Have You Ever Wondered...

In the Zechus of a Refuah Shleima of my Rabbeim, Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky shlita, הגאון הרב שמואל בן איטא עטיל and Rav Moshe Heinemann Shlita, הגאון הרב משה בן פיגלא.

Q: There are various גמרות in ש״ס that discuss רפואות that work to heal specific ailments. Can one today use those cures listed in חז״ל?

A: Rav Akiva Eiger (*YD* 336) quotes a Maharil that it is forbidden to try the רפואות of the תלמוד since it may not work for a variety of reasons and consequently ילעגו וילגלגו על דברי חכמים. The Yam Shel Shlomo (*Chullin* 8:12) takes it a step further and says that there is a חרם הקדמונים to not be סומך על רפואות התלמוד כדי שלא להוציא לעז על חכמים קדמונים וכוי.

The Magen Avraham (173:1) and subsequently Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l* (*Igros Moshe* 3:36) both stress that "many of the *refuos* mentioned definitely no longer work due to שנשתנו הטבעים. Therefore one should always be מסתפק on each רפואה that שמא לא תועיל"

Rav Moshe Heinemann shared an interesting observation. "The רמב״ם (*Hilchos Dei'os* 4:18) lists many רפואות, and not a single one is mentioned in the Gemara – at the same time, not a single cure from the גמרא is in the Rambam's list! The rational explanation is that the Rambam was a doctor and he wrote down the remedies that he felt worked. The beets today are not the same beets they had 40 years ago and it's very conceivable that the מחלה that we have today is not the same as the מחלה of years ago, as there are variants". Rav Heinemann ends with saying, "The general rule is that we follow the doctors of today."

I will never forget sitting in 8th grade, when a brilliant classmate of mine raised his hand asking if he could step out since he was experiencing and suffering from a headache. The רבי responded by saying, "the Gemara (*Eiruvin* 54a) teaches us that חש בראשו יעסוק בתורה. That is, when the head hurts the best thing to do is to study Torah," essentially saying "stick it out and apply yourself more diligently to your learning and all your problems will go away." Without batting an eyelash, the *bochur* shot back, "Doesn't Rav Moshe say that nowadays we don't rely on the *refuos* brought in Gemara?!" The teacher immediately sent him out of the classroom for exhibiting חוצפה, which was really where the boy was asking to go in the first place! (In no way am I endorsing this boy's behavior or lack of respect, just sharing a memory!)

Q: I spoke לשון הרע about my friend at one point this year. Am I required to ask him for forgiveness?

A: With the ימים נוראים around the corner, it is definitely the time of year to apologize, beg forgiveness, and ask *mechilah* from anyone that we may have slighted throughout the previous year. *Chazal* tell us that עבירות that are בין אדם לחברו, involving another human being, will not be wiped away with תשובה alone, and forgiveness must be granted by the victim.

In regard to the above שאלה, there are a couple of factors that we need to clarify in order to get down to the *halacha*.

In a case where you spoke *Lashon Hora* about somebody and the person was not hurt (בין בגופו או בממונו) or affected negatively as a result, even though an איסור דאורייתא has been transgressed,

CINCINNATI Community KOLLEL

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann is a Rosh Kollel in the Cincinnati Community Kollel. The above relevant shaylos are a sampling of questions that were asked recently. Rabbi Heinemann can be reached at RabbiCHeinemann@gmail.com or 513-835-5005.

only *teshuvah* is necessary. However, if your words did harm your friend, and he doesn't know about it, the Chofetz Chaim rules (*Hilchos Lashon Hara Klal* 4:12) that *teshuvah* is not complete without מחילה being granted, and you must approach your friend even though revealing to him (while asking forgiveness) will cause additional pain and anguish.

Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l*, was strongly opposed to this *psak*. He maintained that it is counter-productive to cause more harm than you already have done. Rather, it is better to just do as much תשובה as possible and try to spread good about that person in other ways.

I heard from several sources that when the Chofetz Chaim wanted to print his *sefer* on שמירת הלשון, Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l*, refused to give a letter of approbation, stating that he simply can not accept the Chofetz Chaim's *halachic* ruling in the aforementioned scenario and it is simply wrong. When the חפץ חיים pressed him to write something up and include in the *Haskama* that he agrees with the entire *sefer* except for that *halacha*, Rav Yisroel answered, "Nobody actually reads the letter; rather they see the name on the letterhead and assume that he is writing good things about the author and ALL the contents of the book." In the end, Rav Yisroel declined and no *Haskama* was given!

When Rav Henoch Plotnik. *shlita*. visited Cincinnati in Elul approximately 8 years ago he shared the following *mashal*:

A new wagon driver (aka a taxi service) moved into a small shtetl where there was already someone providing that service. With not enough work to go around for both, a disagreement broke out between the new and the old drivers. Finally they agreed that they would challenge each other to a debate in the town square and whichever presented himself as the better, more proficient, *baal agala* would get the nod and monopoly in town.

A crowd of townspeople came to watch and judge for themselves the winner.

"What happens if the wagon gets stuck in mud after a rainstorm?" asked the new driver to the other.

"That's simple," replied the old driver. "You have the passengers get out of the wagon to decrease the load.

"And if that does not help?" asked the first fellow.

"The next step is to remove the luggage, which will further lighten up the wagon."

The questioner continued to persist, "and if that does not yield results?"

"Then you have the passengers get behind the coach and push with all their might."

"What would you do in a situation where the horses are still unable to free the wagon wheels despite doing all the above?"

The old *baal agala* was at a loss and said, "I am out of suggestions and I simply don't know."

Turning the question back, he asked, "What would you do in that dire situation?"

The first one responded, "A good wagon driver is smart and careful enough not to get in such a mess in the first place!"

Similarly, it is unclear how we *pasken* in regard to the above מחלוקת. However, a thoughtful, caring person is cognizant and careful not to get stuck in such a situation altogether!

Cincinnati Community Kollel

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann is a Rosh Kollel in the Cincinnati Community Kollel. The above relevant shaylos are a sampling of questions that were asked recently. Rabbi Heinemann can be reached at RabbiCHeinemann@gmail.com or 513-835-5005.