

## And the Kohen shall look at the mark in the skin... and (he will) pronounce it unclean. (13:3)

One cannot study the laws of *tzaraas* and the reason for their occurrence and not be filled with pride that he is a Jew. Other religions pay lip service to social graces, human decency, and ethical behavior. Nonetheless, they are not part of their corpus of laws. One is encouraged to be ethical, distance himself from avarice, not commit social sins, but if he does, it is not the end of the world. Imagine censuring a politician for lying! We would have no government! On the other hand, our Torah's inclusion of *Hilchos Negaim*, laws concerning plagues, indicates that Hashem watches over us, as He educates each and every individual concerning how to live an ethical and moral life.

The Torah demonstrates for all to see that, in the Jewish community – whose laws are based upon the Law of Hashem – social sins and misdemeanors are brought out into the open, and the guilty party is held accountable. In the secular world, arrogance, falsehood, slander and character assassination escape the authority of civil courts. Sadly, no one really cares. Our world is governed by G-d's law and, in the case of the *metzora* who slanders his fellow, G-d Himself seems to be getting involved – as He does in other situations which, due to their subtlety or our obtuseness, we do not notice.

*Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl*, speaks about *Rav Avraham Hurwitz, zl*, his uncle's father-in-law. *Rav Avraham* was a *talmid*, disciple, of the *Alter, zl*, *m'Novaradok* and himself a *tzaddik*, righteous person, of unquestionable virtue. He was a businessman, supporting his family from the proceeds of his mattress and linen store in Brownsville, New York. An individual who did not speak one word from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* until after *Yom Kippur*, he conversed with his customers by means of pen and paper. At his *bar-mitzvah*, he accepted upon himself never to speak *lashon hora*. He lived out his life in complete adherence to his promise.

Holy people are careful not to have false plaudits engraved on their head-stones. Apparently, if something untrue is engraved, the deceased will suffer from it. On the *matzeivah* of *Rav Avraham Hurwitz*, his name and the name of his father, the date of his passing, and three words were inscribed: *Shomer piv u'leshono*, "He guarded his mouth and tongue." To inscribe such a statement on a person's *matzeivah* is indicative of an elevated level of character. In fact, *Rav Moshe Aharon* attests that no other *matzeivah* in all of *Har HaZeisim* and *Har Menuchos* has such an inscription. It is dangerous to write such a statement if it is not true.

In the *Talmud Arachin* 15b, *Chazal* say that the sin of *lashon hora* is compared to the three cardinal sins: idol worship; licentiousness; and murder. Clearly, if the sin is so egregious, distancing oneself from its transgression can serve as an amazing *zechus*, merit. The following story underscores this idea.

It was *Cheshvon*, 5768/2008. *Rebbetzin Kanievsky, a"h*, had just returned from a wedding, and she

felt obligated to publicize the story which was the backdrop for this wedding. Four years earlier, a terrible accident had occurred on the highway, which severely injured a fifteen- year-old girl. She was rushed to the hospital, where she lay unconscious for two weeks. This was in addition to the broken bones and internal injuries which she sustained.

Her parents petitioned *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, and his *Rebbetzin* to please pray for their daughter. They prayed, and Hashem responded favorably, as the girl woke up and began to recognize her family. The joy was palpable. They prayed for a miracle, and Hashem sent them one. The first thing the girl wanted to know was, “*Imma*, how long was I in a coma?”

“What difference is it to you?” the mother replied, “The main thing is that you are alive and your brain function has returned.”

The girl’s response shook up all those who were there. “Two weeks prior to the accident, I accepted upon myself to study two *halachos*, laws, from the *Chafetz Chaim’s Shemiras HaLashon* daily. I want to make up what I missed,” the girl explained. This girl was not yet out of the woods. She would have to undergo a number of surgeries, much physical therapy, and then – they were still not sure of a positive outcome. Yet, this is all she thought about: making up the lost time from her *shemiras halashon* study program.

*Rav Chaim* and his *Rebbetzin* were greatly impressed by this girl’s devotion. In fact, the *Rebbetzin* ensured the parents that she would dance with their daughter at her wedding – a promise which at that time was a mere dream. The last thing anyone believed was that this girl would one day be “whole.”

Miracle of miracles, the girl finally left the hospital, and, in short time, she resumed her regular schedule; she was a healthy girl, with no sign whatsoever of her injuries!

“I have just returned from her wedding,” said the *Rebbetzin*, “where I fulfilled my promise to dance with her!”

This is just one of many *zchuyos* attributed and recorded to *shomer piv u’leshono*.