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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Son of the tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a



Maskil LéDavid

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Lashon Hara causes dissent and dispute

"This shall be the law of the person afflicted with tzara'at" (Vayikra 14:2)

In this parshah we read about the issue of tzara'at. The Siftei Chachamim brings (Vayikra 13:46) that the word tzara'at denotes "motzira" (slander). Rashi cites the Gemara (Arachin 16b): Wherein is the leper different that the Torah said: He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be? He separated a husband from his wife, a man from his neighbor, therefore said the Torah: 'He shall dwell alone'. We find that anyone who spoke lashon hara was stricken like Miriam, and like many others. It is surprising why Chava was not stricken with tzara'at, since the Serpent spoke derogatorily about Hashem when it said (Bereishit 3:5) "For G-d knows that on the day that you eat thereof, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like angels, knowing good and evil," and Rashi explains the Serpent's argument: "Every craftsman hates his fellow craftsmen. He [G-d] ate of the tree and created the world." Chava repeated this to Adam and thereby spoke lashon hara; why was she not stricken with tzara'at?

Before we explain it, let us examine the magnitude of the punishment of tzara'at. The Gemara states (Nedarim 64b), "Four are accounted as dead: A poor man, a leper, a blind person, and one who is childless."

This requires explanation. It is logical that a poor man, a blind man and one who is childless are considered as dead, but why is the leper considered as dead, since he lacks nothing because he has children and money and he sees like anyone else. It seems like he can enjoy life, so what is he lacking that he is considered as dead?

The reason is because the Shechinah departs from the leper and he becomes excommunicated. He disconnects from Hashem Who is the source of life, and Hashem distances him, decreeing upon him as it is written, (Vayikra 13:46), "He shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." The message Hashem transmits to the leper is, "I want nothing to do with you!" Thus, being considered as dead has nothing to do with how many possessions one has.

From here we see the severity of lashon hara, which may seem to us as a minor offense, but

the consequences are devastating. Let me tell you about an incident that shocked me. When I was in New York, an acquaintance, whom I know for many years came to me and told me: I have come to say goodbye to you because I do not know if I will see you again.

I was taken aback by his words and asked him why he said that. He confided that the doctors had just diagnosed him with cancer at an advanced stage and they did not give him more than a few weeks or a few months to live. I told him that he must have hope to merit speedy salvation, and he should not despair from Hashem's Mercy, but he persisted that he felt his end was near, and he just begged me to pray for him.

His request gave me no rest. He asked me to pray for him before Hashem that Hashem should have mercy on him and not remember all the sins he committed. Then he began to cry and confessed, "Woe to me, what shame awaits me there!..."

I was astonished to hear him utter these words, because in fact these are the word that the Vilna Gaon uses when he explains that Gehinom is dreadful shame which a person feels on the Day of Judgment, which is devastating! I asked him why he had not done teshuvah before, many years ago; but he had no answer...

We know the answer. The answer is because a person who is immersed in the vanities of this world does not see the truth. The appealing material attractions blind him. He sees only honor, beauty, and money, and this misleads him from truth. But when he faces death, he begins to see the truth, as is stated, "There is no ruling on the day of death."

This lesson is alluded to in the punishment of tzara'at, because the leper is considered as dead when he sits in isolation without another soul around, and this arouses him to the reckoning that one day he will lie alone in the grave.

In addition, the holy sefarim state that also the prayers of a slanderer do not rise to Heaven, because the slander creates a barrier which separates him from Hashem, and thus he prays only to the trees and stones, which is like worshipping idols, and his prayers go to the powers of impurity, G-d forbid! For all this he will have to give accounting. All this teaches us about the dreadful damage of lashon hara.

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Tzaddikim

Le 6 Iyar, Rabbi Refael Levin

Le 7, Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lintchitz, Author of Keli Yakar

Le 8, Rabbi David Chizkia Chaddad, Author of Keren David

Le 9, Rabbi Avigdor Kara, Av Beth Din of Prague

Le 10, Rabbi Yossef Teomim, Author of Pri Megadim

Le 11, Rabbi Aharon Pfeiffer

Le 12, Rabbi Messaoud Abouchatsira



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



How can one truly thank Hashem?

