



## פרשת בהעלותך

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

### Guarding the Tongue

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## Part I. Speaking Against Yisroel

### He is Listening

In this week's *sedrah* the Torah tells us the story of how Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe Rabbeinu. וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁחָה. They had a certain complaint about their brother and they spoke to each other in private about it.

Only that it *wasn't* in private because Someone - with a capital S - was listening. It's not my subject tonight but that's the first thing you should be thinking about when you read this *parshah* - that there is no privacy when it comes to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He's listening! And that means that if you open your mouth against a fellow Jew, you're forgetting about that most important Torah principle, Awareness of Hashem. A tongue that wags against other Jews means that you're trampling on that Torah attitude that Hakadosh Baruch Hu exists and that He is watching and listening.

Now you shouldn't think that it's just something I conjured up from my little head. Our Sages tell us (Eirechin 15b) that this is what *lashon hora* is all about: כָּל הַמְסַפֵּר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע כְּאִלוֹ כּוֹפֵר בְּעֵקֶר - Anyone who speaks with an evil tongue, it is like he denies the fundamental principle of belief in Hashem, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר - There are those who say "With our tongue we shall become mighty"; many people who are frustrated in their dealings with people try to get revenge by slandering them. "With our tongue," they say, "we shall be victorious." שִׁפְתֵינוּ אֶתְנוּ - "Our lips are ours!" מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ - "Who is a Master over us?" It means that a man who talks *lashon hora* it is like he is denying the cardinal principle of Hashem's existence.

### An Easy Sin

Now that needs an explanation because isn't every *aveirah* saying "Who is a Master over me?" Every sin is a rebellion against Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so what's this special business with the tongue?

The answer is that when it comes to doing things with our limbs, it's not so easy. Let's say you

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want to pick up your foot and give a kick to somebody, so it's a big job – your thigh weighs maybe thirty pounds, sometimes fifty pounds, and so before you lift up such a load you'll consider what you're about to do. And in the interim you're reminded that there is a *Borei* and that He won't be happy if you kick your fellow Jew. And so it's not so hard to remember Hashem when it comes to your foot.

But when it comes to lifting up the tongue, it's not such a heavy load – it doesn't require any thought at all – and therefore the tongue is always busy. And that becomes a person's big downfall because it's so easy to trip up. He feels uninhibited when it comes to talking and so, when he wags his tongue, at that moment he is ignoring Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He won't admit it, but he's saying: "Who is the master over me? Even Hashem is not my Master anymore!" If you'll examine his conscience, you'll see that he is in open revolt against the law of the Torah.

### **The Locked Phone**

Now, nobody is perfect but when a person does this a number of times, so he's practicing and when you practice you succeed. Before he knows it, he acquires the attitude that when it comes to his tongue, *מי אֲדוֹן לְנִי*, there is no Master – he is a free man. A person who is careless in speaking about his fellowman, this man is practicing, all his life, day after day, the attitude that Hashem is not his Boss.

And therefore it's only by means of practicing the opposite that he can be saved. That's the excellence, the perfection, of being careful with *lashon hora*. You know, people today have learned the importance, the necessity of *shemiras halashon*, of guarding one's tongue against slandering others. That's one of the great accomplishments of the Chofetz Chaim. Some people have even made stickers to paste on your telephones, *נִצֹר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע*.

It's a very good idea because the telephone is a dangerous instrument and it needs a warning label – 'Use with care!' Like you sometimes see on

dangerous medicines, a warning. The telephone needs that too. And so we have to thank the Chofetz Chaim for what he did for us – he made the world aware of this *aveirah* and today, to some extent, it has become popular to avoid *lashon hora*.

But what we're learning now is that it's much more than that. It's practicing *emunah*. That's the great accomplishment of being careful to never speak *lashon hora*. You're practicing *emunah* all the time!

