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Avak Lashon Hara

When Rav Dimi came (from Eretz Yisroel), he said: What is the meaning of the verse: *He that blesses his friend loudly, rising early in the morning, it shall be regarded as a curse to him?* It refers, for example, to the case of one who stayed in a house where they troubled themselves greatly on his behalf, and the next morning he goes out and sits in the marketplace and says: May the Merciful One bless So-and-so, who troubled himself so much on my behalf. People will hear it and come and take advantage of him (by becoming his guest until he has no resources left).

Rav Dimi, the brother of Rav Safra, taught a *braisa*: A man should never speak in praise of his friend, because by mentioning his praise, he will come to mention his faults as well.

There were those who said as follows: Rav Dimi, the brother of Rav Safra, was ill. Rav Safra entered to inquire about his state of health. Rav Dimi said: May a reward come to me, for I have kept whatever the Rabbis have instructed. Rav Safra said to him: Have you also kept that which they said that a no man should ever speak in praise of his friend, because by mentioning his praise, he will come to mention his faults as well? He answered: I have not heard it, but if I would have heard it, I would have kept it. (16a)

Tzara’as Afflictions

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: *Tzara’as* afflictions come because of seven different sins, and then the *Gemora* cites Scriptural verses proving this. These are:

1. *Lashon hara*
2. Murder
3. vain oaths
4. illicit relations
5. arrogance
6. robbery
7. stinginess

The *Gemora* asks: But does *tzara’as* affliction come on account of *lashon hara*; but Rabbi Anani bar Sasson said: Why are the sections on offerings and the priestly garments close together? It is to teach you that just as sacrifices provide atonement, so do the priestly vestments provide atonement. The tunic atones for bloodshed; the pants atoned for immorality; the turban atoned for arrogance, for let something that is worn high on the head atone for haughtiness; the belt atoned for impure thoughts of the heart, for that is where it was worn; the breastplate atoned for miscarriage of civil laws; the *ephod* atoned for idolatry; the robe atoned for *lashon hara* (slander), for the Holy One, Blessed be He said: let an article that emits sound (through its bells ringing) come and atone for an evil sound; the headplate atoned for brazenness.

The *Gemora* answers: This is not difficult, for we were referring to a case where his actions were effective (and people began to quarrel as a result of his words), whereas the other teaching was referring to a case where his actions were not effective. If his actions were effective, *tzara’as* afflictions visit him; if his actions were not effective, the robe provides atonement.

The *Gemora* asks: But surely Rabbi Simon said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: For two things we find no atonement through sacrifices, but find atonement for them through something else, and they are bloodshed and *lashon hara*. Bloodshed has atonement through the *eglah arufah* (the law is that upon finding a corpse, and being unable to solve the murder, the leaders of the city closest to the corpse are required to bring a calf to an untilled valley, decapitate it, wash their hands over it, and then they must recite a verse, declaring publicly that they did not kill the person) while *lashon hara* is atoned for by the burning of the incense. For the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael taught: For what does incense atone? It atones for *lashon hara*; let that which is performed in

private come and atone for a sin committed in secret. Thus we have a contradiction regarding *lashon hara* and regarding bloodshed!?

The *Gemora* answers: There is no difficulty: bloodshed does not contradict bloodshed. The tunic atones for bloodshed in the case where the murderer is known, and the *eglah arufah* effects atonement in a case where the murderer is unknown.

The *Gemora* asks: If the murderer is known, he is liable to the death penalty!?

The *Gemora* answers: It means that he committed the act deliberately, but he was not warned.

The *Gemora* continues its answer: *Lashon hara* too does not contradict *lashon hara*: The incense atones when the sin was done in secret, and the *me'il* atones where it was done in public. (16a – 16b)

Metzora

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nadav inquired of Rabbi Chanina; or as others say, Rabbi Shmuel bar Nadav, the son-in-law of Rabbi Chanina, inquired of Rabbi Chanina; or, according to still others, inquired of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: Why is the *metzora* different (*from all others who are tamei*) that the Torah said: *He shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling*? It is because he separated a husband from his wife (*caused by his evil speech*), a man from his fellow, therefore the Torah said: *He shall dwell alone* etc.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Levi said: Why is the *metzora* different (*from all others who are tamei*) that the Torah said he is required to bring two birds so that he may become pure again? It is because the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: He did the act of chattering, therefore let him offer a chatterer as a sacrifice. (16b)

Rebuke

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: *You shall not hate your brother in your heart*. One might have thought (*if the Torah would have only said: you shall not hate your brother*) that one (*while rebuking his fellow*) may only not strike him, slap him, or curse him, therefore the Torah writes: *in your heart*; The Torah is speaking of hatred in the heart.

