

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

**פרשת תצוה - פורים**

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נתנדב לרגל נישואי נכדת המחבר  
נח ויהודית גולדבערגער  
בת הרב יחיאל רבינוביץ שליט"א  
יה"ר שיזכו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל

## פרשת תצוה – פורים

וַעֲשִׂיתָ עַל שׁוּלְיֹוֹ... פַּעֲמֹן זָהָב וְרִמּוֹן פַּעֲמֹן זָהָב וְרִמּוֹן עַל שׁוּלְיֵי  
הַמַּעֲיֵל סָבִיב: וְהָיָה עַל אֶהֱרֹן לְשָׂרֵת וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל  
הַקֹּדֶשׁ (שמות כ"ה ל"ג-ל"ה)

*And you should make on its hem...A golden bell and a pomegranate, A golden bell and a pomegranate – on the hem of the Me'il around it. And it shall be on Aharon to serve, and its sound will be heard as he enters the Kodesh.*

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ יִשְׁנֹו עִם אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרָד...  
(אסתר ג' ה')

*And Haman said to the king Achashveirosh, "There is a single nation, scattered and spread out..."*

### The Kapparah of the Me'il for the Cheit of Loshon hara

The Gemara (ערכין ט"ז) tells us that each of the *Bigdei Kehunah* worn by the Kohen Gadol was *mechaper* for a different *aveirah* of Klal Yisroel. The Gemara explains further that both the *Me'il* and *korban* of the *Ketores* atoned for *loshon hara*. Why was it necessary to have two separate items that atoned for *loshon hara*? The Gemara answers this question by explaining that there are two different categories of *loshon hara*. The *Ketores*, which was a 'quiet' *Korban*, atoned for *loshon hara* spoke in secret; whereas the *Me'il* which had the *פעמונים/bells* sewn on the bottom, atoned for *loshon hara* spoken in public.

Besides for the *Pa'amonim* sewn onto the bottom of the *Me'il*, there were *רמיונים/pomegranates* sewn on the bottom of the *Me'il* as well. According to Rashi, these *Rimonim* were placed alongside the *Pa'amonim*, with the bottom of the *Me'il* alternating between a *Pa'amon* and a *Rimon*. This would indicate that the *Rimonim* were intertwined into the concept which the *Pa'amonim* represented. As we shall see, the Chofetz Chaim explains that the *Rimonim* were indeed an integral part of the symbolism of the *Kapparah* that the *Me'il* brought for *loshon hara*. However, before we present his explanation,

let us move to on to the story of Purim, where we also find the concept of *loshon hara* playing a role.

### The *Loshon hara* of Haman

When Haman approached Achashveirosh with his plan of destroying the Jewish Nation, Achashveirosh seemingly agreed wholeheartedly. However, the Gemara tells us although Achashveirosh was certainly very enthusiastic about the idea, he still expressed some hesitation at fighting the Jews. How was he convinced to agree to the plan? The Gemara explains that Haman was a master speaker of *loshon hara*, and it was with this 'skill' that Haman was able to convince Achashveirosh to agree with his plan.

*As Haman presented his plan to Achashveirosh about annihilating the Jewish People, Achashveirosh began protesting. "How will we ever destroy the Jewish People? Their G-d will protect them and destroy their enemies as he has done to all the nations that have attempted this before us!"*

*"Do not worry," Haman countered. "ישנו – The Jews have been sleeping from their mitzvos!"*

*"What about the talmidei chachamim among them?"*

*"They are עַם אֶחָד – 'one nation', [i.e. they are all responsible for each other.]"*

*The exchange continued for a few more rounds, with Haman deflecting each point that Achashveirosh raised. Haman assured Achashveirosh, "You need not be afraid that I will cause there to be a large empty area in your kingdom, bereft of any citizens. The Jews are מְפֹזָר – scattered around your kingdom in all different locations, and there is no single area where there is a large recognizable concentration of them."*

*In this way, Haman used his smooth talk to persuade Achashveirosh until Achashveirosh was fully agreeable to Haman's plan of wiping out the Jews.*

As seen in this Gemara, the 'expert' *loshon hara* of Haman was so instrumental for the decree against Klal Yisroel to be carried through.

We see now that there is an inyan of *loshon hara* in our *parshah*, as well in the Megillah. *Loshon hara* was the *aveirah* for which the *Me'il* atoned, and the *Loshon hara* of Haman was an integral element of the story of Purim. It would therefore seem appropriate at this time to study the nature of the *aveirah* of *loshon hara*, in order to properly understand our task of safeguarding ourselves from its evil trap.

