



RABBI SHALOM

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# Tisha B'av and Chet Hameraglim

Parshat Devarim always coincides with Tisha B'av. There is a reference to the word “*eicha*” in the parsha, which reflects the “*eicha*” that we recite on the night of Tisha B'av. There is another reference in the parsha to Tisha b'av as well. Moshe rebukes Bnei Yisrael for the sin of the *meraglim*, which occurred on the 9th of Av. Since we cried in vain that night, we are destined to cry on that day for generations. That is the day that both Batei Hamikdash were destroyed, and other atrocities have transpired throughout history.

Rabbi Frand (Power of a Vort), offers an interesting insight about the connection between the sin of the *meraglim* and Tisha B'av. The sin of the *meraglim* was a form of lashon hara, as they spoke negatively about the promised land. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 104b) finds an allusion to *chet hameraglim* in *Megillat Eicha*. The pesukim in the first four chapters of *eicha* are written in the order of the *Aleph Bet*. There is one notable exception. In the second, third and fourth chapters, the letter “פ” appears prior to the letter “ע”, although that is not the order of the *aleph bet*. This is symbolic that the *meraglim* said with their mouths (peh) what they had not seen

with their eyes (ayin).

Based on the above, perhaps Chazal are seeking to teach us that one of the problems that makes *lashon hara* so prevalent is the tendency to report things that we have not witnessed with our own eyes.

This explains a perplexing ruling with respect to *negaim*. When one is inflicted with *tzaraat*, commonly known as leprosy, it is understood as a spiritual affliction for having engaged in lashon hara. Whether a *nega* renders one impure (*tamei*) may only be determined by a Kohen. If the Kohen is not an expert, he can seek the advice of an expert, but the Kohen must **see** the *nega* himself. A blind Kohen cannot make such a determination. (Meiri Sanhedrin 34b).

Perhaps this is to highlight that there is a tendency to spread rumors that we have not witnessed with our own eyes and so the Kohen has to see the *nega*. A Kohen who cannot see cannot rule on any sort of *nega*, because if he would, he would pass judgment on something he has not seen with his own eyes- a key cause of the very transgression the *nega* is sent to eliminate. Obviously, even if we witness something we are not to spread lashon hara, but it is even more prevalent that rumors spread among people as hearsay, without ever witnessing the claim.

As we experience the mourning of Tisha B'av and reflect on the sin of the *meraglim*, we ought to undertake to at least take more care at avoiding spreading rumors about people when we have not witnessed the claims and seek to spread *ahavat Yisrael* so that we can merit a *geula shelema*! ■