

**Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat April 21, 2007/Iyar 3, 5767**

**Parashah #27: Tazria (She conceives), Vayikra (Leviticus) 12:1-13:59**

**& #28: M'tzora (Infected One), Vayikra (Leviticus) 14:1-15:33**

**Haftarah: M'Lakhim Bet (2 Kings) 7:3-20**

**Suggested Messianic Writings reading: Mattityahu (Matthew) 13:10-17**

Shalom,

Two Parashot are read together this week, as we are in a non-leap year. Both deal primarily with the same subject, what in Hebrew is called *tzara'at*. This term is translated "leprosy" in many Bibles, but does not seem to be what we know as leprosy today.

But before we get into the subject of *tzara'at*, we have the short chapter of Vayikra 12; of note is the fact that the Torah-observant earthly parents of Yeshua obeyed the commandments of this chapter, as we read in Luke 2:21-24. Involved are the issues of childbirth and purification. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day after His birth, Yeshua was presented for his circumcision, and *pidyon-haben* (redemption of the firstborn son) took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the boy's life. Ten days later, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day after birth, would have been Miriam's (Mary's) purification, with the presentation of the two doves or pigeons for sacrifice. David Stern's JNT commentary points out that apparently Yosef (Joseph) and Miriam came to Jerusalem for the *pidyon-haben*, and stayed in Jerusalem for the next ten days until Miriam's purification sacrifice. We know also that Yosef and Miriam had little money, for the wealthier women were to bring a lamb for the purification sacrifice. (After the destruction of the Temple, which brought an end to animal sacrifices, Jewish women began immersing themselves in a mikveh as part of the process of purification.)

In their understanding of *tzara'at*, the Jewish Sages have concluded that the disease was a punishment from HaShem upon certain individuals, a physical manifestation of spiritual failure, primarily that of slander. The intention was that one with such anti-social behavior be isolated to experience some of the pain he brought unto others, and hopefully bring about repentance. The Hebrew term for "leper" is *m'tzora*, the title of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parashah reading. Russ Resnik points out that "*m'tzora* can be read as a contraction of *motzi ra*, which means 'one who brings forth or spreads evil speech, a slanderer.'"<sup>1</sup> Resnik continues on that subject, noting, "It has been said that gossip has three victims: the one being gossiped about, the one who gossips, and the one who listens. Gossip, then, is a sin of *omission* as well as a sin of *commission*. The one who listens to gossip sins by not speaking out against it... we find it easier to refrain from gossip than to speak up and take a stand against gossip... until we speak out against *lashon hara*, we are accessories to it... The consequence of such sin may no longer be visible among us as *tzara'at*, but the more subtle consequences – distrust, disrespect, alienation, fear – are evident all around us."<sup>2</sup>

*Lashon hara* (evil talk, derogatory or harmful speech) is of primary concern here. HaShem gave us the use of words in order for us to communicate to others the reason we were created – to glorify Him in *how* we talk. Our speech carries great weight and can affect others whether we realize it or not. King David put it well in Psalm 19:15(14), "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in Your Presence, Adoni, my Rock and Redeemer." David's son *Sh'lomo* (Solomon) wrote this truth in *Mishlei* (Proverbs) 18:20-21: "A person's belly will be filled with the fruit of his mouth; with what his lips produce he will be filled. The tongue has power over life and death; those who indulge it must eat its fruit." HaShem may not punish our sin of slander with a disgusting skin disease, but He does have various forms of discipline and punishment He uses to purify His people. We must always be in a state of evaluating our heart and be aware, if possible, of reasons for fluctuations in our lives. Sometimes, "life is what happens to us while we are making other plans<sup>3</sup>," but on the other hand something may happen to us because Adoni is trying to get our attention. Again from the ArtScroll commentary, "One who suffers G-d's apparent displeasure should never dismiss his discomfort as inconsequential. [One] must always question himself and his deeds, and take reverses as a sign from G-d that he must remedy his way. G-d begins by inflicting minor pain, but if that is not taken to heart, much worse may come."

It must be pointed out that this does *not* mean that someone with a physical or mental problem, or someone who has undergone tragedy is necessarily undergoing punishment from G-d. We must carefully

and spiritually discern, for people can be damaged emotionally and spiritually by someone else's careless judging.

