



Acharei Mos - Kedoshim

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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The Consultation That Never Took Place Could Have Made the Difference

Parshas [Acharei Mos](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

There are many different opinions as to why the two elder sons of Aharon died during the ceremony dedicating the Mishkan. An interesting Medrash Tanchuma here in Parshas Achrei Mos enumerates four things they did wrong: The "*kreivah*" (coming close); the "*hakravah*" (bringing an unsolicited offering); the "*esh zarah*" (foreign fire); and "*lo natlu eizta zeh m'zeh*" (not consulting with one another as to whether or not they should be doing what they did).

In elaborating upon this fourth point, the Medrash quotes the *pasuk* in Parshas Shemini that "each man took his own firepan" (Vayikra 10:1). This implies that unbeknownst to each other and independently, they decided on their own to bring this unsolicited Korban. While each came up with this idea individually, neither thought it wise to consult with his brother regarding the wisdom of bringing such an incense offering at this time.

Rav Dovid Soloveitchik asks on this Medrash: And if they would have consulted with each other, would it have made any difference? Apparently, they would have each corroborated their brother's plan, saying, "That's a great idea. I had the same idea!" In other words, it would not have made the slightest difference whether they consulted with one another or not before going ahead and offering this unsolicited incense offering.

However, the Medrash implies that if they would have consulted with one another first, they would not have made such a mistake. Rav Dovid Soloveitchik says that this teaches us a fact about human frailty: I could be doing something wrong, and I may even know that I am doing something wrong, but I don't see it in myself. But when YOU do something wrong and I see YOU doing that something wrong, I will recognize the error. Therefore, if you ask me whether you should do it or not, I will tell you in no uncertain terms, "Of course, you should NOT do it. It is an *aveira*!" This is actually a play on words of a Mishna in Maseches Negaim (2:5) "A person is allowed to view (for determining *tzaraas* status) any and all blemishes, except his own..." A person can rule halachically on the status of anyone else's *negah*, but not on the person's own *negah*. Aside from the legal halachic interpretation of this statement (regarding the laws of *tzaraas*), the Mishna has a homiletic connotation as well: People see the faults of everyone else, but not their own faults.

Had Nadav asked Avihu, "Hey, brother, I am thinking about bringing this *ketores zarah* before Hashem. What do you think about that idea?" Avihu would have responded on the spot "What are you – crazy???" The fact that Avihu was standing there with his own fire pan ready to do the same thing would not matter. He was not able to see the fallacy of his own actions, but he could readily detect that same fallacy in others.

That is what the Medrash means: Had they consulted with each other, it could very well have been that their ill-fated action would have been derailed. I can see your faults. I cannot see my own faults.

The Yetzer HaRah Strives to Derail Aspirations for Purity

Parshas Achrei Mos contains the the *Avodas Yom HaKippurim* that details exactly what the *Kohen Gadol* does on Yom Kippur. That is the parsha that we read on Yom Kippur following *Shachris*.

By Mincha on Yom Kippur, we also *lein* from Parshas Achrei Mos, but the topic is completely different: "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them: I am Hashem, your G-d. Like the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled, do not perform; and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I bring you, do not perform, and do not follow their traditions." (Vayikra 18:1-3) Then we continue reading with the section of *arayos*, enumerating various forms of sexual immorality.

Why, on the same day, do we read about the *Kohen Gadol's* once-a-year angel-like admission to the Kodesh HaKodoshim (Holy of Holies), and then, after spending six or seven hours in fasting and prayer, we need to be warned against the lowest form of moral depravity? Who are we? Are we *malachim* (angels) or are we *mushchasim* (depraved individuals)?

