

Acharei- Kedoshim 2015

1.

Focus on Mitzvos

Meiyana shel Torah pages 106-107

“You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live – I am Hashem.” (18, 5)

"ושמרתם את חקתי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם."

What does the pasuk mean when it states “he shall live”? Even though that we do not receive reward for performing mitzvos in this world as stated in Kiddushin (39b) (שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא), nevertheless one is given reward if one keeps the fences, precautions, decrees that chazal enacted. The explanation of the pasuk is as follows; if you guard the decrees enacted, then then you will live and have reward in this world as well.

Another explanation is as follows; **when one performs a mitzvah, he must have energy, life and enthusiasm. The mitzvos are our life. We shouldn't perform mitzvos just because we are obligated to. We shouldn't view mitzvos as a chore that we must complete. We must be careful not to perform the Mitzvas out of routine and like a machine.**

Lastly, the Chidushei Ha'Rim explains that **when one is in the midst of performing a mitzvah, nothing else in the world matters. All focus should be concentrated on the performance of that mitzvah correctly. This is why if one is involved with one mitzvah he is exempted from other mitzvos (עוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה) as stated in Berachos (11a). The reason for this is; when one performs a mitzvah he invests all of his energy and life into that mitzvah, therefore it is impossible to do something else simultaneously, even another mitzvah.**

For example, when one recites a bracha, all of his focus should be on that beracha. Meaning, he shouldn't be in the middle of a conversation and as someone is talking to him; he is listening to them and simultaneously reciting the beracha. That is not recommended and b'deved (second best). Halachically and hashcafically all focus should be directed to the beracha being recited. Lechatchila (preferably) one should not dry his hands or wave to others when reciting the Asher yatzar upon exiting the restroom. One should preferably dry his hands and then recite Asher yatzar as stated in Shulchan Aruch (siman 191 sif gimal) and commentators.

The same applies to any thing in life. It is quite common for people to get mentally distracted when they sit down and try to start to learn. Many start thinking about everything else other than learning. This is the yeitzer hara (evil inclination) and this problem must be fixed. When one is zocheh (merits) and has time to learn, he must not waste even a minute. Time is incredibly valuable. A shadchan once said that when one spaces out in the middle of Tosfos, it is bad for Tosfos, but good for the shidduch. Lemasa (practically) it is possible to be in a very serious relationship and also focus on learning properly. It is possible and preferable to focus on Tosfos, which will be good for Tosfos and also have a successful relationship, or marriage, which will be good for the relationship or marriage. It is possible to have the best of both worlds. We must strive to work on ourselves to block out unrelated thoughts when we are learning. Many gedolim have had very hard lives. The Stiepler for example said about himself that if he wouldn't have temporarily forgotten and blocked out all of the hardships that were occurring

during his life he would have never reached where he did. The Stiepler, even while in the army managed to continue to learn. The conditions were so cold and unbearable, even so he overcame this. Similarly, when one is at college or work he must focus on what must be focused upon etc.

2.

Lashon Hara

Chafetz Chaim (hachadash) pages 116-117

“You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people, you shall not stand aside while your fellow’s blood is shed – I am Hashem.” (19, 16)

"לא תלך רכיל בעמך לא תעמד על דם רעך אני ה'."

Why didn't the Torah command us not to have other negative middos such as anger and cruelty? Even though the Torah alludes to the severity of these bad middos in many places and chazal discusses how bad it is, even so they aren't officially amongst the 613 mitzvos. Why is lashon hara different? Why is there a specific and official commandment not to speak derogatory information? Speaking lashon hara leads one to quarrel. Negative speech can even sometimes chas v'shalom and unfortunately lead to murder. Therefore the prohibition of lashon hara is adjacent to the prohibition of standing aside while someone is being murdered; in order to allude to the reality that lashon hara can lead to death. The story of Doeg, Shaul and Nov the city of the Kohanim is a quintessential example of this. **The Torah specifically warns about lashon hara as opposed to all other bad middos in order to allude to the severity of the potential negative and catastrophic consequences that can result from the lashon hara. These possible results are qualitatively and quantitatively worse than any other negative results from other bad middos.**

A second answer is as follows; the prohibition of lashon hara essentially includes prohibitions of other bad middos as well. Since lashon hara encompasses the other bad middos, the Torah warns us not to get caught in the lashon hara trap.

Why don't people ask lashon hara shilas (questions) to many Rabbis? How often is a lashon hara question asked? There are many complex areas of lashon hara and many gray areas; why aren't people asking more shilas? The unfortunate answer is that **people don't even realize that they are speaking lashon hara. When someone speaks lashon hara and gets reprimanded, he tries to rationalize and says 'it's not lashon hara it's true.'** The problem is that true negative information is lashon hara. False negative information is motzei sham ra (spreading a bad name). Or people try to rationalize and explain why and how it's not lashon hara. Only someone who learned all of the halachos of lashon hara has the ability and authority to properly determine whether something constitutes as lashon hara or not. Furthermore, no one wants to be friends with someone who is always gossiping and speaking negatively about others.