The *braisa* continues: And from where do we know that if a man sees something inappropriate in his fellow, he is obliged to rebuke him? Because it is written: *rebuke, you shall rebuke*. And if he rebuked him and he did not accept it, from where do we know that he must rebuke him again? It is written: *you shall rebuke* - in all cases. One might have thought (*this to be obligatory even in public*) even though his face has changed colors; therefore it is written: *You shall not bear sin because of him*.

It was taught in a *braisa*: Rabbi Tarfon said: I wonder whether there is anyone in this generation who accepts (*or gives, according to some versions*) rebuke, for if someone would tell a person to remove the (*stolen*) stick from his teeth (*i.e., correct a transgression*), the person would respond by telling him, "Remove the stolen beam from your eye (*i.e., correct an even larger transgression*)."

Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah said: I wonder if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to give rebuke!

Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said: I call heaven and earth to testify for myself that often was Akiva rebuked through me, because I used to complain against him before Rabbi Shimon BeRibbi, and because of this, he increased his love towards me (*demonstrating that he can accept rebuke*), to uphold that which has been said: *Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you*.

Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Shimon inquired: What is preferable: rebuke for its own sake or humility not for its own sake (*when one, after being insulted, chooses not to rebuke the one who insulted him, for he is afraid that the other will then hate him*)? He (*R' Shimon ben Pazi*) answered: Won't you agree that humility for its own sake is greater (*than rebuke for its own sake? You surely do, for you only inquired about humility not for its own sake!?* And how do you know that's true?), for a master said: Humility is the greatest of them all? Then also, humility not for its own sake is preferable, for Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: A person should always engage in the study of Torah or the performance of a *mitzvah* even if not for its own sake, because from learning Torah and doing a *mitzvah* not for its own sake, he will eventually come to learn torah or do a *mitzvah* for its own sake.

The *Gemora* asks: What is a case of rebuke for its own sake or humility not for its own sake? For instance the case of Rav Huna

and Chiya bar Rav, who were sitting before Shmuel, when Chiya bar Rav said (to Shmuel): Master, look how he is troubling me greatly (for Rav Huna used to hit him). Rav Huna undertook not to bother him anymore. After Chiya bar Rav left, Rav Huna said: He did this and that (inappropriate) thing. Shmuel asked him: Why didn't you say this while he was here (for, by being silent before, it appears now that you are not telling the truth)? He replied: Heaven forbid that the child of Rav should be put to shame through me! [Humility not for its own sake was demonstrated by Rav Huna, who did not rebuke Chiya, and instead suffered a temporary embarrassment before Shmuel, but when he left, he did report it.]

The Gemora asks: How far shall rebuke be administered (if the sinner refuses to mend his ways)?

Rav said: Until he is beaten (by the sinner). Shmuel said: Until he is cursed. Rabbi Yochanan said: Until he is scorned (which happens as soon as the sinner becomes angry).

The Gemora notes that this is a point of issue between the Tannaim as well: Rabbi Eliezer said: Until he is beaten. Rabbi Yehoshua said: Until he is cursed. Ben Azzai said: Until he is scorned.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said that they all derive their opinions from the same Scriptural verse. (16b)

Suffering

The Gemora asks: How far shall a man suffer before changing his place of lodging (and go to a different host)?

Rav said: Until he (or his wife) is beaten (by the host). Shmuel said: Until they sling his bundles over his shoulder (as a sign that they are sending him away).

The Gemora qualifies the dispute: Where he himself is beaten there is no dispute (that there are grounds for him to leave); similarly, if they sling his bundles over his shoulder, there is also no dispute. They are disagreeing only in a case where his wife (according to some commentators, this refers to the host's wife, but his own wife is grounds for him to change) is beaten: one holds that as long as he himself is not struck, what difference does it make? And the other opinion maintains that this type of behavior will (ultimately) end in a quarrel.

The Gemora asks: Why is all that necessary (why does he need to suffer so much before changing)?

The Gemora answers: It is because a master has stated that a guest (who constantly changes his lodging) disgraces others and himself (because he will acquire the reputation of a man who is difficult to please, as well as upon the lodging place, which will be regarded as an unsatisfactory place).

Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav: From where is it known from the Torah this principle that a man should not change his place of lodging? It is because it is written (when Avraham was returning to Canaan from his stay in Egypt): And he went to the place where his tent had been at first. Rabbi Yosi ben Chanina said: It is derived from here: And he went according to his journeys.

The Gemora asks: What is the practical difference between them?

The Gemora answers: The difference would be the case of a casual lodging. [He who based his view on 'where his tent had been' would not object to a change from a casual dwelling, because 'his tent' suggests a formal accommodation, like his own house, whereas he who emphasized the expression 'according to his journeys,' would want to see the place of any of his journeys – even a casual guest-revisited.]

Rabbi Yochanan cites a Scriptural verse proving that a man should not change his occupation or that of his fathers.

The Gemora asks: What is regarded as suffering?

Rabbi Elozar said: If a man had, for example, a garment woven for him to wear and it does not fit him properly.

Rava Ze'ira, or, as others say, Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini asked: But more than that was said (regarding suffering): Even if it had been intended to mix the wine with hot water, and it was mixed with cold water; or it was intended to be mixed with cold water, and it was mixed with hot water (that is regarded as suffering), and you say all this?

Mar, the son of Ravina, said: Even if his shirt was worn inside out (and he needs to remove it). Rava, or as others say, Rav Chisda, or



as others say Rabbi Yitzchak, or it was taught in a *braisa*: Even if he puts his hand into his pocket to take out three coins and he takes out but two.

The *Gemora* notes that this is only in the case where he intended to take out three, and took out only two, but not if he meant to take two and three came into his hand, because it is no trouble to throw it back.

The *Gemora* asks: And what is the significance of this information?

The *Gemora* answers: It is because it was taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael that anyone, upon whom forty days have passed, without suffering, has received his world (*his eternal reward*).

In the West they said as follows: Retribution is still being prepared for him. (16b – 17a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Distributing Lists of Donors among Charity Collectors

In our *Gemora* we learn that it is forbidden to praise someone for his generosity in the presence of others if this can harm him. For example, someone who reiterates that he was a guest at another's home and was received with huge hospitality, because we suspect that the fact will become known and the host will become impoverished.

In the light of our *Gemora*, HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l was asked to judge about the custom practiced among charity collectors and fundraisers to exchange lists of donors once they ascertain, of course, that the person receiving the list is trustworthy. The question is if distributing the lists resembles spreading rumors about a generous host. Rabbi Feinstein clearly replied (*Responsa Igros Moshe, Y.D., III, 95*) that there is no worry about the practice while he ascertains that his ruling fits all the commentaries of Rashi and Tosfos in our *Gemora*, as follows. We could understand that our *Gemora* only negates publicizing the host's generosity in the presence of unworthy people who might exploit his fine qualities

(Tosfos, Bava Metzi'a 23b, s.v. *Beushpiza*, cited in *Shitah Mekubetzes, os 1*) or in the presence of criminals who might try to steal his property (Rashi, s.v. *Veshome'in*). Therefore, according to this interpretation there's no prohibition to publicize someone's generosity among trustworthy people.

Rashi explains the *Gemora* in an additional way (ibid). In his opinion, there's a suspicion that once the host's generosity will be known, guests will crowd his home - not necessarily untrustworthy people - and he will soon be impoverished. Apparently, we could compare the cases and contend that just as one shouldn't publicize that someone looks after guests generously, one shouldn't tell another about a donor who gives generously to charity. However, Rabbi Feinstein claims and proves that we must distinguish between the cases. Chazal knew that if poor people knock at a person's door, wanting to eat a hot meal, he cannot refuse them and if his home will become full of such people, in a short while he will unfortunately be impoverished. However, if one asks a person for a generous contribution, he generally doesn't feel uncomfortable to say "I can't" and therefore publicizing his generosity cannot harm his economic standing.

DAILY MASHAL

The Result of Stinginess

The connection between stinginess and *tzara'as* is utterly simple. A stingy person distances people from him. He's made to feel this well when he becomes afflicted with *tzara'as* and has to dwell alone outside the camp. And a *metzora'* is severer than others for a rich *metzora'* who brought a poor person's sacrifice does not fulfill his obligation (see Yoma 41b). If he is still stingy and doesn't want to bring an expensive sacrifice, he is still rebelling and how can he be atoned? (*Meshech Chochmah, Metzora'*).