

Kehillah

#17

THE PERTINENT PARASHA



Our Partnership With Hashem & the Problem of the Gap

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer

Yet surely a birth is the very antithesis of death: it is the greatest "life event" known to the world. What can be "impure" about the event of a birth?

One of the most seemingly incomprehensible tum'os, ritual impurities, is *tum'as yoledes* – the ritual defilement that follows a birth.

Tum'ah represents something negative, a kind of spiritual impasse. Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Chassid famously explained that all *tum'ah* is related to death – the greatest of all impasses and the most powerful of all ritual impurities. Yet surely a birth is the very antithesis of death: it is the greatest "life event" known to the world. What can be "impure" about the event of a birth?

The impurity of birth urges us to seek a more nuanced understanding of *tum'ah*. Rather than deriving from death, it seems that *tum'ah* derives from our

very humanity. Whenever we encounter a profound expression of humanity – specifically, the frailty of humanity, the finite nature of our condition – the result is *tum'ah*.

Deriving from humanity itself, *tum'ah*, moreover, is not negative *pe se*. Human weakness is part and parcel of the reality created by Hashem. It involves no disgrace or shame.

Rather, it receives a negative connotation when juxtaposed with the infinite perfection of the Kodesh – with the sphere of the Divine. The point of *tum'ah* is that it cannot mix with the Kodesh.

Tum'ah is the result of the gap between Hashem and our humanity. On the one hand, Hashem wishes to dwell among us, His people. Our relationship with Him becomes tangible in the Mikdash and the Voice emerges from between the two Cheruvim, the male and female forms that represent the depth and intimacy of





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the relationship.

On the other hand, this Divine enshrinement in all its manifestations – from Mikdash offerings through the Kohanim serving therein and to the *teruma* they consume – requires the innate gap between Hashem and humanity to be somehow closed. It needs to be understated, played down.

This is the reason why *tum'ah* and the Kodesh are contradictory. *Tum'ah* arises when human frailty is emphasized, indicating the gap between humanity and the Divine. Death provides the most profound example, making it *avi avos hatum'ah*, the “father” of all ritual impurity – but the infirmity of birth (for mother and child) also qualifies. Experiencing birth, a woman encounters the gap between the finite and the infinite, and thus becomes *tamei*.

It is remarkable that notwithstanding the *tum'ah* restrictions, there is a Talmudic principle of *tum'ah hutra be'tzibbur* – when all or the majority of the Jewish People is in a state of ritual impurity, *tum'ah* is overlooked with regard to (part of) the sacrificial service. While this halacha can be explained in utilitarian terms, it also includes a deeper message.

The gap between the finite and the infinite inheres in individuals. When it comes to the Jewish nation, human frailty does not constitute a condition of *tum'ah* that disqualifies our service. As a nation,

we are forever “children of Hashem,” forever anchored in Divine eternity. The *tum'ah* gap is closed by our national essence.

Times of national challenge, as those we experience today, are also times of hope. When the challenge applies to the entire nation, we know we will come through. But the path – how we come through – depends on our own initiative. If there was ever a historical moment that proved the point, it was the 1948 establishment of the Jewish State marked next week.

When it comes to the Jewish nation, human frailty does not constitute a condition of *tum'ah* that disqualifies our service.

Israel's “national holidays” give us pause for consideration. The Jewish People will get through. But like the State itself, we will prevail by means of human initiative – including the tremendous sacrifice marked on Yom Hazikaron. *Tum'ah* hutra be'tzibbur, but only in the Mikdash – only where the partnership between Hashem and His nation is fully embodied.

The eternity of the Jewish People derives from Hashem. The embodiment of the partnership – the path of its realization – is up to us.



TORAH INSIGHT FOR THE WEEK

Why Did G-d Create Flies?

by Rabbi Yaacov Haber | Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

A while back, I did some research into house flies and found out that they live for 15 to 30 days. A female can lay up to 500 eggs in four days, and they can travel up to six miles in 1 day. But what exactly does the fly contribute to the world?

