



Choosing the Right Words

By Eli Stahler, 12th Grade

Parshas Metzora deals with a skin condition which people at one time contracted as a result of speaking ill of others. Many people have difficulty relating to the idea that the Torah forbids negative speech about others. Often when cautioned about speaking negatively, people will react by saying "well, it's true!" Still, the Torah looks askance at such speech. The question is: why?

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, d. 1933) offers a beautiful explanation in his book "Shmiras HaLoshon." King David in Psalms 34 says "Who is the man who desires life, loves days to see good? (My advice is) guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from deceit etc." Why does it say that life and goodness depend on proper speech? King David wants to convey to us the importance of concern for the well being of others. This means that people should be careful even about what they say of others, taking care not to harm anyone through something they *say*. Someone who is that careful will certainly develop a sensitivity not to *DO* an *action* which would cause harm to another person.

However, although this is true, it seems that speaking ill of others has an intrinsic negative side to it as well, aside from what it leads to. The Talmud

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A Punishment or a Reward?

By Zachary Blisko, 11th Grade

In Parashat Metzora, the Torah states, "KiTavo'u El Eretz Kenaan...VeNatati Nega Tzaraat BeVait Eretz Achuzatchem" - "When you come into the land of Canaan... and I will place a plague of tzaraas on the house of the land of your inheritance." Rashi tells us that Hashem let Israel know that the signs of Tzaraat that appears on the homes would prove to be favorable. When Tzaraat would show up on people's homes, all the walls would have to be shredded down and they would conceive the gold that the Emorites hid in the walls. Rav Moshe Feinstein inquires why people who were hit by the signs of Tzaraat would be considered worthy of this. How is it reasonable that specifically those who are guilty of greediness are acknowledged such reward? How are we to understand why their reward is directly connected to the punishment they receive because of their foul and bad character? He analyzes that if the man was truly worthy he would come up with the hidden treasure without having to break the walls of his home. If he finds the buried gold it is only because he sinned and had to get rid of his home. We are to consider the embarrassment that he suffers an embarrassment that will cause him to change his ways if only to avoid being placed into this position in the future.

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Parshas Metzorah
Questions

1. What two people in the Torah are inflicted with leprosy?
2. Which three objects involved in the purification of leprosy are also used in the purification process of someone ritually impure through contact with the dead (*tameh meis*) as described in Numbers 19:6?
3. In this parsha, what inorganic object is described as being alive? What else is described as being alive?
4. What action, usually forbidden, is part of the purification process of the leper?

Answers

1. In parshas Shemos, at the Burning Bush, Moshe's hand is temporarily inflicted with leprosy (Exodus 4:6). In parshas Beha'alo'secha, Miriam is inflicted with leprosy for speaking improperly (*lashon hara*) against her brother Moshe (Numbers 12:10).
2. The purification of the leper involves the use of (1) cedar wood, (2) crimson colored wool, and (3) hyssop (Leviticus 14:4). In parshas Chukas, the purification process of someone ritually impure through contact with the dead, requires these ingredients, in addition to the ashes of the red heifer (Numbers 19:6).
3. a) The water used for the purification of the leper must be *mayim chaim* - "living waters" from a natural spring (Leviticus 14:5). b) as an offering, the leper must take what is described as "living birds" (14:4).
4. Normally, a person is forbidden to shave the hair off his entire body, which could involve the prohibition of cutting off the corners of the head and the corners of the beard (Leviticus 19:27). [It may also involve the prohibition for a man to adopt the practices of a woman, such as shaving parts of the body (Deut. 22:5 with Rashi).] 14:8

This Week's Parsha Puzzler

By Netanel Abramchayev

L'elui Nishmat his loving grandfathers and uncles:

יהודה בן אהרן וגם גבריאל בן טוביה וגם מיכאל בן שרה וגם רפאל בן רבקה

"This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification: He shall be brought to the Kohen..."(14:2)

As regular people, we have an inclination to treat Lashon Hara as a sin that doesn't have that much of an effect on a person. We just think that what we say won't hurt anyone, what power do our words have anyway? The Dubno Maggid comes and explains that when a person who was afflicted with leprosy needs to be purified, he goes to the Kohen to hear him say the word "טהור". The reason we do this is so that the afflicted person sees how powerful words are, just with one word the Kohen made the afflicted man pure!