The answer is that human beings are capable of being both. They are capable of angel-like entrance into the *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting) and the Kodesh HaKodoshim, and they are also capable of incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. A person can, in fact, go from the highest spiritual heights to the lowest depths of immorality. Not only that, but it is precisely when a person **is** on

the highest spiritual level that the *Yetzer HaRah* gives a tremendous push to make that person lose this level of spirituality. Specifically, when a person is on the highest level the Satan says, "I need to pull out all stops and make the person fall flat on his face." The Maharal writes (Tiferes Yisrael Chapter 48) that it is not a coincidence that the *aveira* of the *Eigel Hazahav* followed immediately after *Kabbalas Hatorah*. Moshe Rabbeinu was still on Har Sinai. The Jews were still just post-*Matan Torah*. Suddenly, they make a molten image and proclaim, "This is your god, Israel, that took you out from the land of Egypt." (Shemos 32:4) The Maharal says that they went straight from *Matan Torah* to *Ma'aseh haEgel* because there was a tremendous *Yetzer HaRah* at that moment. Specifically, when we reach that high *madregah*, there is a push of an equal and opposite force.

There is a very amazing Gemara in Maseches Yoma (19b): The Mishna describes the attempts to keep the *Kohen Gadol* from falling asleep on the night of Yom Kippur: The young *Kohanim* would snap their fingers before him and say 'My master, *Kohen Gadol*, stand up and dispel your drowsiness (by walking barefoot on the cold floor)!' And they would keep him occupied until the time for the slaughtering (of the morning's *Korban Tamid*).

The Gemara cites a Braisa which states: Abba Shaul says that even in the provinces (outside of the *Bais Hamikdash* without a *Kohen Gadol* and without an *Avodas Yom HaKippurim*) they used to do this (remain awake all night on Yom Kippur) as a *zecher l'Mikdash* (commemorative reenactment of the practice followed in the *Bais Hamikdash*). This was a beautiful thought on their part – they wanted to hold on to those magical moments of holiness that took place in the *Beis Hamikdash* on the holiest night of the year. However, the Braisa continues, this led to *aveiros*. People were

staying up the whole night and (Rashi explains) men and women would mingle and have a good time together. Eventually this led to *aveiros*.

The Gemara then clarifies where this occurred: Eliyahu said to Rav Yehudah the brother of Rav Salla the Pious One: You always say, 'Why has the *Moshiach* not yet come? The answer is in fact because of that *aveira* on Yom Kippur in Nehardea!

How could this happen? Can you imagine in your shul – on *Kol Nidre* night – when every Tom, Dick and Harry comes to shul and they are in deep meditation? They even want to reenact the actions of the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom HaKippurim* and suddenly, the men and women start schmoozing, they start fooling around. The next thing you know they are committing serious *aveiros*. How does that happen?

It happens because just the opposite of what we may expect occurs: Precisely where there is *Kedusha* and where there is striving to reenact and hold on to the great spiritual moments of the past, that is when the *Yetzer HaRah* finds the opportunity ripe to derail such aspirations of spiritual greatness.

That is why on Yom Kippur morning, we read "No man shall at that moment be in the *Ohel Moed*" and then on Yom Kippur afternoon by Mincha, we read "Like the abominations of Egypt where you were dwelling, you shall not do." Especially on Yom Kippur, we need to warn the people – Do not be a low-life. Do not be a *shegetz*.

The Power of Speech—Rather Than Hurt Feelings—Is the Lesson of “Lo Sekalel Cheresh”

Rav Frand

The *pasuk* in Parshas Kedoshim says, “You shall not curse a deaf person, you shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person, you shall fear your G-d, I am Hashem.” (Vayikra 19:14). The vernacular expression “to curse someone out” is **not** the Torah prohibition of “*Lo sekalel*”. The halachic definition of “*k'lal*” does not coincide with what someone might do to another driver when he cuts him off in traffic. Without getting into the specific Torah definition of “*Lo sekalel*,” it is forbidden to do it to a deaf person. There is a question regarding this mitzvah. It would seem that the last person in the world whom we need to be concerned about “cursing out” (however that is to be defined) is a person who specify a deaf person? The Torah qualifies the more general *pasuk* to teach that just as a deaf person is alive, so too, the general prohibition applies only to live people, to the exclusion of those who are dead.” In other words, if someone goes to the grave of a dead person and utters a halachic curse against him, that is not included in the prohibition.

