

Tell a story
Parsha Metzora
by Julie Zhuk on 2024-04-20

This week's Parsha has a lot to do with watching how we speak with others. Being cautious with our words and what we say to others is crucial. We have to always keep our guard on how it is going to affect the other person, meaning how it is going to make them feel. We have to think what we are saying, if that were said to us how would it make us feel? When we think we often don't think about that and this is the biggest problem. This is why so many times gossip becomes an issue and in Judaism, gossip is taught to be an issue that needs to be worked on. The main reason why humans engage in gossip is because of insecurities that they have within themselves. They don't know that they have these insecurities. They seek solace in belittling other people when these insecurities kick in. This Parsha teaches us that when wanting to share anything about a person or say something negative to a person, instead we should "have a substantial amount of Torah on hand". We can share the Torah with people instead. This kind of suggestion is coming from the Rebbe. In this week's Parsha a very famous author named Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan is mentioned. He was also known as a Talmudist and as the famous, "Chafetz Chaim". He wrote a book on "Lashon Hara." He is mentioned in this week's Parsha because he once traveled by train to a Jewish community to give a lecture and he made friends with another gentleman on the train. Rabbi Kagan happened to ask the gentleman where he was going.

The gentleman responded, "I'm going into town to hear the Chafetz Chaim who is only the greatest righteous person in the Jewish world today speak. The Chafetz Chaim felt embarrassed by being praised so highly, he didn't want to give away who he was. He responded that people generally exaggerate just "how great the Chafetz Chaim truly is". He was saying that he knew him well himself and he wasn't truly that great. The gentleman was so upset by this remark that he slapped the man in the face. After that, of course, Chafetz Chaim acted as if nothing ever happened. They got to their destination and Chafetz Chaim presented his lecture to the crowd. The gentleman sat in the crowd listening to the lecture.

It was there that he realized that the man he slapped was the same man who was Chafetz Chaim. As soon as the lecture was over, he ran over to the Chafetz Chaim begging him for his forgiveness. Rabbi Kagan told smiled at him and said, there was no need to forgive him. He explained, in the end, you were just trying to defend me. You taught me a great lesson today. The Chafetz Chaim told this gentleman that it was today, that I learned we should not speak poorly about other people, but we should not speak poorly about ourselves. This week's Parsha is the Shabbat HaGadol. The week right before Passover and it's right before the Seder where we sit with the four sons, the wise son, wicked, simple, and the one who doesn't even know how to ask.

This Shabbat as we are preparing for Passover, we need to remember how to hold our speech. Parsha Metzora teaches us to educate, inspire, and uplift each other. We should remember to keep our insecurities in check. We should never hurt other people as we try to elevate ourselves. The last thing mentioned in this week's Parsha is may the Jewish people have the merit for the Ultimate Redemption from this last and final exile. Meaning, may the Mashiach finally come soon!