### Remembering the מעשה מרים

To begin, let us cite a Magen Avrohom in *Hilchos Krias Shema* (סימן ס' סק"ב), who discusses the שש זכירות/*the six mitzvos of 'remembering'*. As we know, there are six *mitzvos* in the Torah in which we are required to remember a particular concept or occurrence. The Magen Avrohom explains how each of the זכירות are hinted in the words of the *berachah* of אהבה רבה and of *Krias Shema* which follows it. One of the remembrances is about the story of Miriam, who spoke *loshon hara* about Moshe Rabbeinu, and who was punished with *tzora'as* as a result. Where is this *mitzvah* hinted? The Magen Avrohom tells us that it is hinted in the words at the very end of the *berachah*, להודות לך וליחדך באהבה/*to thank You and to proclaim Your Oneness with love*. From where we see, says the Magen Avrohom, that we should be utilizing our mouths to thank Hashem, rather than utilizing them to be speaking *loshon hara*.

The question we can ask on this Magen Avrohom is that this *remez* seems like somewhat of a stretch. True, thanking Hashem is a positive application of our mouths, whereas speaking *loshon hara* is a negative one. However, there would still seem to be a long way between these two ends of the spectrum. What about if one would not use his mouth altogether, or if he would use it for affairs which are neither *loshon hara* nor matters concerning a *mitzvah*? Why is the *mitzvah* of thanking Hashem used as the method of conveying that we should refrain from the *aveirah* of speaking *loshon hara*?

### The Destructive Midah of the Snake

To understand this point, let us learn a Gemara (תענית ה') which relates an exchange which will occur among all the animals of the world:

*In the future, the animals of the world will gather around the snake with a criticism.*

*They will say to the snake, 'It is true that there are many animals whose nature it is to harm other animals. Each animal has its own manner of overcoming its prey, many times in ways that are quite painful for the victim. Still, though, a defense may be offered on their behalf. Each beast at least has intention for its own benefit. It destroys its victim in order to satisfy its hunger. The wolf, for instance, tears apart its prey and brings it to its lair where it eats the victim; the lion tramples its prey and eats it as is. The common denominator is that both animals are consuming their victim.'*

*'You, evil snake, however, are worse than all of us. You poison your victim and just leave it there, having no gain from the act. Why are you so cruel?'*

*To this the snake replies: 'What advantage does the Baal Loshon hara have? He too destroys marriages, businesses, schools, jobs, communities, harming so many people, with no gain for himself. He does so only because he just has this midah of talking negatively without any restraint or limit!'*

### **Understanding the Argument of the Snake**

This Gemara would seem difficult to understand. 1) What is the animals' complaint against the snake? They admit that they have their natures, powered by their instincts; it should follow then, that the snake is also governed by its nature and instincts. What then can they have wrong with the snake, who is merely following the nature assigned to it by Hashem? 2) What is the understanding of the snake's response: "What advantage is there for the *Ba'al Loshon hara*?" How does the fault of the *Ba'al Loshon hara* serve to remove blame from the snake? Do two wrongs make a right?

*Yossi, an eight-year-old, carries a steaming hot bowl of soup to the table in a careless manner. Sure enough, after a few seconds, the hot soup splashes on his hands, causing him to drop the bowl to the floor. The china bowl shatters, and soup splashes all over the dining room floor.*

*You call Yossi over and begin to reprimand him. "Yossi, this is not the first time that you were told to be more careful! Why were you carrying the bowl that way?"*

*How does Yossi respond? "Rivky carries it that way!"*

*You become so exasperated with Yossi. "What does Rivky have to with it? You, Yossi were careless, it is not the first time that you were warned, and you must be dealt with appropriately. Leave Rivky out of this! We'll deal with her if and when we see fit. She has no bearing on your situation!"*

How is the snake justifying himself by pointing to the *Ba'al loshon hara*? True, the *Ba'al loshon hara* may be wrong, but now the snake is being taken to task for his conduct. What relevance does the *Ba'al loshon hara* have to the accusation against the snake?

### **The Midah of the Snake is In-born – as Evidenced by its Existence in the Natures of People**

It would seem that we can explain this Gemara as follows: The other animals reasoned that it is not possible that Hashem would imbue the snake with a trait which is so completely destructive. To harm simply for the sake of harming, with no gain for the one who inflicted the harm, is something that they assumed as having no place in the original plan of Creation. If so, they presumed, it must be that the snake had developed this bad *midah* on its own. Through constantly engaging in negative behaviors, the snake had transformed its nature into one of complete harm and destruction.

This is what angered the other animals. They argued to the snake, "We are acting according to the natures that we assigned at the time of our creation. You, though, have stretched your own nature into a whole new level of cruelty and destruction! You murdered people and other animals with no pleasurable gain for you. Why were you so heartless and cruel?"