What brought me to check out flies in the first place? In last week's parasha, the Torah spoke about animals: “These are the rules regarding animals” (Vayikra 11:46). And in this week's parasha, we begin to learn about rules for man. Rashi points out that the order of the Torah appears to be reversed. Then, he continues, “Rabbi Simlai taught that just as the creation of man followed the creation of animals, so, too, do the rules for man (*bris milah* and *tahara*) follow the rules regarding animals (*shechita* and *kashrut*)” (Rashi Vayikra 12:2).

This begs the question: why in fact were animals created before man? The Midrash (14:1) gives us the full answer. “Reish Lakish taught that 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!’”

I began to wonder how a fly could possibly be greater than a human being. What lofty position could a fly possibly have in G-d's world that would give it precedence over man?

The answer lies in the question. Reish Lakish, a great man who understood late in life that he had a noble purpose and a historical mission to fulfill, was trying to describe the condition of someone who never reaches his or her potential. He searched the animal kingdom for a creature

of G-d 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. Every person is created with the ability to move mountains and shake the Heavens. Each one of us has a potential to realize. What happens if we don't?

The answer is that we become something like a fly, of which everyone wonders: “Why did G-d create that thing anyway?” On the other hand, seeing that G-d indeed did 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. Buzzing around our windows, it is in fact accomplishing its mission. This alone puts it one notch above the human who is going nowhere. Hence, we have Reish Lakish's formulation that when man fulfills his potential there is no creature comparable to him. It can truthfully be stated that he was created “in the image of G-d.” If, however, he decides to just sit around, to exist and go nowhere, well, a fly has one up on him.

In general, I am not obsessive. Sometimes, I'm even a little too relaxed and laid back. I do, however, suffer 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 one's *raison d'être* becomes apparent.

There is an additional reason to consider in reflecting upon why we were created last. By the time we got here, the entire world was already available, at our disposal and ready to help us reach unimaginable heights. May we all be privileged to experience the fulfillment of our potential.



Dealing with Patterns of Deceit in the Workplace

Rabbi Asher Meir

Our parasha presents the laws of the “smitten house,” a house whose walls are afflicted with a *nega* – a discoloration indicating a kind of plague. When the Kohen definitively determines that the house is *menuga*, the afflicted stones must be replaced (Vayikra 14:40-41).

Sometimes, the smitten wall also belongs to a neighbor. In that case, the Mishnah (*Negaim* 12:6) rules that both neighbors must participate in removing the stones and scraping the wall. The Mishnah explains that the primary responsibility belongs to the resident. However, his neighbor also shares some responsibility, as we read “Woe to the wicked, and woe to his neighbor.”

The Mishnah takes for granted that the *nega* is due to some lapse of the resident in the house where the *nega* appears. This is stated explicitly in the Gemara (*Erchin* 16a) which enumerates seven distinct transgressions and character flaws that put a person in danger of *negaim*. One of these is being self-centered, for the householder who consults the Kohen is described as the one *asher lo habayis* (the house is his), hinting that he views it as his alone.

We are also familiar with this expression from Rashi’s commentary on parashas

Bamidbar (3:29). The Torah tells us that the Levitic family of Kehas camped next to the tribe of Reuven. Rashi, based on the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 3:12), explains that these toxic neighborly relations are why some members of the tribe of Reuven were induced to join Korach’s rebellion against Moshe.

The Bystander’s Culpability

The culpability of the “bystander” neighbor can be either the cause of the woe or its symptom. Korach’s supporters were the cause of the woe of the Reuvenites, by tempting them to join the rebellion. A *beraisa* in *Maseches Shabbos* (54b) describes a “symptom” case where the supposed bystander in fact shares responsibility for the lapse: “Anyone who has the ability to protest the actions of his household members and fails to do so is held accountable for the acts of his household members.” The *beraisa* adds that the same is true for residents of his city, and indeed for the entire generation. The woe of the transgressor testifies also to the woeful state of the neighbor.

“Able to protest” of course means “able to protest effectively.” Chazal do not demand that we become busybodies protesting any conduct we disapprove of. But the basic message of responsibility is the same: everyone has responsibility

to stand up against wrongdoing to the best of his ability, and everyone is held accountable for the wrongdoing he condones.