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10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by
Uri Himelstein

Summary of Hilchot Chol Hamoed

The other week we began learning the Halachos of Chol Hamoed with a more general introduction to concepts that we will face this week. This week we will utilize many of those concepts (and I will try to briefly review each concept parenthetically seeing as how it was two weeks ago).

- Uri

I. Exceptions to Tzorech Hamoed

- a. We should stress that some of the Heiterim that we mentioned last time are very limited in nature. For example, Tzorech Hamoed (something that is for the Chol Hamoed) would only be allowed if it is something which isn't a Maaseh Uman (a labor which requires the skill of a craftsman). Of course, we also mentioned that one need not be an actual craftsman, just have skills in a certain area. For example, Halachically most women are considered skilled seamstresses. Also, one may only do a Maaseh Hedyot (common labor) if one wasn't able to do it before the holiday and purposely pushed it off. Additionally, one may not accept payment for his services, even if it falls under all of these Heiterim. Finally, without accepting payment one may not perform any labor which would be considered a denigration to the holiday. Since, all of these exceptions exist, it is clear that the heiter of Tzorech Hamoed is very limited in its nature and may be trumped by any number of things.
- b. For example, one may drive a car on

Chol Hamoed because it is Tzorech Hamoed. This would fit under all of these Heiterim provided that it is Letzorech Hamoed. However, if one were just to take driving lessons in order to learn how to drive later, then this wouldn't be allowed.

II. Tzorech Ochel Nefesh

- a. This is the most expansive. Therefore, any of the exceptions that we had to Tzorech Hamoed don't apply.

III. Tzorech Harabim

- a. One may even do a Maaseh Uman on Chol Hamoed. The reason for this is because the volunteers, who don't generally have so much free time, work on the holiday for the communal needs. Nevertheless, this would be limited to a case where the work benefits the people that Yom Tov.

IV. Davar Ha'avud

- a. This is a very popular Heiter. This Heiter (of allowing Melacha in cases where if it isn't done one will incur a large financial loss) would even apply for Maaseh Uman. Although, most Poskim agree that this Heiter only works for preventing major loss, but for a minor loss one would only be allowed to do Maase Hedyot. Additionally, this only stands for something that one already has and would lose, not for the loss of an opportunity to gain. Even if the work isn't needed for Yom Tov, but one would lose something

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Remember Your Responsibilities

By Chaim Leib Alper, 9th Grade

Following the dictating of the laws of identifying tzaraas of last week's parsha, we now find ourselves in Parshat Metzora, which deals with the purification process for a metzora (one who has been afflicted with tzaraas).

So G-d begins the dictating of laws of purification to Moshe, and we learn that after the tzaraas has already cleared up following the metzora's period of cherem, it is written: "*And he shall be brought to the Kohen...*"

Immediately we can ask, "Why not say, '*And he shall go to the Kohen...*' - does the metzora need help to get to the Kohen in some way? Is he incapable to go by himself to the Kohen and therefore must be brought?"

One possible answer is that while the afflicted is still outside the camp and plagued with tzaraas, he will fervently look forward to the time it will be over and he can finish up the steps of the purification process so life can return to normal. But in reality, when the plague on his body ends, the afflicted will in many cases come to forget the importance of his purification and not meet his responsibilities.

While he is a suffering and humiliated loner on the fringes of society, he will look upon the purification process as a means-to-an-end. Yet once he is clear of tzaraas, the purification process will be an embarrassing reminder of the sins he had committed.

