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maskil Le'David

The Severity of the Sin of Lashon Hara

“Command the Children of Israel that they shall expel from the camp everyone with tzara’at, everyone who has had a zav-emission, and everyone contaminated by a human corpse” (Bamidbar 5:2).

There were three camps in the Wilderness: the camp of the *Shechina* which housed the Mishkan, the camp of the Levites, and the camp of Yisrael. As Rashi explains, “The camp of the *Shechina* was inside the curtains; this was surrounded by the camp of the Levites, which was surrounded by the camp of Yisrael, until the end of the encampment of the flags in all four directions.”

Hashem commanded Moshe about the need to protect the holiness of the camp. Therefore, anyone suffering from *tzara’at*, a *zav*, or anyone contaminated by a human corpse, was to be distanced from the camp so as not to blemish its holiness. There are various degrees of ritual contamination, and people were distanced according to the level of impurity. The greater the severity of the impurity, the more camps the person must be distanced from.

This gives rise to a powerful question. Bnei Yisrael were now in their second year after leaving Egypt and had already accepted the holy Torah. If all the sick were healed at that momentous occasion, how could anyone be suffering from *tzara’at*?

Chazal (*Bamidbar Rabba* 13:8) explain that although all the sick were healed at Matan Torah, after the sin of the Golden Calf they were once again afflicted with *tzara’at* and *zav*-emissions. In a different vein, perhaps they were stricken with the difficult illness of *tzara’at* due to stumbling with the prohibition of *lashon hara*; a sin which, unfortunately, is widespread. So despite the fact that all Bnei Yisrael were healed at Matan Torah, this group of people became ill with *tzara’at* after transgressing the very serious sin of *lashon hara*.

Miriam the prophetess is a proof of the severity of this sin. Despite speaking only a few words about her brother Moshe, and having entirely positive intentions, she was nevertheless smitten with *tzara’at* and had to sit alone outside the camp.

The Torah describes how Miriam came to her brother Aharon and related that Moshe had separated from his wife Tziporah, the Cushite woman. (The description “Cushite” was a euphemistic reference to Tziporah’s great beauty and exceptional character.) Miriam and Aharon went on to say, “If he separated from his wife because of the honor of the *Shechina*, ‘Did He not speak to us as well?’ (*Bamidbar* 12:2), yet despite this we continued family life and did not seek to separate.”

Miriam spoke up only for good; she sought to benefit her sister-in-law, Tziporah, and all of Am Yisrael. As we know, a king or prince serves as an example for the rest of the nation, who follows the way their leaders conduct themselves. Therefore, Miriam was afraid that if Moshe Rabbeinu continued his separation from Tziporah the Jewish people would see this as an example of the correct form of behavior and would immediately withdraw from normal life, taking Moshe’s actions as an opportunity or license to do the same. Miriam knew that Hashem desires marital harmony to reign in the home; she therefore turned to her brother Aharon who loved peace and pursued peace, and expressed her surprise at what Moshe had done.

Seemingly, Miriam’s words contained great legitimacy. Yet we see that despite having positive intentions she was punished; she should have turned to Moshe and discussed the situation with him directly, rather than sharing her thoughts with Aharon. If she was concerned for the public, she should have rebuked Moshe privately for his deed and the possible resulting negative effect on Bnei Yisrael. Since she turned to Aharon and not Moshe, she was indicted by Heaven and smitten with *tzara’at*.

This incident serves as a lesson for us: It is forbidden to share derogatory information, even if it is true. It is important to note that derogatory words which are true are considered *lashon hara*, while derogatory words that are a complete fabrication are more severe than *lashon hara* and fall under the category of *motzi-shem-ra*, a much greater sin. If Miriam, who had positive intentions and spoke only the truth, was punished with *tzara’at* according to the full severity of the law and had to quarantine outside the camp for seven days, all the more so if one relates derogatory information which is false and has no purpose! Clearly, the sin is much greater and many times more severe.