The following is a story that was told to me personally by Mr. Shukrun, a G-d fearing Jew, from which we can learn how one's simple faith in Hashem can bring him great salvation. It was already more than three years that he was searching to buy an apartment. His wife was anxious and she constantly pressured him and complained that he did not make enough of an effort to pursue every lead to apartments for sale.

On the day the story took place (2011), it was on Purim. When Mr. Shukrun saw that his wife would not stop nagging, he turned to her and said, "As you know, Purim is a day when the Jews enjoyed "light and gladness," and each year on this day the Gates of Heaven open again and the merits of Am Yisrael are recalled..."

She stopped her badgering for a moment, but did not really comprehend what he was getting at, "What does this have to do with an apartment?" He said, "I can at this opportune moment affirm with certainty that Hashem will assist us, and by this evening we will find the apartment that we are looking for."

Mr. Shukrun went on to tell me excitedly what happened. "After I concluded my words, I went down the steps of the building, and suddenly I noticed a stranger who turned to ask me if this was such and such street, and I answered in the affirmative. Then, he continued and asked, "Where is apartment number so and so?"

The apartment was located right below the apartment that I rented, and I showed him the place he was looking for. Then he told me, "This apartment belongs to me, and I have not visited the place for a long time.

I put this apartment up for sale many months ago, but I

have not yet found a buyer..."

I realized immediately that this was Divinely orchestrated by Hashem, and my prayers had borne fruit. I asked him for some details about the sale, the size of the apartment, and the price he was asking for. After a mere two hours, we found ourselves sitting with an attorney and finalizing the purchase...

When my wife heard what happened, still amazed at the obvious Divine Providence, she asked me, "But what about parking spaces? Is it included in the price?" Before she finished her words, the phone rang and it was the owner of the apartment: We forgot to add the two parking spaces around the house in the contract, but of course it is included in the price."

When I heard this amazing story, I could not help but be moved by the extraordinary Divine Providence that he experienced. Then I turned to him and asked, "And what did you offer as thanksgiving to Hashem for His great kindness to you?"

Mr. Shukrun responded with conviction, "I decided to add two hours to my fixed times of Torah study each day." I was very pleased with his answer and said, "You are most fortunate to have merited this. And this is truly the right way to thank Hashem for His end-less Kindness. It is not sufficient to prepare a feast of thanksgiving, as most people usually do, but the most important thing Hashem wants is to strengthen oneself in Torah and mitzvot and draw closer to Him and His Torah.

This is a tangible example of the power of a Jew who through his simple faith can connect with Hashem, and thus Hashem fulfills his desires and answers his pleas. As we previously explained, this perfect faith is ingrained in every Jew through the mitzvah of Brit Milah, which instills in him unquestioning faith and devotion in the service of Hashem.



Guard Your Tongue

The Power of Speech

Excommunication

Our sages ruled that it is prohibited to degrade a person that died. This is true even if the person had been an ignoramus, and even more so if he was a Torah scholar. One who disparages him deserves the penalty of excommunication.

This prohibition of disparaging a Torah scholar is even if he degrades the scholar himself, and even more so, if he ridicules his words of Torah.

When zeros turn into millions

"This shall be the law of the person afflicted with tzara'at, on the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the Kohen" (Vayikra 14:2)

In the sefer "Roshi BaShamayim" this pasuk is explained in a mystical manner according to what is stated in the Zohar (Parashat Pikudei), that when a person prays without concentrating on what he is saying, or when he learns Torah not for the sake of Heaven, the merits of the prayer and Torah are preserved in a special section Above, and the next time that he prays with concentration, or learns Torah for the sake of Heaven, the improper prayers and Torah study are raised by the proper prayer and Torah study from the section where they were preserved to the Heavenly Throne.

