

Parsha Plug: Parshat Metzora

<p>Vayikra 13:46, 14:2</p>	<p>ויקרא יג:מו, יד:ב</p>
<p>13:46 All the days the lesion is upon him, he shall remain tamei. He is tamei; he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp. 14:2 This shall be the law of the person afflicted with tzara'at, on the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the kohen.</p>	<p>יג:מו כָּל־יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא טָמֵא הוּא וְיָשָׁב בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֹו: יד:ב זֶה אֵת תְּהִיָּה תוֹרַת הַמְצָרַע בְּיוֹם טְהוֹרָתוֹ וְהוֹבֵא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן:</p>

<p>II Kings 7:3-20</p>	<p>מלכים ב ז:ג-כ</p>
<p>3 Now there were four men, stricken with zaraat, at the entrance of the gate. And they said to each other, "Why are we sitting here until we die? 4 If we say that we will come into the city, with the famine in the city, we will die there, and if we stay here we will die. So now, let us go and let us defect to the Aramean camp. If they spare us we will live, and if they kill us we will die." 5 And they arose in the evening to come to the Aramean camp. And they came to the edge of the Aramean camp, and behold, no one was there. 6 Now the Lord had caused the Aramean camp to hear the sound of chariots and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. And they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired for us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us." 7 And they picked themselves up and fled at dusk, leaving behind their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, the camp as it was, and they fled for their lives. 8 Now these metzoraim came up to the edge of the camp, entered one tent, ate and drank, and carried off from there silver, gold, and clothing, and they went and hid them. And they returned and entered another tent, and carried off from there, and they went and hid them. 9 Now one said to another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, yet we are keeping quiet. If we wait until daybreak, we will incur guilt. Now, let us go and come and relate this in the king's palace." 10 And they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, saying, "We came to the Aramean camp, and behold there is no man there nor the sound of a human, but the horses are tethered and the donkeys are tethered, and the tents are as they were." 11 And he called the gatekeepers; and they related it to the king's palace inside. 12 And the king arose at night and said to his servants, "Now I will tell you what the Arameans have done to us.</p>	<p>ג וְאַרְבָּעָה אֲנָשִׁים הָיוּ מְצָרְעִים פֶּתַח הַשַּׁעַר וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ מַה אֲנַחְנוּ יֹשְׁבִים פֹּה עַד־מָתַיִן: ד אִם־אָמַרְנוּ נָבוֹא הָעִיר וְהָרֶעֱב בָּעִיר וּמָתְנוּ שָׁם וְאִם־יִשְׁכְּנוּ פֹּה וּמָתְנוּ וְעַתָּה לָכֹו וּנְפֹלָה אֶל־מַחֲנֶה אֲרָם אִם־יִחַיֵּנוּ נַחֲיָה וְאִם־יָמִיתֵנוּ וּמָתְנוּ: ה וַיִּקְוּמוּ בַּבֹּקֶר לָבוֹא אֶל־מַחֲנֶה אֲרָם וַיֵּבֹאוּ אִו עַד־קִצְצָה מַחֲנֶה אֲרָם וְהָיָה אִין־שָׁם אִישׁוֹ: ו וְאִד־נִי הַשְּׁמִיעַ אֶת־מַחֲנֶה אֲרָם קוֹל רֶכֶב קוֹל סוּס קוֹל חֵיל גָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו הֲנֵה שְׂכַר־עַלְנוּ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מַלְכֵי הַחִתִּים וְאֶת־מַלְכֵי מִצְרָיִם לָבוֹא עָלֵינוּ: ז וַיִּקְוּמוּ וַיָּנוּסוּ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־אֹהֲלֵיהֶם וְאֶת־סוּסֵיהֶם וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיהֶם הַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר־הָיָה וַיָּנָסוּ אֶל־נַפְשָׁם: ח וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמְצָרְעִים הָאֵלֶּה עַד־קִצְצָה הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֵּבֹאוּ אִו אֶל־אֵל אֶחָד וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וּבגָדִים וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּטְמְנוּ וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּבֹאוּ אֶל־אֵל אֶחָד וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּטְמְנוּ: ט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ לֹא־כֵן אֲנַחְנוּ עֹשִׂים הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יוֹם־בִּשְׂרָה הוּא וְאֲנַחְנוּ מְחֹשִׁים וְחַכְיֵנוּ עַד־אֹרֶךְ הַבֶּקֶר וּמִצָּאֵנוּ עוֹן וְעַתָּה לָכֹו וּנְבֹא אֶה וּנְגִידָה בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: י וַיֵּבֹאוּ אִו וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־שַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּגִּדוּ לָהֶם לֵאמֹר בָּאנוּ אֶל־מַחֲנֶה אֲרָם וְהָיָה אִין־שָׁם אִישׁ וְקוֹל אָדָם כִּי אִם־הַסּוּס אֲסוּר וְהַחֲמוֹר אֲסוּר וְאֹהֲלֵים כַּאֲשֶׁר־הָיָה: יא וַיִּקְרָא הַשְּׁעָרִים וַיִּגִּדוּ בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּנִימָה: יב וַיִּקָּם הַמֶּלֶךְ לִילָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עַבְדָּיו אֲגִידָה־נָא לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ לָנוּ אֲרָם יִדְעוּ כִּי־רַעֲבִים</p>

