

PARASHAT TAZRIA, Parashat HaChodesh- 2014-03-23

“If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a se’eit, or a sapachat, or a baheret, and it will become a **tzara’at** affliction on the skin of his flesh; he should be brought to Aharon HaKohen or one of his sons.” (13:2).

The Gemara Arachin (16a) lists seven different sins that lead to the punishment of **tzara’at** – the main one being **Lashon HaRa**.(evil talk, gossip). This one aveira (sin) is so prevalent in our society today that it is the leading and root cause of many of our problems.

Lashon Hara is not only about speaking about another Jew, but it even forbidden to say anything negative about Eretz Yisrael, and particularly about Yerushalayim. In our seder of reading Haftarot which is all from our Holy Nevi’im (Prophets), we find that perek 22 from the Navi Ye’ches’keil is included in our cycle to be read following parashat Kedoshim. However, being that the Navi speaks despairingly about Yerushalayim the minhag (custom) is not to read this perek in public but to substitute a different perek in its place.

According to the Vilna Gaon, even if something negative must be expressed out of urgency, or even for Piku’ach Nefesh, a life threatening matter, one should do whatever possible to avoid saying it. He cites the famous perek 20 in Shmuel Aleph verses 20-25., the chapter called “Machar Chodesh”, which we read when Rosh Chodesh falls on a Sunday. Here, Yehonatan, the son of King Sha’ul, wished to inform David that his father, Sha’ul, intends to kill him. Yehonatan just couldn’t express those words about his father he could not utter those terrible words from his mouth directly. So instead, he arranged an elaborate plan whereby he conveyed the message through the way he directed his servants to locate arrows.

Why didn’t Yehonatan tell David directly that his father Sha’ul wished to kill him and that he should flee for his life? This certainly was not Lashon HaRa- it was Piku’ach Nefesh! Furthermore, according to Halacha he was bound to inform David that his life was in danger. Says therefore the Vilna Gaon, we can deduce from this that even in a situation where it is permissible to speak Lashon HaRa, and even when it is a Mitzvah to do so- nevertheless one must be brief and express only the bare essential details. And if it is possible to convey the message without expressing it directly, one should do it in such a manner.

Lashon HaRa is a very serious matter and each and every one of us should think twice before saying what we ought not be saying.