Therefore, following the end of the affliction, the Torah states "*And he shall be brought before the Kohen...*," because if not pushed to fulfill his obligations he would happily push it off.

In life, we sometimes make promises to do impressive or admirable things, but what really matters in the end is that we fulfill our promises and remember our obligations.

Adapted from *Growth Through Torah*, by Zelig Pliskin

(10 Minute Halacha — Continued from page 3)

for after Yom Tov, then it falls under this Heiter. For instance, if one has a job which he would lose if he would miss a week of work, that would be Davar Ha'avud, but if one made his own hours and would simply lose the money that he gains by working those hours (or making that deal) then he would not have this Heiter. If one has vacation days ("even though it is very difficult to say this") it would probably be preferable to use them than to work on Chol Hamoed. On the other hand, if one owned a factory where all the workers would need to get paid then it might be considered a Davar Ha'avud.

V. Writing on Chol Hamoed

- a. It is only Muttar for Tzorech Hamoed. However, even then one may not do calligraphy as this would be considered a Maaseh Uman. For example, a Sofer wouldn't be allowed to write a Sefer Torah (unless it was a case of Maaseh Uman). It was an interesting discussion amongst the Poskim (in the beginning of the time of home computers) whether or not the typing would be considered a Maaseh Uman since it comes out so perfectly. This question boiled down to whether we look at the Maaseh (which in the case of typing wasn't so difficult) or the Totzaah (of the perfectly formed letters). Nowadays, most Poskim have concluded that typing is allowed, certainly if it won't be printed out.

VI. Taking a Haircut

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Not How Long, But “How”?

By Akiva Ackerman, 10th Grade

When a person who was afflicted with leprosy reached the day of his purification, there was a ritual that had to be performed. The Priest would take two birds, one to be slaughtered and one to be sent away in an open field.

This would seem to create a dilemma, you see, since one was going to live and the other to die, how do you choose?

The Torah surprisingly says that this choice was made arbitrarily. There is a similar ritual performed on Yom Kippur where the Priest would take two goats, both to be slaughtered. One of these goats went to Hashem while the other carried all the sins of the people and was thrown off a cliff (LaAzazel). In this instance, where both goats would be killed, one would think that it wouldn't make a difference what would happen to which goat.

Surprisingly, here the Torah mandates that a lottery must be cast to determine the destination of each goat. So why when it's a question of life and death does the Torah permit the choice to be made in an arbitrary fashion, yet when both are destined to die, lots are cast? We see a tremendous lesson here.

More important than the question of who should live and who should die is the question of who shall be to Hashem and who shall be LaAzazel. The message being taught here is that the decision and determination of how one lives his life, and what his ultimate goal and destination is, is far more serious than the question of life or death.

This world is just a corridor to the next. The question is not how LONG you lived, but rather HOW you lived.

(10 Minute Halacha — Continued from page 4)

- a. Chazal forbade taking haircuts or shaving on Chol Hamoed, because if one may do it on Chol Hamoed then one won't do it in advance of Chol Hamoed. R' Moshe did point out one major Sevara to be Meikel, in that for people who shave every day, then the fact that they will be able to shave later will not have any impact on whether they will shave today. This Sevara may be used by those who need to shave if they have to go to work. However, if one would not go to work on the last day of Chol Hamoed, this is questionable, since according to R' Moshe he has been shaving every day so he will not be discouraged from shaving. Also, it would appear like a Bizayon to Yom Tov to shave whenever one is going to work, but not to shave before Yom Tov.