<p>They know that we are hungry. So they left the camp to hide in the field, saying, "When they come out of the city, we will seize them alive and enter the city." 13 Now one of his servants called out and said, "Let them take now five of the remaining horses that are left there. Behold, they are like all the multitude of Israel that are left there, behold they are like all the multitude of Israel that have perished; and let us send and we will see." 14 So they took two riders of horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean camp, saying, "Go and see." 15 And they followed them up to the Jordan, and behold all the way was full of garments and vessels that the Arameans had cast off in their haste; and the messengers returned and related it to the king. 16 And the people went out and plundered the Aramean camp; and a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel and two seahs of barley were sold for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. 17 Now the king appointed the officer upon whose hand he leaned, over the gate, and the people trampled him and he died, as the man of God had spoken, which he spoke when the king had come down to him. 18 And it was when the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two seahs of barley will be sold for a shekel and a seah of fine flour will be sold at this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria." 19 That the officer answered the man of God and said, "And behold, if God makes windows in the sky, will this thing come about?" And he said, "Behold you will see it with your own eyes, yet you shall not eat therefrom." 20 And so it happened to him, that the people trampled him in the gate, and he died.</p>	<p>אֲנִי חָנוּ וַיֵּצְאוּ מִן־הַמַּחֲנֶה לְהִתְחַבֵּה בַשָּׂדֶה (כְּתִיב בַּהַשְׂדָּה) לֵאמֹר כִּי־יֵצְאוּ מִן־הָעִיר וַנִּתְפָּשׂם חַיִּים וְאֵל־הָעִיר נָבֵא: יָג וַיַּעַן אֶחָד מֵעֲבָדָיו וַיֵּאמֶר וַיִּקְחוּ־נָא חֲמִשָּׁה מִן־הַסּוּסִים הַנִּשְׁאָרִים אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָרוּ־בָהּ הַנֶּגֶם כְּכֹל־הַמּוֹן (כְּתִיב הַהַמּוֹן) יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָרוּ־בָהּ הַנֶּגֶם כְּכֹל־הַמּוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־תָּמוּ וַנְּשַׁלְּחָה וְנִרְאָה: יד וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי רֶכֶב סוּסִים וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי מַחֲנֵה־אָרָם לֵאמֹר לְכוּ וּרְאוּ: טו וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם עַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהָיָה כָּל־הַדָּרָךְ מְלֵאָה בַגָּדִים וּכְלִים אֲשֶׁר־הִשְׁלִיכוּ אָרָם בַּחֲפָזָם (כְּתִיב בַּהַחֲפָזָם) וַיִּשְׁבוּ הַמְּלָאכִים וַיַּגִּדוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ: טז וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַיֵּבֶזוּ אֶת מַחֲנֵה אָרָם וַיְהִי סֵאֵה־סֵ לַת בֶּשֶׂת קֹל וּסֵאֵה־סֵ שְׁעָרִים בְּשָׁקֶל כְּדָבָר הַ': יז וְהַמֶּלֶךְ הִפְקִיד אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישִׁי אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁעַן עַל־יָדוֹ עַל־הַשְּׁעַר וַיִּרְמָסוּהוּ הָעָם בַּשְּׁעַר וַיָּמָת כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּרַדַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלָיו: יח וַיְהִי כְּדָבָר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵאמֹר סֵאֵה־סֵ שְׁעָרִים בֶּשֶׂת קֹל וּסֵאֵה־סֵ לַת בְּשָׁקֶל יִהְיֶה פַעַת מִחֹר בַּשְּׁעַר שְׁמֵרוֹן: יט וַיַּעַן הַשְּׁלִישִׁי אֶת־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים וַיֹּאמֶר וְהָיָה ה' עֹשֶׂה אַרְבּוֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם הַיְהִיָּה כְּדָבָר הַזֶּה וַיֵּאמֶר הַנֶּגֶם רָאָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּמִשֶּׁם לֹא תֹאכַל: כ וַיְהִי־לּוֹ כֵּן וַיִּרְמָסוּ אֹתוֹ הָעָם בַּשְּׁעַר וַיָּמָת:</p>
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Sanhedrin 107b	סנהדרין קז:
<p>The Mishna states that Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha, has no share in the World-to-Come. The Gemara explains that this is as it is written: And Elisha went to Damascus (see II Kings 8:7). Where did he go, and for what purpose? Rabbi Yoḥanan says: He went to cause Gehazi to repent, but he did not repent. Elisha said to him: Repent. Gehazi said to him: This is the tradition that I received from you: Whoever sins and causes the masses to sin is not given the opportunity to repent. What did he do that caused the masses to sin? There are those who say that he hung a magnetic rock on Jeroboam's sin, i.e., on the golden calf that Jeroboam established as an idol, so that he suspended it between heaven and earth, i.e., he caused it to hover above the ground. This seemingly miraculous occurrence</p>	<p>גחזי דכתיב וילך אלישע דמשק להיכא אזל א"ר יוחנן שהלך להחזיר גחזי בתשובה ולא חזר אמר לו חזור בד אמר לו כך מקובלני ממך החוטא ומחטיא את הרבים אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה מאי עבד איכא דאמרי אבן שואבת תלה לחטאת ירבעם והעמידה בין שמים לארץ ואיכא דאמרי שם חקק בפיה והיתה מכרזת</p>

