



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Executive Director, Camp HASC

Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

Remember!

The *tzadik* Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, zy'a, was one of the most impactful leaders of the Chasidic movement. He led his talmidim along an expansive path, encouraging a broad embrace of intellectual study and rationalism, coupled with passionate introspection, authenticity and individuality.

Like the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Simcha would take his *chevreh* on mysterious trips and outings, during which Divine providence would deliver them some powerful, experiential lesson in *avodah* or elevated *midos*. Once, the group was *ba-derech* and stopped for the night at a *kosher* inn. The host, who was in the midst of preparing dinner, welcomed them warmly and invited them to settle in.

Before their meal was served, the assembled began to interrogate the *arendar* regarding his level of *kashrus*. Where did the meat come from? Who was the *shochet* and is he a *yirah Shamayim*? Did he check the shechita knife immediately before the *shechitah*? Was the *fleish* rinsed, soaked and salted correctly according to the strictest opinion?

Another traveler, a simple beggar sitting by the hearth, overheard the numerous questions, and spoke up: "My brothers! About what goes into your mouths, you

are so *makpid*, exacting and sensitive. May you have such high standards about what comes *out* of your mouths as well!"

The rebuke of the simple *Yid* caught the attention of Reb Simcha Bunim. "Chevreh, eat your fill," he grinned, "in the morning we'll return to Peshis'cha. We have accomplished the purpose of our journey."

וַתִּדְבֹר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁכָּה עַל־אֲדֹת הָאִשָּׁה הַכִּשִּׁית
אֲשֶׁר לָקַח כִּי־אִשָּׁה כִּשִּׁית לָקַח:

Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. (12:1)

Rashi notes that the term דָּבַר connotes a harsh way of speaking. Whereas the pasuk says both siblings used this form of speech in reference to Moshe, Miriam's name is first, suggesting that she initiated the conversation. This is why she is held accountable and stricken with *tzaraas*.

When Miriam heard that her younger brother Moshe had separated from his wife Tzipporah in order to attain a higher level of spiritual *d'veikus*, she turned to her brother Aharon HaKohen to discuss her concerns privately. Motivated solely *l'sheim Shamayim*, Miriam actually praised her sister-in-law Tzipporah as a righteous woman, and expressed her feeling that their brother's decision seemed inappropriate.

Miriam was a loving sister who had risked her life to protect Moshe, watching

over him as an infant when he was cast upon the waters of the Nile. Committed out of respect and sincere concern, her infraction doesn't seem to be so severe. She was only raising questions regarding Moshe's exclusive sounding approach to *avodas Hashem*, and was concerned for Tsipporah and her sense of *shalom bayis*. She meant well and did not wish her beloved brother any harm. Yet, there was some subtle harshness in her words, and despite her good intentions, Miriam was 'rebuked' and suffered from *tzaraas*.

Chazal enumerate six *mitzvos* of 'remembrance'. Among them, one refers to the episode that takes place in our *sedra* involving Miriam's comments about her brother: "Remember what Hashem did to Miriam *ba-derech*, as you were leaving Egypt" (Devarim, 24:9). Ramban explains that this verse is a positive commandment on par with other Biblically mandated *zechiros* or *mitzvos* of 'remembrance'. Those include to "remember the day of Shabbos...", to remember *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, and to remember what Amalek did to us. To fulfill these six *mitzvos* every day, many recite the *Sheish Zechiros* printed in the Siddur after Shacharis.

Beyond memorializing these six moments in time as impactful experiences in Jewish history, each of these 'remembrances' calls our attention to a deeper message within the experience. The *mitzvah* of 'remembering what Hashem did to Miriam...' is not just focusing on what Miriam said *per se*, nor solely calling to mind the laws of *lashon ha-ra*. In a deeper way, this *mitzvah* is also urging us to remember, daily, that *even a tza-deikes* as praiseworthy as Miriam, the holy

prophetess — and when she meant well — even such a person can make a mistake.
ומה מרים שלא נתכוונה לגנותו, כך נענשה, קל וחומר לתספר בגנותו של חבירו:

"If Miriam, who did not intend to disparage him [Moses], was punished, all the more so someone who intentionally disparages his fellow" (Tanchuma, Tzav, 13).

Certainly, it is praiseworthy and holy to be *machmir* on laws of *kashrus* and what we put into our mouths. But *even* when we are on the level to do so — and even when we mean well — we need to 'remember' to have sensitivity about what we say to others, and how we say it. And this is especially crucial in relation to our brothers and sisters, those who are close to us.

May we learn from all our mysterious journeys, and experiences *ba-derech*, and become a blessing to everyone around us. ■



Looking to start a career in U.S. tax preparation or grow your expertise?

Come join the leading U.S. tax firm in Israel!



- Offices in J'lem & Beit Shemesh
- Training provided
- Opportunities for growth
- Flexible hours & hybrid options

Send your CV to hr@pstein.com and mention this ad

www.pstein.com 02-644-4001