### **Two Fundamental Truths**

Let's say you're in the mood to say something. But you withhold it with the thought that you're standing in the Presence of the Creator of the universe. "Who am I?" you think as you're about to shoot off your mouth. "I'm nothing but air. Poof! Hashem is the only reality and He says no. And He's listening to me right now." Ooh ah! You just became a *maamin*! And when you train yourself to do it more frequently you gain more and more *emunah*. By means of practicing up, you gain a true sensory perception of Hashem.

But that's only the beginning. It needs a lot of talk, but we won't spend time on it now; it's not our subject now. Tonight I wanted to talk to you about a second principle in the ideology of a Torah Jew that is intended by the Torah's warning against speaking *lashon hora*. Yes, the first and most fundamental truth is the Creator; but a secondary truth that comes on the heels of the first is the prestige of the Creator's people – *it means the importance of every Jew*. Because when you open your mouth against another Jew, not only are you trampling on the Torah principle of Hashem's Presence but you're trampling on the greatness of a Jew.

### **The Princess in the Trash Heap**

In the *sefer Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu*, a story is told. The narrator describes that he once visited a capital city of the gentiles and either the emperor or the king or some other man of great authority was riding on his horse, parading down the streets

surrounded by all of his noblemen and his soldierly. As he passed down the avenue, he saw by the side of the road a little Jewish girl lying on the dunghill.

As soon as he saw her this king dismounted from his steed and he bowed down to this little girl lying on this garbage hill. He accorded her the greatest honor. Now his noblemen were mystified at this behavior – they imagined that their king had gone mad – and they said to him in dignity, “What are you doing?”

And he said, “Don’t be distressed about what you see now because a time will come when *all* the kings of the earth will bow down to the most simple Jew. I’m just wise enough to recognize the truth even now.”

And then this king quoted a verse from Yeshaya (49:7): **כֹּה אָמַר ה' גֹּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשׁוֹ לְבִזָּה נִפְשׁוֹ - לְמַתְעֵב גּוֹי - לְמַתְעֵב גּוֹי - לְעֶבֶד מַשְׁלִים - לְמַעַן ה' אֲשֶׁר נִאֶמְן קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִבְתָּרָךְ - וְיִבְתָּרָךְ** - So says Hashem, the Redeemer of Yisroel and his Holy One, *The one that the world despises, the one that the nations abominate, the one who is a slave and has rulers over him; it means the Jewish people, kings will see and they will get up for you, and princes will fall down before you, because of Hashem Who has chosen you.* It means that because they were chosen by Hashem they're lifted up, way up high, beyond our wildest imaginings. “And therefore,” said this wise King, “every Jew – even a little girl lying on top of a dung hill – deserves the greatest respect, the most royal treatment.”

### **The Mantle of Royalty**

Now whether the story actually happened or it is a parable, it makes no difference to us. What matters is the ideal, the attitude, that we're supposed to come away with from this story. If you want to know how to think about other Jews, it's good for us to read these verses, to think seriously about what it says there and to keep that attitude in mind always – otherwise we walk in darkness.

But why do you need Yeshaya? We have even better – in the Chumash itself Hakadosh Baruch Hu declared, **בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** - *You are children*

to Hashem. Children to Hashem? What a remarkable, extreme metaphor! He's the Melech Malchei Hamelachim and we are His children, His princes and princesses!

Now that's a tremendous concept! Your fellow Jew is a prince. You don't think so? It's good you came here tonight. It's time to begin aligning your thinking with the Torah thinking. Because no matter what you're going to say in objection, that's what the Torah is telling us. We are faced now with this great proclamation – Hakadosh Baruch Hu has put upon the shoulders of the Jewish people a mantle of royalty!

### **Confiscating the Cloak**

You know what Rabbi Akiva said in Mesichta Bava Metzia (113b) about a certain case in *halachah*? There was a man who was in debt and he couldn't pay his debts but this man was seen to be wearing a remarkably expensive mantle. He was wearing a coat that cost a tremendous sum of money. And therefore the creditor came to *beis din* with a complaint that it's not right for this man to be dressed like a king when he couldn't pay his debts. Even if the *halachah* is that a debtor is allowed to remain with his clothing, but such clothing?! It seems to be too much.

