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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Behaloscha  Rabbi Meyer Stern

A Complete Healing

"E-I nah r'phah nuh luh" (Bamidbar 12,13)

Moshe davened that Miriam be healed from the tzoraas that afflicted her. He beseeched, "Hashem please, heal her, please".

Why did Moshe Rabeinu have to repeat the word 'please'? Wouldn't it have been sufficient to say "Hashem please heal her"?

Similarly, in Yirmiyah (17,14) the posuk says, "Rephoeni Hashem V'eirophai", "Heal me Hashem and I will be healed". What is the meaning of the repetition, "and I will be healed"?

The Ksav Sofer explains these psukim based on a difficult posuk in Tehillim (94,12). "Praiseworthy is the man whom Hashem punishes". Chazal discuss how this posuk is referring to punishment in Olam Hazeh, which saves a person from punishment in Olam Habah. There is a purpose to illness and other hardships which befall a person, as perhaps they are an atonement for his sins. Would it not be for an illness or hardship, a person would more likely suffer in Olam Haboh. If this is so, how can we even daven to be healed? Wouldn't that defeat the whole purpose of yesurim (suffering)? The Ksav Sofer explains that when we daven for a sick person, we pray for rephuas hanefesh v'rephuas haguf, a healing of his soul and a healing of his body. We daven that Hashem should forgive the sick person for his sins, and then we ask Hashem to heal his body.

Now we can understand the double expression in Yirmiyah; "Rephoeini", heal me Hashem, but not in a way which will leave me with a sick soul in Olam Habah. Instead, "V'eirophai" heal me in the future so that I should forever be rid of this spiritual and physical ailment.

This is the meaning of Moshe Rabeinu's repetition; "Hashem please, heal her please". He was asking for two healings, a healing in Olam Hazeh and a healing in Olam Habah. Miriam should not suffer from tzoraas, nor shall she suffer in the next world from the sin which had brought the tzoraas upon her.

There is another explanation of the seemingly redundant word, 'nah', please.

The Yalkut in Melachim (2,20,246) tells a fascinating story. Menashe, King of Yehuda, was captured by his enemies and placed in a cauldron where he was to be burned alive. Menashe, who was an idolater, began to call out to every Avodah Zorah in the world, begging them to save him. When he realized they were not helping him, he recalled from his youth how his father had taught him the posuk (Devarim 4,30), "When you are in distress you will return to Hashem". Menashe proclaimed "I will call out to Hashem. If he answers me, good, and if not, all G-ds are the same". Hearing Menashe's prayer, the ministering angels closed all the windows to Heaven, preventing his tefillah from arising in front of Hashem. Hashem dug a hole (so to speak) under the throne of glory enabling the tefillah to arise. When Hashem heard Menash's prayer, He saved him.

R' Shimshon Pincus Zt"l points out the sharp contrast between Menashe's prayer which was said in a cold, threatening manner and Moshe Rabeinu's prayer in Devarim. Moshe wanted to enter Eretz Yisroel and he pleaded incessantly to Hashem to allow him in. Yet, when the final verdict was passed that he would die in Chutz La'aretz, he was not bitter. Instead, he praised Hashem's judgment saying, "Hatzur Tumim Pu'uloi", Hashem's actions are perfect.

This may be why the Torah accentuates the word, "please". We must learn to emulate Moshe Rabeinu's way of davening which was said in a pleading, beseeching tone. We must not chas v'shalom daven in a way demanding of Hashem, as Menashe did.

May all our tefilos be said in the proper manner, and may Hashem grant us all a complete salvation.

Rabbi Stern learns at the kollel during night seder.

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Positive Negativity

Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

In this week's parsha the Torah relates that Miriam spoke lashon hora about Moshe Rabeinu and the terrible punishment she consequently received. The obvious lesson to be learned from this episode is the severity of forbidden speech. As the Medrash points out, even the righteous Miriam, who spoke privately to Aharon about their humble brother Moshe, with theoretically a purposeful reason, deserved such tremendous retribution. However from the fact that the Torah allows this derogatory story about the tzadekes, Miriam to be passed on to us, we are able to deduce an important rule in relation to lashon hora. If the point of the negative information is not to denigrate the one being spoken about rather it is solely for a constructive purpose, one is permitted to relate it. This is called lashon hora l'toeles. (See Ramban Devarim 25:17)

Conditions:

The Chofetz Chaim enumerates seven conditions that usually must be met in order for derogatory information to be considered lashon hora l'toeles. For example, if one wants to inform a Rav that he or another person are being victimized by a certain individual, he must first make sure that:

- 1) His intention is completely for a constructive purpose. If the speaker will derive even a little pleasure or personal benefit due to the derogatory information being related, it would be forbidden to disclose the information. One must also be sure that the listener is aware of his intent.
- 2) He must be certain that the information is one hundred percent true.
- 3) He must have first considered if the perceived perpetrator could have any justification in doing what he did.
- 4) If one can accomplish his purpose by approaching the perpetrator personally, he must do so before relating his misdeeds.
- 5) It is forbidden to lie or exaggerate.
- 6) There is no other way to accomplish his goal.
- 7) The perpetrator will not receive more than the Torah ordained punishment as a result of the speaker's words.

When listening to lashon hora l'toeles, one should not fully believe the information. Instead, he should merely become suspicious. If the speaker knows that the listener will believe the lashon hora, he is still permitted to relate it, being that in this case it is considered a mitzvah.

Below are several ramifications of this halacha in different settings.

At Home

A wife is allowed to tell her husband all the mischievous activities of the children. The general premise of lashon hora is maligning someone by repeating his sins or misdeeds. Since causing trouble is basic to a child's nature, it is not damaging to their character if their actions are retold. In the rare case where the child could be damaged by the

speech (either personally, or his reputation), one is forbidden to say it.

If a woman had a particularly trying day at work and is filled with pent up anger at her agitator, she is allowed to relate to her husband what transpired if the purpose in doing so is only therapeutic and not to malign.

Parents are allowed to ask about the well being both spiritually and socially, of their child from whoever they think might know. The respondent may answer honestly, even if he has something negative to report. This is allowed because parents are always assumed to have the best interest of their child in mind, and any negative information related will give the parents opportunity to rectify the situation.

A parent is allowed to warn his children to stay away from certain people who have sinful or dangerous character traits. He may even rely on hearsay or exaggerate the claims if he feels it is necessary, in order to safeguard his children from harm

In Yeshiva

At times, a Rebbe may have a strong suspicion that one of his students had done something dangerous or terribly wrong. Hagoan R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l warns very strongly against demanding that someone from the class snitch on the offending student. Such action could inculcate into a student a tendency to inform on his fellow Jew which is considered a terrible crime in Hashem's eyes. Nevertheless, if the situation warrants such a demand, the Rebbe should explain clearly that this is an exception to the laws of lashon hora because it is l'toeles. (Y.D. vol 2, 103)

In the Marketplace

One is allowed to warn people not to lend money or join in partnership with someone who he knows is a swindler.

One is allowed to inform family and friends that a certain vendor is charging a higher price and that they can get a better deal elsewhere. However, if their transaction has already begun you should not interfere. One should not tell a total stranger of such opportune savings, for being that he has no special connection to him, it is not necessary to save his money at the expense of this vendor.

If one was victimized and feels a certain person of authority could help him regain his loss, he may inform that individual of his situation.

As we have seen, the laws of lashon hora could be very complex. It is therefore imperative to learn these halachos well and to have a Rav to turn to concerning these matters. May we be zoche to only speak lashon tov about our fellow Jews and merit the geula in our days.

Rabbi Greenberg learns full-time at the kollel.