The Ramban also asks this question and quotes Rashi, as he normally does. However, the Ramban takes a different approach: The above-cited *pasuk* in Mishpatim, which reads in full: “Do not curse a judge, and a prince in your nation you shall not curse” is speaking about cursing the elite of society – judges and princes. The *pasuk* here in Kedoshim refers to cursing the lower echelons of society. The Torah wants to warn us against cursing the entire range of society, from the highest man on the totem pole to the

least fortunate members of our nation. From this end-to-end prohibition, we can infer that it is prohibited to curse anyone in between these two extremes as well.

The Ramban says further that the deaf person was singled out in this area to teach us a *kal v'chomer*: If it is even forbidden to curse a *cheresh* who cannot hear what we say about him, and is neither embarrassed nor hurt by what we say, it is certainly forbidden to curse someone who can hear and be offended by what we are saying.

The Sefer haChinuch (Mitzvah 231) has yet a different take on the entire prohibition: Even though we don't really understand how the utterance of a curse affects the object of that curse, we realize that inevitably, people fear being cursed. The universal assumption is that words **do** have a power. This apprehension of being cursed applies equally to both Jews and non-Jews. The reason then for this mitzvah is that we are warned not to harm people with our words just like we are warned not to harm them with our deeds. This is not necessarily about making a person feel bad. The Torah is teaching us the power of speech: It is an *aveira* (sin) if I give a *klala* to someone – even if he may not be insulted, embarrassed, or even hear what I said (as in the case of a *cheresh*) because words have power – however that works. That is why the Torah picked the deaf person. Had the Torah picked a person who hears, our assumption would be that the *aveira* is making someone feel badly. However, that is **not** the rationale of this mitzvah, so that is why the Torah picks a *cheresh*.

The Chinuch continues with an attempt to explain how this all works: Speech is a gift from G-d. It is a "*chelek elyon*" – "higher power" because it comes, as it were, from the Almighty. We see this from the *pasuk* in Bereshis (2:7) "And He blew into his nostrils *nishmas chaim* (literally, the soul of life)." The famous

Targum Onkelos on this *pasuk* interprets the words *nishmas chaim* to be *ruach memalela* – a spirit that speaks. The *koach hadibur* (power of speech) comes directly from the *Ribono shel Olam*. Man was granted great strength to speak, even matters outside his own being.

This, says the *Chinuch*, is why people go to *tzadikim*, to *rebbes*, and to holy people to receive *brochos*. The closer a person is to the *Ribono shel Olam*, the stronger his power of speech is. The rationale for going to someone for a *bracha* is that **words count**. Even the *bracha* of a simple person (*hedyot*) is not to be treated lightly. When a simple Jew gives you a *bracha*, you should respond with a resounding “*Amen!*”

The power of speech is not to be underestimated. That is the lesson of *Lo sekalel cheresh*.

A Grammatical Insight Into the Mitzvah of Giving Rebuke

The *sefer HaKesav v’HaKabbalah* is a Chumash commentary with a forte (like that of the Malbim and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch) of analysis of nuances of the Hebrew language.

The *pasuk* in Parshas Kedoshim says: “Do not hate your brother in your heart, you shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him.” (Vayikra 19:17) There are times when someone needs to give rebuke because someone who is doing something wrong needs to be chastised. We have spoken in the past about when and how this is to be done, whether it applies in our time, and whether we still know how to give proper halachic chastisement. That is not the subject for tonight.

The Kesav v’HaKabbalah wonders about the grammatical use of the term “*es*” in the phrase “*Hochayach tochiach **es** amisecha*.”

Based on the rules of *Dikduk* (Hebrew grammar) the *pasuk* should read “*Hochayach tochiach **l’**amisecha*”. The Kesav v’HaKabbalah

explains the difference: Had it said "*Hochayach tochiach l'amisecha*," it would mean that the rebuke is being directed **to** the person. However, "*Hochayach tochiach es amisecha*" implies that there is an OBJECT over here, not a SUBJECT. The OBJECT is the *aveira*. The Torah is saying to discuss with this person the ACT which he did.