And so one opinion in the Gemara was that we should confiscate his cloak and sell it and part of the money would go to pay his debts and with the rest we would buy him a garment that's suited for his status, for his rank. It makes sense; we're not going to leave him naked – but a coat of royalty?

So along came Rabbi Akiva and he said, “No, no! Don't take his coat!” Rabbi Akiva said, **כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם בְּנֵי מְלָכִים** - Every Jew is a king. He has the right to wear a kingly garment.” Every Jew is worthy of that because actually that's his status; that's his prerogative.

Now it's important for us to understand that we're not talking *halachah* here. In practice it could be that we follow the other opinion because to be a prince you have to pay your debts. A man who doesn't pay his debt is certainly not acting like

## Part II. *Speaking Against a Moshe*

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### **Remembered Forever**

And so we come back now to Miriam in our *parshah*. You can be sure that Miriam didn't intend to slander Moshe – he was her beloved brother after all. Don't you remember how she was instrumental in saving his life when he was a baby, how she stood guard by the riverside to see what would happen to him? There's no question that Miriam didn't have any malicious intent against her brother. But because she, for a short moment, forgot how careful you have to be with a fellow Jew and she said something disparaging about her brother, she became our eternal model for *lashon hora*.

Miriam didn't deserve such a punishment – to become a leper and be excluded from the camp – but it was intended as a demonstration forever to teach us how wicked it is to speak about a fellow Jew.

Now all that is true but I think we have the right to ask a question here. Why is this story with Miriam singled out more than any other case of *lashon hora*? Not only here. Later in the Chumash we're told to remember what Hashem did to Miriam – some people say that every day after *shacharis* – which means that even though there's already a separate *lav* in the Torah not to speak *lashon hora*, it's *this* story that the Torah wants us to think about. It's the story of Miriam's *lashon hora* against Moshe Rabbeinu that is chosen to be the model to teach us to guard our tongues.

### **The Prince and the Crown Prince**

The answer is that there's another lesson here besides the wickedness of speaking against a fellow Jew. And that is that there are Jews and then there are Jews – *it matters whom you speak about!* Of course you can't speak against anyone – *לֹא תִלְךָ רֵכִיל* – *לֹא תִלְךָ רֵכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ* means that you can't wag your tongue against any of your people, even the most simple Jew,

royalty. But it's the theory of Rabbi Akiva that's important for us – that a Yisroel deserves to have a royal garment. Who? *כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל* – *every Jew*. It means all of us, men and women, boys and girls, are princes and princesses. We are dukes and barons and earls. We're all of that and more.

### **Not Just Words**

Now, I understand that some of you will think that it's just words; that I'm saying things to encourage you. No; I'm telling you the plain truth. It's an immense concept and we have to rise to that. We have to raise our minds to that, to appreciate that every Jew, even the poorest, the lowest, deserves to be dressed in the garments of a king! He deserves a crown! He deserves an ermine cloak! He deserves all the trappings of a monarch! Every single Jew! That's how the Torah expects us to look at a Jew!

And therefore, for our fellow Jews we must have the highest respect; for every Jew we must have a *yiras hakovod*. Just like that king in the Tana d'Bei Eliyahu who came off of his steed and bowed down to a little Jewish girl playing in the dirty dunghill; every Jew is to us a princeling and we too bow down in reverence for every Jew, big or little!

That's the great principle we must begin to assimilate into our consciousness! We can't merely lean back and remain with the attitudes that we entertain right now. When we learn Torah we try to inculcate ourselves with the Torah attitudes. We listen to the ideals the Torah wants to teach us and we strive to attain that. And therefore, we must reconsider our attitudes to our fellow Jew. We have to realize that Torah opens up our minds, opens up our eyes, to vistas, far off horizons, what's expected of the respect for a fellow Jew.

because even the most simple Jew is not simple at all. He's more valuable than anything else in the world.

But that's only the beginning of the story, that's only the rock bottom *issur*, because this *parshah* tells us that there's a difference which Jew you speak about. And we'll take some time to understand that now.