All these issues are everyday concerns in the workplace, from both a religious and ethical perspective. From an ethical point of view, it is not generally forbidden to work for a company that engages in wrongdoing if one is not personally involved in forbidden acts. Practically speaking, however, if there is a pattern of deceit in the workplace, it is difficult to avoid being drawn in. The worker may begin by viewing the deceit as something normal; subsequently he is likely to become an accessory.

The problem exists equally from a religious point of view. A biography of Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberger relates that a member of his community in New York obtained a stable and well-paid job as a road engineer. However, he quickly discovered that his coworkers’ typical discourse was a constant stream of obscenity and profanity. Despite the very desirable job conditions, Rabbi Scheinberg advised that remaining at this job would almost certainly lead to a far-reaching spiritual decline.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch (*Teshuvos Vehanhagos* 1 283) expresses grave

reservations regarding a well-known heter to avoid Shabbos desecration by forming a partnership with a non-religious Jew. Rav Shternbuch worries that it is very likely that, at some stage, the frum partner will actively encourage the desecration of Shabbos by the non-frum partner. This is in addition to the concern of being negatively influenced by the same partner.

Finding Hidden Treasures

The Machzor Vitri (424) states that Chazal regarded plague in the houses of Eretz Yisrael as a blessing. The *nega* aided the occupants in finding hidden treasures from the previous residents. (See Rashi’s commentary on our parasha, Vayikra 14:34). He answers that righteous people found treasures and wicked people just saw their walls destroyed. Presumably, whether righteous or wicked, the neighbors share the same fate: “Good for the righteous, good for his neighbor” (*Sukkah* 56b). A righteous person will have a constructive influence on people he comes in contact with; chief among these are his neighbors.

The *nega* of houses can result from being excessively self-centered, but its message is one of mutual responsibility. We share our fate with our neighbors, and neighbors help shape and share their mutual moral stature.



The Pendulum

Ilana Cowland

In our marriages, our parenting and personal growth, there are many middos at which we excel. But, there's that one. You know which one I mean. The one that always trips you up. Its counter-middah plays a fantasy role in many unkept resolutions. For some people, the troublesome middah is anger. For some it is a tendency to blame others. I know mine, and it's been the bane of my interactions. It's at the root of most of my failures.

I'm not here to give mussar, just to share an observation. What you may find, if you're anything like me, is that you fall into the following trap: the "today will be different" trap.

Let's say you're messy. Today, you proclaim, is Neat Day! You make your bed neatly. Haha. One point for you. You make your coffee neatly, taking a neat amount of coffee granules that you pour carefully into your neat mug. You pour the water carefully. The milk is put back just so into the fridge. You stir three neat times before rinsing and drying your spoon with the tea cloth that you fold corner to corner. That's three points for you and nil to messiness. Today is the beginning of a new neat you!

But here's the problem. You realize that naturally neat people don't make coffee that way, right? They don't obsess over tea cloths, neither do they count the granules in their coffee.

What you're doing is creating an unmaintainable and unrealistic standard. Your yetzer hara has no issue with your neatness this fine morning because it's ridiculous and it's going to last for a very short amount of time.



If I'm a blamer, maybe I need to learn to recognize when I blame and make a three- step plan to reclaim responsibility.



You, my friend, are on a pendulum. Because in life you suffer or inflict suffering on one far end of the pendulum, you think you'll solve your issue by swinging to the other far end. Angry people may try their luck at remaining extremely calm, for example. Loud people may become unnaturally quiet. Inconsistent people will overschedule themselves. Bad daveners will fervently say all korbonos, slowly and with kavannah.

How long until we're back to our old habits? It depends how far we've swung. The more extreme we swing to the opposite end, the faster we'll swing back.

Then, instead of the issue we have with our trouble middah, it's joined by mixed messaging to people around us and the despair caused by failed attempts. Let's try this differently. First, let's

try not to battle with our natures. It's unkind to ourselves. As long as we're not harming others with our behaviors, we may find that a little more self-acceptance is a great start.

