



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Tazria 5782

### The Anti-Drug

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z"l

**R**abbi Avrohom Abbba Yudelevitch, in his Darash Avrohom to parshas Tazria, cites a very unusual midrash - a 'midrash peliah' - according to which Iyov's (Job's) mind was not set at ease, after all of his suffering, until he reached the section of the Torah, in parshas Tazria, that deals with the laws governing a yoledes, a woman who has just given birth. This midrash, is extremely difficult to understand, because there seems to be no connection whatsoever between Iyov's suffering, which included the loss of his children and possessions, as well as bodily suffering, to the laws of the yoledes. Rabbi Yudelevitch therefore explains that the midrash is referring to a later section of the parsha in the Torah in which the laws of yoledes occur, namely, the section dealing with the laws of a condition called tzora'as, commonly although not necessarily accurately translated as leprosy. This condition, as described in the Torah, can occur on one's body, on one's clothing, and on the walls of one's house. The midrash tells us that each successive occurrence of tzora'as is a warning signal from God to cease the errant behavior - primarily the speaking of 'leshon hora', or evil talk - that leads to tzora'as. God first brings tzora'as to a man's house. If he takes the message to heart and changes his ways, then all will be well for him. However if he persists in his sinning, then tzora'as will occur on his clothing. If he then continues to engage in his illicit behavior, then his own body will exhibit the symptoms of tzora'as, and he will have to dwell, for a time, outside the community, until the condition disappears and he goes through a purification process. According to the midrash, then, this is the progression of the various kinds of tzora'as that comes as a punishment from God.

We have noted in the past that many commentators have pointed out that the Torah itself presents the progression

of the different kinds of tzora'as in an order that is the opposite of that which is described in the midrash. Parshas Tazria gives us, first, the laws of tzora'as that occurs on a person, then the laws of tzora'as on clothing, and only in parshas Metzora are we given the laws of tzora'as of houses. Many solutions to this variance have been given, but Rabbi Yudelevitch himself suggests that this midrash must be understood in light of an other midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 15:4), which says, in connection with the verse in Tazria that begins the laws of tzora'as, "When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising (Vayikra 13:2), that when Yisroel heard this section of the Torah, they became afraid. Moshe, however, told them that the section is meant for the wicked nations, but as far as Yisroel is concerned, they are meant to eat, drink and be joyful, as it says, "Many are the sufferings of the wicked, but he that trusts in God, mercy encompasses him (Tehillim 32:10). Rabbi Yudelevitch explains that God brings the punishment of tzora'as in a gradual way, starting with tzora'as of the house, only to those who have a reasonable possibility of learning the lesson being suggested. However, if someone is unlikely to take the message to heart, God begins directly with the punishment of tzora'as of the flesh. Therefore, when Yisroel saw that tzora'as of the flesh is mentioned first in the Torah, they became afraid, thinking that God did not think they would ever change once they sinned. Therefore, Moshe told them not to be afraid, because that progression was meant for the evil nations, and not for Yisroel. As far as they were concerned, the afflictions of tzora'as that they would suffer would come in a gradual progression, because it was certain that they would understand the message and change their ways. In a similar way, says Rabbi Yudelevitch, when Iyov reflected on his sufferings and realized that they came in a gradual way, first touching his possessions and

only in the end touching himself personally, he realized that God considered him as a person who was likely to change through his suffering, and, therefore, his mind was set at ease.

Rabbi Yudelevitch's explanation, despite its ingenuous and inspiring nature, carries many difficulties. First, he assumes that the midrash is not referring at all to the opening section of parshas Tazria - the laws of the yoledes - but it is in fact the opening verse of that section which the midrash quotes. Secondly, there is a dispute in the Talmud about the identity of Iyov. There are opinions that he was not Jewish, and there is even an opinion that he never lived at all, and that the entire book of Iyov is a parable that carries a universal message, using Iyov as a kind of everyman. This opinion, in fact, was favored by my teacher, Rav Aharon Soloveichik, zt"l, because of the consequent universal nature of the book. According to Rabbi Yudelevitch's explanation, however, the midrash seems to be identifying Iyov as a Jew, and the message of this midrash is consequently narrowed to be dealing with specific halachic issues rather than to more general life issues. I would like to suggest a different explanation of the midrash, which avoids both of these difficulties.