<p>caused the people to worship it even more devoutly than before. And there are those who say: He engraved the sacred name of God on its mouth, and it would declare and say: "I am the Lord your God" and: "You shall not have other gods". And there are those who say: Gehazi pushed the Sages away from coming before him, i.e., he prevented them from learning from Elisha...The Sages taught: Always have the left hand drive sinners away and the right draw them near, so that the sinner will not totally despair of atonement. This is unlike Elisha, who pushed away Gehazi with his two hands and caused him to lose his share in the World-to-Come...Rabbi Yitzhak says: This was the incident involving Gehazi: At that moment, Elisha was sitting and teaching the halakhot of the eight impure creeping animals. Now Naaman, the general of the army of Aram, was a leper. A certain young Jewish woman who had been taken captive from Eretz Yisrael said to him: If you go to Elisha, he will heal you. When Naaman came to him, Elisha said to him: Go immerse in the Jordan. Naaman said to him: Are you mocking me by suggesting that this will cure me? Those companions who were with Naaman said to him: What is the difference to you? Go, try it. Naaman went and immersed in the Jordan and was healed. Naaman came and brought to Elisha all those items that he had taken with him from Aram, and Elisha did not agree to receive them from him. Gehazi took leave from before Elisha and went and took from Naaman what he took, and he deposited them. When Gehazi came, Elisha saw the leprosy that had grown on Gehazi's head. Elisha said to him: Wicked one! The time has arrived to take your reward for studying the matter of the eight creeping animals. "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your seed forever. And he went out of his presence a leper as white as snow" (II Kings 5:27). With regard to the verse: "And there were four men afflicted with leprosy at the entrance of the gate" (II Kings 7:3), Rabbi Yoḥanan says: These were Gehazi and his three sons, as he and his descendants were cursed...The Sages taught: Elisha fell ill with three illnesses:...One was due to the fact that he pushed Gehazi away with two hands and caused him to despair of atonement...Until the time of Elisha, there was no ill person who recovered, and Elisha came and prayed for mercy and recovered, as it is stated: "And Elisha was fallen ill of his illness from which he was to die" (II Kings 13:14). That is the first mention of a person who was ill and who did not die from that illness.</p>	<p>ואומרת אנכי ולא יהיה לך וא"ד רבנן דחה מקמיה...תנו רבנן לעולם תהא שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת לא כאלישע שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידים...אמר רבי יצחק באותה שעה היה אלישע יושב ודורש בשמונה שרצים נעמן שר צבא מלך ארם היה מצורע אמרה ליה ההיא רביתא דאישתבאי מארעא ישראל אי אזלת לגבי אלישע מסי לך כי אתא א"ל זיל טבול בירדן א"ל אחוכי קא מחייכת בי אמרי ליה הנהו דהוו בהדיה מאי נפקא לך מינה זיל נסי אזל וטבל בירדנא ואיתסי אתא אייתי ליה כל הני דנקיט לא צבי לקבולי מיניה גחזי איפטר מקמיה אלישע אזל שקל מאי דשקל ואפקיד כי אתא חזייה אלישע לצרעת דהוה פרחא עילויה רישיה א"ל רשע הגיע עת ליטול שכר שמנה שרצים וצרעת נעמן תדבק בך ובזרעך עד עולם ויצא מלפניו מצורע כשלג: (מלכים ב ז, ג) וארבעה אנשים היו מצורעים פתח השער אמר ר' יוחנן גחזי ושלשה בניו...ת"ר ג' חלאים חלה אלישע...ואחד שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידים...עד אלישע לא הוה איניש חליש דמיתפח ואתא אלישע ובעא רחמי ואיתפח שנא' (מלכים ב יג, יד) ואלישע חלה את חליו אשר ימות בו</p>
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<p>Teshuvot HaRashba 5:239:2</p>	<p>תשובות הרשב"א ה:רלט:ב</p>
<p>Many push away the wicked with both of their hands.</p>	<p>שהרבה, דחיות הרשעים בשתי ידים עושה.</p>