Therefore, if one feels that another person must be rebuked, he must go straight to the one involved and not speak behind his back, so as not to stumble with the sin of *lashon hara*.

cont. p. 2.>>>

14 Sivan 5786
30 May 2026

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Nasso



Hilula

14 Sivan
Rabbi Nissim Yagen

15 Sivan
Rabbi Yedidya Refael
Abulafia

16 Sivan
Rabbi Sasson Levi

17 Sivan
Rabbi Aharon of Karlin

18 Sivan
Rabbi David of Cracow

19 Sivan
Rabbi Yehuda ben Attar,
Av Beit Din of Pass

20 Sivan
Rabbi Chaim Mordechai
Leviton, author
of *Nochach HaShulchan*





WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Gaining by Giving

I was once invited to a fund-raising evening on behalf of the Kol Torah Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. I merited sharing the dais with the Rosh Yeshiva, Hagaon Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Schlesinger *shlit"a*. In order to encourage others to donate, I pledged a considerable amount of money. Then I doubled my pledge, so that others would take an example and do likewise.

When I pledged my donation, I had no idea how I would attain the money. I offered a silent prayer that Hashem help me fulfill my pledge and donate the full sum I had promised.

The next night, I participated in the wedding of a friend. As I was leaving the hall, a man ran after me with a sizeable check in his hand. It was even more than the amount I had pledged to the Kol Torah Yeshiva.

I lifted my eyes heavenward and thanked Hashem for accepting my prayers. He showed that when one gives, he never loses. On the contrary, he merely opens the pipelines so that abundance can rain down. As our Sages exhort us (*Ta'anit* 9a), "Tithe so that you may become wealthy."

I was also involved in another similar incident.

My mentor, Rabbi Binyomin Zev Kaufman *shlit"a*, once paid me a visit. While we were talking, I pledged to donate the considerable sum of twenty thousand francs to his Yeshiva. This was despite the fact that I had no idea where the money would come from. But Hashem has His own ideas. As we were speaking, a man walked in with a check for that very amount.

I immediately handed it over to Rabbi Kaufman and saw once again that when a Jew has a strong desire to help his fellow man, Hashem comes to his aid.

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This sin is so severe, to the extent that *Chazal* instructed us not to praise someone excessively, as it could lead to derogatory speech. Similarly, one must be careful not to praise a person in front of his enemy, for the hatred of the enemy might drive him to speak derogatorily, and the one who praised will end up transgressing the sin of hearing *lashon hara*.

Following the construction of the Mishkan, Hashem hurried to command Moshe to distance all those who had *tzara'at* as a result of speaking *lashon hara*, since this was a message for Am Yisrael — the *Shechina* cannot tolerate dwelling among those who stir up dissension and speak *lashon hara*. In order for the camp to remain holy with Hashem's Presence resting in the Ohel Mo'ed, the entire camp must be free of this severe sin. *Lashon hara* simply cannot reside in the same vicinity as the Holy *Shechina*.

I thought that this could be a reason why the *parshah* is called Nasso. The word "נָסוּ - Nasso" can be rearranged to hint to "שָׂנְאוּ - hatred." A person must completely hate anything that can sabotage or disturb his *avodat Hashem* and interpersonal relationships. This includes the sin of *lashon hara* which distances him from his friends and from Hashem.



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Personal Choice – Not Imitation

"One leader each day, one leader each day" (*Bamidbar* 7:11).

Why does the Torah find it necessary to repeat each tribal leader's offering, if they all brought the exact same offering? It would seem sufficient to detail the first one and conclude with "so all the leaders brought."