Rashi, in the beginning of parshas Tazria, cites a midrash (Vayikra 14:1) in which Rav Simlai notes that the laws of the yoledes are recorded in the Torah only after the laws of the kashrus of animals, fowl and fish, as well as other laws regarding the status of these creatures and their capacity to render a person impure. R. Simlai explains that this is in accordance with the order of creation, in which the creation of man came after the creation of all these creatures. Just as man's creation came after their creation, so, too, the laws governing man are recorded in the Torah after the laws in regard to the other creatures. Rabbi Yosef Salant, in his Be'er Yosef, notes that a significant difference between man and all other beings is that it takes a human being much longer to mature from infancy to adulthood than it takes any other creature. Thus, parents play a much greater, protracted role in the rearing of children than other creatures play in bringing their offspring to maturity. Although Rabbi Salant presents this aspect of human maturation in the context of the applicability of the laws of purity and impurity to human beings, it is equally if not more applicable to the general maturation of a person into a responsible human being who eventually takes his place in society. As Rav Elimelech Bar Shaul points out in

his Min HaBe'er to parshas Tazria, although the mother becomes impure as a result of the process of birth, after her period of impurity passes, she takes an active role in the nurturing of her child, as does the father, and this role continues throughout life. This educational process is most pronounced in the case of a son, who, as the Torah goes on to tell us in the beginning of parshas Tazria, must be circumcised on the eighth day, after the mother has gone through her purification process. As we showed at length in Netvort to parshas Tazria, 5763 (available at [Torahheights.com](http://Torahheights.com)), the inclusion of the requirement of circumcision on the eight day within the laws of the yoledes serves to underline the role that the parents play in the education of their child. With this factor in mind, we can now return to our enigmatic midrash about Iyov and his understanding of the section of the Torah about the yoledes.

Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, zt"l, in his classic essay, Kol Dodi Dofeik, discusses Iyov and his encounter with God. Once Iyov admitted that he cannot know the reason for suffering, God spoke to Him, and told him that, while this was true, he could grow from his suffering. Although Iyov was a righteous person, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, who regularly brought sacrifices to God in case his children sinned in the course of the parties they often held, and who contributed very generously to charity, he was, still very insulated, and did not take the trouble to go out and actively seek opportunities to help others. He helped individuals, but he did not take a broader interest in the troubles of the community, nor did he truly join with those suffering individuals who needed the receptive ear and heart of another person who would feel the enormity of their plight. This was the message that God was giving to him when He appeared to him from out of the whirlwind. Although Rav Soloveitchik does not mention this, I believe that God's message to Iyov extended to his relationship with his children, as well. It is true that Iyov brought sacrifices after the parties which his children held. However, a more concerned and responsible parent would have taken a pro-active role in these parties and made sure that the possibility of sin could not occur in them. On a wider scale, he should have raised them in a way that he would not even have to worry that such a possibility could exist. When he studied the section of laws about the yoledes, this sense of responsibility came home to him, and he realized that he had not taken the proactive role in his children's upbringing that he needed

to. This reactive, rather than proactive, attitude then spilled over into other areas in his life, until it defined his entire personality, as Rabbi Soloveitchik explains in his essay. Upon understanding this message, Iyov's mind was set

at ease, because he now understood the function of the suffering that God had brought upon him, namely, to move him to galvanize his talents for the betterment of mankind by becoming a proactive member of society.

## A Matter of Time

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from a shiur given in the Gruss Kollel on March 27, 2014)

This week is Parshat ha-Chodesh, and it makes us think of the famous Rashi at the beginning of Chumash, who says that the Torah should have started from ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim. Because the first mitzvah in the Torah given to Bnei Yisroel is Kiddush ha-Chodesh. This is a bit surprising. We would think that the first mitzvah should be *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, for example, or *ve-asu li Mikdash*, Tefillah, or *ve-ahavta le-re'echa kamocha*, etc. No matter, it would be something big, overarching, and profound. *Ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim* seems technical. Obviously, it is crucial. How can we have Pesach without Kiddush Ha-Chodesh, and how can we properly time other Chagim? But it seems to be more like technical groundwork. It doesn't seem to be the heart of the entire Torah—where it should start.

