

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



תשפ"ד Metzora

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

ל"ן 286

אמרות שמשון

What the Peddler Taught R' Yannai in Regards to the Stringency of Speaking Loshon Hora

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והוכא אל הנהן (יד, ב):

This shall be the law of the metzorah...

The Midrash (ויקרא ט"ז ב) cites this Passuk and expounds on it as follows. This shall be the law of the metzorah, thus it is written, 'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit'. The Medrash continues and relates an incident which teaches us the significance of this message.

An incident took place with a peddler who would make his rounds in the towns which were in the vicinity of Tzipori, and announce: "Who wishes to acquire a life-giving drug?" Whenever he would make this announcement, people would cling to him, anxious to hear more about this drug. One time when R' Yannai was sitting and studying in his reception room, he heard this peddler making his announcement. R' Yannai promptly called the peddler over and asked to purchase this drug. The peddler replied, "Neither you nor any like you have any need for that drug which I have to sell". Nevertheless, because R' Yannai persisted, the peddler came close to him, and showed him the Passuk in Tehillim, אהב ימים לראות טוב, - 'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good?' The peddler then showed R' Yannai what is written thereafter, נצור לשונך מרע, - 'Guard your tongue from evil'. This Passuk indicates that guarding one's tongue from speaking ill of others is the key to preserving one's life and to seeing good days. R' Yannai then said; Shlomo Hamelech proclaimed similarly in Mishlei (כ"א כ"א) and said, - שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, - 'One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from troubles'. Subsequently, R' Yannai said; All my life I have read this Passuk, yet I never knew how it is to be understood, until this peddler came and made known to me the importance of 'Who is the man who desires life'.

We need to understand what it was about this Passuk in Mishlei

that at first R' Yannai didn't understand, and why only after hearing the words of the peddler, who seemingly did nothing other than show R' Yannai a Passuk in Tehillim, did the meaning of the Passuk in Mishlei become clear to him?



The Midrash Tanchuma brings the Passuk in Mishlei, שומר פיו ולשונו, - *One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from troubles*, and modifies it, as if it were to say, שומר פיו ולשונו, - *One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from tzaraas*. What R' Yannai did not understand about this Passuk before the peddler came along, was why the Passuk would say, שומר מצרעת נפשו, - *he guards his soul from tzaraas*, when it should have said, שומר מצרעת גופו, - *he guards his body from tzaraas*, for tzaraas inflicts the person's body and not the person's soul?



When the peddler announced, "Who wishes to acquire a life-giving drug?" and then went on to show R' Yannai the Passuk, מי האיש חפץ חיים, אהב ימים לראות טוב, נצור לשונך מרע, - 'Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil', this caused R' Yannai to reflect and realize that the tzaraas that inflicts the slanderer isn't a tzaraas that merely inflicts the slanderer's body, rather it endangers the slanderer's life, too. Accordingly, the Passuk would be understood as follows; 'One who desires life' [and doesn't want to endanger it with the tzaraas that can endanger the slanderer's life], and also 'loves days that he may see good' [and doesn't want to ruin his days with the tzaraas that inflicts the slanderer's body], should 'guard his tongue from evil'.

As a result of this new understanding of the Passuk in Tehillim, R' Yannai also gained an understanding of the Passuk in Mishlei. The Passuk says, שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, - *One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles*, and while the Tanchuma does modify the Passuk to read, שומר מצרעת נפשו, - *guards his soul from tzaraas*, nevertheless it still wouldn't read שומר מצרעת גופו, - *guards his body from tzaraas*, for although, in truth, the tzaraas is only found on the slanderers body and not on his soul, nevertheless the tzaraas doesn't merely inflict his body, rather it also inflicts him in a way which is a danger to his life, and thus, the tzaraas is indeed an infliction to the slanderers soul, as well.

(זרע שמשון פרשת מצרע אות ז)

We See That Even Though Lashon Haro Is A Very Severe Sin There Is Atonement For A Person Who Transgresses It.

It is written in the Gemara Erchin (16a); R. Shemual ben Nachmani in the name of R. Yehuda said that Hashem afflicts a person with tzarras to atone for one of seven sins and that lashon hara is one of them. The Gemara asks a contradiction to this. R. Anani bar Sasson said that the me'il (one of the priestly garments) is what atones for lashon hara! The gemorra answers that in actuality both tzarras and the me'il atone for lashon hara but each one atones for a different type. Tzarras atones when the lashon hara caused damage, for example, it caused two people to fight or it caused one person to think less of another person. When nothing came out of the lashon hara then the me'il atones.

From this Gemara we see that even though lashon haro is a very severe sin there is atonement for a person who transgresses it.

Zera Shimshon asks that this Gemara seems to contradict a previous Gemara. Just one amud before (15B) it is written that R. Acha the son of R. Chanina said that if a person spoke lashon hara he has no remedy, since Dovid HaMelech declared through ruach hakodesh that anyone who speaks lashon hara is cut off (korais) from the Jewish nation, like it is written, yachris Hashem kol siffsey chalakos lashon medabberess gedolos, Hashem should cut off all the "smooth talking" lips, the tongue which speaks boastfully!

How can we reconcile these two statements?

He answers by asking and answering another question. The Gemara in Moad Katan learns from the possuk, tamay tamay yikra, one who contracted tzaraas should call out; "tamay tamay", that one who contracted tzarras shouldn't keep it a secret but he should publicize it in order that people will pray for his recovery. Zera Shimshon asks why specifically concerning tzaraas does the Torah teach us that one needs public prayer to be saved from a difficult situation and not in some other

difficult situation?

He answers that the answer to this question lies in the exact wording of R' Ananni bar Sasson; " if a person spoke lashon hara HE HAS no remedy, ain low takonah. It is not written, there is no remedy, ain takonah but it is written, HE HAS no remedy. He cannot heal himself since he is only one person, however the whole community has the capability to heal him with their prayers. Therefore, a person who contracted tzarras should publicize his condition so the whole tzibbur together can annul the decree and will be healed.

In other words, when a person is stricken with tzaraas it is as if a heavenly verdict was given. A single person isn't strong enough to annul a sealed verdict, only tefillas harabim (public prayer).

Tefillas harabim is not the only way to reverse a seemingly final heavenly verdict. Chazal teach us that exile also has this power. The Gemara (Berachos 56A) says that a curse of a talmid chochom is effective even if it was said for no reason! For instance, if a talmid chacham curses someone if he won't do something and in the end he did do that thing the curse is still effective. In other words, a curse of a talmid chochom is like a sealed, final, and irreversible verdict. However, the Gemara concludes there that if the person goes into exile that curse is annulled!

According to this, explains Zera Shimshon, we can now understand how it can be that tzaraas atones for lashon horro even though it is also written that there is no remedy for one who speaks lashon horro. A person who was stricken with tzaraas has to move out of the city where he lived it until the tzaraas heals and only then can he return to his home and to his city. This means that goes into a temporary exile. Exile, we learnt, has the power to annul even a sealed verdict! Therefore even though Dovid HaMelech declared through ruach hakodesh that anyone who speaks lashon hara is cut off (korais) from the Jewish nation, this is only if he doesn't go into exile. However, after he leaves his house and city for the whole purification process he can be spared from the severe punishment.

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