



Parshas Tazria 2019, words that pierce

This week's Parsha Perspective is Sponsored by Dovy Berger in honor of Rosh Chodesh Nissan – Chodesh HaGeulah! May G-d shower him and his family with many blessings of health, success and happiness.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the immediate and speedy recovery of Daniel Aaron Moshe Ben Ruth and Chai Ben Sarina. May he and all those who need a Refuah Shlema experience G-d's mercy and compassion swiftly!

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha continues to discuss the laws of Tumah & Taharah, ritual purity, and impurity. When a woman gives birth, she must undergo a process of purification, which involves immersing herself in a Mikvah and bringing a sacrifice to the Beis Hamikdash.

The Torah then begins to discuss the laws of Tzara'as, a skin discoloration that renders a person ritually impure. A kohen must see someone with the symptoms of Tzara'as, and judging by the various signs (such as an increase in size after seven days), the Kohen pronounces it as pure or impure.

A person afflicted with Tzara'as must dwell outside the city alone. When it heals, a kohen will examine it again, and they can begin to undergo a rigorous process to become purified and return to their community.

The Gemara in Meseches Arakhin (15b) states, *“Rabbi Yossi Ben Zimra said: ‘Whoever speaks Lashon ha-ra, tzara’as infections inflict him.’* One of the reasons that a person gets Tzara'as is because they spoke badly about another person.

However, a question comes to mind: Why does speaking badly about another cause such a terrible punishment to befall someone?

Furthermore, the Gemara states that anyone who speaks lashon ha-ra is considered to have committed all three cardinal sins — murder, adultery, and idol worship. Why is talking negatively about someone just as bad as the three worst sins in the entire Torah!?

In Judaism, we learn that words have great power and energy. We use words to celebrate, honor, and praise G-d. We use words to bless each other. We use words to spread joy and happiness. Through prayer, we can change harmful decrees on high for the better, but because they have great influence, they can also be used in the opposite way.

The Gemara in Arakhin (15b) says, *“In Israel, they would say that lashon ha-ra kills three people: the person who speaks it, the person who hears it, and the person about whom it is told.”*

Speech is compared to an arrow: once the words are released, they cannot be recalled, the harm they do cannot be stopped, and the damage they do cannot always be predicted.

A well-known Chasidic story illustrates the danger of improper speech. A man went around his community telling malicious lies about the Chief Rabbi. Later, he realized the wrong he had done and began to feel remorseful. He went to the Rabbi and begged his forgiveness, saying he would do anything he could to make amends.

The Rabbi told the man, *“Take a feather pillow, cut it open, and scatter the feathers to the winds.”* The man thought this was a strange request, but it was a simple enough task, and he did it gladly.

When he returned to tell the Rabbi that he had done it, the Rabbi said, *“Now, can you gather the feathers? No. You cannot amend all the damage your words have done.”*

Our words have immense spiritual and physical energy. They can praise G-d and build everlasting relationships — or the opposite, heaven forbid. Therefore, we must hold our speech sacred and remember that it is not merely our actions that can last an eternity but our words as well.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand our words can influence not only other people's actions but our destinies as well. Studies show that people who use positive language tend to be happier and more prosperous, and in fact, even recover from illness quickly.

We must use positive words even when faced with the direst of situations because they will keep our spirits alive and help us achieve the best possible results.

***“The kind of words we use influence our thoughts,
character, habits, and even our destiny.”***

Have a meaningful Shabbos.

Rabbi Sholom Yemini