Secondly, let's identify a middle ground. I'm not going to magically transition from being a very messy person to becoming a very neat one. What does the midpoint look like? Assertiveness, as an example, is the middle ground between submission and aggression. If I fail to identify and learn assertive behaviors I risk swinging between aggressive and submissive tendencies.

Finally, let's come up with a strategy. If I'm a blamer, maybe I need to learn to recognize when I blame and make a three- step plan to reclaim responsibility.

If I get angry too often, maybe I need to learn to remove myself from company and apply a breathing technique.

We are who we are. And most people kind of like us. We need to grow. But growth is not usually achieved in the long term through pendulum behavior. Acceptance of self. Articulation of middle ground. Application of strategy.

Wishing us all reasonable growth plans, maintainable results and a productive *Sefiras Haomer*.



Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of Piaseczna

Rabbi Dov Loketch

This is the second installment in our new section dedicated to short biographies of Gedolei Hadoros.

In the first chapter we introduced Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the renowned Rebbe of Piaseczna and a passionate proponent of aliyah to the Land of Israel. A towering and fascinating figure, the Rebbe represents the freedom of the Jewish spirit even in the harshest of circumstances.

Our Mother, the Holy Land

The Piaseczna Rebbe, like most Chassidic rebbes in Poland (most famously, the Imrei Emes), passionately supported immigration to Eretz Yisrael. In particular, the Rebbe supported the establishment of the Charedi settlement of Bnei Brak in 1924.

His brother, Rav Yeshayah Shapira, moved to Eretz Yisrael and became very active in the effort to bring Jews to the land and rebuild it, for which he earned the name, HaAdmor HaChalutz – The Pioneer Rebbe.

In 1920, Rav Yeshayah bought property for himself and on behalf of his brother, the Rebbe of Piaseczna. Three years later, Rav Yeshayah sent a message to the Rebbe advising him to sell the land, sensing that property values would soon drop. The Rebbe wrote back with the following words: "My eyes shed tears when



this idea of distancing myself, Heaven forbid, was brought up now that I have had a slight connection with Eretz Yisrael."

In a different letter, the Rebbe expressed his longing to move to Eretz Yisrael: "I thought [...] I would take practical action and go to Eretz Yisrael now for a few weeks or months. And when I cast aside all my worries for a while and am in Eretz Yisrael, perhaps our mother, the Holy Land, will grab me by the hair on my head and not let me return to a foreign land on a permanent basis. Then God will finally light up my eyes so that I find my livelihood there."

Chovas HaTalmidim: A Groundbreaking Work on Chinuch

In 1932, the Rebbe published the only work printed in his lifetime, a volume that has become one of the most important and groundbreaking works on the subject of chinuch, entitled *Chovas HaTalmidim* – The Students' Duty. The Rebbe wrote this book to address the grave spiritual crisis which befell Polish Jewry during the years following World War I. The youth, particularly in large cities such as Warsaw, were falling prey by the thousands to the powerful cultural influences of the time, to movements such as communism and secular Zionism. The Rebbe laments these developments in his introduction to *Chovas HaTalmidim*:

"We should be heartsick, however, and our hair should stand on end when we see the way the younger generation has turned to heresy and has lost all spiritual discipline. They possess neither faith nor fear of G-d, nor knowledge of Torah. They have actually come to despise G-d and His servants, the people of Israel. The administrators and deans of the yeshivot, who are totally immersed in the life of the Yeshiva

and its students and encounter only the elite of our youth, are unaware of the gravity of this problem."

In an especially heartrending passage, the Rebbe describes the growing chasm that he observed between the adults and youth of his



The introduction to *Chovas HaTalmidim* is the Rebbe's chinuch manifesto, outlining in great detail and with great passion, the proper approach to meeting the overwhelming educational challenges of the modern era.



time:

"Our sons and daughters are threatened by Satan in the form of parties that would poison their souls and defile their bodies with heresy and other foul transgressions, may G-d have mercy. There are homes in which the father, upon his return from the mikveh and prayers [at the synagogue], dressed in his Shabbat finery on Shabbat night, seeks to arouse within himself the joyous fervor of the sanctity of G-d and the sanctity of Shabbat by reciting the Kiddush, while his son, at the same time, is smoking a cigarette, may God have mercy, or reading the sort of novel that defiles the soul and the body alike, may G-d have mercy, or the boys are chatting with each other about the filth that they have read or watched at the cinema. Some or all of them leave their pure Jewish home at this time and go off to the cinema, to sin and to defile themselves and all of the Jewish people. And the father observes this; his heart contracts and his thoughts

grow vacant. As time goes on he becomes accustomed to his diminishment and adapts to his abasement.