There's a statement that everybody says on Shabbos – if you come early enough to shul in the morning, you say it: **וְשֹׂנְאֵי צְדִיק יֵאָשְׁמוּ**. It sounds familiar? Come a little earlier and you'll say it every week. **שֹׂנְאֵי צְדִיק יֵאָשְׁמוּ** – *Those who dislike a righteous man will be held guilty*. Someone who speaks about a righteous man, that's the truly guilty one.

Now suppose you opened your mouth against somebody who's not so righteous, so does it mean that you won't be held guilty? Absolutely you will! No question about it. If you open your mouth against any *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*, you're opening your mouth against a prince of Hashem. You'll be found guilty, absolutely. But it makes a difference! That's what the story of Miriam is telling us. You can't speak against anyone but if you make a mistake and speak against the wrong person, it's a much more serious mistake.

### **Careful Whom You Start With**

You remember what happened to Doeg HaEdomi? Doeg was an important personality but he was envious of Dovid Hamelech. When Dovid was still a young man Doeg became envious and he entertained a hostility towards him. And then one day he said some *lashon hora* to Shaul about Dovid. And that was the most unfortunate thing Doeg could do!

If he would have had an animosity towards, let's say, his janitor, the superintendent of his building, it's also not right, but still it wouldn't have ruined him. But he became an enemy of a *tzaddik*! He became an enemy of the Chosen One of Hashem. And because of that animosity he was held guilty. **שֹׂנְאֵי צְדִיק יֵאָשְׁמוּ** and therefore Doeg lost his *chelek l'Olam Haba* (Sanhedrin 110b).

It's an important lesson you're hearing now. Don't start up with *anybody* but if you're going to start up with somebody, better choose somebody who's not such a big *tzaddik*. Because those same emotions towards a righteous person are going to have much greater repercussions. It's the same amount of hostility, the same *lashon hora*, and still when it's exercised on a great *tzaddik* it's a much greater misfortune.

### **The Best Boss**

That's what the Gemara says in one place (Shabbos 11a); it's giving us career advice and it says if you're looking to take a job somewhere in a warehouse or an office so **תַּחַת נְכָרִי וְלֹא תַחַת הָבֵר** – better to be employed by a *goy*, to be under the thumb of a gentile than to be under a *frum* Jew.

So that surprises many people. What does that mean “it's better to work for a *goy* than a Jew”? To work under a *goy* could be perilous. You might pick up bad habits, bad ideas. Even the best gentile has a gentile mouth. Even worse, he has a gentile head. Also he'll tell you to work late Friday afternoons too. You'll come into Shabbos without a head. Why is it better to work for him than for a Jew?

The answer is because when you'll grumble against your boss, the *goy*, it's not right, but it's not the worst thing. It doesn't say **לֹא תִלְוֶה רֵבִיל** on a *goy*. He's not *amecha*. It's not recommended, but you're not guilty of speaking *lashon hora*. But when you have complaints against your boss, a *frum* Jew, and you grumble against him – you open your big mouth to your wife and to your friends, your coworkers, about him – so you have a big *aveirah*. Now you're speaking against a prince, a *ben melech*! And that's much worse. A *frum* Jew for a boss is not good for you if you're going to grumble against him.

### **The Worst Boss**

Then the Gemara continues. It says, suppose you have a choice for a boss a *frum* Jew or a *talmid chochom*. Oh, a *talmid chochom*! That sounds like a good boss. He'll tell you *divrei Torah* sometimes.

He'll understand when you can't come in on *chol hamoed*. Wonderful!

Oh no, says the Gemara. Be very careful! If you have a choice, forget about it! **תַּחַת הַחֵבֶר וְלֹא תַחַת תַּלְמִיד חוֹחוֹם** – *Better to work under a regular frum Jew than a talmid chochom*. Because when you grumble against a *talmid chochom* it's a thousand times worse than grumbling against a *frum Jew*! The same grumbling, the same *lashon hora*, but it depends on whom you're exercising it.

