

The Projectile

“We have now reached the final session of your training program. Please step this way.”

The trainees moved in closer to see the giant missile, standing on its underground launch pad.

“This missile is deadly. Its warhead can cause untold destruction.”

“Sir, what triggers the launch of this missile?”

“That is a very good question, young man. It is voice activated. It has a sound sensor that identifies certain words. If they are spoken, the missile blasts off.”

“Sir, is it confidential information to ask what is the destination of this missile?”

“It is very confidential, because no one knows its destination.”

“What? It could be pointed at my home town!”

“That’s right.”

“If I say one of the code words, I could activate the missile and destroy my family and friends.”

“Young man, you had better watch what you say.”

Kinderlach . . .

Do you recognize this parable? The code words are loшон hora, and the missile is the terrible destruction that it causes. The Chofetz Chaim zt”l in his book, “Shmiras HaLoshon” describes what happens when we speak loшон hora. The words go up to heaven, and evil forces grab hold of them. They send them back down to earth in the form of death and destruction. We must be very careful what we say, for every word is heard, and comes back to haunt us.

The Disease

“If a person will have on the skin of his flesh *s’eis* (a swelling), *sapachas* (a scab), or *baheres* (a bright spot)” (Vayikra 13:2). These are types of *tzoras*, a terrible skin disease that existed in the times of our forefathers. There are many opinions as to the causes of *tzoras*. The Keli Yakar zt”l offers his explanation. *Tzoras* comes from the word *metzora*. *Metzora* is a

contraction of *motzi ra* (brings out the bad). If we have sinned in private, the effects of that sin remain hidden inside of us. The disease brings the bad effects of that sin to the surface of our bodies for all to see. The Keli Yakar continues by enumerating some of the sins that can cause *tzoras*.

“S*eis*” is a swelling of the skin to above normal height. This is a result of a swelling of the ego. Pride and haughtiness are sinful character traits. When a person contracted *s’eis*, it was a sign from Hashem that he needed to humble himself. “*Sapachas*” was a growth on the skin similar to a scab. The desire to acquire money caused *sapachas*. Spiritual acquisitions that a person makes (such as wisdom, good character traits, and integrity) become a permanently fixed part of him. Material possessions just surround the person (like a scab) and ultimately do not stay with him. “*Baheres*”, a white patch of skin comes from speaking loшон hora. The speaker embarrasses his friend and “whitens” his face in public. Therefore, his skin turns white.

Kinderlach . . .

*Do you remember the Megilla that we read on Purim? “Haman told them about the honor of his wealth, and his many sons, and the many ways which the king had promoted him and elevated him above the officers and royal servants” (Esther 5:11). “Haman said in his heart, ‘Whom would the king especially want to honor more than me?’” (Esther 6:6). Haman is an excellent example of pride and haughtiness. “I want this.” “I need money to go buy that.” “I have no money for *tsedaka* (charity) because I spent it all on candy.” If you find yourself saying things like this, it is a sign of a desire for money. “He’s fat.” “She cheated.” “Her charm is all a fake act to win friends.” These are all loшон hora. All of these sins brought *tzoras* to the person. What was the cure?*

The Cure

“He shall be brought to Aharon HaKohen or to one of his sons the

Kohanim” (Vayikra 13:2). The Keli Yakar zt”l elaborates that a cure from this disease could only be achieved with the help of a Kohen. One who is from the seed of Aharon HaKohen has the three good qualities, which are the opposite of those that brought on the *tzoras*. The sin of loшон hora is at the root of fighting and divisiveness between people. Therefore, the *metzora* must come to the Kohen, who has mastered peace in his own life, and is an expert at helping others make peace. Similarly, Aharon HaKohen can heal the sin of haughtiness. He is especially humble, as the verse quotes Moshe and Aharon saying, “What are we?” (Shemos 16:8). They did not see any reason to praise themselves. Lastly, the Kohanim did not suffer from the sin of greed for money. They had no portion of land in the Land of Israel and therefore no conventional means of earning a livelihood. Their income was totally derived from their service to Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash. Therefore, they learned to be satisfied with what Hashem gave them.

Kinderlach . . .

*The Kohanim teach us how to correct those sins that cause *tzoras*. Try to make friends with humble people and learn from their ways. Stay away from those who brag about themselves and their accomplishments. Do not speak loшон hora under any circumstances. Be happy with what you have. Do not look at what other people have. If you need something, Hashem will give it to you. He gives you exactly what you need. What could be better?*

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