To this the snake responds, "See that this *midah* exists in people as well." The human being is an עולם מלא, a composite of all the forces that Hashem implanted in Creation. If a person has the same *midah* as the snake, we can conclude that this *midah* is indeed originally designed by Hashem Himself in the Creation, and the snake is not to be held to blame for its destructive nature.

### **The Destructive Nature of Loshon hara**

This *midah* can be found, the snake argues, in the *Ba'al Loshon hara*. He has no gain whatsoever, and yet he destroys with his negative words.

*I am personally aware of a story in which a bachur was pursuing a certain shidduch, until one of his friends caught wind of it and began speaking negatively about the bachur in front of the family of the girl. This loshon hara-speaker did not do so because he wanted the shidduch for himself or a family member, nor because he was angry at the first bachur and wished to settle the score, and nor because he truly felt that he was sharing information l'toeles. Only because he found some perverse pleasure in involving himself in other people's affairs and inserting his own two cents. As a result of his loshon hara, the shidduch was called off.*

*'Bachur, what do you have from you loshon hara? Are you happy now that you ruined a nice shidduch? – Learn to control your mouth, rather than using it to needlessly harm other people!'*

The *Nachash* is demonstrating, then, how terribly destructive is this nature of *loshon hara* that is instilled into human beings. It is aptly compared to the deadly poison of a snake, in its lethal power to harm others, and in the way the perpetrator has no benefit from it. How are we to protect ourselves from falling not this terrible sin? Is there a means for us to ensure ourselves against its tight clutches?

### **Overcoming the Midah of Jealousy**

To answer this question, let us discuss the insight of Rav Chaim Brim regarding the *midah* of jealousy. The Ibn Ezra and other *meforshim* famously discuss a difficult question regarding the Torah prohibition against jealousy. How can the Torah prohibit a feeling that exists in our minds?

*Reuven tells Shimon, "I am going to tell you a hilarious joke – but make sure not to laugh!"*

*How is Shimon supposed to follow those instructions? If the joke is funny, he will be forced to laugh! He is almost laughing at the absurdity of the idea before he even hears the joke!*

Similarly, how can one not feel jealousy when he sees others have what he does not?

*Chaim and his wife would like to add an extension to their home. They have dreamed of doing so for a few years, and they have been trying to save money, yet so far, they have not been able to afford it. At one point, they hear that their rich neighbor across the street is thinking of extending his home. Within two days, a contractor is seen on their property gathering all the necessary details, and within a month's time, the project is complete. A beautiful new wing is added to their mansion.*

*How can Chaim not feel resentment toward his neighbor? Here he is, scrimping and saving for his dream of one day adding a few measly feet to his home, and here his rich neighbor can add an entire wing to his large mansion without even blinking? It seems not fair!*

### **Rejoicing over our Friend's Success**

Rav Brim would offer an answer to this question. As long as we are struggling with feelings of jealousy and resentment over our friend's success, it is indeed hard to overcome these feelings. However, says Rav Brim, we can alter our whole attitude to our friend's successes. Rather than resenting their good fortune, we can train ourselves to view their success with the same need as our own. We will then truly rejoice for them when they receive a gift from Hashem, even if we do not presently seem to have the same *brachah* for ourselves.

*Shloimy and his wife are looking for a shidduch for their daughter. They feel that their daughter is on a high level in her yiddishkeit and her midos, and they feel that she needs a bachur of a certain caliber. They have been looking for some time, but they have not yet been sent the right one. At that time, Shloimy's co-worker does a shidduch for his daughter with a boy of the exact caliber that Shloimy is seeking!*

*How can Shloimy avoid thoughts of anger? How can he control himself from thinking, "He is no better than I am! Why does he get what he wants and not me?!"*

*Shloimy is indeed faced with a difficult nisayon. It can be hard for a person not to compare and wonder why he did not get the same good fortune. The answer to the question, though, is that Shloimy must develop himself to the point that he has a deep and genuine ahavas Yisroel to all yidden. When a yid succeeds, Shloimy is truly happy. "Ah! Boruch Hashem my co-worker was able to such a shidduch! He deserves it completely! I feel so happy!"*

Such a state of being is certainly not easy. However, when a person puts the necessary toil into acquiring this *midah*, he will see that the resultant state that he will achieve was well worth the effort. He will have completely conquered the *midah* of jealousy, by rejoicing over the success of others rather than resenting it.

### **Combatting Loshon hara by Training Oneself to Speak Positively**

Now let us return to the subject of *loshon hara*. How can we control ourselves from the terribly destructive force that exists within us through our power of speech? The answer is that simply controlling ourselves from speaking negatively can indeed be difficult. True, silence is generally a commendable trait when it can be practiced, but it is not always easy. A person is naturally inclined to use his power of speech, and it is a tremendous *Gevurah* to acquire the habit of silence.

