

Everything that comes into the fire – you shall pass through the fire, but it must be purified with the water of the sprinkling. (31:23)

The Torah discusses the laws of kashering utensils. *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, observes that the Torah's concept of "clean" is quite different than the secular perspective. Take any utensil that has been washed/scrubbed and dried. It is now pristine. Indeed, it cannot be any cleaner. Yet, if within the last twenty-four hours it has been used to cook a piece of non-kosher meat, it is considered ritually *treif*. If one were to cook a piece of kosher, *mehadrin min ha'mehadrin* meat in this utensil, the meat is unquestionably *treif*. But is it clean? Yes, to the naked eye it appears clean, but deep within the utensil's walls *treif* meat has been absorbed, thereby rendering this utensil and everything cooked in it – *treif*. Taking this further, *Rav Chaim* notes that if a person spiritually defiles his mouth with *lashon hora*, evil speech and filthy language, he can use all of the mouthwash in the world – his mouth remains contaminated. Therefore, when he opens his mouth to pray or learn Torah, his words emanate from an unclean mouth. The words of Torah and *tefillah* which exit our mouth are only as pristine as our mouth.

For those who have difficulty grasping this basic idea, *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, adds support with a story that delivers a practical lesson. The King of Germany visited the Czar of Russia. Understandably, when two such monarchs meet, they are accompanied by a host of ministers and dignitaries. The Russian monarch had a lavish supper prepared in honor of his esteemed guest and his retinue. Among the sumptuous dishes prepared by the royal chef was *kishke* (stuffed derma), which the German monarch loved so much that he had his chef obtain the recipe. The Germans are meticulous about everything they do, and a recipe is no different. The chef went over every aspect of the recipe, from the type of meat to the exact amount of spices. They returned home, and the German monarch asked his chef to prepare *kishke* for him in honor of a special state visit from the king of France.

The day arrived, and the king of France was sitting next to the king of Germany, as they were both about to partake of the unique Russian delicacy about which the German King could not stop raving. The *kishke* was served, and the German king honored his French counterpart with the first piece. He took one bite and almost passed out. The taste and the smell were absolutely overpowering. He could not dare to insult his friend, so he kept on eating – and choking on every bite. The German king had a similar reaction to his portion of *kishke*. They brought out drinks to flush their systems. As soon as the meal concluded, each one went outside and wretched.

It goes without saying that the German monarch called in his chef and berated him for whatever he did to prepare such a distasteful meal. The chef said that he had followed the Russian recipe religiously. Something had to be wrong on "their" side. The king accepted no excuse, and he ordered his chef to return to Russia to speak with their chef. He needed to find out what had gone wrong.

The two chefs met, and the Russian chef asked his German counterpart to review everything that he had done in his preparation of the *kishke*, play-by-play. Time and again, they went over the procedure, until the Russian chef declared, "I have no idea what went wrong." The German chef countered, "All I know is that the *kishke* had the smell and taste of fertilizer!" "Stop!" the Russian chef exclaimed. "Did you say it smelled like fertilizer? How did you prepare the skin of the intestine?" "I washed it" was the German chef's reply. "How many times?" asked the Russian chef.

Well, we all understand what happened. The Russian chef said that after washing the intestines five times, he soaked it for two days in water inside out until he was absolutely certain that every bit of waste material had been removed from the intestine.

The same thing, explains *Rav* Reuven, applies to our mouths. We speak words of Torah, pray to Hashem, but if our mouths have been used to spewing filth, then one can only imagine that it is like the delicious filling placed inside of filthy intestines!