This means that you should go over to the person and say something like "You know, I don't know whether **that** is permissible." Leave **him** out of it. Don't attack him personally. That, says the Kesav v'Hakabbalah is how it is possible to reach people. Attacking a person directly (that which is called an *ad hominem* attack in Latin) is counter-productive. Human beings outright reject personal attacks. A person's defense mechanism is immediately activated when he is personally criticized. However, when someone discusses the impersonal act that was done, rather than the person who did the act, the recipient of the "chastisement" lets his defenses down. At that point, it is possible to have a reasonable and constructive discussion with him.

In our day and age, we do not generally give *tochacha*. In fact, the Chazon Ish writes in *Hilchos Shechita* that "We do not know how to rebuke." However, there are two exceptions to this rule. There are two categories of people who **need** to give *tochacha*: (1) Rabbis and *Rebbeim*; (2) Parents.

Consequently, the Kesav v'Hakabbalah is giving us a lesson in how we need to chastise our students and our children: Do not attack the person. Do not attack the child. Do not say "How could **YOU** do that?" Once "**YOU**" is involved, there will be resistance. It is much more effective to talk about the act – "Is THAT nice?" or "Is THAT right?" or "How would you feel if someone did THAT to you?" Take whatever approach might seem appropriate, but do not start with

the person. That is how to achieve success with the mitzvah of *tochacha*, if and when it applies today.

A Great Reason why not to speak Loshon Hora!!

Written by Ben Rose

Chazal say that all our pain is caused by the Accusing Angel who constantly prosecutes us before Hashem.

Is there any way to protect ourselves from his constant accusations?

Yes! Because the Chofetz Chaim explains that Hashem only listens to lashon hara about those who speak it themselves. If a person does not speak any lashon hara, Hashem will not let the Soton open his mouth to prosecute us.

So, how do we protect ourselves? If we refrain from lashon hara the Heavenly prosecutor will not be allowed to speak.

The power of company

Written by Daniel Shasha

Parashah Tazria teaches that a speaker of lashon hara who contracted tzaraas was quarantined outside the camp (13:46). What was the purpose of this quarantine? Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin explains that a common reason why one speaks lashon hara is because they fail to see the good in their companions and instead badmouth them.

When they are quarantined and are forbidden to have contact with anyone else, including other people who are tameh, it will give them an opportunity to appreciate what it means to have human company. Loneliness is extremely painful, and the metzora will be led to be grateful for all those around him, focusing on their good. Furthermore, the only way they can survive is dependence on others, e.g., people bringing them food and water. All this will lead them to appreciate their friends and realize their good traits; consequently, this will cause them to repent.

Everyone has so much good, and it is essential that we focus on it, despite their shortcomings. It is a mitzvah from the Torah to emulate Hashem, ‘And you should walk in His ways’ (Devarim 28:9). The Tomer Devorah teaches how Hashem focuses on the good we do, overlooking our defects. Someone who has committed many sins yet performs acts of kindness, Hashem doesn’t punish him since he loves those who perform acts of kindness! So too, we must do whatever we can to try to appreciate the good in our companions, despite their shortcomings. Our Sefarim teach that when we focus on the good in others, it actually helps bring out the good in them, helping them become better people.

The Gemara recounts how Rabbi Chiya’s wife was a very challenging person, constantly causing her husband a lot of distress. Yet, whenever Rav Chiya found something, he thought she would appreciate, he wrapped it up nicely and gave it to her as a gift. He exclaimed, “Is it not enough that she raises our children and protects us from sin?” (Yevamos 63a)

And you shall love your friend like yourself

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ

And you shall love your friend like yourself (19:18)

The Mitzvah to love someone else as one loves oneself is a very difficult concept to grasp. Surely it is against everyone’s nature to love someone else in the exact same way as we love ourselves, especially if it is a stranger?^[1] In light of this, the Ramban understands that the Mitzvah to “Love your friend like yourself” is not that we must actually literally love him in the same way as we love ourselves. Rather, the Mitzvah is to desire for our friend everything that we would want for ourselves, in the same proportion. For instance, just like we want to be wise and wealthy, so we should want our friend to be *as* wise and *as* wealthy. The focus of this Mitzvah, explains the Ramban, is to negate from our hearts all jealousy and the need to be in a better position than everyone else.

