

# How Lashon Hara Leads to Metzora

by **Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher**  
Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

The Torah warns that one who speaks Lashon Hara will be afflicted with Tzoraat. In fact, the word METZORA is an acronym for Motzi Shem Ra, which means slanderous and evil speech. What is the Mida K'neged Mida here? We know that G-d always punishes measure for measure.

The answer here is, a person who has Tzoraat may be 99% healthy. There may be only one small blotch of Tzoraat on his skin. Yet that one blotch renders him a Metzora, totally unclean. The one percent of afflicted skin defines him, just as he defined another person by focusing on the 1% of his personality that he dislikes.

Loshon Hara results from focusing on another's negative traits and not seeing his positive qualities. When we cannot see beyond the things that bother us about a certain person, we may feel the need to share those negative feelings with others. That person, that we don't like, may have many wonderful qualities, but we don't see them because we are so focused on the components of that person's personality that we don't like.

The Hebrew word Machloket (dispute) is derived from the word Chelek (part), for one involved in a dispute sees only part of the picture.

My Rebbe, Rav Avraham Pam ztl, noted that it is our responsibility to constantly espouse the merits and virtues of Klal Yisrael. The Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu speaks about the intense pleasure G-d has when we speak kindly of our fellow Jews. Rav Pam bemoaned the fact that it is common to hear people speaking about the spiritual degeneration of our times.

However, we must realize that G-d derives no pleasure from such negative speech. Rav Pam added, "Perhaps this malady is one of the causes of the delaying of Moshiach."

It is analogous to a parent who has a wayward child, who causes the parent much heartache and grief. If a person approaches the parent and tells him about some negative behavior that his child is involved in, it will cause the parent great anguish, even though he is aware of his child's wicked behavior. However, if the person would tell the parent how his child helped and acted kindly to him, the father would be extremely appreciative.

So too, G-d, our Beloved Parent, waits to hear words of defense and merit on behalf of His children, the Jewish People, especially by other Jews. It is not a matter of being blind to the truth of our faults but a matter of focus and perspective. What do you choose to see? Unless you have the ability to correct and rectify evils that are committed by others, you should not

Speak negatively about other Jews. Rather, we must seek out their positive traits and focus on them.

There are undoubtedly many serious challenges confronting the Jewish world. However, there is no shortage of merits that we possess either. It is all a matter of perspective.

Let us focus on seeing the proverbial glass as half full instead of half empty. Let us learn to agree to disagree with respect and cordiality. 🌈