Like a king's son who is held captive for a long period by wanton, worthless drunks, he, too, loses his lofty spirit and uplifted wisdom, and is left like one who is stupefied, or a country simpleton, who is aware of nothing beyond his sustenance and his occupation, a man devoid of aspirations or lofty longings. And if at times he remembers the days gone by, when he was a Chassidic scholar, devoted to Torah, and he seeks to encourage and awaken himself, he sinks back once again, telling himself, "What am I, and what is my life? The weekdays, with their commerce, are hell, and this is the state of my home, my Jewish home?!"

Speaking the Student's Language

The introduction to *Chovas HaTalmidim* is the Rebbe's chinuch manifesto, outlining in great detail and with great passion, the proper approach to meeting the overwhelming educational challenges of the modern era and to bridging the widening gap between the adults and youth. Rabbi Dr. Nehemia Polen summarizes the Rebbe's objective and outlook expressed in the introduction to *Chovas HaTalmidim* as follows:

"The answer, says Rabbi Shapira, is not more authoritarian discipline and rote learning, but imbuing the child with a vision of his own potential greatness and enlisting him as an active participant in his own development. The teacher must learn to speak the language of the student and graphically convey the delights of a life of closeness to G-d. In earlier times it was possible to the structure of Jewish religious practice without imparting a sense of its inner significance, in the

hope that practice would lead to genuine involvement and inner commitment.

Now, however, writes Rabbi Shapira, the youngster's intellectual and emotional



"Talk of punishment should be avoided, for it is the surest way to alienate the student."



capabilities develop at an earlier age than previously, and the child must be presented, from the very beginning of his educational career, with a sense of the inner beauty of the life of Torah, to prevent his being captured by the far more obtrusive and blatant attractions of the big city and its culture. Talk of punishment should be avoided, for it is the surest way to alienate the student. Instead the teacher should sprinkle his teaching with touches of humor, and should also not neglect to invoke the power of the imagination, in such forms as the parable and the story, while imparting his message."

In one especially poignant passage in the introduction, the Rebbe instructs, "We must adapt ourselves and speak their language, practically turning ourselves into children in order to speak to them according to the way they think and the level that they are on."

Whereas the introduction is written for the parents and educators, the book itself is addressed to the students themselves. As Rabbi Dr. Polen explains, the Rebbe in this work "constantly reminds the student of the powerful spiritual potential within him, that he is a descendant of the prophets of Israel





Two Stories of Loshon Hara

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

We are all well aware of the sin of lashon hara. We are also aware of the connection to the tzara'as described in detail in this week's parasha. I always find it a challenge to actually stop myself from speaking lashon hara. In the times of prophecy, the tzara'as showed up as a physical, real expression of the lashon hara. Certainly, if I was living back then, I would have been more careful.

"I really hope her chosson won't mind her bossiness. Sometimes, she can really be overbearing."

The Power to Destroy

Here's a clever story that was sent to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein as a halachic inquiry. I found it to be a powerful message about lashon hara.

Suri and Malky were sitting on a city bus on their way home from work. "Did you hear the good news?" said Suri. "Leah got engaged last night!" "Oh, wow, that's wonderful," replied Malky. As they discussed the new kallah, the conversation took a turn for the worse. "You know," said Malky, "I really hope her chosson won't mind her bossiness. Sometimes, she can really

be overbearing." "Yeah, and you know, as great a girl as she is, she isn't the neatest," said Suri. "Hope he knows how to sweep and mop." The two girls giggled and continued to discuss Leah's shortcomings. A few minutes of this type of conversation continued but was cut short by the lady sitting behind them on the bus. "I'm so glad I'm sitting behind you. You see, I'm the chassan's aunt, and my family really had no idea about all the issues this girl has. I'll be sure to let them know to look into it."