The Magen Avrohom provides us with an alternative approach to this. As explained regarding the *midah* of jealousy, a highly effective means of combatting it is by coming from the opposite end, and instilling within oneself to be happy over others' success. In a similar manner, one can battle against his *midah* of speaking negatively by training himself to always speak positively. We remember the *Ma'aseh Miriam*, says the Magen Avrohom, in the words להודות לך וליהודך באהבה – by training ourselves to utilize our mouths for the positive activity of thanking Hashem. Through this we will pull out the *midah* of *loshon hara* by its roots, because we will direct our natural inclination towards positive qualities that we can find rather than negative ones.

There is always something positive to say about a particular person or situation.

*Avi is sitting at a dinner which is being catered by a well-used local caterer. As Avi begins eating the farfel that is being served as part of the main dish, he realizes that a terrible mishap must have occurred. The farfel must have not been wrapped properly in the refrigerator, and it had had enough time to absorb the smells of the other food in the fridge. Avi tasted salmon, potato kugel, chicken, and tzimmes, all in that farfel. It was like the mann, containing all the tastes in the world!*

*Avi has two choices in front of him. Either he can start to 'knock' the caterer with a vengeance. "That caterer – all he's looking to do is make his buck! His food can sit in the fridge for a month and he'll still serve it! I don't understand how he calls himself a caterer!"*

*Alternatively, however, Avi can recall the way he has always enjoyed the meals of this caterer. He can decide to praise the caterer's professional selection of dishes, or of his expert skill in arranging each dish in a pleasing manner, making it enjoyable to partake of the food.*

*There is something negative which Avi can say, as well as something positive; what will actually be said depends on the mindset and the attitude of Avi.*

### **Bowing at Modim – like a Nachash**

The ideas that we are presenting can be beautifully seen in a Gemara discussing the *berachah* of *Modim*. The Gemara tells us that one should bow at the beginning of *Modim* in the manner of a snake. The obvious question is, why must the Gemara choose the lowly snake as the *mashal* for the way one must bow during *Modim*? Based on our discussion, we can suggest the following: Through the *nachash's* role in the *cheit* of the *Eitz Hada'as*, by claiming that HaKadosh Boruch Hu had ulterior motives for forbidding the tree, the *nachash* became the prototype speaker of *loshon hara* for all generations. Chazal therefore hint to us – When bowing for *Modim*, do so in the manner of the snake. The message is clear: Use the ability of speech that the snake had, but direct it for giving thanks to Hashem, rather than the evil *loshon hara* that the snake spoke.

### **A Person Should Speak Divrei Torah, but Remain Silent Regarding Other Matters**

Let us now return to the subject of the *Me'il* that the Kohen Gadol wore in the Beis Hamikdash. As explained earlier, the *Pa'amonim* of the *Me'il* symbolized the sound of *loshon hara* that is uttered with one's voice, and it is such *loshon hara* for which the *Me'il* was *mechaper*. What is the symbolism of the *Pa'amonim* in between the *Rimonim*? The Chofetz Chaim explains this according to the passuk יולד לעמל פה / *A person is created for toil*. Which toil? עמל תורה / *the toil of one's mouth*. Which toil of one's mouth? עמל תורה / *Toiling in Torah*. This, explains the Chofetz Chaim, is the meaning of the *Pa'amonim* and *Rimonim*. When speaking words of Torah, one can, and should, produce much noise with his mouth – like the *Pa'amonim*. Otherwise, ישים עצמו כאלם / *He should make himself as though he were mute*. Here again, is hinted the idea that we are discussing. A person does not have to make himself a complete mute in this world. However, if he wishes to speak, he must channel his words into words of Torah, or kedushah, or of thanks to Hashem.

### **משתה ושמחה - Thanking Hashem for His Miracles**

Purim is a time when we have a *שמחה* and *שמחה* through which we give thanks to Hashem for the miracles that He performed. Let us use the concept of *שמחה* and *שמחה* to train ourselves to become as distant as possible from the evil *loshon hara* that Haman spoke. Let us follow the advice of the Magen Avrohom, to utilize the gift of speech for thanking Hashem, thus removing much of the urge and temptation to use our mouths for *loshon hara*.

As the Chofetz Chaim tells us, one who fulfills the lesson of the *Me'il*, will be *zoche* to the *berachah* which is alluded to in the continuation of the *pessukim* concerning the *Me'il* – ונשמע קולו בבואו / *His voice will be heard in the Kodesh*. i.e. His *tefillos* will be heard in Shamayim. Through our refraining from *loshon hara* as represented by the *Pa'amonim*, and on the contrary using the sound of the *Pa'amonim* as they represent words of Torah, we should be *zoche* to this *brachah* that our *tefillos* should be answered and bring the גאולה השלימה במהרה בימנו.

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