

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE IRRESPONSIBLE HUSBAND

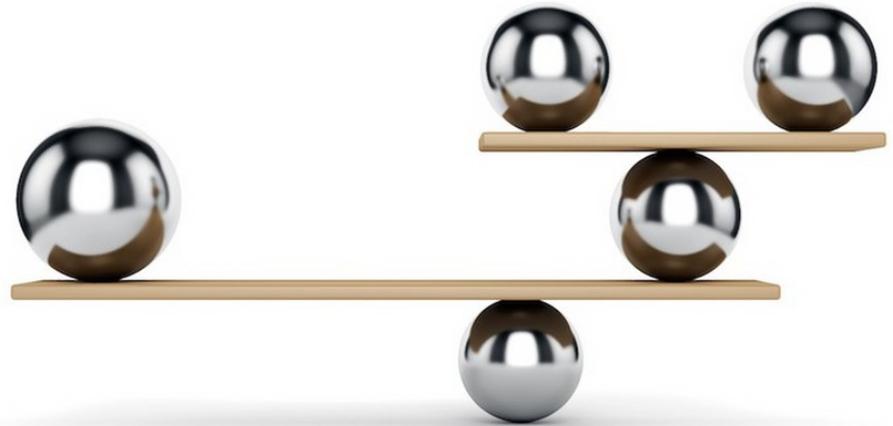
By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the mitzva of tzaras. Tzaras was a painful spiritual disease that erupted as a result of violating sins such as Lashon Hara.

Lashon Hara, evil gossip means saying things that are derogatory or damaging about another person. Sometimes gossip can be damaging even if it is not derogatory. Revealing a secret is one example of Lashon Hara that may not be derogatory but is damaging. This has a specific term called Megaleh Sod.

This brings us to the following true dilemma.

There was once a religious Jew named Zev. Zev was a wealthy business man in



PERFECT BALANCE

In this week's Parsha, Tazria Metzora, we find how severe the sin of lashon hara is. Lashon hara is the sin of speaking gossip which at its lowest level damages a person's reputation in the eyes of at least one person. When one spoke lashon hara he contracted tzaraas, a severe skin disease that resembled leprosy. This disease did not find its cause in a physical disorder but rather a spiritual disorder. It rendered the speaker tamei, spiritually impure and he was required to live outside the community. If anyone wished to visit him he was required to inform them that they should keep their distance.

The therapy by which one cured himself of tzaraas was by doing teshuvah, repentance. Teshuvah required the speaker to receive forgiveness from the two individuals whom he wronged. Those two individuals are HaKadosh baruch Hu and the subject of the lashon hara. He wronged HaShem by disobeying His law. He wronged the subject by degrading him in front of others. It is interesting to note that even if the subject will never find out about this lashon hara, he must still be asked for forgiveness! If however, the listener of the lashon refused to believe the gossip and he did not share the report with anyone else then the speaker does not need to ask the subject for forgiveness because no harm was done.

I find this remarkable. If the listener accepted the lashon hara and thereby thinks less of the subject even though he does not share this report with anyone else, it is considered that damage was done to the subject. This is true even if the subject will never know about it and nobody else will ever know about it. Behold! The Torah recognizes the damage of one Jew's reputation being downgraded in the eyes of another Jew, even though nobody else will ever know!

We can appreciate why the Torah forbade us from speaking lashon hara but why is the consequence so severe? We do not find this kind of consequence for most other transgressions. What is it about lashon hara that it is so damaging. Especially given that the damage is almost non-existent; only in the eyes of the listener - nobody else.

his thirties who was married with two young children. Zev's wife Hadassah did not work, and was financially dependent on Zev. One day Zev suddenly felt very ill. Zev went to his doctor, Dr. Ross and the doctor informed him that he had a very aggressive form of cancer and likely only had a few weeks to live. Zev, shocked, accepted the news. He then told the doctor as follows. "Ok I accept the fact that you have given me a very dire prognosis. However I plan on not letting anyone in my family know. I insist that you do not tell my wife, so that I could spend my last days with her and my family without anxiety".

Dr. Ross was a religious Jew and he felt very strongly that it is really wrong not to let the wife know. Zev should give her time for her to be able to prepare financially, and emotionally.

At the same time Dr. Ross was explicitly told by Zev not to say anything. In addition Dr. Ross was constrained by HIPA laws that forbid divulging patient information. Dr. Ross felt very torn. On one hand he felt that it was extremely harmful not to tell the wife, but on the other hand did he have a right to reveal this secret?

According to the Torah, what do you think is Dr. Ross's responsibility?

See Chashukei Chemed Yoma page 49

Answer to the Pork Restaurant Security Guard

This story is discussed in Veharev Na Volume Three Page 106. Rav Zilberstein answered that it would be a Chillul Hashem for the man to take this job.



Everything in this world exists in a delicate equilibrium. There are forces that pull in one direction and forces that pull in the opposite direction. Both forces are needed to create a perfect balance. If one force pulls a bit harder then the alternate force needs to be adjusted. This is why our world is such a magnificent demonstration of HaKadosh baruch Hu's Unity. Every force is adjusted to perfectly match its counterforce. This is true in microbiology as well as in astrophysics. The slightest deviation can throw everything out of order. (Of all the infinite forces that there are HaKadosh baruch Hu controls them all.)