Suri and Malky sat in silent shock for a few minutes. They realized – a little late – that they had just destroyed their friend's shidduch, and, possibly, her future.

"No, you don't understand," explained Suri. "Leah is the most wonderful girl! Such wonderful middos."

"But she is also bossy and overbearing, right? I am not sure that my nephew will respond well to that. I really do think that this was meant to be. Thank you"

Suri and Malky began to cry. Their attempt to change the lady's mind fell on deaf ears. The response was always, "Yes, yes, I understand. I'll just let my brother and sister-in-law know what they need to check into."

The girls spent a few long minutes in dead

silence. They understood they may have very well just destroyed their friend's shidduch. Several stops later, the woman rose to get off the bus. Just before she descended the steps, she turned to the ashen-faced girls, "I'm not really the chassan's aunt. But I could have been. Lashon hara has a tremendous power to destroy lives!"

The story arrived at Rav Zilberstein's desk because the woman wanted to know if she was allowed to lie to teach the lesson. What do you think? Is it permitted?

The Rewards for Holding Back

The second story relates the most incredible restraint in holding back from speaking lashon hara. It can be found in *Along the Maggid's Journey* by Rabbi Pesach Krohn.

Over 100 years ago, in a town called Shavil, Lithuania, washing machines and dryers had not yet been invented. Women did their laundry by hand and hung it out to dry. One day, Mrs. Leah Henig (not her real name) was making her way home from the market. She noticed sheets hanging over her head. For some reason, this made her very angry, and without much thought, she grabbed the sheets and threw them into the mud.

Leah didn't notice, but the owner of the sheets, Chaya Musia, was watching in

shock. Leah walked home, while Chaya calmly and quietly picked up the sheets, rewashed them, and re-hung them on the clothesline.

This is where the story begins.

A day later, Mrs. Henig's son became seriously ill. Doctors came and went. The fever spiked. The son was not doing well at all.

For Mrs. Henig, there was only one thing to do: run to visit the great Tzaddik, Rabbi Shlomo, known as The Leshem after his great and deep Kabbalistic sefer *Leshem Shevo VeAchlama*. After knocking on the door of the great sage, Mrs. Henig began to cry hysterically, afraid for the life of her son. "Please, Rabbi. Help me! I am so frightened. My son needs a yeshuah!"

The Leshem calmed the lady and listened to her story. He then explained that while we do not understand the ways of Hashem, her case was certainly sudden and mysterious. "Can you think of anything you might have done wrong," he asked, "which may have brought about this as a punishment?"

After a few minutes, a scene flashed before her eyes. The sheets on the clothesline! "Actually, I do remember something, and I am quite embarrassed. A few days ago, I was in an angry mood, and I pulled down a neighbor's sheets and threw them in the mud."



STORIES THAT INSPIRE



For some reason, this made her very angry, and without much thought, she grabbed the sheets and threw them into the mud.

The Rav thought for a minute. "If you know whose sheets they were, then you must go to ask forgiveness even now, in the middle of the night."

Embarrassed, confused, and scared, Mrs. Henig replied, "I can't go. I am too embarrassed." The Leshem spoke a few gentle words to the distraught woman and reached for his coat and walking stick. The two of them made their way through the dark alleyways, towards the home of the quiet young couple, Avraham and Chaya Musia, son and daughter-in-law of the great Leshem.

They knocked on the door. Mrs. Henig waited, her knuckles white with nervousness. The door opened, and a surprised Avraham faced them. "Abba! What are you doing here so late at night? Who is this lady? How can I help?"

At this point, the ashen-faced Mrs. Henig burst out, "Please forgive me. Please save the life of my son. I threw your washing into the mud. I am so sorry."

A little taken aback, Avraham replied, "Washing? In the mud? What are you talking about? Are you sure you are at the right address?"

It was Mrs. Henig's turn to be confused. "I think so. I think I recognized that it was your wife, Chaya Musia. Isn't that right?"

"Well Chaya Musia is asleep right now. She didn't tell me anything about it. Just a moment, let me quickly ask her. This is something important, if your son is so sick."