An allusion to this can be found in the words of the pasuk: "Zot tihiye Torat hametzorah – (lit. This shall be the Torah of the person who speaks badly), implying that this will serve to repair the Torah learned not for the sake of Heaven and the improper prayer; "beyom teharato" (on the day of his cleansing), which refers to the day when he learns Torah and prays properly, then "he shall be brought to the Kohen," which signifies that his prayers and Torah study will be brought before the Heavenly Throne, bringing pleasure to Hashem...

There is a story of a chassid of Chortkov, who was a son-in-law of a prominent well-to-do merchant and G-d-fearing man.

One day this chassid came to the home of the Admor of Chortkov, zy"a, and told him:

"Honorable Rebbe, Unfortunately, I have to tell the Rebbe that my father-in-law does not pray..."

The Rebbe told him: "Excuse me for asking, but what time do you pray?"

The chassid answered: "Late in the morning."

"Apparently your father-in-law prays on time," the Rebbe told him...

But the chassid persisted that he was convinced that his father-in-law did not pray at all. So the Rebbe asked him to follow after his father-in-law and only when it was clear to him that he definitely did not pray, he should tell him that the Rebbe was calling him. Indeed, after a few days of following after him, the chassid told his father-in-law that the Rebbe was calling him.

Words of our Sages

The father-in-law turned white, and trembling he went to the Rebbe's house to find out why the Rebbe was calling him.

The Rebbe told him: "I heard that you do not pray."

"That is right," answered the man.

"How could that be? Why not?" The Rebbe inquired.

The man explained: I am not a great Torah scholar, but I have one virtue; I am a man of truth and am meticulous about speaking only the truth. Since I cannot concentrate properly during prayers, I do not want to speak untruthfully what I don't mean, so I do not pray."

The Rebbe told him: It is stated in Tehillim (87:6), "[When] the L-rd counts in the script of the Nations..." This can be explained in the following way:

A Jew comes to the Beit Haknesset and prays without concentrating properly; can Hashem record that he prayed this prayer? Certainly not! It is not considered prayer. Therefore, Hashem records in the man's files a zero.

One zero and another zero join each other, until there is a long line of three hundred and sixty-four zeros as in the days of the year...

But then one day comes when that Jew manages to sanctify himself and he prays wholeheartedly with proper concentration. Then Hashem records a number one in his file. However, if He writes the number one on the right side of the page, then it remains only one. But if He puts the number one on the left side, then the number one is followed by all the three hundred and sixty-four zeros, which amount to an astronomic sum...

All the Nations write from left to right, while the Jewish people write from right to left. So this is the explanation of the pasuk: Hashem "counts in the script of the Nations," and writes the number one on the left side. Thus, at once the entire row of zeros become meaningful and acquire a value of millions... That one prayer recited with proper concentration as if "give birth" to all the prayers so that they become meaningful.

"Therefore," the Rebbe instructed the father-in-law, "you must fulfill your duty. You should answer Amen to all blessings, and try to concentrate properly when saying Amen. But, be aware, that even if you do not always succeed, the improper prayer will one day turn meaningful, since it is preserved and waits until you manage to concentrate properly during one prayer, making the sum total of all your prayers worth millions..."



Chazak U'Baruch

Guarding one's eyes

The sanctity of guarding one's eyes is one of the loftiest ways of serving Hashem, and we are warned about it in the Torah (Bamidbar 15:39), "You shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray."

Usually people attribute the reason for the prohibition of viewing forbidden sights because in the end one will come to transgressing an actual offense. This is not true, because the very forbidden sight causes damage, both in itself and also what the person will do as a result.

There is an account of Rabbi Matia ben Charash, who sat in the Beit Midrash studying Torah. His face shone like the sun, and he never lifted his eyes to look at a woman. Once, the Satan passed by, and became jealous of him. He asked, "Could it be that he never sinned?" He then asked Hashem for permission to entice him to sin. Hashem said he would never succeed, but gave him permission to try.