VII. Laundry

- a. Laundry isn't allowed on Chol Hamoed, even if it would be Letzorech Hamoed. However, since children are always messing up their clothing then it would be allowed to clean their clothing, albeit it would be best to do one big wash rather than piece by piece. This is different from back then

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(Eli Stahler — Continued from page 1)

Yerushalmi writes that the act of learning Torah is the greatest of all of the commandments, and corresponding to that, is that the transgression of speaking ill of others is the *worst of sins*. *The Chofetz Chaim explains that the more spiritual a force is in the world, the stronger it is. His example is fire. It has an ability to consume most things more physical than it is. Wind is the second example he cites. Wind is less of a physical force, and it has the ability to destroy in a most profound way. Since speech involves air, it is a very spiritual force. When it is used positively, its effect is more profound than a positive act which takes on more physical trappings. The same is true in the converse. Negative speech has a more significant effect than a corresponding negative act on a more physical plane.*

No one needs to be convinced of the problems people cause through negative speech. We probably all remember the time we wished we hadn't said something. Sensitivity in what we say is an important key to living a happy, effective life.

There is a famous analogy regarding the topic of speech. A man who was not particularly careful about his speech came to a Rabbi. He had decided to change, and needed advice on how to go about it. The Rabbi gave him a very peculiar answer. "Take a feather pillow into the street, and release its feathers in every direction." The man was perplexed, but his resolve was firm to do as he was advised and change his life. After doing as he was told he returned to the Rabbi. "Now what should I do?" he asked. "Go back into the street and collect all of the feathers to the very last one," was the astounding reply. Again the man made his way into the street and began the daunting task. At his wits end he returned to the Rabbi dejected reporting his inability to keep his last words of advice. "Remember," said the Rabbi, "that your words are like those feathers. Once they leave your mouth they never return. Make sure the words you allow out are ones you won't have to go chasing after!"

Taken from Torah.org

(Zachary Blisko — Continued from page 1)

The Midrash addresses that the signs of Tzaraat that appear in the homes was a completion of the fact that the citizens of the land of Canaan engaged in business. The Netziv analyzes that businessmen by nature spend a lot of their time with other people. If they fail to work out caution in their dealings their rivalry could easily cause jealousy, which necessarily leads to Loshon Hara, the root cause of Tzaraat. Farmers have much less dealings with each other. They mainly focus on working their land. This career is less likely to lead them to speak Loshon Hara. The Torah therefore warns Israel that when they enter the land of Canaan they are to be alert to bypass the factors could turn into to their homes being cursed by sign of Tzaraat.

(10 Minute Halacha — Continued from page 5)

when each individual piece of laundry required effort, then they would say to wash as needed. However, with our washing machines it would be less effort to make a large load than to put in as necessary. Poskim add that one should not throw in adults' clothing. One could iron clothing though.

VIII. Cutting nails

- a. The Rema seemed to be Machmir, and this is the Minhag, but if one has the bad habit of biting one's nails this would be permissible. Also, if one generally cuts one's nails before Shabbos, then one could also cut them Erev Shabbos Chol Hamoed.

We should all keep in mind that this was simply a basic summary of a very complicated matter of Halacha (and one should always ask a Rav for a psak for any specific Shailos), and we should merit to be able to learn and fulfill these laws to their full extent.



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(Stories of Greatness — Continued from page 8)