A moment later, Avraham returned to the door with Chaya Musia. Chaya Musia was looking at the floor. "I just didn't want to cause more pain," she began. You clearly were upset. I didn't want to tell my husband. I just went back to the river, washed the sheets, and hung them out again."

Mrs. Henig was shocked. This was truly a family of tzaddikim. Chaya Musia didn't even tell her husband. She told no one. It was simply not human.

"Please forgive me," said Mrs. Henig through her sobs.

"Please, I totally forgive what you did," Chaya Musia answered "I am so sorry that this is happening to your son!"

"Abba", said Rav Avraham to the Leshem, "Please give this lady a bracha

for the health of her son."

The Leshem beamed. He had a new appreciation for the righteousness of his daughter-in-law. "I would love to give you both a bracha. First, a bracha for the health of your son, Mrs. Henig, for having the courage to ask forgiveness and for doing teshuva. And to you, my dear daughter-in-law, we know that you have not yet been blessed with a child. You managed to hold back from speaking lashon hara and gave another person the benefit of the doubt. You were careful for the honor of someone else. May Hashem send you a son who will light up the world with his Torah and Yiras Shamayim."

Mrs. Henig's son immediately recovered. Happily, one year later, following thirteen years without a child, Avraham and Chaya Musia Elyashiv, the son and daughter-in-law of the Leshem, Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, were blessed with a child who they named Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.

Rav Elyashiv, grandson of The Leshem, father-in-law of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, became the Posek HaDor, the greatest halacha authority of the generation.

The power of holding back from lashon hara and showing honor for one another are the keys to building Klal Yisrael. They will ensure that we can stand at Shavuot and accept the Torah with one heart.



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



Tazria: A Tale of Treats & Tattling

Josh and Tammy Kruger

Once upon a time:

Yehudit and Leah were walking home after a hard day at school. For weeks, their class had been trying to behave perfectly because they were promised a Rosh Chodesh party by their teacher if everyone's behavior was good.

However, on this day, some of the bags of treats set aside for the party went missing from the teacher's drawer. No one knew who had taken it, and their teacher was quite upset.

"It's really not fair," said Yehudit. "We've worked so hard this whole month, and someone had to ruin it! I'm pretty sure that Mrs. Levy thinks it was Rachel. She seemed to be staring at Rachel while she lectured us about how wrong it is to steal."

"Actually," replied Leah, "I'm fairly certain it wasn't Rachel. I saw the bags of treats in one of the other girl's school bag. Looking very guilty, she quickly closed her bag when she saw the opened zipper."

"Omigoodness!" exclaimed Yehudit, "You have to tell the teacher!"





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



The Discussion

Q: What is the connection between our story and the parasha?

A: Parashas Tazria deals with tzara'as, a sickness of the skin that was a punishment for lashon hara.

Q: Is tattletaling allowed?

A: If we are certain that the person did something wrong and that telling on them will have a positive effect, then lashon hara can be permitted. In our story, for example, telling the teacher may prevent Rachel from being wrongly accused and embarrassed and will enable the teacher to deal effectively with the situation. However, there are a number of important conditions that must be met (*Chofetz Chaim Klal 10*). The following questions deal with some of the conditions.

Q: If Leah decides that she will not tell the teacher that she saw the treats in the school bag of their classmate, can Yehudit (assuming Yehudit knows which girl it was) tell the teacher?

A: No. One of the conditions taught by the Chafetz Chaim is that we must be certain that the person actually committed the act. Yehudit did not actually see the treats in the girl's school bag. She only heard about it from Leah. She therefore cannot be certain and cannot tell the teacher about the incident.

Q: If Rachel decides that she should

tell the teacher about the girl who had the treats in her bag, then there is something that she should do first. What is it?

A: When and where it is possible, she should try first to discuss the matter with the girl. This will give the girl a chance to confess her crime to the teacher and change her ways with minimal embarrassment. Furthermore, perhaps there was a good reason why the girl had the treats in her bag and she wasn't actually stealing.

