

Based on Hashem's kindness towards us and our ancestors, we should be convinced that Hashem has A Proven Track Record in assisting us with our needs. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

Darkest Africa

There was a young Israeli who grew up in North Tel Aviv. After serving his time in the army, this young man went abroad on his tour of the world. He traveled through Europe to Sweden where he met, fell in love, and married a non-Jewish girl. She was a diplomat who worked for the Swedish Foreign Ministry, and shortly after their marriage they were posted to the embassy in one of the central African nations in what used to be known as Darkest Africa.

The Foreign Minister held a reception to welcome the new Swedish consulate, and he was introduced to this Swedish girl and her Israeli husband. The Minister saw that the husband didn't look very Swedish and asked from where he came, "I am from Israel," replied the husband. "You are Jewish!" exclaimed the Minister, his eyes widening. "Yes," he replied rather sheepishly. With a loud and commanding voice, the Minister summoned his entire entourage, "Everyone come here immediately! G-d has sent us one of His holy people - and from His Holy Land!" The polite consular chitchat fell silent as all eyes turned to this fellow, who was praying (probably for the first time in his life) that the floor would mercifully open at his feet and swallow him. His prayers seemingly went unanswered, and the Minister proceeded to ask him how he came to be in his country and many more questions about the Land of Israel.

A few months later, the wife received her transfer orders to the embassy in Ankara. Before they left, however, the Foreign Minister arranged a farewell reception. As the reception drew to a close the Minister made a small speech. Again he impressed on the crowd the tremendous honor that they had enjoyed having one of "G-d's holy people" in their midst. At this point he took an ancient book from one of his aides. Addressing the Israeli fellow he said: "We have had this book in the Ministry for many years, no one is quite sure how long. None of us can read the book since it is in a foreign language. We are not sure, but we think it is in the Holy Tongue. If it is, we would like to present it to you as a mark of our esteem and honor for the time you have spent among us."

With a polite acceptance speech, the Israeli received the ancient tome, and sure enough, it was a Hebrew book - The *Kuzari* by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi.

The couple had decided to see something of the continent of Africa and had planned to spend a month motoring up to Turkey. Needless to say, the husband had no interest in reading The *Kuzari*, but since the nearest copy of *Maariv* was more than a thousand miles away, he made do with the only Hebrew literature that he had.

He started to read Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's account of how the King of *Kazars*, a tribe in Central Asia, had invited the representatives of Judaism, Islam and Christianity to present their claims to being the true faith. After hearing the arguments of each, he had chosen to convert, along with his entire people, to Judaism.

By the time the couple reached the Bosphorous, they were no longer a couple. The Israeli flew back to Tel Aviv, took a taxi to B'nei B'rak, and stopped a black-hatted man on the street, announcing, "I want to learn Torah."

He got remarried in Bnei B'rak just before Pesach. (Ohr Sameach)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִלּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

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SHABBAT TAZRIA ✪ תַּזְרִיָּא

SHABBAT HAHODESH שַׁבַּת הַחֹדֶשׁ

Haftarah: Yehezkel 45:18-46:15

APRIL 1-2, 2022 1 NISAN 5782

Early Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 6:15 pm	Shaharit: 5:40, 6:45, 8:10, 8:30, 9:00 am
Reg. Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 6:45 pm	Morning Shema by: 9:01 am
Candlelighting: 7:02 pm	Shabbat Class: 5:30 pm
Evening Shema after: 8:00 pm	Shabbat Minhah: 1:30 & 6:40 pm
These times are applicable <u>only</u> for the Deal area.	Shabbat Ends: 8:01 pm (R"Y 8:33 pm)
	Sunday Minhah: 7:00 pm

Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Shabbat, April 2.

Mabrook to Shlomo & Shoshana Abadi on the birth of a baby girl. Mabrook to the grandparents, Isaac & Ilana Abadi. Mabrook to the great-grandparents, Meir & Barbara Abadi.

Mabrook to Albert & Sally Alboucai on the engagement of their son, Elliot, to Sophia Savdieh.

A Message from our Rabbi

”וְהִצְרוּעַ אֲשֶׁר-רָבוּ הַנִּגְעוּ...וְטָמְאָ טָמְאָ יִקְרָא”

“And the person with *sara'at* in whom there is an affliction...is to call out 'Impure, impure.'” (Vayikra 13:45)

The *Gemara* teaches that one of the seven causes of *sara'at* is speaking negatively about others. The *Shelah* writes that the Torah specifically instructs someone with *sara'at* to publicly announce his impure status, in line with the *Gemara's* principle that one who invalidates others does so with a defect that he himself possesses. Accordingly, because the gossiper labeled others as “impure” by revealing their alleged defects, now he must publicly admit to his own status as “impure” – having the same defect.

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick points out that in fact the trait of denigrating others is so severe that the *Shulhan Aruch* writes that while every family is assumed to be kosher to marry into, someone who always declares others as ineligible should be assumed to be ineligible himself.

The Rabbi tells the following story that poignantly illustrates this point. Many years ago, the owner of a large bakery decided to check that the weight of the milk and cheese that he was receiving was accurate. He weighed the produce over several days and

discovered that he was being cheated and was receiving less than he was paying for. He brought the evidence to the *Bet Din*, who in turn conducted their own investigation, which concluded that the dairyman was indeed misleading the bakery. When the *Bet Din* confronted the dairyman, he was genuinely astonished at the accusation and pled complete innocence. However, once he was presented with the irrefutable evidence, the truth was soon revealed. It turns out the dairyman did not have his own scales in order to weigh the products. Therefore he used the bakery's bread, which was sold by weight, in order to determine the exact amount of milk and cheese to give the bakery. The *Bet Din* investigated this and discovered that the dairyman was telling the truth, and it was in fact the baker who was cheating his customers, which is why he received dairy products less than he was paying for!

