

פרשת תזריע – שבת החודש

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, Devorah,
and my dear daughter, Tehilla.

"אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר וטמאה שבעת ימים"
"When a woman conceives and gives
birth to a male, she shall be *tamei* for a
seven-day period." (יב, ב)

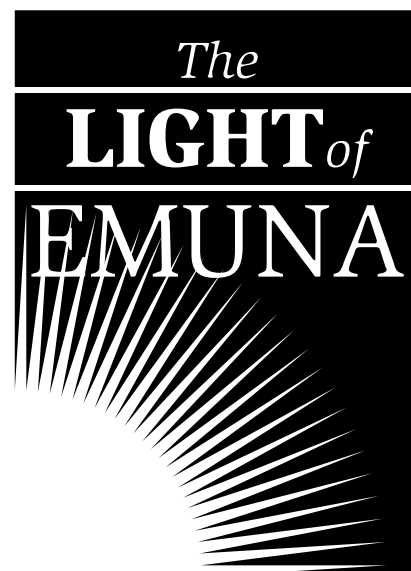
Last week's parsha discussed domesticated animals, wild animals and birds. Only afterwards does the Torah turn to human beings. Such was the order at Creation – Hashem created everything and only at the conclusion did He create man. Why? So that as soon as man becomes arrogant and overly proud, he can be brought back down and told, "Even the mosquito was created before you – what do you have to be so haughty about?"¹

"נגע צרעת כי תהיה באדם והובה אל הכהן" (יג, ט)
"If a *tzaraas* affliction will be in a
person, he shall be brought to the
Kohen."

When our speech is positive – there is nothing greater. But, when it is evil – there is nothing worse. That is the meaning of the pasuk, "Death and life are in the hands of the tongue."² We received the power of speech in order to *daven*, say *Tehillim*, learn Torah, speak encouragingly to our friends. How can we be so brazen as to misuse this power to speak ill of others and their deficiencies? **How can we use this awesome faculty to engender baseless hatred? A Jew must sanctify his mouth** – to not utter a single inappropriate word, no *loshon hora*, no *rechilus*, no pedantry, no anger, no self-centeredness, no arrogance, no falsehood and no frivolity.

¹ סנהדרין לח.

² מות וחיים ביד הלשון (משלי יח, כא)



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

We must look at ourselves honestly. Only then will we realize how defective and lacking we really are, how much work we have yet to do to properly rectify ourselves – so how do we have the time and the nerve to look at others and talk about them? **We have no cause to speak ill of anyone.** But, we have many reasons to meditate and conduct thorough and piercing introspection. The Chofetz Chaim zt"l would analyze every minute of his life, every day. Can we even comprehend that? Every minute? We must learn from the service of the tzaddikim. We must conduct much soul-searching and we must talk to Hashem a lot. **"Master of the World: save me from jealousy, hatred, rivalry, *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. Help me maintain a generous outlook – first towards myself and then towards others. Help us not believe a single negative thing about others, that no one ever be harmed by our words, that we may be cautious about even the dust of *loshon hora*."** The Chofetz Chaim once accompanied a certain Rav on a trip to help with a *mitzvah*. For dinner, they stopped at an inn, whose owner was known as a G-d fearing and meticulous woman. After they ate, the owner inquired as to how the food was. The Chofetz Chaim replied that it was perfect, while the Rav responded that it was fine but it was missing a bit of salt. After the woman left them, the Chofetz Chaim told his companion that he could no longer accompany him. Surprised by the Chofetz Chaim's reaction, he asked what he had

done wrong – the woman asked and he gave her his honest opinion. The Chofetz Chaim explained: upset by your displeasure, the woman has gone into the kitchen and started to yell at the cook, who is probably an indigent person whose livelihood depends on this job. A fight will ensue because the owner assumes that, as a Rav, your complaint was that the meat was not salted to the highest standards of kashrus. The Rav asked the Chofetz Chaim if he wasn't exaggerating just a little. The Chofetz Chaim led him to the kitchen and showed him how the two women were arguing. Trying to calm them, the Chofetz Chaim said to the owner, "I am healthy, thank G-d, but my companion doesn't feel well and everything tastes bitter to him." He then told the Rav, "You must appease the cook with words and even with monetary compensation. Do you now see the power of even the dust of *loshon hora*?"