The Jewish people are no different. We are no less a creation of our Creator. As such, we also depend on a very carefully balanced equilibrium. Every member of our most beautiful nation is needed for our nation to be complete and to be balanced. The respect and dignity of each member must be held in the highest order because everyone of us are needed and everyone needs their due respect. (Of course regarding people who are dangerous in one form or another protective safeguards must be taken. Lashon hara is permitted under certain circumstances when preventive measures are needed.) When lashon hara is propagated and another Jew's reputation is damaged then the equilibrium has

been offset and the counterforce must kick in to correct that deviation.

The reason the Torah treats lashon hara with such severity is because the balance has to be reset.

We find a similar parallel in the k'tores offering. The most effective offering and the most sanctified offering brought in the Temple was the k'tores, a spice offering. It was composed of 11 ingredients. When burnt, the k'tores gave off the most magnificent fragrance. One of the main ingredients was the chelbina which by itself was extremely malodorous. If this ingredient was missing, the k'tores was not accepted. Behold! What might have been perceived as the outcast is critical for the composition of this most fragrant offering. Just as the k'tores needs its chelbina and without it, it is disqualified, so to our people need our chelbina even though it appears to be malodorous her standing should not be belittled in our eyes - we need her!

How fortunate we are to be part of such a beautiful nation where every member has their distinct role, deserves to their due respect and even what they think makes all the difference.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

The ground beneath your feet has a lot more mysteries and marvels to it than you might think. There is a thick layer of granite beneath all the continents. This granite gives rigidity to the continental masses, and is the foundation upon which rests the sedimentary strata. This granite also provides a base on top of which are underground river channels, various pockets of minerals, petroleum, etc. Still farther up is to be found the soil which is close to the surface. Air, water, ice, roots, flood, and glaciers all work to crumble the rocks near the surface. Plant and animal remains, and body wastes, add to the mixture, and soil is the result.

When plants die, they decay and form humus, an organic material that makes the soil more fertile. Animal remains add to the humus. Bacteria in the soil help the plants decay. Animals that burrow in the soil help mix it.

An extremely valuable creature is the earthworm. It swallows soil as it burrows, chews it up, and excretes it again. The result is a finely pulverized soil. Earthworms feed on dead plant material in the soil. The worms help break down the humus the decaying matter in the soil. The necessary air for plant growth enters the soil through the burrows made by the earthworms.

The topsoil is the best soil for growing plants. It is seldom more than a foot deep [30.5 cm]. Below is the subsoil, which may be 2-3 feet deep. This is not as rich, for the earthworms and microbes have not worked it over, and it lacks the humus.

The ideal soil is structured so that each grain is not entirely separate, but sticks together with others in small crumbs. Humus is valuable in helping the soil stick together in this way. A good soil texture is one in which particles are not too small (clay) or too large (sand, pebbles, or small rocks). The best soils will be a mixture of sand, clay, or silt without too much of either, plus a

THE MAGIC OF SOIL

good amount of humus.

There are small creatures, bacteria (also called microzoma) which live in the soil and help condition it.

As the evening cools, dew forms on the plants and ground and waters the earth. Plants reach their roots down into the ground and tap underground water. But the earth has been damaged. The aerial and underground watering system was partially deranged at the time of the Flood. Another problem was deposition by flood waters of sections of clay, sand, exposed rock, gravel, and calcite, iron, selenium and other beds. Soils may lack calcium or have too much (and thus be too acid or alkali).

When too much rain falls, erosion results as soil is carried off. Rain also leaches the soil, taking nutrients downward into the ground. But while the top layer is leached by rainwater, minerals in the rock beneath it can be reached by plant and tree roots, which draw up more nutrients. In addition, humus can be built up by falling leaves and stalks, and by man as he works with the soil.

The result is garden plants containing the nutrients needed for life. We plant, tend, harvest, and eat the plants and obtain the vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, and proteins needed for the sustenance of life. We drink the water from the skies, and bathe our bodies in it. The sunlight falls upon us and deepens our health. Amid all the work, we grow stronger. It is all part of a good plan by One who looked upon the world when it was first made and declared, "It is good."

THE HOLY LANDLORD

The Brisker Rav's father-in-law R. Dovid Mintz, contributed a substantial sum to the dowry of the young couple. Along with this gift, The Brisker Rav received a number of valuable sefarim, including an original copy of the Shulchan Aruch, published in the lifetime of the author, and other ancient manuscripts of great monetary value. Apart from this, another man, R. Meshulam Auerbach signed over ownership of an apartment building in Warsaw to The Brisker Rav so that he would be able to live off the income generated by renting the apartments. But all this wealth was lost: The tenants of the apartment building in Warsaw were pious Jews who were very poor. These people did not have the money to pay city taxes, and over the years their debt to the city had accumulated to a very large sum. Finally, the government submitted a request to the owner of the building, The Brisker Rav, to reveal the names of his tenants, but he would not do so, flatly refusing to turn over the money of his fellow Jews to the government. As a result, possession of the building was taken in lieu of the back taxes. The dowry money, too, was lost in a bitter episode, and so all the wealth was gone. During the period when he lost the apartment building, The Brisker Rav spent much time studying "Sha'ar Habitachon" in the sefer Chovos HaLevavos. He remarked then, *the world thinks* that a wealthy man is someone with a block of apartments in Warsaw but the truth is that a rich man is someone who has Sha'ar Habitachon in Chovos HaLevavos! From The Brisker Rav, By R' Shimon Yosef Meller, Published By Feldheim page 130



Achim in a Nutshell:

"Veyached l'vaveinu l'ahava es Shimecha."

"Please bring our hearts together so that we can love Your Name".

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