

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

והורתם את בני ישראל ממטאתם ולא ימתו במטאתם בטמאם את משכני אשר בתוכם וגו' (טו-לא)

One of the rather famous *yahrtzeits* that are keenly observed during the days of *Sefirah* is the third day of *Iyar* - for the *tzaddik*, **R' Shayele of Kerestir (R' Yeshaya Steiner זי"ל)**. It is interesting to note that the affectionate name “Shayele” was not a title appended to him by his many followers and adoring *Chassidim*; he himself would humbly call himself Shayele, and as a result, the name stuck. He lived in the hamlet of Kerestir, Hungary, around the turn of the 20th century, and aside from being pious, righteous and scholarly, he was also known as a miracle worker. Many of his “miracles” took place in and around the *Motzei Shabbos seudah*. R' Shayele’s greatest pleasure was to host an elaborate *Melave Malka*, the meal that follows *Shabbos*. He would sing, talk words of *Torah* and regale his *Chassidim* with amazing stories.

In Kerestir, there was an old wagon driver, a simple, unlearned Jew. The wagon driver had a son he had sent to the local *cheder* until the age of *bar mitzvah*; after that, the boy was enlisted to help his father. Life as a wagon driver’s assistant didn’t do much for the boy’s spiritual development, and when he eventually married and settled in Budapest, the young man’s *Yiddishkeit* fell away. The cosmopolitan feel of the big city and liberal influences affected him. In time, he wandered far from the path of his father raising his own two sons in a secular “cultured” home with neither *Shabbos* nor *kashrus*.

One summer, the two boys traveled to Kerestir to visit their elderly grandfather. Being unacquainted with Chassidic life, they found the *Rebbe’s* court a charming throwback to a different time, and they went to observe the weekly *Melaveh Malka* of the world-renown rabbi, R' Shayele of Kerestir They sat in the corner, enjoying the hum of activity, the many guests, and the interesting foods. Although they intended to mind their own business, they were shocked when R' Shayele summoned them to come over to him as he was doling out *shirayim* (leftovers). He handed each of the boys a piece of *kugel* and told them to enjoy it. The two brothers took their *kugel* with them but only one brother ate his piece; the other mocked and jeered and said he had no intention of eating some rabbi’s leftovers!

On the way back to Budapest, they both laughed at the strange, archaic practices they had seen in their grandfather’s hometown. When they arrived back home in Budapest, their parents wanted to hear about their experiences and they all sat down to an elaborate welcoming meal. The food was delicious and one brother ate heartily. For some reason, the other brother had no appetite. He couldn’t look at the food. The next day, his appetite had not yet returned, and he ate a bit of fruit but nothing more. His parents worried that he might be ill and watched with increasing anxiety as several days passed without him eating anything other than fruits and vegetables. They took him to doctors but they too, could find nothing wrong with the young man, and finally, the second brother who was not ill speculated that he knew what was causing his brother’s strange condition. He recalled how the *Rebbe* had given them both *kugel*, but only his brother had eaten it.

“Since then, he hasn’t been able to eat other foods. Perhaps,” he suggested, “my brother suffered some kind of food poisoning.” The worried parents wasted no time in setting off for Kerestir, their ailing son in tow. They headed straight for the *Rebbe’s* home and didn’t mince words. “You harmed our son! Since eating your *kugel*, he is too sick to eat anything else!”

R' Shayele listened and turned to the *gabbai*. “Bring a *שׂיטת וועטשערע*” (good dinner). We will see whether our guest can eat or not!’ The *gabbai* returned with a delicious spread of food which the hungry young man ate with obvious appetite.

“Why do you say he can’t eat?” R' Shayele asked the parents. “He can eat perfectly well. It’s *treif*, impure food, that he cannot eat!” Following R' Shayele’s advice, the concerned parents agreed to eat only kosher food at home.

Upon their return to Budapest, they asked a local *Rav* to *kasher* their kitchen utensils in accordance with *halacha*, and they ordered meat from the kosher butcher. Seeing their son restored to good health as he ate kosher food had an effect on the rest of the family It was the beginning of their journey back to the ways of their ancestors and a full *Torah* life.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ורחץ במים ומדר ואחר יבוא אל המהנה וגו' (יד-ה)

משל: The *minhag* of immersing in a *mikvah* each and every day is a very important one in the *Chassidishe* world, and some men and boys will not begin their morning - no matter how late it is - without first *toiveling* in the *mikvah*.

When **R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach זי"ל of Belz** once visited Hungary, he was approached by a well-known rabbi from a large community in the upper regions, who complained to him that the *Chassidim* in his city hounded him constantly and refused to accept his authority as Chief Rabbi, no matter what he does. When the *Belzer Rebbe* asked him why this was so, the rabbi answered that they were upset at him since he does not go to the *mikvah* every

single morning, but rather once a week. “But they are wrong,” said the rabbi, “because there is no source in the *Torah* that says that a Jew must go to the *mikvah* every single day!”

The *Belzer Rebbe* shook his head. “We have a *kabbalah* (tradition) that anyone who questions a valid *minhag Yisroel* by asking, ‘Where does it say it in the *Torah*,’ is *apikorsus*! Why? Because every *minhag Yisroel* is *Torah*!”

The rabbi was stunned but the *Belzer Rebbe* told him, “They are right for hounding you and they should not accept your authority. For it is not about whether or not one must go to the *mikvah* every day - it’s about accepting a *minhag Yisroel* as *Torah*. It is not to be treated lightly.”