Parshas Tazria is the parsha of *negaim*. For what sin is a person afflicted with *tzaraas*? *Loshon hora* – מצורע = מוציא שם רע. That is terrifying. *Loshon hora* is the equivalent of murder. Therefore, the punishment is so severe. **The sinner must sit in seclusion because he caused a separation between people - he is quarantined from all others - measure for measure.** Improper speech costs. An intelligent person must take great caution to wage an all-out war against this challenging inclination. Everything can be lost, G-d forbid, if we fall into *rechilus* and/or *loshon hora*. How much holiness can permeate our prayers and Torah learning when they are uttered by the very same mouth that debased itself with *loshon hora* and *rechilus*, just moments earlier?

Everyone fully wishes to strengthen themselves in guarding their tongue. But, everyone also feels as if it is an unattainable goal. A covenant was established with *loshon hora* that it would be received in the hearts of man. It is one of the wonders of the world – our "*emuna*" in the *loshon hora* that we hear is complete "*emuna*." Whenever we hear one person speak negatively about another, the *yetzer hora* immediately imbues within the listener such faith in the

slanderer – that person suddenly seems to be the most trustworthy person alive. The listener thinks: "Why would he suddenly lie? Is he just making things up? It must be true. Where there is smoke there is fire." It is a feast for the *yetzer hora*. The inner and deep service that provides a person with the tools to escape this evil inclination is to **start to look at oneself honestly – to what extent does he himself possess these deficiencies and flaws – until he harbors no more thought or desire whatsoever to look at others.** Every Jew, no matter his station, so long as he has a connection with *emuna* and *yiddishkeit*, has definitive cause for joy throughout his life, even if he has performed only one mitzvah. However, if he is arrogant and secure in himself and he has time to look at others, to pronounce opinions of others and takes pleasure in hearing of the disgraces of others – he should know that the ultimate truth is that he is in grave danger. In reality, he has no cause for arrogance – for he himself is full of flaws, he is impure and he is still distant from genuine goodness, he has not yet begun to serve Hashem.³

We must flee these as we would from fire. If a person manages to guard his tongue and his ears from speaking or listening to the forbidden - after several weeks, people will stop trying to tell him, they will peddle their wares elsewhere, to those who are interested in listening. He will be honored, for everyone will know to be careful when speaking with him, because he is unwilling to listen to *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. **It is even prohibited to speak *loshon hora* about ourselves.** One rainy night, the Chofetz Chaim was walking in Radin and encountered an unknown Jew riding in a wagon. The man asked where the tzaddik, the Chofetz Chaim lived. The Chofetz Chaim responded, "First of all, he is not tzaddik." The stranger said, "What are you talking about? Everyone knows that he is G-d fearing and righteous." The Chofetz Chaim replied, "What 'everyone' says is meaningless. The world does not know him - I know him well and I am telling you that it is a great

³ המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

exaggeration.” The guest became angry, cursed him and even hit him with his crop. The Chofetz Chaim was pained over the fact that he caused a Jew to commit a sin. When the Chofetz Chaim returned home, he found the visitor sitting and waiting for him. When the man realized that this was indeed the Chofetz Chaim and it was he who he had cursed and struck, he almost fainted. The Chofetz Chaim calmed him down and said to him, “It is of no matter, you did nothing wrong, I deserved the lashes, for not only is it forbidden to speak negatively of others, it is also illegal to speak so about oneself.”

When the mouth is unsoiled by *loshon hora* and *rechilus*, when one is pure of all evil speech – all of his requests are accepted. R’ Dovid of Lelov once dined at the home of a friend who was exceedingly poor. R’ Dovid tasted the taste of Gan Eden in the food. When the Rebbetzin asked the man’s wife how she had prepared the meal that her husband had raved about, the woman explained that she had turned to Hashem and said, “Master of the World, You know that I would not withhold any delicacy in order to please the tzaddik. But, what can I do, there is nothing in the house. But, You, Master of the World, own all of Gan Eden. Therefore, please place the flavor of Gan Eden into the stew that I am making, so that the tzaddik will enjoy my food.” She continued to implore until she finished cooking and Hashem listened to her prayers and the *tzaddik* actually tasted the flavor of Gan Eden.⁴

Moreinu Harav: The lifeblood of a person is his soul. He takes holy breath and instead of expending it in prayer, Torah, love of friends – he speaks *loshon hora* and that is how brings out his inner essence – turning his vitality to animalism.