ined the booty. “Ho ho!” she exclaimed. “Look what we have here!” as she held up the pack of money she found in his wallet. “Looks like we caught a big fish this time.” One of the sons examined the money, went to the cupboard, took out a large bottle of vodka and put it on the table with a bang. “Brothers, let’s celebrate! G-d has been good to us! We have enough money here to be happy for a long, long time! But first, let’s take care of our guest.” He pulled a large knife from somewhere under his coat while one of his brothers was pouring him a drink. He took a cup of vodka in his free hand, raised it high and said, “To long life, except for you!” as he looked at the bound chassid. One of the brothers, surprised by the joke, laughed so hard that the vodka came spraying out of his mouth on the others, and they all began to laugh, and then someone began a song and another toast, then another. Then the door opened again, and it was their father. “Aha!” he shouted as he looked at the money on the table and the bound victim on the floor. “Good work, boys! Excellent! We’ll have to kill him though . . . I’m glad you left him for me. You know what? In the morning I’ll take care of him. Now, let’s drink to our good fortune!” And before long they were all drunk as Lot, and forgot completely about our unfortunate hero. Late that night, when they were all sleeping soundly, the father woke, looked around to make sure that no one else was awake, tiptoed over to our chassid, motioned him to be silent, cut his ropes and silently ordered him to follow. He tiptoed to the door, opened it and gave the chassid his coat. “Here is your money back,” he whispered in the chassid’s ear as he pushed the wallet into his coat pocket. Then he pressed a gold coin into the chassid’s hand. “This is for charity from an old sinner. Tell your rebbe to please pray for me. Now go! Get out of here as fast as you can . . . run for your life.” Dawn was beginning to light the horizon, the storm had stopped, and our grateful hero was on the road back home. When he entered the rebbe’s room, the rebbe looked up at him and said: “I know what happened; you don’t have to tell me. I was up all night interceding on your behalf.” The chassid produced the golden coin and told of the old thief’s request. The rebbe took the coin and wedged it in a crack in the wall next to his desk, and said no more. Fifteen years passed, and this same chassid, who was now married with a family, became one of the rebbe’s gabbaim (secretaries). One day he answered the door to an old beggar, and told him to wait. When he entered the rebbe’s room and informed him that there was a beggar at the door, the rebbe pulled the gold coin from the crack where it had been for the past fifteen years, and told the chassid that this was the old man who had released him years ago.

It seems that when his wife and sons awoke and realized what he had done, they beat him and drove him from the house just some hours before the police made a surprise raid and took the mother and sons off to prison. The old man began a life of wandering and atonement, waiting for a sign that his repentance had been accepted in heaven.

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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: NOAM LEVY

Sometimes we see that it is extremely hard to do the right thing. Although we usually know what is right, habit or just pure misjudgments lead us to do the wrong things. However, if a hard challenge is conquered and a person can overcome the fiber that is ingrained in him to do wrong, then that finds favor in Hashem's eyes. Hopefully, we can all make the right judgments and be rewarded by Hashem with eternal feelings of happiness and joy. Have a Great Shabbos!!

- Noam

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi once sent one of his chassidim on a mission to raise a large sum of money for an important cause. The rebbe blessed him with a safe trip, but mysteriously warned him not to enter any house that had its door on the east side. The trip went well, and soon most of the money had been collected. But one day the chassid found himself caught in a snowstorm on a lonely road winding through the forest. The wind grew steadily stronger and colder. He urged his horse on, hoping to reach some sort of an inn before he lost his way entirely in the snow; but hours passed and still nothing. He was numb and freezing, and the snow was falling so densely that he couldn't really see where he was going. He prayed to G-d for some sort of miracle.

Suddenly, through the white sea of swirling snow, he saw what looked like the outline of a house just off the road. With his last ounce of strength he forced the horse in its di-

rection, and sure enough, it was a house! It even had a mezuzah on the door. A Jewish house, no less! He thanked G-d for his good fortune as he jumped from his wagon onto the front porch and knocked on the door. An elderly woman opened the door and let him in to the warm house. "Come in, you must be freezing," she said. "Come have a cup of tea; sit here by the stove. In just a minute my sons will return, and they will put your horse in the barn. Please sit down." Just as he sat down and began thawing out, he remembered that it was almost night and he hadn't yet prayed minchah (the afternoon prayer). So he asked the woman which direction was east (to face Jerusalem, as is customary during prayer) and prayed, thanking G-d for his good fortune. As he finished praying, he noticed that something was wrong: the eastern wall was the one with the main entrance of the house in it! Without hesitation he put on his coat and walked to the door, saying apologetically, "I'll be right back" — but the door was locked. He went to a window, but it too was locked. "I forgot something in the wagon," he called to the old woman, who had slipped out of the room. "Could you please open the door?" Suddenly a key turned in the door from the outside, and four brawny young men entered from the storm. As soon as they saw their visitor they immediately grabbed him, emptied his pockets, tied him up, laid him on the ground in a corner, and sat down to eat while their mother exam-

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