

“The frogs will depart... only in the river shall they remain.” (8:7)

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* prayer to Hashem requesting that the frogs be removed and the plague come to a halt was effective. The frogs returned to the river where they belonged. In *Parashas Chukas* (*Bamidbar* 21:4), Moshe also prayed to Hashem that He remove the fiery snakes that were wreaking havoc in the Jewish camp. His prayer was not effective. It only worked after Hashem advised Moshe to make a fiery snake out of copper and place it on a pole. Anyone who had been bitten by the fiery snake and looked at Moshe's snake was spared. *Chazal* ask, “Does a serpent cause death or life? Rather, when they looked upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven they were healed. If not, they died” (*Rosh Hashanah* 29a).

The *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, wonders why Moshe's prayer had been effective in ridding Pharaoh of the frogs, yet he could not do the same for the Jews who were dying from the fiery snake bites. Surely, Moshe prayed as hard, if not more so, for his own brothers. He explains that everything has an antidote; every sin has a penance through which one can seek atonement – except for the sin of *lashon hara*, evil speech. The *mekatreg*, prosecuting agent, created by *lashon hara* is not easily removed. It stands and prosecutes, finding fault with the individual who has slandered his fellow. Similar to the sin which is executed by word of mouth, the prosecuting angel cannot be silenced. Since the sin which catalyzed the punishment of the fiery serpents was that the nation spoke contemptuously of Hashem and His chosen leader of the people, Moshe, our leader's prayer was ineffective in silencing him.

Likewise, one who goes to great lengths not to speak *lashon hara* will merit great reward. *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates an incredible story which supports this idea. One evening, *Rav* Zilberstein visited his brother-in-law *Horav Chaim Kanievesky, Shlita*. During his visit, the *Rebbetzin* returned home from a *chasunah*. She was effusive in her excitement about this wedding. She maintained that this was a wedding that was clearly a testament to Hashem's miraculous intervention. It was a wedding that should not have been, but due to a special merit it had taken place.

Apparently, four years earlier, the *kallah* – at the time a fifteen-years-old teenager – was in a terrible car accident which left her critically injured and comatose. She lay in her hospital bed, oblivious to her predicament, for two full weeks. Her parents approached *Rav* Kanievsky and his *Rebbetzin*, asking them to pray for their daughter. Hashem listened to their heartfelt pleas, and their daughter woke up. She immediately began to speak. Her first words were a question: “*Ima*, how long was I in a coma?”

“It is not important,” replied her mother. “For what reason must you know?” she asked. The teenager's response should frighten us all: “A number of months prior to the accident, I accepted upon myself to study two *halachos*, laws, from the *Sefer Chafetz Chaim* concerning the laws of

lashon hara every day. I had never missed a day – until the accident. I must know how long I was out. It is essential that I study the *halachos* for each day that I was in a coma.”

Imagine, this was the first question she asked her mother. This was primary on her mind. When the incident was related to *Rav* Kanievsky and his *Rebbetzin*, understandably they both responded with great emotion. *Rebbetzin* Kanievsky visited with the parents and promised them that she would dance with their daughter at the girl’s wedding.

At the time, this assurance was far-fetched. While she had woken up from her comatose state, there was still much to mend and a number of surgeries were scheduled. Truthfully, even after she would undergo the surgeries and ensuing therapy sessions, her body would still be a mess. She would not be a prime “catch” for a *shidduch*, matrimonial arrangement. Who would want to marry a girl who had gone through so much?

Wonder of wonders, the girl not only survived all of the surgeries but she came through with flying colors. Indeed, other than the fact that some people knew what she experienced, most people would be hard-pressed to believe that this girl had been in such a horrific car accident and had not only survived, but thrived.

She became engaged to a budding young Torah scholar from a wonderful home.

Rebbetzin Kanievsky attended their wedding and kept her word as she danced with the *kallah*.

In conclusion, *Rav* Zilberstein attributes her miraculous recovery to her earlier *kabbalah* to study the laws of *lashon hara* daily. Who knows the incredible reward in store for one who controls his tongue!