



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

ח ניסן תשע"ו – מצורע – 16th April 2016 - Volume 8 - Issue 40

## News This Week

### Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning this Shabbos sponsored by Rabbi & Mrs Y. Katz together with Mr & Mrs A.C. David in Hakoras Hatov to Ohr Yerushalayim on their 1st anniversary as members of the Shul.

### Shabbos HaGadol Drosha

The Rov will be giving his Shabbos HaGadol Drosha this Shabbos before Musaf.

### Clean Your Boxes

A reminder that members are responsible for cleaning their boxes - please do so before Yom Tov.

### מעות חטיין

The Rov is gladly accepting מעות חטיין which will be distributed to "local" families to help with the costs of Yom Tov.

### מכירת חמץ

The Rov will be available for מכירת חמץ after Davenning.

## Lashon Hara – Cooking Our Own Kettle

Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann (Torah.org)

Much of this week's parshios deal with laws pertaining to the metzora, who has contracted one of various forms of spiritual illness (tzara'as), which manifests itself in a skin blemish (sometimes mistakenly identified as leprosy). It is well known that according to Chazal, our Sages, the word metzora is a contraction of motzi ra – one who brings out the bad in others (Arachin 15b); namely, one who spreads rumours and gossips about his fellow man – the ba'al lashon hara/bearer of the evil tongue. What is less known is that tzara'as is also a punishment for selfishness (tzaros ayin – literally a narrow eye, ibid 16a; see also other reasons).

Perhaps the idea is this: What motivates one to speak lashon hara? The fact that he has "found" a fault in someone? This should come as no surprise – everyone has them. So what really drives us to degrade and malign our fellow man?

There are two ways to get to the top of the hill: Climb up it until you reach the top, or level it by digging a hole so deep that all the dirt falls into it, so that from where you stand you become the de-facto king of the hill.

We speak lashon hara out of some need to demonstrate our own superiority, moral or otherwise. At times, this need is a manifestation of our arrogance; we find ourselves so far removed from our contemporaries that we are appalled by their behaviour. This lashon hara is spoken out of self-righteousness, and is easily recognizable; it comes across as a snobbish, holier-than-thou, pretentious superiority.

Even when one is free of such feelings as an individual, and refrains from defaming others, we can be easily drawn into this category of lashon hara when speaking about groups and sects who hold views different than our own. It is natural to put one's own beliefs on a pedestal – our

beliefs, especially religious, are dear to us – and we should be proud of them. It becomes lashon hara when one seeks to enhance his own viewpoint by deriding the views of others who differ in their outlook (even within a Torah framework). Because we speak not as individuals but as members of a group or community, it is more difficult to recognize the arrogance and presumptuousness of our words.

This person is the one who gets to the top of the hill by trodding his way up, making sure he stands high at the top of all the dirt that lays beneath him.

There is however, another more subtle type of lashon hara. Its bearer doesn't come across as arrogant at all. To the contrary, he is humble and self-critical, perhaps to the point of self-deprecation. It is precisely this self-honesty which gives him – so he thinks – the right to be openly critical of others. "I am indeed garbage, and do not presume to deny it," he says. This being the case, he considers himself uniquely qualified to identify the faults of so-and-so, who doesn't even have the character to admit them himself!

This type of lashon hara comes across as piercing cynicism; he presents himself as the champion of painful honesty, a bearer of the truest truths others are too coward to admit or recognise. He digs mankind into a hole so deep that despite his own self-admitted mediocrity, he still comes out on top, if for no other reason than, "at least he has the honesty to admit it..."

His criticisms too bear the seal of self-righteousness, one borne not out of king-of-the-hill arrogance but out of champion-of-the-garbage-pit humility. As someone once quipped: "Honesty is the cruelest game of all; not only can you hurt someone – and hurt them to the bone – you can feel self-righteous about it at the same time."

In fact, it is his complete lack of self-worth and dignity that leads him to degrade others. The truly humble are dignified and self-respecting, and feel no need to advertise the "truths" of others or themselves.