Rabbi Pinchas ben Zecharye Hakohen Mag'ari *zt"l*, a Sage from Tzinah, explains in his *sefer Or Torah* the reason the Torah details each leaders' offering. Although the offerings were identical, each leader brought his offering out of his personal desire and according to his discernment, and not because he saw the other's offering. Thus, the Torah personally honors each leader, as it says, "For I honor those who honor Me" (*Shmuel* I, 2:30). Had the Torah only described the first leader's offering and then concluded, "And so all the leaders brought," it would have been a slight to their honor, for it would imply they were just following the previous leader.

This serves as a lesson for us, to what degree we must be sensitive to another's honor. The Torah often suffices with changing or adding letters or single words to impart important Torah laws and concepts, while here when it comes to the slightest suspicion of hurting another's honor, the Torah adds a considerable number of verses.

The Goal of Confession is Implementation

"They shall confess their sin that they committed; he shall make restitution for his guilt... and he shall give it to the one to whom he is indebted" (*Bamidbar* 5:7).

The verse begins in the plural "They shall confess," and then surprisingly, goes on to use the singular form "he shall make restitution," and "he shall give." What can we learn from this?

The Tzaddik Rabbi Mordechai of Neshchiz *zt"l* answers with a clever insight:

Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that there is a great gap between a promise and its implementation. For instance, many people can be seen banging "*al chet*" and confessing aloud certain sins they transgressed. But when these same people are faced with fulfilling the obligation of returning a stolen object or other similar situations, it often becomes clear that the words they confessed with their mouths are not followed by any practical application.

When talking about interpersonal relationships, this unfortunate reality is demonstrated by this change in terminology. "They shall confess" is a mitzvah many fulfil, while "he shall make restitution" and "he shall give" is fulfilled only by a few select individuals...



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Five Sela'im for the Kohen

As part of the Pidyon Haben (Redemption of the Firstborn) ceremony, our Sages established the following. The officiating Kohen asks the father, "Which do you prefer: to give away your firstborn son, who is the first issue of his mother's womb, or to redeem him for five silver shekels, as you are required to do by the Torah?"

Of course, the father replies that he wishes to redeem his son for five silver shekels. It appears that the wording of the ceremony allows the father to refuse, as a result of which the infant would belong to the Kohen. Furthermore, the *gaon Ya'avatz* in his siddur *Beit Yaakov* writes that if an older child redeems himself, he says, "I am a firstborn, first issue of my mother's womb and I am yours." The Kohen replies, "Do you want to be mine or do you prefer to give me the five silver shekels your redemption requires?" The child answers, "I wish to redeem myself and I present you [with the redemption money]." He then recites the redemption blessing.

The *sefer Chut Hashani* written by the *Chavat Yair*, writes that despite the implication that the father has the choice of leaving his son with the Kohen if he prefers not to part with five silver shekels (an enormous sum for most people during many periods), this is not so. Firstly, the Torah requires the father to redeem his son, as he says, "This is my firstborn son... and G-d has commanded to redeem him."

Secondly, the child is not the property of the Kohen and is not taken from his parents even if the father refuses to redeem him. Rather, this question is framed as such in order to increase the father's love for his son and the mitzvah of redeeming him; he should give the money willingly without feeling forced, for otherwise he will not have fulfilled the obligation of *pidyon*. This is why he is asked, "Which do you prefer...?"

When Hashem smote the firstborns in Egypt, He laid claim to all firstborn Jews. So if the father does not want to redeem his son, his son remains in Hashem's possession and Hashem might decide to take him back, G-d forbid. If he wishes to keep his firstborn son just as he will keep the rest of his children, the father would do well to redeem him; then the child belongs to his father.

This idea is mentioned in *Sha'arei Teshuva* in the name of *Teshuvat HaGaonim*. The Kohen places his right hand on the infant's head and says to the father, "What is dearer to you, your son or these five *sela'im*?" and the father replies, "My son is dear to me and I am redeeming him." He then redeems him twice as it says, "אך פדה תפדה – but you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man," and it is also written, "ופדויו מובן חדש תפדה – those who are to be redeemed, from one month shall you redeem."

