

Volume III Issue #25
Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 1 Iyar, 5783
April 22, 2023

On the Parsha

In Parshas Tazria, the Passuk (Vayikra 13:46) tells us regarding Tzara'as, "All the days the lesion is upon him, he shall remain unclean. He is unclean, he shall dwell isolated, and his dwelling shall be outside the camp."

Rashi explains the words, "he shall dwell isolated" to mean that other unclean people [that are not stricken with Tzara'as] shall not live with him. Our Sages said: "Why is he different from other unclean people that he must remain isolated? Since, with his slander, he caused [discord and] separation between man and wife or between man and his fellow man, he too, in kind, will need to be separated."

Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz ZT"l explains that Hashem's employment of Middah K'Neged Middah (paying a person back measure for measure) is not an example of "you get what you give" or "what goes around comes around". Rather, it is a Chessed (kindness) from Hashem and instructional in nature. Once we are aware that Hashem operates in this fashion, it allows us to identify the specific area in which we have sinned so that we can correct it.

Rav Tzvi Shruga Grossbard ZT"l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevech L'Tze'irim explains that the dwelling in isolation mentioned by the Passuk is also a Chessed that Hashem designed to correct the underlying cause of the Lashon Harah that was said by the individual. What is the underlying cause of speaking Lashon Harah?

Rav Grossbard answers (Daas Shruga, Vayikra p.48) that we tend to think that hate and jealousy are the general causes of Lashon Harah and are the byproducts of bad Middahs (character traits). Rav Grossbard cites a Vilna Gaon, however, that indicates that the real reason behind our hate and jealousy towards others stems from our inability to perceive the truth.

In the blessing of Yotzer Ohr that is recited daily before we recite the Krias Shema, we state regarding the celestial angels, "**All of them are beloved**, all of them are pure, all of them are mighty and all of them perform with awe and reverence the will of their Creator..." The Vilna Gaon comments (in the Avnei Eliyahu) that regarding the

celestial angels, "**All of them are beloved**" because they have no hate or jealousy among them because they see the truth – that each person (or entity) has their own specialized role to play and no one may take that which is prepared for another [by Hashem]. Therefore, each angel is happy and satisfied with the role that Hashem has assigned to them.

The cure for relieving ourselves of the base qualities of hate and jealousy which causes us to speak Lashon Harah, is seeing the absolute truth the way the angels do. To see that truth, Hashem "punishes" the individual who spoke Lashon Harah by separating him from the rest of the camp so that through this forced isolation, he has the time and headspace to reflect on this fundamental truth. Upon this realization, he will no longer speak Lashon Harah.

Author's Note: Please see below for a Devar Torah on Parshas Shmini, as there was no Emes Parsha Sheet distributed last week.

In Parshas Shmini, shortly after the passing of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, Moshe questioned the remaining sons: "Why did you not eat from the sin-offering?" This sin-offering, which brings atonement for Bnei Yisrael was supposed to have been eaten by the Kohanim. However, it was not eaten, and the entire offering was burned on the altar.

In questioning Aharon's remaining sons, it seems that Moshe had entirely forgotten an important Halacha. He had forgotten that an "Onen", which is a mourner who is mourning the death of certain relatives before they have been buried, is not allowed to perform Mitzvos. Aharon very gently corrected Moshe that he himself had brought the offering (and not his remaining sons because they were an Onen and were not permitted to). Aharon further explained that even though he was also an Onen, he, as the Kohain Gadol, had a special Halachic dispensation to offer it, however, there was no special dispensation for the Kohain Gadol to eat from it.

The Passuk then tells us, "Moshe listened, and it was good in his eyes."

Rashi explains that Moshe did not respond that he had not heard this Halacha. Rather, Moshe admitted and was not ashamed to say, that he had heard this particular Halacha but had forgotten it.

Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus ZT"l (1944-2001) was a remarkable Tzaddik and Baal Mussar who inspired tens of thousands of Yidden. Rav Pincus explains in his Tiferes Shimshon (Vol. III p. 99) that no one is above making mistakes.

He writes that imperfection was placed into every human being without exception. He also writes that the greater the person, the more difficult it is for the person to admit that he made a mistake. The greatness of a person is not determined by whether he makes mistakes or not. Rather, his greatness is determined by his ability to recognize his errors and readily admit to them.

Rav Pincus continues by providing a parable. Imagine someone wishes to drive a big and powerful car. The first thing that he must determine is whether the brakes are functioning properly. The bigger and stronger the car, the greater destruction and calamity it will leave behind if there are no functioning brakes.

The same is true with us. The greater the person is in Torah and fear of Heaven (i.e. the more powerful the car is), if he cannot recognize his own mistakes and admit to them (i.e. there are no breaks on the car) – the greater the destruction and calamity that he can bring.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: When it is slightly warm in the house, my spouse has the tendency to turn the thermostat way down. When it is slightly cold in the house, my spouse turns the thermostat way up. What my spouse does not realize, is that the thermostat in my house that my spouse uses broke a long time ago and I have installed a working, hidden one behind a bookcase in its place. Now, whenever my spouse adjusts the thermostat way too high or way too low, I go behind the bookcase and adjust the working one slightly. This is a little game I play to keep the peace in my home. I know there is a concept of “Muttar Leshanos Mipnei Hashalom” – that one may lie to keep the peace.

Rabbi Hoffman, I read in one of your past Emes Parsha Sheets that one is only permitted to avail oneself of this leniency if, in general, one is completely honest in other

matters and this will not adversely affect one's honesty in the future. Although I am working it, I still lie occasionally. May I employ the concept of Muttar Leshanos Mipnei HaShalom (“MLMH”) or must I tell my spouse what I have been doing when he or she adjusts the thermostat?

ANSWER: It is true that Rav Yavrov in his Niv Sfasayim Section II (#5 and #6) discusses the limitation you cited above to MLMH, namely one may not employ this dispensation if one is not completely honest in other matters and it will not adversely affect one's honesty in the future. However, not all Poskim (Halachic authorities) agree with Rav Yavrov. Further, Rav Yavrov says that one should not rely on the dispensation of MLMH in your case but he does not expressly prohibit it.

Further, in your case, you have not actually told a lie. Rather, you have failed to inform your spouse about something that you have done. Therefore, it would appear that it may be permitted.

However, there are other limitations to consider. If not informing your spouse will result in a desecration of Hashem's Name, you cannot rely on MLMH.

Another limitation is that if your spouse would find out on his or her own, would the spouse be embarrassed that he or she was foolish enough to fall victim to your thermostat ruse. Embarrassing someone is a very serious Halachic issue and if there is even a chance that your spouse would be embarrassed if he or she found out on their own, then please inform your spouse now.

The Gemara in Bava Metzia (58b) states that all the people who descend to Gehinnom arise from there with the exception of three kinds of people: the last one being - one who embarrasses his friend in public. This Halachah is stated in Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 228:5) and is particularly applicable in this case – the potential embarrassment of a spouse. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:14) lists one who embarrasses another in public as one of the 24 categories of people that have no share in the World to Come.

Therefore, if you are absolutely certain that there will be no possibility that your spouse will be embarrassed if he or she finds out on their own, then you can keep your secret. Otherwise, you should inform your spouse and find another way of dealing with the uncomfortable temperature in your home.