



KINDER TORAH

ת"טז

PARASHAS METZORA

KEEP THE SHECHINA WITH YOU

"How was school today, Chaim?"
"Great, Abba. We learned about parashas Metzora."

"It is a fascinating parasha, Chaim."
"The Rebbe sent us home with a *kasha* (question) Abba. The metzora brings different *korbonos* as part of his purification process. One of them is a *korbon oshom*. What is an *oshom* and why does he bring it?"

"That is a fascinating question, Chaim."
"The Rebbe told us to look in the Ramban at the end of parashas Vayikra, and the Sforno on parashas metzora to find the answer."

"Let's take a look, Chaim. Here is the Ramban. He explains that the name of the *korbon* reveals its essence. *Oshom* is similar to the words *shomom* (desolate) and *ne'evad* (lost). The person committed a very serious *aveyra*. He truly deserved to be *shomom* and *ne'evad*. Instead, of suffering that terrible fate, he does teshuva and subsequently receives his *kapora* (atonement) from the *korbon oshom*."

"Fascinating, Abba. Why does the metzora bring a *korbon oshom*?"

"The Ramban explains that the metzora is like a dead man. Because of his *aveyra*, he should be dead – *shomom* and *ne'evad*. That is why he must bring an *oshom*."

"I am in suspense, Abba. What is his *aveyra*?"

"Let us look in the Sforno, Chaim. He shares with us a fascinating insight into the nature of the *oshom*. The principal *aveyra* that requires an *oshom* is *meilah bi'kodesh* – misuse or desecration of the holy things. The metzora's main sins are *loshon hora* (slander) and *gasos ruach* (haughtiness)."

"How are they *meilah bi'kodesh*, Abba?"
"The Sforno adds that most *loshon hora* is a result of *gasos ruach*. The speaker feels superior to the other person. Therefore, he feels that he is allowed to put him down by speaking *loshon hora* about him. Furthermore, he usually speaks *loshon hora* secretly to his close acquaintance. A person who commits an *aveyra* in secret 'pushes away the legs of the

Shechina (Divine Presence).' By sinning in a private place he is making the statement, 'The *Shechina* is not here. Hashem does not know about this place and my sin here.' There is no greater desecration of Hashem's holiness than this. About such a person Dovid HaMelech writes, 'He who slanders his neighbor in secret – him I will cut down; one with haughty eyes and an haughty heart, him I cannot bear.' (Tehillim 101:5). The Targum explains that the slanderer will be stricken with *tsoraas*. The haughty one and Hashem cannot co-exist. The Metsudas Dovid adds that Hashem hates his deeds. Therefore, the metzora pushes away the *Shechina* and desecrates the Holy Name."

"I never realized that *loshon hora* was so serious, Abba. It is like *meilah bi'kodesh*. That is truly horrible."
"It is, Chaim. Let us all make a renewed effort to never speak it again!"



THE CHOICE IS YOURS

"Life and death are dependent upon one's speech" Mishle (18:21). The Medrash (Vayikra Rabba 33:1) relates the following story. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said to Tuvi his servant, "Go to the market and buy me a delicacy." Tuvi went to the market and bought tongue. The Rav then sent Tuvi to buy plain food. He came back with tongue. "What is going on here?" asked Rabban Shimon. "I ask you to buy a delicacy and you buy tongue. I ask you to buy plain food and you buy tongue." Tuvi replied, "There are good and bad tongues. When a tongue is good, there is nothing better than it. And when a tongue is bad, there is nothing worse than it." Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that a good tongue is one that speaks Divrei Torah and encourages others to learn and do mitzvos. A bad tongue is one that speaks *loshon hora* and *rechilus* (tale-bearing). The Medrash continues, telling us about a festive meal that Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi made for his students. He served both soft and hard tongues. The students selected the soft tongues and discarded the hard ones. Rebbe said to them, "Just as you prefer the soft tongues, so too others prefer to hear you speak softly and not harshly."

Kinderlach . . .

We can all think of examples of beautiful speech. "I love you Imma." "Thank you so much Abba for helping me with my learning." "That is a beautiful dress you are wearing Chani." These words of appreciation make a person's heart sing. Unfortunately, harsh words of criticism or discouragement can hurt a person very badly. *Kinderlach*, when Imma comes back to the Shabbos table, let us all tell her how delicious the meal is. What a big mitzvah!

Kinderlach . . .

Close your eyes, sit quietly for a few minutes, and feel the *Shechina* next to you. Hashem is everywhere. He is always with you. He is always there to help you and protect you. With one exception. If you speak *loshon hora*, you push Him away. Can you imagine that? The Almighty, Creator of the Universe is at your side, ready to help you, comfort you, and protect you. What do you do? Push Him away. What a terrible thing to do. That is the metzora, and that is his *korbon oshom*. Don't do it *kinderlach*! Keep your speech pure, and keep the *Shechina* with you!

Parasha Questions:

- Name the ways that a zov can make things or people *tomei*. (15:4-10)
- Which birds, trees, and wool must a metzora bring for his purification process, and what does he do with them? (14:5-7)
- Which *korbonos* does the metzora bring on the eighth day, and what does he do with them? (14:10-32)

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