The Satan stood before Rabbi Matia, disguised as the most beautiful woman, like from the days of Na'ama, the sister of Tuval Kayin, who the Hosting Angels sinned with, as it is stated (Bereishit 6:2), "The sons of Elokim saw that the daughters of man were good and they took themselves wives from whomever they chose."

Rabbi Matia saw her, and turned away. The Satan placed himself in his line of vision, and Rabbi Matia, once again, averted his gaze from her. The Satan didn't give up, and stood before him in all different positions. Until Rabbi Matia cried out, "I am afraid that my yetzer hara will get the better of me, and cause me to sin." He immediately called for his attendant, and asked for a fire and nails. Rabbi Matia heated up the nails and poked out his eyes with them. Upon seeing this, the Satan fell back defeated.

Hashem instructed the angel, Refael, to heal Rabbi Matia. But Rabbi Matia refused to be healed. He told the angel, "Leave me alone. Whatever was, was." The angel took his words up to Heaven. Then Hashem told the angel, "Go and tell Rabbi Matia that I guarantee the yetzer hara will have no control over him." He was immediately healed. From here, Chazal teach that one who doesn't gaze at women, is liberated from the yetzer hara. These are the words of the Midrash.

Let us contemplate what lesson we learn from Rabbi Matia ben Charash. He understood that it was preferable to blind his eyes than to view forbidden sights. With extraordinary conviction, he blinded his eyes. He was prepared to suffer all this pain so that he would not transgress the prohibition of viewing forbidden sights. He knew the suffering that he could experience afterward in the World of Truth would be much greater. But even more than that, he understood that it is not worth having eyes if he would use them to sin. He is prepared to lose his whole life so as not to transgress even once the prohibition of viewing forbidden sights.

Rabbi Matia ben Charash understood that the world is not a free for all. It is not possible to look at whatever one desires and afterward to continue life as usual. It is preferable to be blind, which is considered as being dead, and it is preferable to lose one's sight entirely, in order not to sin with his eyes.

The lesson that Rabbi Matia taught here is incredible: One's eyes do not belong to him. Eyes were given to him to be used in the right way, and when the correct purpose cannot be fulfilled, there is no longer any need for his eyes.

Treasures

*Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita*



A shameful reminder for life

"And it shall be, on the seventh day, that he shall shave off all his hair: [that of] his head, his beard, his eyebrows; indeed, all his hair, he shall shave off" (Vayikra 14:9)

What is the cure for the leper, and how does he cleanse himself of his impurity?

The Torah states that after the affliction of tzara'at is cured, the Kohen takes two birds and a cedar stick and a strip of crimson [wool], and a hyssop; then slaughters the one bird, and dips everything into the blood of the slaughtered bird over the spring water, etc, and he sprinkles seven times upon the person being cleansed from tzara'at, and sends away the live bird. The person being cleansed then immerses his garments, shaves off all his hair, and immerses himself in water, and becomes clean, as it is stated "And it shall be, on the seventh day, that he shall shave off all his hair: [that of] his head, his beard, his eyebrows; indeed, all his hair, he shall shave off." This is how he is ultimately cleansed.

This requires clarification. If the Torah would command the leper to shave off all his hair when the affliction of tzara'at is still plaguing him, then we would understand that this procedure was necessary for his cure. But after the leper is cured from his tzara'at, and he is entirely healthy, why does he then have to remove all his hair? There is nothing more humiliating than this. Imagine a person who has hair and a long beard and suddenly becomes completely bald, and his face is distorted beyond recognition without his beard and side locks and without his eyebrows. Certainly he would be ashamed to leave his house, and he would be traumatized for life. So what is the point of shaving all the hair?

It seems to me that this teaches us how stringent the Torah is about the prohibition of lashon hara. The sin of the gossiper is too great to bear. The main damage is caused by his mouth, and when the mouth becomes defiled by forbidden words of lashon hara and rechilus, the prayers recited through that mouth are not accepted Above, and also the Torah studied through that mouth is flawed and not worthy and cannot purify his soul and sanctify him. Thus, from then on his spiritual advancement is stunted, because he no longer has the necessary tools to grow.

