

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

The Love of Hardship

When one studies the sickness of *tzara'as*, he will notice right away that there are a few very interesting rules that apply to this sickness. The Torah says that when one is afflicted with *tzara'as* he has to go to the *kohen* to check on his *negah*. He shouldn't go to the doctor and get medicine. What type of sickness is this that a doctor won't be able to heal and only the *kohen* can heal? There is another interesting criterion for it to be considered *tzara'as* that the Torah was referring to. The *Rambam* says, regarding *tzara'as* that is found on a house, the house must be located in Eretz Yisroel. Only then can it be considered *tzara'as* and the rules of *tzara'as* will apply. Why does the house have to be in Eretz Yisroel? The *Ramban* explains that *tzara'as* is not a regular sickness that happens to all people. Rather, it's a sickness that happens only to people that are holding on a higher spiritual level and are close to Hashem. He explains, when a Jew acts properly, then Hashem keeps his body and home intact; but when he strays even a little, Hashem inflicts on him *tzara'as*. The *tzara'as* is there to remind him that Hashem loves him and only wants the best from him; Hashem wants him to repent and come closer. This is why one has to go to a *kohen* who is on a higher level of spirituality than the rest of the Jews. This will

remind him that this is a special sickness that is coming from Hashem's love for him. This also explains why *tzara'as* on a house can only happen to a home that is located in the holy land of Eretz Yisroel.

My grandfather R' Zeidel Epstein, *Zatza'*, writes in his *sefer* that this *Ramban* gives us a whole new outlook on the concept of hardships and sickness. They befall people who are on the lofty level that Hashem wants them to repent and come closer to Him. Only on these people does He inflict hardship. The hardship is a love tap to awaken the person to repent and come back closer to Hashem. Everyone agrees that we are definitely in unprecedented times. Stress and anxiety levels are at an all-time high. No one knows what tomorrow will bring. One thing we do know is, as the *Chovos Halevovos* writes, that Hashem loves us and cares about us more than we care about ourselves! All He wants is that His most cherished children should come closer to Him so that He can bring *Moshiach*. May it happen speedily in our days! 🙏



RABBI
 ZALMY
 EPSTEIN

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Our sages teach us that *tzara'as* is the punishment for one who speaks *lashon hara* (*gossip*).

The *Vilna Gaon* says that proper speech is the major factor in determining one's portion in the world to come. The *Chofetz Chaim* tells us that adherence to these laws empowers our prayers, validates our Torah learning, accesses Hashem's Divine Protection, and invokes the many blessings that Hashem, in his kindness, is waiting to shower upon us.

As a general rule, one may communicate potentially embarrassing or potentially damaging information about a Jew only if there is a qualifying need. Common examples of this qualifying need include preventing or stopping victimization, avoiding inappropriate *shidduchim* and partnership, seeking advice, and unburdening oneself about a very troubling issue.

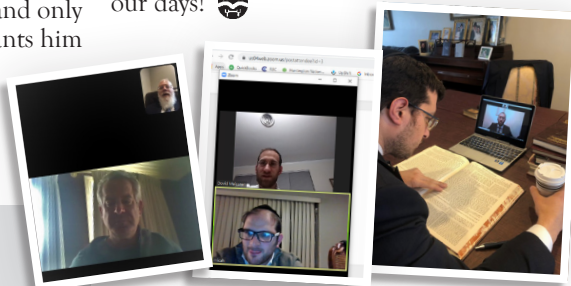
When there is no qualifying need, Reuvin may not communicate information about Levi that is potentially embarrassing or potentially damaging to Levi. This is the case even if:

- Reuvin only writes, only hints, only speaks, etc., the information (*Sefer Chofetz Chaim Hilchos Lashon Hara Klal 1:8*).
- Reuvin merely shows something, such as a letter or newsletter article, that will either damage or embarrass Levi (1:8).
- Reuvin says it just once (1:1).
- Reuvin says it jokingly (3:3).
- Reuvin told it to the listener before (5:8).
- Reuvin embarrasses himself in the same statement (1:9).
- Reuvin knows that he will thereby be respected by others (1:7).
- Reuvin's employer will reward him if he says this about Levi (1:6).
- Reuvin's principal, teacher, wife, relative, friend, etc., asks for the information (1:5).