Now this doesn't mean some complaints aren't justified – sometimes you have to say something – but when a person speaks about a *talmid chochom* he has to know that everything he says is like touching an electric wire of 50,000 volts. Sometimes the wire is in your way; maybe you have a just complaint, but watch out! You're dealing with life and death.

And that's why when the Torah wanted to teach us the danger of *lashon hora* it especially chose this story with Miriam. Because Miriam chose the worst person in the world to speak against – he was the best in the world and that's why he was the worst to speak about.

### **Danger: Live Wires!**

What happened? The *possuk* (12:2) tells us that Miriam and Aharon said, “Was it only with Moshe that Hashem spoke? Didn't He speak to us too?” And Rashi explains that Miriam was disturbed that Moshe had forsaken his wife Tziporah. After Hashem began speaking to Moshe Rabbeinu so he no longer lived with his wife and they were bothered by that. They considered it an injustice to her and so they said, “Why would Moshe our brother do such an extreme thing? Just because Hashem speaks to him? Didn't Hashem speak to us? And we still live a normal married life?”

Oh no! To open your mouth against a Moshe Rabbeinu?! Of course Miriam had a *terutz*. She thought she was justified; she was standing up for Moshe's wife, the unfortunate Tziporah. But she made a terrible mistake. Because whatever justification you might imagine, you're touching a

live electric wire and with a live wire every move is a *sakanah*.

That's what Miriam teaches us, that as bad as *lashon hora* is, it's much worse when you're speaking about a bigger person. The same emotion when it's exercised in the wrong place can make a tremendous difference because a bigger person is much bigger than you think. As much as the simple Jew is a prince, the *talmid chochom* is a thousand times more princely.

### **The Living Sefer Torah**

I'll tell you what the problem is. As much as we don't know how to look at a Jew, *kol shekein v'kol shekein* we don't know how to look at *tzaddikim*, at *talmidei chachomim*. You know what happened in the *midbar*? You'll have to excuse me for saying so but the people looked at Moshe and they saw a person.

You have to remember, Moshe Rabbeinu wasn't a book. He wasn't a *sefer Torah*. Moshe Rabbeinu was a human being. He had facial expressions. He had a tone of voice. Moshe Rabbeinu had all the traits that a human being is supposed to have. He was a man. He was the perfect man but he was a human being. And the fact that he had a face and he had a nose and he had two eyes and he had ears like a human being and he had all physical functions of a human being was a very great test for people. “I'm a person and he's a person. I'm a Jew and he's a Jew.”

You know there were some in the *midbar* who looked at Moshe Rabbeinu and said – it's difficult for us to repeat the words but for the sake of study and understanding we'll repeat the words – they said “Look how thick his thighs are!” **הִבִּיטוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה** – *they looked at Moshe Rabbeinu and they said* **כַּמָּה בָּמָה עָבִים שׁוֹקֵי** – “Look how thick his paunches are!”

### **The Great Test**

Now, the truth is they were. Moshe had to have thick thighs! He had to carry down *shnei luchos habris* – it was very heavy. What do you think? He had wings underneath his *kapote*? Oh,

then it would have been less of a test. If he was a *malach* with wings and he didn't walk but he flew with wings it would be easier to appreciate him. But what can you do – he was a human being and a human being has to have thighs. Otherwise how will he walk?

But the test is: what do you see when you see Moshe? His thighs? It's like a child. A child looks at thighs. A child can't understand that *מִהַצֵּיז וְמֵעֵלָה* – above his thighs he's higher than any human being in the world. An immature head can't understand that because all he sees is a body. As long as the thighs are there, it blinds the eyes of people.

And so, as much as it takes practice to recognize that every Jew is not what he seems, he's not a person – he's a child of royalty deserving of the utmost *kavod* and deference – it's even harder to recognize the greatness of a *talmid chochom*. Whatever you'll say, it's not enough. And that's a tremendous danger because somebody who will be disrespectful to Moshe Rabbeinu is not like being disrespectful to a fellow Jew; it's the mistake of his life.