There are two kinds of redemptions: one from Hashem and one from the Angel of Death. The Kohen accepts the money, and, swinging it in a circular motion over the infant's head, he says, "These five silver shekels are redemption money for the son of this father. This redemption is instead of that; this is in exchange for that. This is given to the Kohen and may this son enter into life and fear of Heaven." He then blesses him by reciting "He will not allow your foot to falter..." until the end of the Psalm.

Rabbi Mordechai Halevi Shwartzboard *shlit"a* calls our attention to a novel insight. If a son asks his father why one performs a Pidyon Haben ceremony, the father has a **Torah obligation** to explain the reason to him, according to the verse "and it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, 'What is this?' you shall say to him... Hashem killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt... Therefore... I shall redeem all the firstborn of my sons." He points out that he has observed noted *talmidei chachamim* at Pidyon Haben ceremonies, who purposefully approach the father and ask him why it is necessary to perform the redemption. The father then relates the matter of the Exodus and the plague of the Firstborns, thereby fulfilling a Torah obligation.



FROM THE TREASURY

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

And Establish Peace for You

"May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you" (*Bamidbar* 6:26).

Hashem spoke to Moshe Rabbeinu, telling him to instruct Aharon and his sons as to how to bless Am Yisrael. The verse stresses (*Bamidbar* 6:23), "Speak to Aharon and his sons, **saying**... So shall you bless the Children of Israel, **saying** to them." The commentaries explain the repetition of the word "saying": Aharon and his sons must take care not to bless Bnei Yisrael hastily, just to fulfil an obligation. Rather, they must bless them with the appropriate intentions and feelings. It should not be a blessing cited by rote, but a blessing which emanates from the depths of their hearts.

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 11:5) explains that this Priestly Blessing includes many different blessings. "May Hashem bless you": May Hashem bless your possessions. "And safeguard you": May Hashem protect your newly gained blessing of prosperity so that bandits cannot take it away from you. This is a blessing that only Hashem can guarantee, for man can give a gift to his friend but it may be stolen by thieves. However, Hashem is both the Giver and Protector and therefore His gifts are true gifts that endure. The Kohen continues, "May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you": May Hashem regard you with a pleasant countenance and not treat you sternly. The Sages add that peace is the greatest and most precious blessing Hashem bestowed on His children, for peace is one of the pillars on which the world stands. Hashem's Name is Shalom and His signature is Shalom.

We also find that Bnei Yisrael were not given the Torah until they achieved true unity and love for one another, as it says (*Shemot* 19:2), "And Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain." The word "*vayichan* – encamped" is written in the singular, to teach that they all camped by the mountain as one man with one heart. They felt united and mutually responsible for each other.

Due to the importance of the Priestly Blessing, even after the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, the Kohanim retain this power to bless Am Yisrael, and do so every morning in the chazan's repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei prayer. They pray and beseech Hashem to continue extending His peace over us. Similarly, many people have the custom of blessing their children on Friday night with this blessing. This demonstrates the importance of the Priestly Blessing, whose central theme is peace.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



The Promise for Heavenly Protection

In the approbation to the *sefer Birkat Kohanim B'ahava*, Rabbi David Cohen, Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron notes:

“Some time ago I was with Maran Rosh Hayeshiva, Hagaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman *zt”l*, and he told me the following:

“I am very surprised to see so many people suffering hardships, who require salvation, rushing around to seek blessings. Often they will even travel to distant places for this, even though they are not certain this person’s blessing will bring them salvation. They do not realize that right at their doorstep they have a blessing that Hashem Himself promised has power and generates abundant blessing! At the time of the Priestly Blessing, Hashem Himself blesses His people through the Kohanim, as it says, “And I shall bless them.”

“If so, why do people not try to run after the merit of the Priestly Blessing?”

This question remains unanswered.

Gedolei Yisrael wholeheartedly recommend this exclusive *segulah*; a most valuable gift that the Giver of the Torah bestows upon us in this week’s *parshah*.