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which father and son's names, in Hebrew, are both palindromes? 🙏

See reverse side for the answer

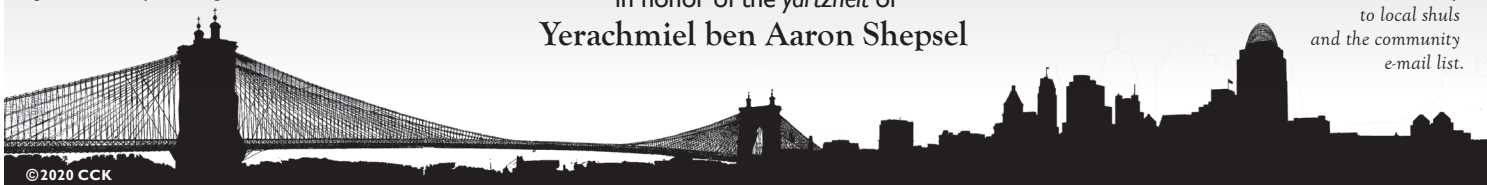
Mazal Tov to

**Ari Rubinoff and his Chavrusah
 Ephraim Skolnik** 🙏

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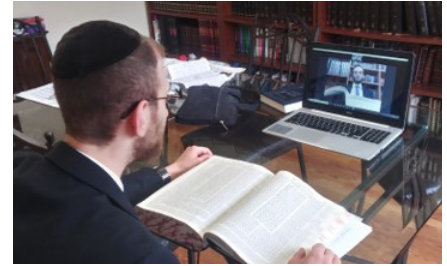


A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

- Reuvain is communicating with non-Jews (8:12).
- the information is true (5:1).
- the information concerns Levi's property, business (5:7), or one of his characteristics, such as his intelligence, wealth, or physical strength (5:2-4).
- other Jews behave the same way, for example, if Reuvain says that Levi does not learn Torah, does not give tzedaka, or says *lashon hara* (4:2).
- Levi is present (3:1).
- Levi is a child (8:1).
- Levi's name is not mentioned, but his identity is understood from the context (3:4).
- Levi never experiences any embarrassment or damage from this communication (3:6). 🕒

GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL



IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

Yaron was not religious by any means, but after being childless for many years his more traditional friends urged him to go pray at the grave of one of the many holy people buried within the land of Israel. He never gave it a second thought until one year, on the day of Lag Ba'omer, he found himself working right along the highway that led to Meron. That is the site of the grave of the Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who, because he passed away on Lag Ba'omer, has masses of people come pray at his grave on that day. Urged once again by a co-worker to take the opportunity to pray for a child, and seeing that he was already in the neighborhood, he gave in and got on the road to Meron. What he found out was that traffic was miserable, as

it seemed like the whole country was trying to get to Meron. Eventually, traffic came to such a standstill that Yaron parked his car and continued on foot. As he walked up the hill, a man passed him and mentioned that there was another grave very near to where Yaron already was of a *Tzaddik* from the times of the *Mishna*, Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar, which was much less frequented than Meron. Yaron decided that one grave is as good as another and followed the signs to the grave of Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar. He found the gravesite completely empty, and found himself strangely moved. Approaching the grave, he began to pray and soon the tears began to flow as he described how empty his and his wife's lives were without children. Spent from this first experience of prayer, he walked back to his car and went home. Nine months later he and his wife were blessed with the birth of a baby boy. Out of gratitude, he named the child Yochanan HaSandlar, although he was not inspired to make any other changes in his

life. However, once his son grew older, young Yochanan HaSandlar found himself attracted to his heritage and began, without his parents' knowledge, to attend Torah classes for teenagers. One day, his cover was blown. Telling his parents that he was going to play soccer, he joined a class instead. When Yaron went to the park to see his son play, he was nowhere to be found. Confronted by his father when he came home, he finally admitted to his secret studies, which at first filled his father made his father boil with anger. Yaron walked on to the balcony of their apartment to calm down and after a few minutes, with thoughts racing in his mind, remembered the prayers he said at the grave of the holy Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar. Looking to the heavens and spreading his hands wide, he called out, "Yochanan HaSandlar - You Won!" 🕒



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RIDDLE ANSWER

🕒 .bivoD bno idrsiY

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Whereas now it seems humorous and has been genetically disproven, at one point there was a popular theory that Native Americans were descended from the Ten "Lost" Tribes of the Jewish people. Such theories have been around since at least as far back as the 17th century. Those like Oliver Cromwell of England, who thought the messianic era would come when the Jewish people were spread across the face of the earth, believed in this theory to such an extent that they felt the messiah was imminent. The founder of the Pennsylvania colony, William Penn, was one famous purveyor of this theory. He wrote to a friend, "I found them [the Indians of the eastern shore of North America] with like countenances with the Hebrew race." One American named James Adair, who spent many years trading with Native Americans, gave this theory an even longer shelf life. He published a book in 1775 with 23(!) arguments that he felt proved a connection between the Native Americans and the Jewish people. For instance, he pointed to the fact that the Jews had tribes, prophets, and high priests, practiced the Native American way of curing the sick, and buried the dead in a particular way. There were even some American Jews who believed and promulgated these ideas as late as the 1830s. Beyond the fact that the "proofs" were weak to begin with, these theories have been extensively disproven by many forms of DNA testing which show no link between Native Americans and Jewish middle eastern roots. 🕒

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Is the American Indian Descended From the Ten Lost Tribes?" 2015.
Southerton, Simon G. "Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church." Signature Books. Utah. 2004.

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