



## OVERVIEW of the Daf

### 1) Humiliation and depreciation (cont.)

R' Ze'eira suggests another argument to prove that the violator and seducer must pay for humiliation and depreciation in addition to the fifty-sela penalty.

Abaye rejects this argument and offers a proof of his own.

Rava suggests an alternative proof.

2) **MISHNAH:** The Mishnah elaborates on the defamer and takes note that the defamer is treated more stringently than one who actually performed an evil deed. Support for this principle is seen regarding the generation of the wilderness.

### 3) Defamer

Rava explains how we know that the defamer is held accountable for his defamation rather than because he almost had his wife killed.

### 4) Generation of the wilderness

Reish Lakish explains how we know that the generation of the wilderness was denied access to Eretz Yisroel because of the lashon hara they spoke against Eretz Yisroel.

A Baraisa discusses the lashon hara that was spoken by the generation of the wilderness.

Rabbah in the name of Reish Lakish explains how we know that the unusual death of the spies was because of lashon hara.

A Baraisa elaborates on the ten tests that the generation of the wilderness presented to God.

### 5) Lashon hara

Numerous teachings and discussions related to lashon hara are presented.

Rabbah and Abaye discuss the definition of lashon hara.

Rabbah and Abaye discuss whether a statement made in the presence of the person being discussed is subject to the prohibition of lashon hara. ■

## REVIEW and Remember

1. What is the source that the fifty-shekel payment for the violator and seducer does not include humiliation and depreciation?

2. What were the ten tests the Jewish People gave God?

3. What is the source that one who speaks lashon hara is regarded as though he denies God's existence?

4. What steps should one take to avoid speaking lashon hara?

## Distinctive INSIGHT

### *The power of a word*

מה תקנתו של מספרי לשון הרע? אם תלמיד חכם הוא יעסוק בתורה

The Sages tell us, "What is the remedy for one who has spoken lashon hara (slandorous speech)? If he is a Torah scholar, let him engage in Torah study." (Arachin 15b). Lashon hara defaces man's "image of God", and Torah study restores it.

According to the Midrash (Tanchuma, Kedoshim #13, and Nedarim 32a), Avraham was punished for his reaction to God's promise in the Bris Bein Habesarim that He would grant him possession of the land of Canaan. God told him, as it were, "You want to know? Here is something you can know (Bereshis 15:13): 'Know with certainty that your offspring will be strangers.'"

Rav Shach once explained that the uniqueness of man in creation – the "image of God" that was bestowed upon him – lies in the fact that he is a "living soul", which Onkelos renders as "a speaking spirit." It is the ability to speak that sets man apart from the beasts. The power of speech is indeed a reflection of "God's image." Just as God's very word is capable of accomplishing the same as an actual deed, as it says (Tehillim 33:6): "By the word of God the Heavens were created," so too is man's power of speech capable of "establishing the heavens and settling a foundation for the earth" (Yeshaya 51:16). We must therefore ensure that our speech is pure and exact, in order not to corrupt the "image of God" within us.

This is why Avraham was punished for his expression, "How can I know," although this was seemingly only a minor impropriety of speech. Similarly, Moshe was taken to task for asking God (Shemos 5:22; see Rashi ibid., 6:1), "Why have You treated this people badly?" There are many other examples of improper expressions and harsh penalties for them – all because of the fact that to misuse the gift of speech is to tarnish man's image of God.

The Gemara (Arachin 15b) tells us that the tongue is encircled with two layers of protection. It is guarded with the teeth and also with the lips. In this way, when a person is considering using his tongue to speak lashon hara, he should be reluctant. In fact, the Gemara points out that we should each take a lesson from the sea, which has also been commanded to control itself, and it is in fact careful not to breach its borders. As a result of this consideration, a person can control himself and keep his mouth shut, and not

