



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

### Talk, Talk, Talk

**Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects**

The Midrash Tanchuma at the beginning of Parshas Metzora relates an incident regarding a peddler who was traveling about and calling, "Who would like an elixir of life?" When Rabbi Yannai heard him, he requested to buy the special potion. Instead of producing any elixir, the peddler pulled out a book of Tehillim (Psalms) and showed Rabbi Yannai the verses (34:13-14), "Who is the man who desires life, who loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit." Rabbi Yannai was so excited by the peddler's advice that he paid him six *sela'im*. His students asked him, "Rebbe, did you not already know these verses?" Rabbi Yannai responded that indeed he had known the verses, "but this man came and clarified them."

Rabbi Yannai's response is difficult to comprehend. Seemingly, all the peddler did was read him some verses he already knew. What did he mean that the peddler had come and "clarified them?"

Rabbi Yissocher Frand suggests that what was so striking and novel for Rabbi Yannai was to hear *a peddler* promoting the importance of guarding one's tongue. Peddlers were not only transporters of goods but they also carried news, and usually gossip, from town to town. A peddler would *shmooze* with the townspeople forging relationships with customers. One might have thought that such a person could not possibly be careful about *lashon hara*. The peddler taught Rabbi Yannai that to guard one's tongue from *lashon hara*, it is not necessary to remain silent all day long; one can still *shmooze* and connect with others. What matters is how we direct those conversations.

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski reported that the Chofetz Chaim, who was legendary in his adherence to the laws of *lashon hara*, was not a quiet person, but when someone visited with him, he would immediately steer the conversation to Torah topics, thereby not only fulfilling the *mitzvah* to study Torah, but also ensuring that no *lashon hara* would be spoken.

At our Pesach Seder, both men and women have a special opportunity to fulfill an explicit positive commandment to eat matzah. The Talmud (Pesachim 115b) teaches that one of the reasons that matzah is called *lechem oni* is because it is a bread over which we *onim*/respond many words – a reference to telling the story of the Exodus while the matzah is in front of us. The Shvilei Pinchas expounds on this explaining that using our mouths to perform the *mitzvah* of recounting the story of the Exodus also sanctifies our mouth in preparation for the special *mitzvah* of eating matzah. As we ourselves prepare for the majestic night of the Seder, let us take care to keep our mouths pure by keeping *lashon hara* out and directing our conversations towards other matters and especially words of Torah.

**Wishing you a Good Shabbos!**

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## TABLE TALK

### Point to Ponder

***K'nega (Something like an affliction) has appeared to me in the house... (14:35)***

***A man or woman in whom there will be nega (an affliction)... (Tazria 13:29)***

***If there will be tzara'as nega (affliction) on a garment... (Tazria 13:47)***

Why does the Torah use the word "like a" in reference to the tzara'as of the house?

### Parsha Riddle

***What do the Seder and a house with tzara'as have in common?***

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

***Why do snakes have spots?***

***Answer: They were punished with tzaraas for speaking lashon hara against Hashem (Rabeinu Bachya).***

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

From our archives

A central theme of the laws of *Tzara'as*, appearing repeatedly throughout the parashiyos of Tazria and Metzora, is the crucial role of the kohein's diagnosis. The halachic status of the afflicted individual (or building or garment) hinges entirely upon the kohein's pronouncements: he becomes *tamei* (ritually impure) when the kohein declares him *tamei*, and *tahor* (ritually pure) when the kohein declares him *tahor*.

The Mishnah (Negaim 2:5) declares that a person may rule on anyone's *nega* (affliction) except his own. The mishnah continues with two more parallel rules: a person may annul anyone's vow (via the procedure of *hataras nedarim*) except his own, and a person may examine any first-born animal (i.e., to ascertain that it has a defect that neutralizes its *kedushah* [status of holiness] and allows it to be treated less restrictively) except his own. This mishnah is usually understood to imply that only in these three cases (which are exceptional for reasons that are not entirely clear) is one barred from ruling for himself, but one may in general issue a halachic ruling even on a matter in which he is directly interested, financially or otherwise (Tosafos Nidah 20b s.v. kol yoma, Shut. Rivash #406, Shut. Re'em #70, but see Rash Negaim ibid. and Meiri Nidah ibid.). This is in stark contradistinction to the judicial context, where we disqualify judges and witnesses who stand to gain from their participation in the case "even in a remote and amazing way" (Rambam Edus 16:4). The reason for this distinction between the ritual and judicial contexts is also not entirely clear (see Emunah U'Bitachon 3:30). It should be noted, however, that in general, the halachah holds those in positions of public trust to judicial standards (Pilpula Charifata Sanhedrin 3:17 [shin], Aruch Ha'Shulchan Choshen Mishpat 9:1).

PRESENTED BY  
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### Who Am I?

#### #1 WHO AM I?

1. I am big, not really.
2. I precede the spring holiday.
3. Say "Telling".
4. Sheepish celebration

#### #2 WHO AM I?

1. I am a mitzvah of Pesach.
2. I can cause tzara'as.
3. I am the namesake of the Yom Tov.
4. I can also mean to jump over.

#### Last Week's Answers

**#1 Bris Milah** (I am mentioned at the Seder, I take precedence over Shabbos, I was first for 99, I was also for 13.)

**#2 Nisan** (I am the first, I am the seventh, This year I am the eighth, I am for redemption.)

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