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the lubavitch multi-academy trust
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Assembly Notes

PARSHAS TAZRIA, METZORA 5785

Assembly Theme: Think positively about others

The world seems to be obsessed with the power of speech. Some people claim to champion the right to protest and to free speech, even if it means hate speech, intimidating others and inciting violence and worse.

We also witness other examples of the effect of words, such as words of government leaders, professional advisors or prominent figures in industry. Whatever their view on what is said, everyone concedes that these words carry weight and have consequences. But what about harmless, casual conversations? Do they matter? Do they have any effect? This week's Sedra, Tazria - Metzora discusses Tzoraas, a spiritual illness, manifest in the body, garments or even the house of one who engaged in Lashon Hora (evil speech). Lashon Hora applies when the criticism is true.

The Torah teaches us that there is no such thing as harmless Lashon Hora. Speaking negative about another harms ("kills") all three: the speaker, the listener and the one about whom they are talking.

Now, the one who speaks is certainly harming himself with his words. The one who listens is, in a way, worse: he is a facilitator. If nobody would listen there would be no Lashon Hora. The Rebbe asks, about the third victim, the one they are talking about. Since Lashon Hora is something true, is it that person's own behaviour that causes him harm; not the fact that someone talks about it!?!

The answer is that a fault which is not brought out into the open, would become weak and atrophied, and maybe would even disappear. But the fact that someone talks about it strengthens the other person's fault. So talking negatively about the person is indeed a cause of harm. In the same way, speaking **positively** about someone strengthens their good points, to the credit of the person who talks.

It can be very difficult to focus only on the positive when talking about someone. The best way to achieve this is to be careful about what we ***think*** about others. The Alter Rebbe in Tanya (IV: 22) quotes the Tenach: ואיש את רעת רעהו אל תחשבו בלבבכם and explains it: Nobody should think about their fellow's badness. If a negative thought about someone comes to mind, reject that thought, just as you would expel a thought of Avodah Zarah (idolatry) from your mind.

This does not mean justifying or whitewashing any negative behaviour. It means reject the behaviour but remember that this does not ***define*** them. Their Neshama is pure and holy and that is what does define them.

Shabbat Shalom!
Good Shabbos!

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STORY OF THE REBBE

The teachings and many stories of the Rebbe teach the power of positive thinking. After the Frierdikke (previous) Rebbe passed away, the Rebbe said that if you connect to him, "the Rebbe will find a way" to answer you and to help you. We know of countless people who were helped (after Gimmel Tammuz) by connecting to the Rebbe, who brings one's request before Hashem.

Mrs Dianne Abrams is a lawyer. Her husband is Robert (Bob) Abrams who was the Attorney General for New York State. They are observant Jews. They went to the Rebbe many times and received advice and Brochos, and even miracles.

When the Rebbe left us physically on Gimmel Tammuz, Mrs Abram's felt the loss greatly. This feeling was very strong when her son in law Chaim in Israel had a health issue. Mrs Abrams flew to Israel for a few days to be with her daughter Raitzel and her son in law, and went with them to many doctors. When she had to leave for home, she did not see any solution for the problem.

She got on the plane with a heavy heart, feeling for her son in law and daughter. She thought to herself how much she misses the smile and Brocho and encouragement that the Rebbe always gave them.

Meanwhile, she saw a young Chabad man going from row to row on the plane, putting on Tefillin with people and having happy conversations with many people.

When he came to her row, she sighed. He asked if there was something that he could help with. She told him about her anxiety and said that if she could meet the Rebbe for a moment and hear a good word, she would be the happiest person in the world.

The man introduced himself as Sholom Rubashkin and said that the Rebbe continues to live, within his Chassidim, who study his teachings and follow in his way. But she was not really comforted. Sholom went on to speak to others on the plane, but he gave Mrs Abrams a small device with ear pods on which he had been listening to a farbrengen.

When she put the ear pods in her ears, the Rebbe was between talks and the Chassidim were singing beautiful Chassidic songs. People could then approach the Rebbe privately. The moment that she started listening, she could hear that her husband came over and had a brief conversation with the Rebbe! The Rebbe then asked "How is your daughter Raitzel doing?"
Mrs Abram's now felt that she had that moment with the Rebbe and now that she got the Brocho all will be fine in the near future. And it was, Boruch Hashem.

גוט שבת!