But it is not a coincidence that it is the first mitzvah commanded to Bnei Yisroel in the Torah. It is the first revelation to Klal Yisroel when Hashem says: Look, now you are starting Avodas Hashem. Where does He start? He doesn't begin with Korban Pesach—which would have been a suitable place to start Avodas Hashem and the whole Torah. He commences with *ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim*—Kiddush Ha-Chodesh. But for what reason? So, *al-pi drush*, one could answer this question in many different, interesting ways. But the simplest way to answer this question is based on the observation of the Rav. He asks what the difference is between an Eved and a Ben Chorin. We can answer this on multiple levels. But if you think about it, what does Ben Chorin have that an Eved doesn't? So you could say: *Ma she-kanah eved kanah Rabo*. A Ben Chorin has a bank account, and an Eved doesn't. But an Eved could also squirrel away some money somewhere. So what is the real difference between them? A Ben Chorin controls his time. The Rav would say that a Ben Chorin has time-consciousness. A Ben Chorin is *ba'alim* over his *zman*. He says: Look, here's my time. Now

I could do this or that. I have this much time, and this is what I will do. He says: For this project, I have six months. First, I would do this, and then I want to do that. He is a master over his time to utilize it to achieve whatever goals he wants. One thing that an Eved doesn't have is control over his time. Because every moment, he is dependent on the whim of his master. Any day he could be sold down the river. His master tells him to do this, and then five minutes later, he is told to do that. An Eved cannot plan his time. An Eved does not have an overarching time-consciousness. He doesn't participate in historical time and doesn't have a mesorah of time. And even in the most practical sense, an Eved is not *ba'alim* on his time. What is Torah saying then? What's the very first mitzvah? It's not even Korban Pesach. It's something more elementary than that! You ought to appreciate what Cheirus is in the first place—before you shecht the Korban Pesach. What is Cheirus? It means that now you have the first month. It's more important than the second month and the third month, in some ways. Because there are many critical things to do in this first month. *Veyikchu lahem seh* on the tenth of the month. And on the fourteenth, *ve-shachatu oso kol adas Yisroel bein ha-arbayim*. And on the fifteenth, you have *achila be-chipazon*. And then, you should get ready for the next thing happening in time. We should learn to control our time—to give it structure and order. We should learn to impose our spiritual ambitions in Avodas Hashem on our time—to use our time for Avodas Hashem. And ultimately, now it makes sense that the Torah should have opened with *ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim*. What's the very first mitzvah? Before you actually get to do the mitzvos, you have to have a perspective on time—the most precious gift that Hashem gives you. *Be-derech melitzah*, it is said that what has happened is gone, and the future is not here yet, but here-and-now is a gift of Hashem. That's why they call it the present! Time is a gift from Hashem, but not in the sense of *ha-avar ayin ve-asid adayin ve-hahove*

*ke-eref ayin* (Pele Yoetz, *Da'agah*). No, that's a perspective of an Eved. For an Eved, there is no past. And who knows what will be in the future? And here-and-now is not worth worrying about—what can I do right now? On the other hand, the perspective of Ben Chorin is: What do you mean? The past is what I have built until now. The future is what I plan to do. And now is my bridge between my past and my future. It's between what I have done in the past—where I come from, and what I will build in the future—what I will be. It's a conduit between where we all come from in the past and where the world is going. And it is our job to be moving toward the future. And the very first mitzvah given to Bnei Yisroel in the Torah—before we actually do any of the mitzvos—is to say, “What's time?”

## Being Transparent, But Discrete

*Rabbi Moshe Taragin*

**A** heavenly fire had descended into the mishkan, confirming the presence of God within the human realm and within a human edifice. The divine spirit amongst us is cause for celebration, but also poses challenges. Preserving the splendor and magnificence of the divine presence demands that those who experience unsightly illnesses or inelegant bodily circumstances be temporarily suspended from the mishkan.

In listing those who are temporarily suspended, the Torah depicts numerous ‘undignified’ conditions of the human lifecycle. It describes the contagious physical disease of tzara'at. Likewise, the Torah portrays a compromised bodily state of a zav or zava, who experience unpleasant bodily secretions. These people are not in a state of maximal nobility or physical dignity.