The nature of animals make them bite, kick and gore. But, the animal nature of man is to speak *loshon hora*, to speak about others. A person cannot receive holiness unless he first subdues his animal nature. A person must know that when he speaks *loshon hora*, his animal nature is

driving him. What is the remedy? The *metzora* brings two birds – birds have good voices, soft voices, voices of pleasantness, of love of Creation, of peace between man and his fellow. Birds are song - singing all day long. We say to the *metzora*: look ... these two birds sing all day; you too, must begin to sing. **We give him back the power of song and melody, the pleasantness, the peace** – that all of his words may be only songs and praises to Hashem and to all others – his family, his friends – just to praise and applaud them – how amazing and good they are.

Song and melody are our cures. They save us from our animal nature, our base urges and our inclinations. **Song and melody are the most amazing connection between man and his Creator.** Our souls, before they descended to this world, were accustomed to the songs of the ministering angels – and still now, when they are within physical bodies, they yearn for those melodies. **When a person sings and hums, he instantly connects** - he immediately wants Hashem. His soul is drawn upwards, to Hashem. Hashem specifically wants our tunes, more than those of the angels. The songs of those found below, born with difficult inclinations, with urges and attributes that are so overwhelming – yet they fight to overcome. We sing a song of gratitude – thanks for the world that He created for us, such an amazing world, filled with kindness, love – Hashem loves all. “Master of the world, help me *daven* all of my *tefillos* with a melody, to *bentch* with a melody, to recite *Tehillim* with a melody. Grant me, Father, that melody that I have awaited for so many years.”

And there is also silence - silence that protects speech - silence that empowers us. When we desperately want Hashem but remain quiet, what eventually comes out of our mouths are not words - they are fiery coals. When a person habituates himself in silence - it becomes second nature to him and he refrains from evil speech. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught that all of his days he was raised amongst wise men and found nothing better for the body than silence.⁵ If that

⁴ סיפורי חסידים

⁵ פרקי אבות א, יז

was true in a generation is which they spoke only words of wisdom – what of us, all of our thoughts and talk are mostly trivial and empty – if we do not seal our mouths with the rein of silence, where will we end up?!

A person who is accustomed to remaining silent, even if people insult and curse him, he does not respond. He knows that if he would respond, they will only intensify. The wise man says, “I hear something bad and I am quiet.” When asked why, he explains that if he retorts, it only makes things worse. A quiet person is told secrets because others know that he will not repeat them. It is much better to have one’s friends ask why he is so quiet than to have them complain about the fact that he does not stop talking! This world is laden with words – people prattle on endlessly, unnecessarily, rumors, chatter, frivolity – we must learn to hold back.

The mouth is an entranceway. If the entrance of

a home remains open constantly, there is nothing left inside. The same is true for the mouth – there is a time to open it for words of Torah and other critical matters and there is a time to close it. That is why man was created with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils – but only one mouth – to teach us to limit our speech. Our entire lives are one long education. We must learn to maintain a pure mouth. Never to speak about anyone. We must run away from the bitter and sins of *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. True, it is a long and difficult road – but even a path of many years begins with one small step. In his famous letter, the Ramban advises us to weigh each word before emitting it from our mouths. If we desire and we begin – we will attain.

This Shabbos is *Parshas Hachodesh*. We proclaim the month of Nissan and Pesach that are imminent. **Spring is at the door, Creation is renewed and us along with it. How great it is that we can constantly begin anew.**

תפילה

Master of the World! Rescue me from my mouth. Help me, Father, that my vitality derive from You and not from discussing the deficiencies of others. Help me stop criticizing other people. Help me merit remembering, at every moment, my own flaws – that I never lose awareness of the rebuke, “And you yourself have already corrected everything?” Help me, Father, remember that I do not really know all of the details; I do not truly know where anyone else is coming from, what they endure in their lives and what kind of childhood they experienced. I must believe that if I had gone through what they did, I would have been much worse.

Master of the World! Grant me a benevolent outlook – that I never take pleasure in the downfalls of others. That I never feel disappointed that they were very successful when it looked like they were destined to fail. Help me recognize that the fact that someone else was successful where I failed need not upset me because he is here to correct his issues and I am here to correct mine. **Another’s success does not infringe upon my mission in the slightest.**

Master of the World! I am still awaiting the melody of my life, with which I can *daven, bentch, say Asher Yatzar, recite Tehillim* and learn *Gemara*.

Master of the World! When I sing to You, I am in the clouds. I feel like salvation is imminent. With this melody, I want for nothing else – just You.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov Elias

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha’Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha’Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha’Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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