# HALACHAH Highlight

## Telling others that someone is a ba'al teshuvah

שלא נחתם גזר דין על אבותינו אלא על לשון הרע

The decree against our ancestors was not sealed except for leshon hara

Teshuvah Riv'vos Ephraim<sup>1</sup> wondered whether relating that someone had sinned but subsequently repented is permitted or is a form of lashon hara. He suggested that it depends on whether the person repented out of love or out of fear. If he repented out of love the Gemara teaches that his transgression becomes a source of merit and it would not be lashon hara to relate that he sinned and repented. If he repented out of fear the transgression remains a transgression and it is not clear that it would be permitted to relate this history to others. Riv'vos Ephraim then relates that the author of Shearim Mitzuyanim B'halacha expressed surprise that it should ever be permitted to talk about another person's transgressions when the Gemara in Yoma is clear that one may not even speak lashon hara about himself, not to mention to talk about others. He also doesn't understand why people think that it is acceptable to relate that someone is a ba'al teshuvah when seemingly it violates the prohibition of lashon hara.

Teshuvah Shevet HaKehasi<sup>2</sup> writes that the permissibility

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to speak slander. Kli Yakar points out that it is for this reason that the me'il/apron was entirely turquoise, the color of the sea. As the Gemara later notes (16a), the kohen's wearing of the me'il atoned for leshon hara. By reflecting upon the lesson of the sea and its ability to remain within its borders, we too can be disciplined and keep our tongues under control, not allowing it to speak in areas which are prohibited. ■

to relate that someone is a ba'al teshuvah depends upon whether it is well known that this person is a ba'al teshuvah. When it is well known or if the person himself freely shares this information with others it is permitted for one to share that information with others. If one's history is not well known and it is not something that the person shares with others it is prohibited for one to share this information with others. In the course of his discussion about this matter he suggests an answer to the question as to why Shulchan Aruch did not discuss the halachos of lashon hara in Shulchan Aruch when it is such a severe transgression as the Mishnah relates that it was the sin of lashon hara that prevented the generation of the wilderness from entering Eretz Yisroel. His simple answer is that Shulchan Aruch does not address things that are obvious similar to the fact that Shulchan Aruch does not state that one is not allowed to eat pork. ■

1. שו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"ג סי' ת"ה.

2. שו"ת שבט הקהתי ח"ב סי' שכ"א. ■

# STORIES Off the Daf

## A Question of Lashon Hara

שלא נחתם גזר דין על אבותינו במדבר אלא על לשון הרע

Today's daf discusses the negative consequences of speaking lashon hara.

Once a certain father heard that a child of the rebbe of Toldos Aharon, zt"l, wished to make a match with his daughter. He was overjoyed...until someone told him that the young man was not totally normal. Obviously, the father was distressed. He was also worried about how to ascertain the truth; surely a maggid shiur or other person within the Toldos Aharon system wouldn't say anything negative about the rebbe's grandson.

He finally decided to ask the rebbe himself, since he was certain that the tzaddik would not deceive him. When this question was put to the rebbe he denied the claim against his grandson. "I know that child since he was born. No one has ever thought there was anything wrong with him."

The father was very glad to hear this, but also furious at the one who had slandered the innocent bochur, and immediately blurted out, "Do you know who told me? It was..."

"Just a moment," the rebbe firmly interrupted, "It is a question of lashon hara. Perhaps you are forbidden to tell me. Working out whether this is permitted is no simple matter. I am going on a fundraising trip for two weeks in the next few days. When I return you are welcome to come back and I will tell

you the halachah."

When the rebbe was away, he learned the entire Sefer Chofetz Chaim through twice with great care. When he returned, the father of the girl—now engaged to the rebbe's grandson—came to ask whether he was permitted to tell the rebbe who had slandered the bochur.

The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon said, "I learned the sugya very carefully while I was away and I concluded that if you don't derive any pleasure in the telling, you are permitted to tell me who slandered the young man."

Before the man could say a word, however, the rebbe stopped him with a motion. He astounded the man with his concluding words, "It may be permitted, but nevertheless, I do not wish to hear about it!"<sup>1</sup> ■

1. זכרון צדיק, ע"י ל"א ■