The Torah could have easily and quickly summarized the laws pertaining these awkward illnesses. Yet, surprisingly, these two wordy sections painstakingly delineate each and every detail about someone stricken with these conditions. This “verbal outlay” illustrates that the Torah doesn't flinch from any aspect of the human condition. There is no moment which isn't “dignified” enough for the Torah's interest. Human beings constantly stand in the presence of God – during our most magnificent moments and in our most compromised physical states.

In fact, the actual word “TORAH” appears five times in Tazria and Metzora – the greatest concentration of this word in the entire Torah. To dispel the notion that

Time is not something that flows like I am floating down the river. From the mitzvah of Kiddush ha-Chodesh, we learn that time is something we structure. We give it units. We make plans for things we want to do in those units. We have responsibility for them. And we know that we are going someplace with those units. Those units have kedushah. And only then—once you are a master of your time—can you keep kol ha-Torah kulah because you recognize the value of the biggest gift Hashem gave you, and you use it properly. And you appreciate the kedushah and the potential of that time. And then you go and do all the rest of the other 612 mitzvos. But it all must start from Kiddush ha-Chodesh and kedushah of zman, from *ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim*. Shabbat Shalom.

unattractive human experiences are ignored by religion, the Torah repeats the word “TORAH” five times, underlying the sweeping interest of Torah and religion.

The notion that the Torah would avoid certain topics or blush at certain situations implies that religious experience is to be compartmentalized into exclusive areas of human life. By spotlighting diseased or physically compromised people the Torah presents religion as all-encompassing.

We have learned- sometimes the hard way- the value of open and frank conversations about the entire range of the human condition. We realize the great danger of suppressing topics and allowing the general culture to fill the void. We conduct open and honest conversations about mental health, marriage, sexuality, verbal and physical abuse, racism and many other issues which, in previous generations, were unattended to. In a world of easy access to information, shying away from these important issues merely surrenders that conversation to others.

The damage of “conversation suppression” isn't limited to the particular issue being suppressed. Avoiding important conversations because they are “too sensitive” conveys that impression that religion is partial, frightened or both. Engaging in open conversation conveys confidence and conviction that the Torah is eternally relevant and comments upon every nook and cranny of the human condition.

Yet, despite the candidness of the Torah's list, it still employs discrete language. A male who experiences

abnormal bodily secretions and conveys halachik impurity is portrayed as riding upon a horse. A female who experiences similar bodily emissions is described as sitting upon a chair. In the Torah's vernacular, the image of a woman riding horseback is less discrete than a woman sitting upon a chair. Even though the Torah is quite frank about the physically compromised condition of a woman, it still utilizes discrete language.

Transparency is vital but so is prudence. While we must address every issue— even sensitive ones— we must be careful about our language and the looseness of our conversation. By encouraging frankness and transparency we sometimes too eagerly share information meant to be confidential. Likewise in the rush to open conversation about every topic we sometimes speak in words which should better be avoided. There is a thin line between transparency and TMI (too much information). We can create open conversation while still protecting the dignity of language and while still sharing information only with those who need to know. The cost of unrefined speech can sometimes far outweigh the value of transparency. The tilt towards transparent conversation has created a loose-tongued culture while introducing words and imagery which robs us of our purity.

Can we achieve transparency while preserving the dignity of language and the privacy of others?

## The Path to Happiness

*Rabbi Yehuda Mann*

**T**his week we learn about the different types of metzora'im – people who experience a skin ailment called tzara'at as a form of Divine punishment for sin. Our Sages teach us that tzara'at comes upon a person who speaks harmfully about other people. (Arachin 15b)

A midrash discusses the verse “Who is the one who is eager for life? (Tehillim 34:13)” and relates a story. Once there was a peddler who went from town to town, announcing, “Who wants an elixir of life?” Rabbi Yannai heard the peddler and was intrigued about this so-called elixir of life, and asked the peddler to come sell him some of it. However, the peddler told him that Rabbi Yannai and “those like him” did-n't need this elixir of life. Rabbi Yannai asked him why not. The peddler read to him from Tehillim 34, “Who is the one who is eager for life, who

Additionally, sometimes our rush toward transparency tramples potentially innocent people. When addressing situations of possible abuse, are we careful to assess the context and timing? Are we cautious about the potential damage we may cause to the innocent? It is obvious to us all that our primary responsibility is to eradicate abuse, protect victims and prevent future victimization. It is fair, though to ask ourselves: are we sometimes too fanatical in our interventions? Given the gravity of these crimes it is a difficult question to raise, but an important one. As a Rabbi I have been approached several times about people who allegedly behaved inappropriately toward others. I was asked to intervene and to prevent further exploitation. I tried to be thorough, responsible but also discrete. My primary objective was always to protect potential victims, but I also tried to be mindful not to victimize those who may have been falsely accused. This isn't an easy balancing act but one we should be mindful of.