And that's why Miriam is chosen, to teach us that lesson. Don't speak about any Jew! Any Jew is a prince deserving of the utmost respect. But surely, a hundred times over, you have to be careful when it comes to the better ones.

### Part III.

## Speaking Against the Moshes

### Many Moshes

And that brings us to our subject for tonight. Everything we said till now was an introduction – it's important by itself but it's only an introduction to what I wanted to speak about tonight. I want to speak about The Better Ones.

This story that we're told about the *cheit* of speaking against Moshe is a very important one because in every generation the *talmidei chachomim* are given authority by Hakadosh

Baruch Hu almost like Moshe Rabbeinu. You know, in the days of the Gemara they used to call the *chachmei haTorah* “Moshe.” *מִשֵּׁה שׁוֹפֵר קְאָמְרַת* – Moshe, you're saying a good *pshat*. That's what one *talmid chochom* would say to his fellow *talmid chochom* when he said something wise. *מִשֵּׁה שׁוֹפֵר קְאָמְרַת* means that the *tzaddikim* of today, the *talmidei chachomim*, are called Moshe because that's how we have to see them.

### It Is Like It Used To Be

Now, I know that today it's a world of *kalus rosh* and people have a tendency to say that it's not like it used to be, that this is not the same kind of *talmid chochom*. That's what they said after Moshe Rabbeinu passed away, when they saw Yehoshua take over (Bava Basra 75a). When some of the *ziknei hador* looked at Yehoshua they said, “Oy, look what happened to us! Oh, we lost the great one, Moshe. Who is Yehoshua compared to Moshe Rabbeinu?!”

“Oh no,” Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, “Nothing doing! *כְּאִשֶּׁר הָיִיתִי עִם מֹשֶׁה* – just like I was with Moshe, I'll be with Yehoshua too.” And that stands for us as a model forever. They were punished in the *midbar* for speaking against Moshe – Miriam was punished severely; Korach, much worse – as a lesson to us. *Tacharishu!* Be quiet! Don't open your mouth!

I must tell you that I disagree with the attitude of putting down someone else's *gadol*. No; I disagree with that attitude very much. *Talmidei chachomim*, *tzaddikim*, can be here and they can be there too, and we have to appreciate all of them. The people who come from Crown Heights will say the Lubavitcher Rebbe is it – the greatest *tzaddik* of the generation. If you come from Monsey, certain parts of Monsey, you say Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky. If you come from the East Side you'll say Reb Moshe Feinstein. If you come from Williamsburg, the Satmar Rebbe. And in my mind there's no doubt that they're all right. Your *gadol* doesn't have to be the only *gadol*.

And even though there might be a *machlokes*, a disagreement, between them; yes, there may be a

*machlokes* between them, but we should stay out of it. Never open your mouth! *Chas v'shalom!* It's fire! Worse than fire! We shouldn't say a word. Not a word! So if Rav Shach, let's say, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe may have *sichsuchim*, some arguments; I don't know if they do but if they have some *sichsuchim* it's none of our business.

### **Show Nothing But Respect**

The wisest way is to say nothing at all and to have the greatest *derech erez*, the greatest respect, for all those people who are recognized. After all, the Lubavitcher Rebbe is recognized by many people. And Rav Shach is recognized by many people. So we should keep our mouths closed and recognize both of them. That's the way we should follow. It's the fire of Gehenom to open up your mouth. It's a tragic mistake to mix in. It's so foolish; so foolish! *Tacharishu* – the best thing is to remain quiet.

I guarantee you that Miriam had a better head than you. No question about it. And she had *terutzim*; she had more of a reason to talk than you. And what happened to her? **וְהָיָה מִרְיָם מְצֻרֶתֶת וְהָיָה מִרְיָם מְצֻרֶתֶת ... וְתִסְגָּר מִרְיָם מְצֻרֶתֶת לְמַחֲנֶה** She was stricken with leprosy and had to remain outside of the camp. And Korach too. Korach was a big *talmid chochom*, an *oved Hashem*. But he went lost. Why did the earth open its big mouth to swallow Korach? Because he opened his big mouth to speak against Moshe. He went lost forever because he opened his mouth!