Back to Our Story:

Leah asked her father for advice, and they looked up the halacha together. They saw that although it is probably okay for lashon hara to help clear Rachel's name, it was best for Leah to approach the girl with treats in her bag and privately convince her to confess to her teacher. Leah did talk to her classmate, and the results were positive. A week later, the class happily celebrated Rosh Chodesh with treats and smiles.

Metzora: Relieving a Heavy Heart

The Story

"Yitzi, don't you have a big test tomorrow? I think an early bedtime might be a good idea," Yitzi's mom commented as she passed his bedroom. Yitzi was sitting on his bed, fiddling around with

some toys, and had a grumpy look on his face. He nodded at his mother, but didn't say much. He was still pretty upset with his cousin Binyamin who had invited him over to see his new bike, and then didn't let him touch it! Yitzi spent an entire hour watching Binyamin ride his new bike. How frustrating.

Yitzi's mother realized that he was behaving unusually. She came back to his room and sat on his bed with him.

She touched him on his arm, "You've been really quiet since you came back from Binyamin's house tonight. Is everything okay?"

Yitzi shook his head, "Something really annoying happened but I don't think that I can tell you about it 'cuz it's really lashon hara. But I'm so upset that I can't even make myself go to sleep and tomorrow I'm gonna be tired and then I'm gonna do badly on my test and then I'll be upset tomorrow cuz of the test and won't be able to go to sleep again tomorrow night! This is terrible and horrible and I'm never going to sleep again so you can just sell my bed and blankets and sheets..."

With a groan, he flopped his face into his pillow.

Is Yitzi allowed to tell his mother what happened? It would help him feel better, but it would be lashon hara about his mom's own nephew. What can he do? (... and will he ever sleep again?)

The Discussion

Q: What is the connection between our story and the parasha?

A: Parashas Metzora deals with tzara'as, a sickness of the skin that was a punishment for lashon hara.

Q: Can Yitzi tell his mother about what happened at Binyamin's house?

A: While lashon hara is certainly an extremely serious issue, it can be permitted in situations where it will have a positive result. Drawing on a verse in Mishlei, the Gemara (*Yoma 8*) writes, "When a person has a heavy heart, he should open up to others." Based on this idea the *Chofetz Chaim* (Clal 10, Note 14) mentions that it could be permitted for a person to unload his concerns and feelings by sharing them with others, even if this involves lashon hara.

This leniency is reported in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l concerning a husband and wife: It is often permitted for husband and wife to share their frustrations – even where others are involved – for venting frustrations is essential to getting over them. Yitzi is having trouble falling asleep because he keeps thinking about what happened at Binyamin's home. Sharing his story with his mother is allowed, even though it means that she will hear lashon hara about Binyamin.

Q: Let's suppose that Yitzi's mother had indicated the day before that she



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was considering buying a fancy bike lock for Binyamin. Why might that be important?

A: While Yitzi is permitted to discuss what happened at Binyamin's house, he has to be careful with whom he shares the story. This is because it is forbidden to state lashon hara if it will cause a financial loss to the subject (Tosafos, Zevachim 88b). In this case, Yitzi should realize that his mother may choose not to buy the fancy bike lock for Binyamin when she hears the story. It would therefore be better, if possible, to discuss what happened with his father.

Back to Our Story

After talking with his mother, Yitzi relaxed and was able to get to sleep. The next day his class took their test and, afterwards, were dismissed for recess.

Yitzi walked out to the play area and saw Binyamin standing next to his new bike.

"Yitzi! There you are! I've been waiting for you!"

"Yah, our class got out a little late because we had a test."

"Okay! Anyway, I brought my bike to school and was gonna ride it during recess, but I wanted to ask you first if you'd like to have a turn." Binyamin handed his helmet to his cousin, "I feel really dumb that you didn't get to ride it yesterday. I'm really sorry. I guess I was so excited, I wasn't thinking right."

Yitzi smiled and, excitedly, began to mount the bike. "I know what you mean, Binyamin. When I get excited, I start thinking silly things too. Like when I told my mom last night that she should sell my bed."

Yitzi laughed while Binyamin looked puzzled.

"Never mind. It's a long story. Okay, here I go! Thanks for giving me a turn!"

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