

How Bad Is It?

“How was your day, dear?”
“Fine dear. Thank you for asking. How was yours?”
“Good. However, I received some disturbing news from Yankie’s teacher.”
“Oh no. What did he say?”
“I’m afraid that Yankie cheated on a test.”
“Oy vey. Let’s call him in here and speak to him about it. Yankie, please come into the dining room.”
“Yes, Abba.”
“Yankie, your teacher told Imma about the test today.”

Yankie’s face fell. He knew what was coming.

“Please, Abba. I know what I did wrong. I feel so bad. I am so sorry.”

“Yankie, Boruch Hashem you realize your mistake and you regret it.”

“Abba, I realize that you may punish me for cheating on the test. I just have one request.”

“What is that, Yankie?”

“Please do not tell anyone what I did. I am so embarrassed.”

Yankie’s father thought for a minute.

“I won’t tell anyone, Yankie. I do not want to embarrass you. What was the subject of the test?”

“Parshas Beha’alosecha.”

“That is very interesting. Let me tell you something about the parsha that is very relevant to what happened today. Miriam, the sister of Moshe Rabbeinu, was stricken with the disease of *tsoraas* because she spoke *loshon hora* about her brother. The Jewish people were traveling in the desert at the time. The whole camp became aware of her sin. They had to stop traveling while she was sent outside of the camp for seven days. Her disease then healed and they continued.”

“Everyone knew about her sin, Abba. How embarrassing.”

“The Torah devotes sixteen verses to this episode. Not only that, The Ramban counts ‘Remember what Hashem Your G-d did to Miriam on the way when you left Mitzraim (Devarim 24:9)’ as one of the 613 mitzvos. The whole episode became a very public event, recorded in the Torah forever.”

“Oy vay voy.”

“Why do you think the Torah made

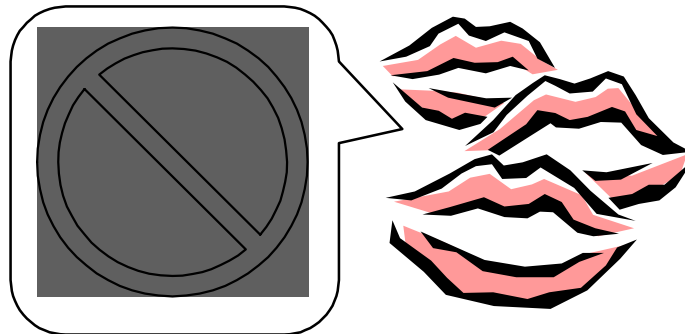
such a public spectacle of Miriam’s sin?”

“Because *loshon hora* is so terrible.”

“Exactly.”

Kinderlach . . .

How bad is loshon hora? Disastrous. The Torah does not waste words. The Torah also does not embarrass people for no reason. Especially a tzadekes like Miriam. Who only had her brother’s best interest in mind. And only spoke to her other brother Aharon. Moshe Rabbeinu was so humble that he himself was not offended by what she said. Yet, she was punished and everyone knew about it. The Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson. The power of speech. It is a megaton bomb. Handle with extreme care.



Love Those Mitzvos

One year had passed since the exodus from Mitzraim. The time had arrived to offer up the *Korbon Pesach*. This was a mitzvah that all of Klal Yisrael participated in. However, some were not able to bring this sacrifice. Those who had contact with a dead body had become *tomei* (impure). They were prohibited from taking part in the *Korbon Pesach*. “Why should we be lessened by not offering Hashem’s offering in its appointed time among the Children of Israel?” they asked (Bamidbar 9:7). Rashi relates that they requested the Kohanim to offer up the *Korbon* on their behalf. This would not help them because a *Korbon* may not be offered on behalf of one who is *tomei*. Yet they still wanted some share in this mitzvah. Why? Rav Moshe Feinstein points out their great love of mitzvos. Even when they were *potur* (exempt) from performing the mitzvah for legitimate reasons, they still longed to fulfill it.

Kinderlach . . .

The Jewish neshama (soul) craves Hashem’s mitzvos. We love them so much. There was once a Jew who did not begin learning Gemara until late in life. Still, he had an ambition to finish all of Shas. He was well on his way, learning up a storm. Then he became ill. He was weak and in pain. Yet he was more distressed by the fact that he did not have the strength to hold the Gemara. He wanted to learn so badly. Oh, how he loved the mitzvah.

One Agenda

Who guided the travels of the Children of Israel in the desert?

Hashem. His Presence, as manifested in the Cloud that covered the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), would lead the way. The Torah explains (Bamidbar 9:15-23) that when the Cloud ascended they would travel. When it came to rest, they would camp. Later (Bamidbar 10:35-36) the Torah describes the traveling of the *Aron* (Holy Ark). “When the *Aron* would travel, Moshe said, ‘Arise Hashem . . .’ And when it rested he would say, ‘Be tranquil

Hashem . . .”

Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt”l, is puzzled. Can it be that Moshe was telling Hashem to arise or rest? The Almighty was guiding the travels, not Moshe. Rather this is an example of the complete identification of a servant with his Master. As the Mishna states (Pirkei Avos 2:4), “Do His will as you do your will.” There was no conflict of interest here. Anything that Moshe said or did was *al pi Hashem* (in accordance with Hashem’s word). There was only one agenda. *Ratzon Hashem* (Hashem’s desire).

Kinderlach . . .

I want to do mitzvos, but I also have my own interests. I want to fulfill Hashem’s wishes, but I also have my own goals. There is a flaw in this way of thinking. The “buts” must go. A truly great person strives for the loftiest goal; the ultimate accomplishment. Doing Hashem’s will exclusively. No “buts”. Why settle for anything less than the best? You deserve it.