This is a mitzvah that is so easily attainable (in Eretz Yisrael). It is saturated with blessings, chock-full of gifts, and bursting with mercy. The more we are meticulous with this mitzvah and the more fervent our concentration, both those who bless and those who receive the blessing, the quicker we will merit salvation, G-dly abundance, and blessings!

Often when Hagaon Rabbi Yaakov Eidelstein *zt”l* was asked to bless a sick person *r”l*, he would give the following piece of advice: “Ask the Kohen if when saying the words ‘peace’ during the Priestly Blessing, he could have in mind the name of the sick person – and with Hashem’s help it will be beneficial. **The Priestly Blessing is the most suitable place**

to receive a blessing and merit salvation. And the correct place to have this in mind is during the word ‘peace,’ for as we know, the blessing of peace includes everything.”

Furthermore, Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas of Rein *zt”l*, in his *sefer Chesed L’Alofim*, details various requests and the correct places to have them in mind during the Priestly Blessing. It also details several requests and entreaties which the Kohanim can have in mind when they offer their blessing, and thereby merit the congregants with their influence. **He points out that the condition for meriting the effect of the blessing is to repent before the blessing, for this enables the blessing to have an effect.**

The holy Zohar explains that at the time of the Priestly Blessing, there is an influence of mercy in all the spheres, and at that very time judgement is transformed into mercy!

How appropriate to bring the words of the *Eretz Chaim*, written by a *talmid* of the Ba’al Shem Tov *zy”a*, in the *Likutim* of the holy *gaon*, Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropol *zy”a*: “He has transmitted a tradition, **“The following are particularly powerful times for one’s request to be fulfilled: When opening the Aron HaKodesh, when lifting up the Sefer Torah, and during the Priestly Blessing. Therefore, if someone has a request he should ask at these times and his prayer will certainly be answered.”**

Harav Menachem Eliezer Moses relates that once as a young boy he went with his father, Harav Shlomo Zalman *zt”l*, to accompany the Chazon Ish *zt”l* on his daily early morning walk. He approached the Chazon Ish and said, “Rebbe, please bless me.” The Chazon Ish replied, “You should see the fulfillment of ‘May Hashem bless you and safeguard you,’ with all its interpretations...”

Similarly, Hagaon Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss *zt”l*

writes in his *sefer Alef Ktav*, “When someone asks me for a blessing, I am accustomed to replying, ‘You should merit the fulfillment of the Priestly Blessing, with its sixty letters, with all the blessings that are derived from the verses of the blessings, detailed in Shas, Midrashim and Zohar.”

The esteemed Admor of Housiatin *zt”l* was approached by a chassid whose face was visibly lined with traces of stress and anxiety. “Rebbe,” he said, “I began working as a money changer and now must walk around the entire day with huge amounts of cash in my pocket; dollars, shekels, every kind of currency... I carry it all with me and it causes me much tension. What can I do?”

The Rebbe thought for a moment and then replied: “Birkat Kohanim. The Priestly Blessing begins with “May Hashem bless you” – your assets, and continues with “and safeguard you.” As Rashi explains, this means bandits should not come and steal your money. If you are particular to hear Birkat Kohanim every day, you are promised Heavenly protection!”

From then on, the chassid was particular to listen to Birkat Kohanim every day. Indeed, throughout the years he worked as a money changer, he was never harmed. Nothing was ever stolen from him, no thief ever tried his luck in his pockets! For tens of years he was meticulous about the blessing, and the blessing protected him, as Rabbi Gamliel Rabinowitz *shlit”a* testifies in his *sefer Gam Ani Odeka*.

For when Hashem promises protection, it has much greater significance than any safe, insurance, or security personnel. While these are important and necessary because of our *hishtadlut* obligation, it is much more worthwhile to be protected by the lofty Promise that will guard all our possessions.



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

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