The sections of Tazria and Metzora remind us to carefully calibrate between two important but sometimes clashing values— transparency and discretion. We must extend the religious conversation to every aspect of our human experience. Just the same, we must exercise great caution about the manner in which this conversation is conducted. Otherwise, we will pay a heavy price in our mad dash toward unlimited transparency.

desires years of good fortune? Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech.” Rabbi Yannai was extremely impressed and said that this is also the meaning of the words of King Solomon, “He who guards his mouth and tongue guards himself from trouble. (Mishlei 21:23)” He added that for many years he had not understood this verse, but thanks to the peddler he now understood it. (Vayikra Rabbah 16:2)

What is the great insight of the peddler? What novel idea did he present? He simply recited a verse from Tehillim; why was Rabbi Yannai so impressed?

One answer is given by Rabbi Asher Weiss (Sichot on the Torah pp. 220-222). Rabbi Weiss says that the insight is not in the words of the peddler but rather in the profession of the peddler. Peddlers speak a lot in order to convince others to purchase their merchandise. For that very reason

the root of the He-brew word of gossip - rechilut - comes from the word rachil, which means “peddler”. On the other hand, one would expect those who are careful of slander and gossip to be people with less of a talkative nature, barely speaking, out of concern lest they speak harmfully of others. That fear causes us to give up on the challenge of avoiding slander. Rabbi Weiss says that this is why Rabbi Yannai was deeply impressed by the peddler: he managed to live normally, to carry on talking, building relationships and being involved in the world, and to carry on being a frum, Torah observing Jew.

Another answer is traditionally attributed to Rabbi Yisrael HaKohen of Radin, a.k.a. the Chafetz Chaim. The novel idea the peddler presents to Rabbi Yannai is that until this day, Rabbi Yannai thought that the value and virtue of shemirat halashon - staying away from slander - is only to acquire the next world. Suffer in this world, and busy yourself with Torah and mitzvot, and you will gain joy, pleasure and happiness in the “World to Come”.

## The Spiritual-Dermatological Disease

*Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald*

**T**his week’s parasha, parashat Tazria, as well as parashat Metzorah that follows, are among the most challenging portions of our Torah. These parashiot concern a strange disease known as צָרַעַת – Tzaraat, the popular translation of which is “leprosy.” According to the Torah’s understanding, Tzaraat cannot be leprosy. After all, according to the Torah’s account, Tzaraat is not contagious, the way leprosy is. It is, rather, a physical malady, caused by a spiritual imperfection, designed to induce spiritual transgressors to mend their ways.

According to Jewish tradition, the primary cause of Tzaraat, is לְשׁוֹן הָרָע – L’shon haRah, slander or speaking evil of others. In ancient times, those who would speak evil of others would be stricken with a rash or infection that would appear on their possessions or on their bodies. In fact, our Sages point out that the word, מְצוֹרָה – metzorah, is a contraction of the Hebrew words מוֹצִיא רָע – motzi rah, speaking evil.

The understanding that emerges from an in-depth study of the Tzaraat disease, is that it is Divine punishment for a person’s failure to regard the needs, and share the hurt, of others. The commentary of the Stone edition of the ArtScroll Chumash, points out that through this

However, that is not true; Torah and mitzvot in general, and avoiding slander in particular, are the elixir of life and provide joy, pleasure and happiness in our mundane world.

Many times, we face the challenge of deciding to observe Torah and mitzvot when we fear missing out on the pleasures of life. However, Torah and mitzvot can provide us the true happiness and fulfillment of life. There are so many examples of mitzvot that show how Torah can improve our mundane life - the relaxation and family time of Shabbat, the creation of a righteous and respectful society by observing the laws of harmful speech, the educational value of a child craving a piece of dairy chocolate but asking in advance whether enough time has passed since eating meat.