So don't open your mouth! Even today the earth opens its mouth to bury men. Many are swallowed in an early grave because they opened their mouths. And what's even worse; many are swallowed into Gehenom just like Korach was.

### **A Foolish Business**

Now, you shouldn't think this subject is superfluous – it's not; not at all. And that's because of a certain reason, a certain spiritual reason called the *yetzer hora*. That *malach* that Hakadosh Baruch

Hu created, is an angel, a force, that is busy. He is very busy.

The Chofetz Chaim, *zichrono livrachah*, asked the following question. Why is the *yetzer hora* called 'kesil', a fool? In Koheles that's how he's described, as a fool. And that's a queer name for this *malach*. After all, he is very far from being a *kesil*. The truth is that he's quite wise.

So the Chofetz Chaim said that every person is called by his profession. A bookkeeper is a man who keeps books. A bookie also keeps books; only that instead of keeping the books in the open when inspectors can see them, he keeps them in his back pocket. A plumber plumbs and a judge judges. And the *yetzer hora* fools people. He's called a fool, because that's what he makes out of people.

That's what the Chofetz Chaim says. It's the *yetzer hora*'s function to make a fools out of you. Not merely to make you sin with this or that temptation. His function is to becloud the issues and to deceive you into thinking things *and saying things* that are most foolish.

### **The Greatest Campaign**

Now that's too big a subject to be treated in one night – walk out in the street and you'll see that it's a very big subject. The street is filled with fools – but we're focused tonight on just one sliver of it, one facet of this campaign. One of the most important achievements for the *yetzer hora* is called *kitrug talmidei chachomim*, to belittle Torah scholars, to find fault with Jews who are learned in Torah. That's the biggest of all of the machinations of the evil inclination.

Now it may seem queer to you. That's one of the biggest achievements that the forces of wickedness can accomplish? Aren't there much more important things than that, much bigger sins that a person can be tripped up in?

And the answer is that the force in this world which we call the *yetzer hora* is most interested in keeping the Jew away from his perfection, from his achievement in life. And if the Jewish masses would be influenced by the Torah leaders, they would see

the light. They would return to true Torah living, to true Torah attitudes. They would begin to make use of their lives. They'd make progress. They would change.

If a Jew would truly appreciate the *talmid chochom* or the *kollel* man or the rabbi, he would get close to him and his life would be transformed. He would see the truth, that they're such lovable characters, such kindly and humble people, the *bnei Torah*. If he could get close to a *talmid chochom* and become friendly with him it would save him; it would transform his life, the life of his wife and his children, and everything would become entirely different.

And so the *yetzer hora* cannot permit that – it would be too dangerous for his business and so he's always giving you reasons to think bad, to say bad. So what does the *yetzer hora* do? He sends a *kitrug* against *talmidei chachomim*. He causes suspicion to arise; jealousy and arrogance and an *ayin ra*. And he's doing a very good job. If we'll think about it a little, we shall see that we are to a big extent victims. We have bought that merchandise.

### **The Money Campaign**

Everybody “knows” that Orthodox rabbis – the ones with beards – are out for money. The Conservative and Reform, they don't care for money at all. It's the Orthodox rabbi in Brownsville – the one who used to get \$10 a week salary; that was his fixed salary – he was known to be most rapacious for money.

I once invited some Egyptian Jews to come to my synagogue. They had wanted me to come to speak in their synagogue but I told them “Why don't you come to my synagogue? I'll speak to you on my turf.”

So I was told yes, they'd be happy to come to me but they're suspicious; there's a suspicion that I want to rope them in and make them members in order to make money out of them. After all they assumed I'm a *talmid chochom* – I'm not a *talmid chochom* but I look like one – and so I must be in it for the greenbacks.