<p>And you already know what is said in Sanhedrin 107b: Not like Gehazi whom Elisha pushed away with both of his hands. And the rabbis said: The place where baalei teshuvah stand, complete tzaddikim are not able to stand.</p>	<p>וכבר ידעת, מה שאמרו (בסנהדרין דף קז:): לא כגחזי, שדחאו אלישע בשתי ידיים...ואמרו (בברכות ל"ד ע"ב): מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים, צדיקים גמורים אינם יכולים לעמוד.</p>
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Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Power of Speech: Metzora 5779*

Covenant is the word that joins heaven and earth, the word spoken, the word heard, the word affirmed and honoured in trust. For that reason, Jews were able to survive exile. They may have lost their home, their land, their power, their freedom, but they still had God's word, the word He said He would never break or rescind. The Torah, in the most profound sense, is the word of God, and Judaism is the religion of holy words. It follows that to misuse or abuse language to sow suspicion and dissension is not just destructive. It is sacrilege. It takes something holy, the human ability to communicate and thus join soul to soul, and use it for the lowest of purposes, to divide soul from soul and destroy the trust on which non-coercive relationships depend. That, according to the Sages, is why the speaker of *lashon hara* was smitten by leprosy and forced to live as a pariah outside the camp. The punishment was measure for measure: What is special about the person afflicted with *tzara'at* that the Torah says, "He shall live alone; he must live outside the camp" (Lev. 13:46)? The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said, "Since this person sought to create division between man and wife, or a person and his neighbour, [he is punished by being divided from the community], which is why it says, 'Let him live alone, outside the camp.'"...Judaism emerged as an answer to a series of questions: How can finite human beings be connected to an infinite God? How can they be connected to one another? How can there be co-operation, collaboration, collective action, families, communities, and a nation, without the coercive use of power? How can we form relationships of trust? How can we redeem the human person from his or her solitude? How can we create collective liberty such that my freedom is not bought at the cost of yours? The answer is: through words, words that communicate, words that bind, words that honour the Divine Other and the human other. *Lashon hara*, "evil speech," by poisoning language, destroys the very basis of the Judaic vision. When we speak disparagingly of others, we diminish them, we diminish ourselves, and we damage the very ecology of freedom. That is why the Sages take *lashon hara* so seriously, why they regard it as the gravest of sins, and why they believe that the entire phenomenon of *tzara'at*, leprosy in people, mildew in clothes and houses, was God's way of making it public and stigmatised. Never take language lightly, implies the Torah. For it was through language that God created the natural world, and through language that we create and sustain our social world. It is as essential to our survival as the air we breathe.