Someone who achieved this lofty goal was the Brisker Rov as illustrated by the following story which took place in his home. One evening, the community leaders came to the Brisker Rov's home to discuss an urgent matter with him. After they were welcomed in, they immediately sensed that his home had no form of heating and was unbearably cold. Upon leaving the house, the men decided to organize for chopped wood to be delivered to the Brisker Rov so that their stove could be heated and their home be warmed.

The following night the men returned for further discussions and as they walked in to the home, they once again felt the cold. They turned to the Rebbetzen and asked why her home was not warm. "Yesterday, so many poor people came to our home. They all complained about the cold and said they had no money to buy wood," she explained, "the Rov was not able to give them money, but he allowed them to take as much wood as they needed, until all the wood was gone" she said in earnest. When the men left, they once again arranged for the wood supplier to fill up their storehouse with wood, but realizing that this would happen every day, this time they added a lock to the door. They gave the key to the Rebbetzen and with great empathy said to her, "We are giving you this wood for your home only. If the Rav gives it to poor people instead, we will consider it theft!"

The following day, the men returned to the Brisker Rov's home, and it was once again freezing. "Why isn't your home warm?" they questioned the Rebbetzen. "Because my husband said, 'if the poor people are going to be cold, then we too are going to be cold!'"

[1] This approach is even more difficult due to the concept of, "Your life takes precedence over anyone else's." (Bava Metsia 62b)

Humor

A Blessing at Dinner

Leah Epstein invites some family and friends to dinner and at the table, she turns to her 6 year old daughter Rivkah and says, "Darling, don't forget to make a bracha (blessing)."

"But Mommy, I don't know what bracha to say," replies Rivkah.

"All you need do," says Leah, "is to repeat what you heard Mommy say."

Rivkah thinks for a moment and says, "God, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

A Big Catch

An Israeli man named Itzik was returning home from a fishing trip at the Sea of Galilee. He was flying down the highway, going way too fast. He felt secure amongst a pack of cars, all traveling at the same speed. However, it wasn't long before he saw flashing lights in his review mirror and pulled over.

The officer handed him the citation, received his signature, and was about to walk away when Itzik stopped him. "Officer, I know I was speeding," he started, "but I don't think it's fair. There were plenty of other cars around me going just as fast, so why did I get the ticket?"

The officer tilted his head and gestured at the fishing gear stowed on the passenger seat. "I see you like fishing," he said.

"Ummm, yes I do... so?" Itzik replied, confused.

The officer grinned as he turned to leave. "Ever catch ALL the fish?"

A Fly in my Coffee

What happens when a fly falls into a coffee cup?

The Italian - throws the cup and walks away in a fit of rage

The Frenchman - takes out the fly, and drinks the coffee

The Chinese - eats the fly and throws away the coffee

The Israeli - sells the coffee to the Frenchman, the fly to the Chinese, buys himself a new cup of coffee and uses the extra money to invent a Device that prevents flies from falling into coffee.

The Palestinian - blames the Israeli for the fly falling into his coffee, protests the act of aggression to the UN, takes a loan from the European Union for a new cup of coffee, uses the money to purchase explosives and then blows up the coffee house where the Italian, the Frenchman, and the Chinese, are trying to explain to the Israeli why he should give away his cup of coffee to the Palestinian.

A Prescription Perspective

70 year old Yankel Sapperstein makes an appointment to see his doctor.

"So how can I help you?" asks Doctor Levy.

"I was speaking to my pharmacist yesterday and he suggested I should ask you to change my prescription," replies Yankel. "And he also suggests that you check the prescription you've given to Miss Jones."

"That's a bit of a *chutzpah*, don't you think, Yankel?" says Doctor Levy. "Since when does a pharmacist query a qualified doctor's diagnosis?"

"Since he discovered that I've been on birth control pills for the last two months," replies Yankel.