It's as silly as could be but that's the *yetzer hora* at work. Why is it that recently when they tried to make a scandal about the *yeshivos*, when they spoke about the *roshei yeshiva* taking government money, that so many *frum* Jews opened their mouths? It's only because the the *yetzer hora* is hard at work with them.

### **Wasting Government Funds**

You know how we react to something like that? We should react by keeping our mouths shut. The truth is that it's not so simple at all. Now I am able to talk because I'm not connected with any institutions and I'll tell you honestly that I don't think that they're doing anything wrong by using government funds the way they do.

If you people would see what goes on. I pass through Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood and I see a hundred establishments, a hundred storefronts – Dynamic Youth Corps, Youth Improvement Corps, Civic Improvement Corps – and inside are sitting loafers with their feet on the table. They're not doing a thing and they're sucking money out of the government like nobody's business. It's my money. I don't sit all day with my feet on the table. I have to work too. All of us are working for our livelihood. But the government is siphoning off our money to so many loafers in all colors, all over the country. Not only to loafers. It's being sent overseas to rat holes. A tremendous amount of money is being wasted. You have no idea how much money is being given because of politicians, crooks. The whole country is in a frenzy of wasting money.

So if it was a situation where nobody got free funds and somebody made a grab so we would say, “Feh! It's not right.” But everybody's grabbing. So why shouldn't we grab something too for a good cause? It's our money. We're the ones who are earning the money so why shouldn't a tiny trickle of the money go for us? It should go *only* to criminals and to loafers?

Now you have the right to disagree with me – but the minimum is that you don't say a word. Keep

quiet. I don't criticize it at all. I criticize the critics. And anybody who opens his mouth, he might get burned. *Hizaharu begehaltan*.

Now, like we said in the beginning, what we're saying here is true for any fellow Yisroel. To open your mouth against a Yisroel means you're trampling on the Torah; you're trampling on the great Torah principle of *kol Yisroel bnei melachim heim*. You're trampling on Hashem's children! But this week's *sedrah* teaches us much more than that; Miriam teaches us that with the better ones we have to be a thousand times more careful. And the most important lesson is that we don't open our mouths! *Tacharishu!* Stay silent!

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL

##### Remembering The Lesson of Miriam

The Torah exhorts us to remember what happened to Miriam when she spoke against Moshe in our *parshah*. When someone speaks against a Jew he is acting in opposition to the two great principles of the Torah. Firstly, he is denying the Presence of Hashem - for he would never sin were he aware of Hashem's Presence. And secondly, he is denying the greatness of the Jew he is speaking against. But much worse than speaking against a fellow Jew, is speaking against a "Moshe", a *talmid chochom* of our generation.

This week I will *bli neder* dedicate one hour each day during which I will be exceptionally careful about the words I say. Additionally, I will *bli neder* make one statement every day in praise of a *talmid chochom*, or Torah scholars in general.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

27 - Wiles of The Yetzer Hara | 72 - Making Light Into Darkness

113 - Bargains | 450 - The Tongue The Last Day Of Judgement

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**How far do you have to go for shalom?**



You have to go to the end of the world for *shalom*. You must do everything for *shalom* because *shalom* means you're making your character perfect.

כל עניני העולם נסיונות הם לאדם – *all the things in this world were made as tests for man*. A wife tests a husband and a husband tests a wife. They're made to test each other. Of course you shouldn't look for a woman that will test you too much. You shouldn't look for a husband that will give you too much of a test. Once you're married, however, make up your mind that's your *mitzvah*, that's your test. That's your *Olam Hazeh* and *Olam Habo*.

And you will not lose out. A person who doesn't get excited will live longer. Make up your mind no matter what, you're married to this *meshugene* now and that's it. Now, don't tell him that, don't tell her that, but that's it. All your life, do your best to get along with that person. You're both *meshugeh*. That's the truth; both are *meshugeh*. He thinks he deceived her. But she also deceived him. They deceived each other when they married.

And therefore all your life try to deceive your wife. Make her think you're a nice fellow. Make your husband think you're a nice person. Try your best to deceive each other all your life.

TAPE # E-147 (July 1998)

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