



meet the Rebbe extended out of the waiting room and onto the open-air porch. When the Rebbe heard about the large crowds that stood waiting out on the porch, exposed to the elements, he expressed concern for their comfort, and instructed that the line begin in the *beis midrash* and move from there to the waiting room.

Some people had reservations about this arrangement, and asked the Rebbe whether this ran counter to the prohibition against making a *beis midrash* into a shortcut.⁵ Although for many of those waiting this would not be an issue, since they occupied themselves with reciting Tehillim or looking into a *sefer*, there were also simple Jews among the crowd and this prohibition might be very relevant.

5 See Berachos 62b and Megillah 29a

The Rebbe summoned R. Yitzchak Meir Kanovlovitz and asked him to clarify whether this halachah applied to the scenario in question. At the time, I was R. Yitzchak Meir's *chavrusa*, and, in his way of thorough learning starting with the Gemara and *Rishonim*, we studied *Hilchos Beis Haknesses* with the commentaries of the *poskim*, and arrived at the conclusion that there was no issue whatsoever; it was permissible *l'chatchilah*. With this, the Beis Yisrael felt at ease.

This was the very essence of the Beis Yisrael; from his exalted *madreigah*, he would worry about another Yid, both his *gashmiyus* and his *ruchniyus*. This is the entranceway to *taharah*.

(פרשת תזריע מצרוע תש"פ – מאמר א)

Mastery over the Mouth

There is an expression common throughout Chazal and the *Rishonim*, used to express wonderment about the opinion of a *chacham*: *הא כי תאמר דבר זה*, *The holy mouth – how could it say such a thing?*⁶ Why is the focus on the mouth? After all, opinions are formed in one's mind. The expression should begin *ראש קדוש* or *מח קדוש*, *The holy head* or *The holy brain*.

The Chiddushei HaRim asks why the Oral Torah is not referred to simply as *שבפה*, *the Torah of the mouth*; why the lengthier term *תורה שבעל פה*? He explains that Torah can reside only with someone who is a *בעלים*, a master over his mouth. We may now understand that one who has a *פה קדוש*, a holy mouth, can maintain a superior level of Torah learning.

In Aramaic, *לשון הרע* is referred to as 'eating,' *אכילת קורצא*. The pasuk (*Vayikra* 19:16) *לא תלך - רכיל בעמך* - *You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people*, is rendered by Targum as *לא תיכול קורצין*. Similarly, the pasuk in Daniel (3:8) states, *וְאִכְלוּ קֶרְצִיהוֹן דִּי יְהוּדָיָא*. Ibn Ezra on this pasuk gives a sharp explanation for this expression: speaking *lashon hara* is like eating the flesh of its subject. Based on this we may understand a statement of the Gemara (*Arachin* 15b), that one who speaks *lashon hara* is afflicted with *tzara'as*. It is measure for measure, *middah*

k'neged middah: as he ate his friend's flesh, so his own flesh is eaten; as the pasuk (*Bamidbar* 12:12) states about *tzara'as*, *וַיֹּאכַל חֲצִי בְשָׂרוֹ - and half his flesh is consumed*.

Rashi,⁷ however, explains the term *אכילת קורצא* differently: it was the way of gossipers to visit their listener in his home and share their gossip over *הלעטה*, food. This was a way of demonstrating that their tales were true. This dish, explains

me, now, some of that very red stuff. Why does Rashi adopt this expression?

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 155b) says that *הלעטה* is a term for force-feeding; when one wishes to fatten an animal but it does not want to eat, he holds its mouth open and shoves food down its throat. This, then, may be why Rashi used this expression. Those who gather to share *lashon hara* are not in control of their own mouths; their mouths spew *lashon hara*, force-feeding

Those who gather to share lashon hara are not in control of their own mouths; their mouths spew lashon hara, force-feeding themselves and their listeners

Rashi, was called *קורצין*. The term Rashi uses for food, *הלעטה*, is very uncommon; it appears only once in Tanach (*Bereishis* 25:30), when Esav told Yaakov, *הֲלֵעִטְנִי נָא מִן הָאֲדָם הָאֲדָם הַזֶּה* - *Pour into*

themselves and their listeners.

