

Parshas Tazria ♦ Rabbi Avi Metchik

In this weeks Parsha we find the details of the unique spiritual affliction known as tzaraas. When describing the treatment of the metzora, the one afflicted with the tzaraas, we find an interesting commandment. The possuk says (Vayikra 13:45) "And the person with tzaraas in whom there is the affliction – his garments shall be rent, the hair of his head shall be unshorn, and he shall cloak himself up to his lips; he is to call out: "Tamei Tamei (contaminated contaminated)". As the metzora is walking he is instructed to call out "Tamei Tamei" to warn anyone whom he may encounter of his approach.

The Dubno Maggid used to say that there is a very important lesson here. Many times people speak lashon hara because they feel that their words can't really do so much harm. After all they are just a couple of words. To this, the Torah counters with the commandment to the metzora. He says just one word and then he repeats it. The point is to show all of those around him the power of words. With this one word he says "Look at me. Because of just a few words I was afflicted with tzaraas and sent out of the camp, and I need to undergo the purification process for a metzora. Please take heed and be more careful with your speech. Learn from me." This is the lesson of the one word "Tamei".

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter zt"l would often say that for one to say that this rabbi can't sing or that this chazzan doesn't know halacha is lashon hara, but to say the opposite is on the level of murder. He would say that it is worthwhile for a person to spend his entire life learning mussar if it will save him from even one instance of speaking lashon hara.

What we can all learn from here is the power of our words. As explained above, even just a few words have the power to wreak havoc for someone else. However, on the flip side, our words, even just a few, can build someone up and make themselves feel great about themselves and what they are accomplishing. We all remember one instance when we got a compliment on something we did and the positive feelings those few words engendered. When a child comes home with a project from school and runs to open their backpack to show it off, when

contact information for him?".

The girl responded that the man in the picture was her father and unfortunately he had passed away two years prior. The attendant began to cry and said "I've been waiting for him to come back for so long. As you can see I have a handicap, and due to that, this is one of the few jobs available to me. Most people are uncomfortable with my appearance and look away when I come to the car, and I really do understand that. Your father was different. When he pulled in, over two years ago, he looked right at me and said I am in awe of you. You were born

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you compliment them and say what a great job they did and how amazing it is that all the colors are inside the lines, just look at the smile they will beam back at you. In this regard, we are all slightly like children. We all thrive off of compliments.

An amazing story is told about Reb Eliezer Geldzahler zt"l. About two years after he passed away, his daughter was driving on the Garden State Parkway and pulled into the Cheesequake rest stop for gas. She saw that the man pumping the gas was a person of extremely short stature. As he passed by her car he noticed a picture of her father on the front seat and he became visibly excited. He asked "How do you know that man? I've been looking for him for over two years, do you have

with a tremendous handicap, yet you refuse to play the role of victim. Instead you go to work every day and earn an honest living. You are a role model for me. You teach me that circumstances should not be allowed to dictate our existence. I have a large Yeshiva in Brooklyn, and I am going right from here to tell over to them this tremendous lesson. Since that day I have been looking for him, hoping he will return yet again. He made me feel tall".

This is the power of our words. When utilized properly we can build people up and cause great things to happen, and if chas ve'shalom the opposite, there can be tremendously bad consequences.

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Good Shabbos!