That is the profound message of the peddler who provides merchandise and necessities to his customer to have an easier and better life. This time he brought the best piece of merchandise possible - the Torah, its commandments and its values.

dermatological affliction, the Al-mighty, in effect, rebukes this anti-social behavior by isolating the transgressor from society so that he/she can experience the pain that they have inflicted on others, and heal themselves through repentance. Consequently, once those who speak evil are afflicted and diagnosed with Tzaraat by the Cohen (Priest), they are sent out of a camp of Israel, where the cattle and sheep are penned. The irony, of course, is that the transgressors now have no one with whom to speak! Clearly, the greatest punishment for a gossip is the absence of an audience!

On the surface, the assertion that one can develop a horrifying skin rash from speaking evil seems quite preposterous. And, frankly, I was, for many years, at a loss to explain the Torah’s contention to my students. At some point, one of my students referred me to a fascinating book, authored in 1979, by Lewis Thomas, entitled *The Medusa and The Snail*. Dr. Lewis Thomas (1913-1993), who attended Princeton University and Harvard Medical School, was an award-winning medical author and, in his time, was one of the foremost medical practitioners in America. His last professional position was President of the prestigious Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York

City.

In a fascinating chapter entitled, “On Warts,” Thomas contends that among the most effective treatments for warts is hypnotic suggestion. You read that correctly! Yes, according to Thomas, warts can be hypnotized away.

I once spoke about Thomas’ claim publicly at a Shabbat service, and the two dermatologists in attendance simply rolled their eyes. One dermatologist argued vehemently that this was simply “hogwash,” and was determined to disabuse me of my fantasy. Not too long afterwards, she attended a dermatological convention. At the convention, 10 of the foremost dermatologists in America were featured on a panel and asked how to treat various dermatological diseases: sexually transmitted diseases, rashes, etc. When the issue of warts came up, the majority of the experts stated firmly that the most effective treatment for warts was hypnosis. Upon returning to the synagogue, the doctor contritely shared with me the prevailing view of the experts.

Upon learning conclusively that hypnosis heals warts—the Torah’s claim that L’shon haRah can cause Tzaraat, became more credible. After all, if one can rid oneself of skin blemishes through proper thought–hypnosis, then one can develop a skin blemish through improper speech—L’shon haRah.

Another intriguing aspect of the Tzaraat disease is that the Torah declares that only a Cohen, a priest, can pronounce the diagnosis. No matter how many experts or doctors confirm the presence of the disease, a violator is not sent out of the community into exile until the Cohen himself utters the words, טָמֵא, טָמֵא, “unclean, unclean.” According to Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Tzaraat Impurity, 9:2, even if the priest is a minor, a child, or mentally incompetent, to the extent that experts must instruct the Cohen to say the words, “Ta’may Ta’may,” only then, is the violator punished.

Strange as it seems, only the mouth and voice of the Cohen determine the fate of the gossip. This clearly underscores the arbitrariness of a word, and the capriciousness of speech. An incompetent person, (in this case the Cohen), is being told to simply say the words טָמֵא, טָמֵא—“Ta’may, Ta’may” about another person, and that person is rendered impure. As a result of the Cohen’s words, (not the words of the expert advisor), the disease is declared Tzaraat. Only then, is the violator banished from the camp, for at least one week, to live among the sheep

and the cattle. Even though the Cohen has no idea what he has said, he has determined the fate of another human being by simply uttering two, three-letter, Hebrew words, “Ta’may, Ta’may.” How dramatically this underscores the power of the spoken word. Clearly, an arbitrary word, can make, or break a life.

It is for this reason, that King Solomon affirms, in the book of Proverbs (18:21), מָוֶת וְחַיִּים, בְּיַד לְשׁוֹן, Death and life is in the “hands” of the tongue. A word, a wanton word, a capricious word, can determine the fate of another’s life.

In light of the above, how wonderful it would be for all of us to resolve to try a little harder, to do a little better in the week and weeks to come, to guard our tongues from speaking evil, and to make a sincere and concerted effort not to hurt others with our wanton words.