Since the leper damaged his mouth and defiled it with forbidden speech, and henceforth, even if he would engage his mouth with the study of Torah, his mouth is defiled and unworthy, and his prayers would not be accepted Above. He must be aware that the leprosy came to him because he used his mouth to slander his fellow and defiled his tongue with forbidden words of lashon hara and rechilus.

In order to remember the enormity of his sin for the rest of his life, the Torah commanded him to do something degrading and shave off all the hairs of his body. Certainly this shame will make a deep impression in his soul that he will never forget it, and this way he will always remember the severity of his severe sin and will henceforth guard himself from repeating his evil behavior.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Input - Output

Parashat Tazria, which mostly concerns lesions and lepers, is contiguous to parashat Shemini which discusses forbidden foods that are prohibited to eat.

Rabbi Yisrael of Salant, zt'l, explains that this is because the afflictions come mainly because of slander.

Note: While most people are careful not to eat forbidden foods and meticulously check to make sure that they do not swallow a little worm, they are not careful about guarding the dignity of their fellow, and people eat each other alive through slander.

Therefore, the Torah has these two matters contiguous to each other, to teach us that just as we are careful not to eat forbidden foods, so too we must be careful about forbidden speech... Just as we are careful about what we put into our mouths, we have to be careful of what comes out of our mouths!

Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book *Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto*

Hitting the Nail on the Head

Mr. Nachmani worked in the ports of Morocco and earned a profitable income. One day, Rabbi Chaim Hakatan met him in the street and asked him to contribute a specific amount of money for tzedakah. He told the Rav that he did not have the money. The Rav repeated his request and told him, "How can you insist that you do not have the money when you have the exact sum in your pocket?"

Mr. Nachmani shamefacedly took out of his pocket the sum that the tzaddik requested and gave it to him.

Then, Rabbi Chaim warned him, "Your job is in the port. When you go to work, beware! Several Arabs in the port will throw rocks at you, attempting to kill you. The stones will fall near you, but none will hit you."

Rabbi Chaim continued to give him precise instructions.

"Leave your job in the port and go out in the street. Take the first job offer that you receive."

That is exactly what happened. After his miraculous escape at the port, Mr. Nachmani went out in the street and met a gentile, who offered him a job.

"I have a storage room full of nails. I must empty it within the next few days, since someone wants to rent it empty of all contents. You can buy all the nails from me, if you want."

Mr. Nachmani was surprised by this unusual offer. "Why should I pay you for the nails which I will empty from your storage room? You should pay me, since I will be removing them. What can I do with such a huge quantity of nails, anyway?"

The gentile thought a bit and then told Mr. Nachmani, "Okay, tell me how much you want to get paid

for emptying the storage room."

Mr. Nachmani named a sum of money, which the gentile agreed to pay. Mr. Nachmani proceeded to empty the storage room, and he took the nails to his house.

At home, Mr. Nachmani inspected the nails and noticed that they were produced by a well-known company. He hurried over to the local shoemaker and asked him, "How much are these brand name nails worth?" The shoemaker was taken aback and exclaimed, "Nails from this company are scarce! If you possess such nails, I will buy your entire stock."

The shoemaker signed a contract with Mr. Nachmani on the spot. He paid for the entire stock of nails, and Mr. Nachmani received a huge amount of money.

Mr. Nachmani, who was only sixteen years old at the time, went home and showed his father all the money that he had received.

"Where did you get all this money from?" his father asked him.

Mr. Nachmani told his father the whole story, beginning with his encounter with Rabbi Chaim Hakatan, and how in the end he had earned a huge sum of money. When his father heard the amazing account, he told his son, "Let us go to Rabbi Chaim Pinto, since the money really belongs to him."

When the two arrived at the tzaddik's house, even before crossing the threshold, Rabbi Chaim called to them, "Come in."

The father went in and declared, "Rabbi, all the money here belongs to you."

Rabbi Chaim answered, "Take all the money, since I already took from your son the sum that I needed for tzedakah..."