The metzora is commanded as part of his purification process to take a cedar branch and a hyssop (a bush) and use them to sprinkle himself

## The Week Ahead

| פרשת מצורע                    | שבת הגדול                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mincha                        | 7.00pm                   |
| Candle Lighting               | 7.16 - 7.25pm            |
| Shacharis                     | 9.00am                   |
| סוף זמן ק"ש                   | 9.37am                   |
| 1st Mincha                    | 1.45pm                   |
| Ovos uBonim                   | 5.00pm                   |
| 2nd Mincha                    | 6.00pm                   |
| 3rd Mincha                    | 8.01pm                   |
| Rov's Shiur on Inyonei Pesach | following                |
| Maariv & Motzei Shabbos       | 9.06pm                   |
| Sunday                        | 7.15am / 8.20am          |
| Mon / Thursday                | 6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am |
| Tues / Wed / Fri              | 6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am |
| Mincha & Maariv               | 7.45pm                   |
| Late Maariv                   | 10.00pm                  |

with water and the blood of his offerings. Rashi explains that the cedar, king of the trees, represents arrogance, while the hyssop symbolizes humility. By taking the two together, the metzora expresses his resolve to change himself by converting his haughtiness into humility.

The Chiddushei Ha-Rim asks that it seems strange that one branch represents a trait that needs to be fixed, while the other branch represents its rectification.

Perhaps, according to the above, both the cedar branch and the hyssop are there to be purified. Sometimes we put others down out of a sense of superiority, and sometimes we do so out of tzaros ayin – an unhappy sense of our own faults and shortcomings, that causes us to begrudge others as a form of self-redemption. We must take both our sense of superiority and of inferiority and dip them into the purification waters, ensuring that neither of the two will continue to be a source for tarnishing the deeds and beliefs of others.

This explains why the metzora is told to shave the hair of his head, his eyebrows, and his beard. The beard surrounds the mouth, and represents defamatory speech. The head symbolizes arrogance and headiness. The eyebrows represent tzaros ayin – a lack of self-worth and begrudging (see K'li Yakar).

There is, of course, nothing more foolish than to think that we can elevate ourselves (or at least remain the last one standing) by gossiping about and degrading others. The ba'al lashon hara imagines he bears witness to the hidden "truths" of his fellow. In fact, more than anything else, he bears witness to his own arrogance and self-importance, or to his own lack of self-worth.

It brings to mind the story of the broken kettle, which it is said Freud was wont to invoke:

"The kettle I lent you," says one man to the other, "you returned it to me broken!"

"First of all, I never borrowed the kettle. Secondly, I returned it to you unbroken. And finally, it was already broken when you lent it to me!" The person, of course, confirms precisely what he endeavours to deny.

The ba'al lashon hara speaks about no one more than about himself; the proverbial pot calling the kettle black. Chazal express this when they say (Kiddushin 70a), "Whoever goes around advertising the faults of others; he bears the same fault!" So before we are tempted to cast aspersions on someone else, it might be a good idea to consider whom we are really badmouthing.

## Remember What G-d Did To Miriam

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)**

Both Parshas Tazria and Parshas Metzora deal extensively with the laws of Tzaraas. The Talmud [Eruchin 15b] says that the plague of Tzaraas is a consequence of the sin of Lashon Hara [improper speech]. Tzaraas was a 'miraculous' disease, which occurred when the Bais Hamikdash was still standing.

If a person spoke evil about someone else, first his home was affected. If he did not repent, his clothes were affected. If he still did not repent, his body was ultimately affected. He had to separate from civilization. He was publicly proclaimed an "impure person" as a result of his evil speech.

In Parshas Ki Teizeh, the Torah writes "Guard against the plague of Tzaraas, guard exceedingly and do all that will be instructed to you by the Kohanim, the Levites. As I commanded them, thus you shall observe to do." [Devorim 24:8] Immediately after this pasuk, the Torah commands [24:9] "Remember that which HaShem your G-d did to Miriam on the road at the time you went out of Egypt."