We have cited the Chiddushei HaRim's explanation for the term *ba'al peh*: one who is in control of his mouth. The Gemara (*Arachin*, *ibid*) uses

6 See Sanhedrin 23a; *Ran*, *Nedarim* 2a s.v. *U'shevuos*, about Rabbeinu Tam

7 *Vayikra* 19:16

a similar, yet contrary, expression: מה יתרון – לבעל הלשון? *What is gained by the master of the tongue?* This refers to one who uses his tongue for *lashon hara*. What is the difference between a *ba'al lashon* and a *ba'al peh*? A *ba'al lashon* is one who is an expert at the use of the tongue; he is proficient at hurting others with it. But he is not a *ba'al peh*; he is not in control of his mouth.

8 Vayikra Rabbah 16:2

A Yid must rule over his mouth; otherwise, he is like an animal who doesn't have a mouth (so to speak) and has its food poured down its throat with *הלעטה*. Only one who is in control of his mouth can eat with *אכילה*, consuming as he sees fit. We must maintain a proper, controlled mouth so that we can be capable of learning Torah.

The Gemara (Shabbos 147b) states that the most effective time for practicing remedies is between Pesach and Shavuot. As the Midrash⁸ says, guarding one's tongue is a *sam hachaim*, an elixir of life. This period is certainly a fitting time to strengthen our *shemiras halashon*, as well as respect for others and *middos* in general.

(בנאות דשא – תודיע מצורע תשכ"א)

Entering the Beis Hamikdash

There is a discussion in the Gemara whether one who enters partly into the *Beis Hamikdash* is considered to have entered, so that if he was *tamei* he must be punished. The Gemara (Yoma 31a) states that partial entry is not considered entry, proving this from the *metzora*: he stands in *Sha'ar Nikanor* and extends his thumb into the *Azarah*, his *tumah* notwithstanding. It is clear from the Gemara elsewhere (Zevachim 32b) that the differing opinion (which holds that partial entry is considered entry) maintains that the *metzora* may insert his thumb into the *Azarah* only because of the *gezeiras haKasuv* (the Torah's instruction) that he receive the blood on his thumb.

The Sfas Emes⁹ wonders how we know that a *metzora* must insert his thumb into the *Azarah* to receive the blood. Perhaps the blood should be brought out into *Sha'ar Nikanor*, making unnecessary the partial entry with *tumah*? Rashi¹⁰ states that if the blood were brought out, it would become invalid due to *yotzei* (leaving the *Beis Hamikdash*); but if we are ready to assume that the prohibition of partial entry becomes permitted for *metzora*, why wouldn't we assume that the prohibition of *yotzei* becomes permitted? The Sfas Emes answers that since the pasuk (14:18) says *וְכַפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי ה'* – and the kohen shall provide him atonement before Hashem, all of the atonement – including the placement of blood – must take place 'before Hashem,' i.e., inside the *Azarah*.

9 Zevachim ibid

10 S.v. *Idi*

11 This *ma'amar* was said during the lockdowns of COVID-19.

12 *Tosafos Yevamos 7b s.v. Zeh*, mentioned above.

13 Although the place where a *metzora* would stand – *Sha'ar Nikanor* – was not be sanctified with the *kedushah* of the *Beis Hamikdash*; nonetheless, it was a part of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and was thus a proper place for a *metzora* to achieve *taharah*.

14 Cited by R. Elyahu Mizrahi, *Vayikra* 14:11

There is a lesson in this which is particularly relevant during *Sefiras HaOmer*, as we strive for high levels of *taharah* and *kedushah*. We cannot sit home with our hands folded, peacefully immersed in the mud of our *aveiros* and *gashmiyus*, and also shout that we want to become purified. A person needs to first enter the *Beis Hamikdash*, to take a least some small step of his own towards purity. Although we are all presently confined to our homes,¹¹ in our thoughts and hearts we cannot remain in our previous state of *tumah* – we must seek to extricate ourselves and move forward. This is why the Torah requires that a *metzora* make a partial entry into the *Beis Hamikdash*; only by taking leave of the mundane and entering the *Mikdash* can he achieve *taharah*.