Adapted from “Rav Shayele”
The Warmth and Wonder of
Kerestir, by Rabbi Yisroel Besser

מחשבת הלב

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV
FROM R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

Who - "מי האיש החפץ חיים אורה ימים לראות טוב," The classic work on *Hilchos Lashon Hara* received its name from the *posuk*, *"Guard your tongue from talking evil..."* R' Nissen Alpert זי"ל suggests that the question mark in this *posuk* should be moved, which would offer us a profound insight into the root cause of *lashon hara*. It should read *"מי האיש החפץ חיים?"* and the answer is, *"(He) who loves days of seeing good."* The root cause of *lashon hara* is not a failure of the tongue, but is due to a failure in perspective.

When the *meraglim* (spies) came back from *Eretz Yisroel* and spoke negatively about the Land, *Hashem* punished all of *Klal Yisroel* for those few moments of *lashon hara*. Why? Why were they punished for forty years just because spies spoke *lashon hara* for a few moments? My *machshava* here is that the sin of the *meraglim* actually began long before they delivered the negative report. R' Alpert writes that the spies already determined to view the subject of their *lashon hara* with a jaundiced eye. The *meraglim* only said *lashon hara* about *Eretz Yisroel* because they spent forty days in the Land looking for negative things to say about it. Had they been looking for the good in the Land, there surely was plenty of good they could’ve seen to bring back a good report. The more a person views the world with a negative attitude the more he will find negative things to say.

Therefore, the *posuk* is telling us, if you truly desire life then you must be a person who loves days of seeing good - *"אורה ימים לראות טוב"*. And if you are determined to see the good in the world, then you will be able to fulfill the next *posuk*: *"you will already guard your tongue from speaking evil"*. It isn’t necessarily the event that determines the reaction, but the pre-existing attitude that determines the future of how an event will be viewed. As long as one’s perspective is to adopt a positive outlook and stop seeking the negative in others, he will continue to live a beautiful life without the need to speak *lashon hara* in the future. May we only be *zoche* to see the good in everything and everyone.

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

ונעמן שר צבא מלך ארם וכו' והאיש הזה גבור חיל מצרע (מלכים ב-ד)

In this week’s *Haftorah*, we read the story of Naaman, general of the army of Aram. He was afflicted with *tzaraas* (leprosy) and needed a cure. He was told about Elisha the prophet, who had the power to affect a cure. He traveled to the prophet’s house with a grand entourage of chariots and horses. Elisha was told of his arrival and sent a message that he should immerse in the Jordan river seven times and he would be cured. On hearing this he declared, *"I thought he would come to me, that he would stand and call out in the Name of Hashem...and the afflicted would be healed. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not immerse in them and be healed?"* He left in a rage.

The **Manchester R”Y, R’ Yehudah Zev Segal זי"ל** says that at first one may have thought that Naaman was angry

because he felt that this was a ridiculous cure, that there are bigger rivers than the Jordan. Yet on closer examination, it is his opening remarks that give him away: “I thought he would come to me.” The **Metzudos** explains that Naaman was saying, “I thought that because of my importance he would come to me and stand erect in the way of honor that people give esteemed officers.” Here we have a man for whom there is no cure through medication and who is dependent on the prophet. He then stormed home because he felt he was not given the honor that was due him, despite the fact that he would have to continue to live with the disease. The **Mesillas Yesharim** says: *“One who is bound up in the chains of his evil inclination cannot see or perceive the truth because he is blinded, literally.”* When one is tied up in pursuing his honor, even an affliction of *tzaraas* will seem trivial to him. He would rather keep the *tzaraas* and not forgo the honor.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF דִּבְרוּ

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

אדם כי יהיה בעיור בשרו שאת או נפחת או בחרת והיה בעיור בשרו לנעו צרעת (יג-ב)

Speech is one of our most powerful tools. It can be the greatest balm and it can be the deadliest weapon. If we would realize the awesome ramifications of our words, we would probably be afraid to open our mouths. The **Zohar** in *Parshas Tazria* (46,2) teaches us that just as a Jew is punished for speaking *Lashon Hara*, so too is one punished if he has an opportunity to say something nice to someone and he doesn’t! Because his speech really matters! The generation of the flood was destroyed because of it’s sins. The complete corruption and breakdown of moral society was due to their inappropriate speech! The *"גזל"* and *"חמס"* that caused their downfall was a result of the way they spoke to one another. *Hashem* commanded Noach to build a *"תיבה"* - which translates as WORD. Noach spent 120 years building this *"תיבה"* as a message to all people that one’s life - his 120 years on this world - must be an exercise in building up speech to a level of greatness.

Hashem told Noach: *"צַהֵר תַּעֲשֶׂה לְתִיבָה"* - MAKE YOUR WORDS SHINE! The words that come out of our mouth should illuminate the world by spreading wisdom and kindness to others! If your words are not sharing wisdom or kindness, says **R’ Avigdor Miller זי"ל**, then just don’t say them! The way to build the world, as well as our own individual worlds, is through words. One good powerful WORD can save the world from complete destruction and one good powerful WORD can save someone’s life! A compliment or a simple word of encouragement can illuminate a person’s self-perception.

The word LASHON which means speech is comprised of a "ו" which is 30, a "פ" (300) and a "ר" (50).These were the exact measurements of the *"תיבה"* 30x300x50! What a lesson this is from *Hashem*! We must exert ourselves extensively, all our 120 years in this world to make sure every *"תיבה"* - every WORD - we say is truly pleasing in the eye’s of *Hashem*.

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