Miriam spoke "lashon hara" about her brother. She was stricken with "Tzaraas". As a result, she was sent outside the camp. The Torah is reminding us about this event.

When Miriam was sent outside the camp as a result of her "Tzaraas", the entire camp waited for her for seven days. No one traveled. No one moved forward. Everyone waited for Miriam. [Bamidbar 12:1-16]

Why did they wait for her? Why didn't they move on and force her to

catch up with them later? Our Sages teach us that the Jewish people waited for Miriam as a 'reward' or 'payback' to her for having waited for her brother, Moshe, when his basket was placed in the Nile [Shmos 2:4]. Now the Jewish People waited for her.

If we were in Miriam's shoes, we might very well have not wanted such a 'payback'. If she had the option, she might very well have preferred that the Jewish nation travel on without her, with the intent of "catching up with them" later. Most likely, the last thing she would have wanted would have been to cause everyone to wait for a whole week with nowhere to go. Everyone would be asking one another "Why aren't we moving?" The answer would be "It is Miriam's fault. It is because she spoke evil words about her brother." What kind of 'reward' or proper 'payback' is this for her?

The answer to this question can be found in a passage in Ramba"m in his Yad HaChazakah [Tum'as Tzaraas 16:10]. The Rambam does not usually launch into philosophical discussions in his legal code (Mishneh Torah), but in this case he writes as follows:

"...and concerning this matter we are warned in the Torah. 'Remember that which HaShem your G-d did to Miriam on the road'. The Torah is saying, contemplate what happened to the prophetess Miriam. She spoke about her younger brother who she loved and helped raise. She had endangered her own life to save him from the Nile. She (furthermore) did not speak malicious evil about him. She just erred by equating his greatness to that of other prophets (who do not separate themselves from their wives). And Moshe was not bothered by any of her comments, as it is written 'And the man Moshe was extremely modest'. And nevertheless she was immediately punished with Tzaraas. Kal v'Chomer [how much more so] how great a punishment will be coming to those wicked fools who frequently speak great and wondrous (criticisms).

The Rambam is saying that Miriam's Lashon HaRah is really not typical Lashon HaRah. It was not said maliciously. It was not said to harm anyone. It did not harm anyone. It was an innocent mistake. But such is the power of Lashon HaRah — whether it is ill intended or well intended, it is like poison. Regardless of the reason why poison is taken, it kills. The same is true regarding Lashon HaRah.

Therefore, when the Torah says "Sit out in the wilderness and remember what Miriam did for Moshe (when she waited for his basket by the Nile)," the Torah is not denigrating Miriam. She is not being criticized. She is righteous. The Torah is saying, "while you are waiting for Miriam, keep in mind the destructive power of Lashon HaRah." If what she just did is considered Lashon HaRah and is deserving of such a punishment, certainly how much more so regarding denigrating Lashon HaRah.

Miriam was truly righteous and had nothing about which to be embarrassed. Her action was really not a sin at all. It was just a 'mistake'. And yet we see the powerful consequences. This is the lesson of 'Remember that which HaShem your G-d did to Miriam'.

## Can You Fix It?

**D Fine (Shortvort.com)**

A most perplexing Midrash features in Rashi 14:34. Commenting closely on the unusual wording of the pasuk, Rashi writes that HaShem promised us that when we go into the Land of Israel we will contract tzara'as on our houses. Why?

So that when we have to knock down our houses in the consequent purification process we will find ancient treasure which was buried underneath our houses. Splendid. But how can we understand this - surely the tzara'as only came because we sinned; so why is HaShem rewarding us with treasures for having sinned? The basic idea is found in Da'as Zekeinim (Vayikra 12:8) that these forms of tzara'as actually serve to atone for the sin.

Thus, after one has successfully been through the tzara'as purification process and has become a new spiritually-gleaning person, then one is worthy of reward for your spiritual turnabout. And since one of the sins that causes tzara'as is stinginess (a midah which you have now become re-sensitized to after the purification process), what better way to be rewarded than via riches galore!