"*Lashon hara* reflects the belief that everyone and everything should conform to one's own standard. It arises out of an intolerance of differences between oneself and others – someone else's customs as opposed to one's own, someone else's opinion as opposed to one's own, someone else's financial approach as opposed to one's own. The underlying basis for focusing on these differences is the sense that one's own way is the right way. It is the egocentric need to assert the superiority of one's own way of doing things, which is, at its heart, a denial of the uniqueness with which HaShem has endowed each human being."<sup>4</sup>

How can we overcome *lashon hara*? With *shmiras halashon* (guarding of the tongue), and by speaking *lashon tov* (good or positive talk). "As effective as *shmiras halashon* is in bringing good into one's life, it is perhaps even more powerful as a means of bringing good to others. Every day, people produce thousands of words. Each of these words has the potential to become a vehicle of *chesed*, an act of kindness in and of itself. When one speaks to family, friends, even strangers, in a gentle, considerate way, one's words become conductors of tremendous positive power. They can alleviate loneliness, build self-confidence, uplift, encourage, instruct and advise... *Lashon tov* is a means for emulating HaShem's kindness and compassion."<sup>5</sup> *Chofetz Chaim* wrote that "speaking *lashon hara* is akin to denial of belief in G-d."<sup>6</sup> *Ya'akov* (James) 3 is another chapter about *lashon hara*, also having strong words concerning the tongue and our speech. Adoni does not take lightly what comes out of our mouth, for those words tend to reflect our heart.

Much of what is "wrong" in life comes from mankind's corporate sinful nature. "The sin of *lashon hara* does not only cause individual exile, it can be the cause of national exile as well."<sup>7</sup> The speaking of *lashon hara* causes strife, and when it spreads, it can affect a whole community, city, or nation. As an example, the nation of Israel, the chosen people, on a whole did not accept Yeshua as their Messiah, and are still in an exile that has lasted for nearly 2000 years. Yeshua, in *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 13 and quoting from *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah) 6, said that, "the heart of this people has become dull..." The heart can become so jaded that it is unable to hear truth. Yeshua also declared in the same chapter of *Mattityahu* that, "Anyone who has something will be given more, so that he will have plenty; but from anyone who has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away." In line with that statement, the Jews were sent into exile; the church has spent 1700 years splitting into denomination after denomination because they threw out their Jewish roots and lessened the importance of Torah.

So as we seek to cleanse our own lives of *lashon hara* to avoid discipline and punishment from our Creator, we must continue to cry out for the deliverance of "all" of Israel. HaShem, who said to Israel, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," also called the Jewish people "stiffnecked, stubborn, obstinate," but that does not give anyone else license to blast the Jews. HaShem declared to Avraham in *B'reshheet* (Genesis) 12: 3, "I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you... [emphasis mine]." These are the chosen people. This does not mean that Adoni loves the Jew more than the *Goy* (Gentile), but we must understand that the Jews are "the apple (pupil) of His eye." Paraphrasing a thought from our friend Stephanie, "when you disparage Israel and the Jewish people, you are basically poking G-d in the eye." In the natural, when a finger comes at our eye, our natural inclination is to protect the eye. Some parts of the body require more protection than others. I have pointed out in the past that there are two different words for "curse" used in *B'reshheet* 12:3. Essentially Adoni is saying, "Anyone who [*kah-lah*] makes light of you [Israel], who belittles you, who makes jokes about you, who makes sarcastic comments about you, who esteems you lightly – I will [*ah-rah*] hem in with obstacles, I will render powerless, I will resist, I will bitterly curse." Do not put the Jewish people up on a pedestal, but do honor them as G-d's chosen people, and guard the tongue concerning them. We must understand that replacement theology in any form makes light of Israel, and pokes G-d in the eye. That's frightening.

*Yom HaZikaron* (Remember the Soldiers Day) is observed on Iyar 4 (April 22 this year) in Israel, and the following day *Yom Ha'Atsmaut* (Israeli Independence Day) is observed. Just as the United States has its own Memorial Day and Independence Day, it is good to honor those who have fought to defend these nations from tyranny, and to thank our Creator for allowing us these nations which still protect and allow

us our basic freedoms to one degree or another. Pray that the United States continues to stand with Israel. Continue to *sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* (pray for the peace of Jerusalem), because the deliverance of Israel by Messiah Yeshua will bring deliverance to the rest of the world – life from the dead, which means world-wide revival and renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Russell Resnik, *Gateways to Torah*, Lederer Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> From *Mr. Holland's Opus*, quoting John Lennon.

<sup>4</sup> From the Overview to *Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day*, ArtScroll Mesorah Publishing

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> *Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day*, ArtScroll Mesorah Publishing

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi David Feinstein, *Seasonings of the Torah*, ArtScroll Mesorah Publishing

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah (Blessings & thank you very much)

### **Mordekhi (Marc) & Yisraela Carmela (Teresa)**

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you  
into heaven, will come back to you in just the  
same way as you saw him go into heaven.  
(Acts 1:11 CJB)