



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR MEIR PREIS

You are What You Speak

This is the law of the *m'tzora* on the day of his purification. (14:2)

Reish Lakish said, "What is the meaning of, 'This is the law of the *m'tzora*?' It means, 'This is the law for a *motzi shem ra*—someone who casts aspersions on another person.'" (Talmud, Arachin 15b)

IN OTHER WORDS, REISH LAKISH IS EXPLAINING that the Hebrew word *m'tzora* is seen as an abbreviation for *motzi shem ra*—someone who casts aspersions on another person—and this verse therefore means, "This is the law of the one who slanders." The Torah is giving us the remedy for someone who has spoken *lashon hara* (gossip or slander).

[*Torah Temimah* explains that Reish Lakish interprets this verse as hinting to a *motzi shem ra* because this is the only instance in which the Torah refers to a person with *tzara'as* (a miraculous skin affliction) as a *m'tzora*. Elsewhere, the Torah refers to such a person as a *tzaru'a*. Since the Torah changed its description of this *tzara'as*-stricken individual, it must be hinting to something.—Ed.]

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus points out that *lashon hara* is unique among sins. On the one hand, the severity of the sin supersedes that of even the "Big Three" (idolatry, adultery, and murder). This is seen in the Talmud Yerushalmi, which states,

Murder, adultery, and idol worship—*lashon hara* is equivalent to all of them [combined]. (Pe'ah 1)

On the other hand, *lashon hara* is extremely common. This is described in Talmud Bavli.

Many steal, some are immoral. But everyone speaks *lashon hara*. (Bava Basra 165a)

How could it be that *lashon hara* is the most serious sin, while concurrently being the most common sin, one of the most difficult sins to refrain from?

To answer that, we need to understand the source of *lashon hara*.

A human being is called *m'daber*—a "speaker"—because the essence of a per-

son is his ability to speak. Each of the 248 "limbs" in the body can only be used for its own function. The eyes can only see, and the ears can only hear. However, the mouth can express the experiences of the other limbs. The mouth can express what a person sees, hears, and feels. It is as if the mouth has a certain supremacy over all of the limbs.

In his introduction to *Shav Shmatsah*, Rav Aryeh Leib Heller writes,

If someone were to go up to heaven and see all the secrets of the world, he would not fully enjoy the experience until he had come back down to this world and told his experience to someone else.

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Looking for a chavrusa? See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!
Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

Sunday *Free brunch!*

🖐️🖐️ **America Runs on Torah**
(Jewish Law & Parasha)
Rabbis Dani Schon
and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM
Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

🚺🚻 🖐️ **Partners in Torah
at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

🚺🚻 🖐️ **Torah Treasures for
Seniors at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

🚺🚻 🖐️ **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn
at Strauss & Troy**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

🖐️🖐️ **Halacha** (based on the parasha)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM
Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim Daylight Time

Shacharis
Sunday 8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 7:20 AM
Shabbos N/A

Mincha
Sunday 7:45 PM
Monday–Thursday 5:45 PM
Shabbos 6:30 PM

Ma'ariv
In the Beis Midrash:
Sunday–Wednesday 9:45 PM
Thursday 10 PM
Shabbos N/A

Every Day

🖐️ **“Dirshu” Gemara Shiur**
(Maseches B'choros)
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kollel Yisgaber K'ari**
(amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kitzur Shuchan Aruch**
Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

🖐️ **Daf Yomi**
Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🖐️🖐️ **Nightly Halacha Chabura**
Rabbis Dani Schon
& Binyamin Teitelbaum
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning
(private & small groups).....times vary

You are What You Speak CONTINUED

That doesn't just mean that he would have a desire to tell over his experience. Rather, the very essence of a person is telling things over.

Since speech is the very essence of a person, those who cannot dedicate their essence and their very being to Hashem, are, effectively, cutting themselves off from Hashem. This is different from murder, idol worship, and adultery (the “Big Three”); people who commit those sins are still able to be identified as Jews. However, to a degree, the same cannot be said regarding *lashon hara*. For by speaking *lashon hara*, it is as if one is say-

ing, “I don't want to restrict my essence! I want to decide, on my terms, what my essence should be.” Such a person is secluding his “self” from Hashem, and it is, therefore, compared to a sin that is even beyond murder, adultery and idol worship.

The very reason why this sin is so severe is also why it is so common. In order to avoid *lashon hara*, one must go against his inner nature and refrain from speaking. If not, it shows that he let his “self” takes precedence over belonging to Hashem.

Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel says, “In all my days by the Rabbis, I didn't find anything better for the body than quiet.” (Avos 1:17)

Perhaps the explanation of this Mishnah is found in the aforementioned idea. As long as one is in control of his speech and can keep quiet, he can still have the special status of being a part of Hashem's people. We must work on controlling this dangerous, common sin, and live up to the status Hashem has given us! 🙏