This lesson is also contained in the explanation of Rabbeinu Tam¹² that *Sha'ar Nikanor* was left unsanctified in order to protect *metzora'im* from the elements. One might wonder: why wasn't *Sha'ar Nikanor* sanctified, and a protective awning erected outside of it to protect the *metzora'im* from sun and rain? Clearly the Torah wants the *metzora*, who comes seeking to purify himself, to stand inside the structure of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as only in this way could he reach *taharah*.¹³

Rabbeinu Yeshayah of Trani (author of *Tosafos Rid*) writes¹⁴ that a *metzora* is permitted to make partial entry into the *Beis Hamikdash* despite his

tumah, because his mitzvah of becoming *tahor* overrides the prohibition of entering the *Beis Hamikdash* while *tamei*.

Maharal¹⁵ contends this, arguing that the permissibility of a *metzora* entering the *Beis Hamikdash* is not because the *issur* of entering while *tamei* is overridden; rather, since he must enter as part of his mitzvah of becoming *tahor*, it is not considered an impure entrance into the *Beis Hamikdash*.

At times, a person wants to purify himself through *teshuvah*, but he contemplates his low spiritual state and thinks he cannot enter the *Mikdash*. During this period of *Sefirah*, as we prepare for *Kabbalas HaTorah*, the *yetzer hara* convinces a person that he cannot approach *kedushah* since he is entrenched in improper thoughts and actions.

The Torah reveals that this is not so. The prohibition of entering the *Beis Hamikdash* while *tamei* is so serious that on every *yom tov*, including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as well as on every Rosh Chodesh, a special *korban* is brought to atone for this sin.¹⁶ And yet, a *metzora's* entry while *tamei* does not violate this prohibition, since this is the way for him to become purified. On the contrary, the *Beis Hamikdash* is meant to purify and elevate the impure and bring every *Yid* closer to *kedushah*. In the same way, one who wishes to purify himself with *teshuvah*, resolving to give up his improper ways, has begun his process of purification, so his *tumah* becomes irrelevant and cannot prevent him from entering the *Mikdash*. With proper *teshuvah*, his *aveiros* become like mitzvos, since his very essence, including his actions, is transformed from *tumah* to *taharah*.

15 *Gur Aryeh*, ibid

16 Mishnah, beginning of Shavuos

17 See *Avnei Nezer*, Y.D. 451

The *Acharonim* discuss whether it is permissible to put one's fingers through the cracks of the *Kosel Hama'aravi*. If the walls of *Har HaBayis* have the *kedushah* of *Har HaBayis* itself, then inserting one's fingers may be considered a partial entry into *Har HaBayis*. Since we are assumed to be *tamei*, this would be forbidden. Indeed, some *gedolei Yisrael* refrained from this practice.

The Lubliner Rav, author of *Toras Chessed*,¹⁷ writes that this is not the case. Partial entry is only considered entry where one is *able* to make a full entry. Where the entrance is a small hole that only a finger can fit through, it would be permissible. The reason for this is that a partial entry is forbidden only because the Torah considers as if he entered fully, so where he cannot enter fully, a partial entry is not forbidden.

There is a great lesson in this. Our process of *taharah* begins as only a 'partial entry.' During the days of *Sefirah*, we purify ourselves slowly; forty-nine days – day after day, *avodah* after *avodah*, *middah* after *middah*. It is as if we are sticking our foot in the door, holding it open just a bit, so that we aren't entirely left out in the cold. But it must be with the intention that we want to enter the *Mikdash* entirely. One who merely inserts a finger and is happy with a small *taharah* has not entered the *Mikdash* at all.

The Gemara (*Zevachim* 113b) states that the animal called *re'em* did not enter the *teivah*, because it couldn't fit inside; it stood outside the *teivah* and inserted into it the tip of its nose so that it could breathe. This sort of conduct is fine for an animal, but for a person to achieve purity, he must desire to enter the *Mikdash* entirely. When he does so, then even a partial entry is considered a true entry.

(פרשת תזריע מצורע תש"פ – מאמר א)

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