem of mine for some time now and I try with all my might to work on myself and purify the words that come out of my mouth!"

The doctor gave him a prescription, but before he left, R' Tzvi Hirsch called out in a miserable voice, "Unfortunately, due to our sins, is there anyone today who can truly say that he has a "clean mouth!"

R' Chaim of Volozhin ZT"L would say:

"A person accomplishes much more through patience, than with all the anger in the world."

ואם דל הוא ואין ידו משגת ולקח כבש אחד אשם ... ושתי תורים (יד-כא)

The purification process of a cured Metzora includes that he or she must bring korbonos to the mishkan, which are ordinarily one female and two male lambs. If, however, this is beyond what the individual can afford, the requirement is then reduced to one male lamb and two doves or pigeons.

R' Yisroel Mayer Kagen ZT"L, the Chofetz Chaim, derives a lesson from this posuk that is especially appropriate to those of us living outside large Jewish communities. He says that many people daven, learn and do mitzvos, and say to themselves, "Well, if I'm not doing things so perfectly, at least I'm doing a great deal better than my friends and neighbors!"

They fail to realize that they are rich in knowledge that their friends lack. A poor person can bring two doves or pigeons, but a rich person who brings a poor man's sacrifice has not fulfilled his obligations. So too, while those who lack knowledge may be able to satisfy their Creator with minimal performance of the Mitzvos, those who "know better" are expected to act accordingly.

The strongest foundation for spiritual success is unshakable belief in yourself – everything begins there. The moment you understand your inherent worth is the moment your life begins to rise.

When you know how precious and how capable you are – when you see your value and your ability – your choices become clearer, your path brighter, and your heart lighter.

Never doubt how cherished you are – your best life grows from the belief that you deserve the best in life. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbeinu Yonah (1180-1263).



There is a very well known the chidush of the **Sfas Emes** and of **Rav Shlomo Ganzfried** in his **פירוש על התורה**. They both point out that the metzora who is punished for speaking lashon hara, in fact had to bring two birds, that's written, to kill off the evil twitter, yet they were not both killed. One was sent away chirping happily.

Why do we only offer up one bird, are you not supposed to be killing off the evil twitter?

Answers the Sfas Emes and Rav Shlomo Ganzfried, it is not enough to avoid evil speech, it's not enough to kill off the evil twitter. You have to use the power of speech for lishna tava. You can have a friend or a spouse who's desperate to hear a good word. Not saying that good word can be as hurtful as a bad word. And therefore, they say that's the second bird that goes away happily teaching us the lishna tava. And they bring a **Zohar HaKadosh** to prove this.

I want to share, a beautiful story. The Sfas Emes's grandson acted this out.

The Beis Yisrael, famous Gerer Rebbe, a Sefardishe Rav said about him that he made me the **גדול בתורה** that I am.

This Sefardishe Rav is well known, he's a very great man. He said the Beis Yisrael made me who I am. How did this Sefardishe Rav come to the Beis Yisrael?

And he explained he was a poor child growing up in the Beis Yisrael area, very poor. He was a **יתום**, his mother worked day and night to

put bread on the table. All the children came at least on Yom Tov with a new beged, they couldn't afford a new beged, but his mother bought him a new shirt.

Who's gonna notice a new shirt? And he was desperate for somebody to say a good word to him and notice his new shirt.

He was walking along very forlorn, and nobody had yet noticed it, it was Yom Tov night, and he saw the Beis Yisrael walking down Rechov Malchei Yisrael with a huge entourage. And he moved back! And the Beis Yisrael, with his sharp eye, sees this little boy. He picks up the collar of his own shirt, and he goes, "Pshhh," to the boy, indicating that he approves of the nice shirt.

And the little boy sees the Beis Yisrael noticed his new shirt, which his mother had bought him for Yom Tov, and when he'd almost given up, this propelled him to become the **גדול בתורה** that he became.

This is lishna tava.

נצור לשונך מרע, but **סור מרע ועשה טוב**. Not just avoiding the evil twitter, but use and develop the power of speech, because that's what it's been given to us for, to use it and to develop it.



וְעֵץ אֶרֶז, וּשְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב (יד/ד)

***Asks the* חידושי הרי"ם:** The **מצורע** is being taught a lesson in humility. That is why he brings **אזוב**, which is a short grass. But why does he bring **עץ ארז**, which is strong and tall; the opposite of humility?

***Answers the* חידושי הרי"ם:** of course a person must be humble. But that is with regard to himself. When it comes to helping others [or for doing **מצוות**], one should not say, 'Who am I? How can I do such a **מצוה**?' Rather, he should do all that he can, and do it in the best possible

way. As we find by **אברהם**; he said about himself "**ואנכי עפר ואפר**" but when it came to helping someone else, even though he was 99 years old, and had just had a **ברית מילה**, he went out of his way to serve the 3 travellers to the best of his ability. (**חייס שיש בהם**)