Many times the character traits that we need to work on remain hidden from our consciousness. Yet one way to discover areas that require our attention is when we constantly see a certain fault within others - using the principle that one who invalidates others does so with a defect that he himself possesses. If we see that we are focused on the faults of others in this area, we should consider whether we ourselves are struggling with the same challenge. And if we discover that to be true, then we should apply another of the *Gemara's* principles – not to criticize others about their failings before we have successfully confronted ours. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

A Kind Word

This week's Torah portion describes a person infected with a *negah* – a blemish, which might infect his skin, his clothing, or even the walls of his house. So it is immediately obvious that the “infection” the Torah is describing was a spiritual illness, not medical. A medical condition would not appear on both humans and walls, and would be treated by a medical doctor. The diagnosis of a *negah*, on the other hand, was given by a *Kohein*, a member of the priestly class specially trained to recognize these blemishes.

What was the point of having a spiritual kind of leprosy? In G-d's relationship with the Jewish people, how was it appropriate for them to be afflicted in this way?

The *Talmud* (*Arachin* 16a) attributes these blemishes to any one of seven causes: negative speech, murder, a false oath, forbidden relations, arrogance, theft, and stinginess. G-d used these blemishes to communicate His objection to these negative activities, both to the infected individual and to those who observed his condition.

This disease did not affect everyone who committed these iniquities, and in our time this form of communication does not occur at all. The *negah* is a powerful tool for change, and was therefore reserved for people and times of high spiritual caliber. We are simply not on the spiritual level to properly grow and change from having or seeing this illness.

But if the *negah* no longer afflicts people, and has not for millennia, it begs the question - why are two portions of the Torah almost entirely devoted to the intricate details of how to recognize and treat a spiritual blemish that no longer exists? How is the Torah speaking to us in our generation, when so many words are devoted to a foreign affliction none of us have ever seen?

While we may not see these blemishes today, these Torah portions make one thing very clear - our actions always have real consequences. Sometimes we see those effects, but other times we don't. We might say something to a neighbor that's insensitive, and wishfully imagine that it didn't really matter. However, just because they didn't react to the comment doesn't mean they didn't hear it and weren't hurt by it. They might forgive us for our insensitivity, or they might not, but the words hurt. In former times our treatment of other people might have been revealed to us and the public through a skin

blemish or an ugly stain on our home. In our time the same actions can severely damage our souls, our relationships, and our homes - we just don't always get to see it.

If these are the effects of our negative actions, Judaism teaches us that the consequences of our positive actions and spiritual achievements are many times more potent. By contrast to the *negah*, these great spiritual deeds never had a physical manifestation. We do make unfortunate mistakes, but we can always replace them with positive actions to mend our relationships and correct our ways. The effects of our kind words and deeds is not always obvious, but G-d knows and He is keeping score. He is sure to reward us generously. (Rabbi Mordechai Dixler)

Fault Finding

The process of *negaim* involves the *Kohen* viewing the blemish on the skin of the person and then ruling whether or not that blemish is *sara'at*. The *Mishnah* says “A person can view (and rule on) all blemishes except his own.” The simple and correct interpretation of this *Mishnah* is that a *Kohen* can rule on anyone else's blemish, but if the *Kohen* has a blemish of his own, he may not view it and rule on its status.

Beyond the simple and correct interpretation of this *Mishnah*, there is also a life's lesson to be learned from the *Mishnah's* formulation of this *halachah*. The life's lesson is that “All blemishes a person can see” – meaning I can look at other people and notice their faults. “This person has a temper, this person is haughty, this person is envious” and so forth. I see every fault under the sun in other people! But “except for his own blemishes” – We do not see our own faults. They can be staring us in the face, but we do not see them.

This is one of the great challenges of life. We all have personal biases that do not allow us to see our own shortcomings. We are not even aware of these biases.

The following is a startling incident that vividly illustrates this phenomenon:

The *Shach* (Rav Shabsi Kohen, famous *Shulhan Aruch* commentary (1621-1662)) once had a *Din Torah* with another Jew. However, nobody in the *Shach's* city wanted to adjudicate the case because they did not want to take a case where they might have to rule against the *Gadol Hador*. The *Shach* and his disputant decided they would travel to another city where nobody knew the *Shach* and they would have the case heard there. In the seventeenth century, people did not know what the *Shach* looked like. There were no Jewish newspapers and there were no photographs.

They went to a Rav in another city. The *Shach* gave his side of the story and his disputant gave his side of the story and the Rav ruled against the *Shach*. The *Shach* said “Ok. You are the Rav. You have ruled, I need to accept it. But tell me, why did you rule like that?” To which the Rav said, “I ruled based on the opinion of the *Shach* in *Hoshen Mishpat* (the section of *Shulhan Aruch* dealing with monetary matters) and he quoted the exact chapter and paragraph where the *Shach's* ruling was recorded.

At this point the *Shach* was startled. “It is an explicit *Shach!* It is me!” But even though the *Shach* ruled clearly in an abstract case, he was still not able to apply it to himself. He was blinded by his personal involvement in the matter! It was because “all blemishes a person may rule on, except on his own blemishes.” We see everyone else's faults except our own. This is the scary part about *negiyut*. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

A Proven Track Record

If a person opens his eyes, he will be convinced that Hashem has been showering upon him and upon his ancestors for generations all the benefits that life requires. That experience should be another convincing argument in trusting Hashem's kindness.