



ורגליו של אדם העושים כל מלאכתו, ויזרוק הדם על המזבח כנגד דמו בנפשו, כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה, כי חטא לאלקיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו, לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה, וכיפר הקרבן שיהא דמו תחת דמו, נפש תחת נפש, וראשי אברי הקרבן כנגד ראשי אבריו.

**Seeing as a person's actions incorporate thought, speech and deed, Hashem commanded that when he sins, he bring a korban; he should lean on it with his hands corresponding to the act; he should confess verbally corresponding to the speech; he should burn the intestines and the kidneys in fire, because they are the instruments of thought and desire, and the extremities corresponding to the person's arms and legs, which perform all of his actions; and he should sprinkle the blood on the mizbeiach corresponding to his life's blood. While doing all of these things, the person should recognize that he has sinned against his G-d in body and soul, and it would have been fitting for his blood to have been spilled and his body to have been burned—were it not for the chesed of the Creator, Who accepted a substitute from him. The korban provides atonement by providing its blood in place of his blood, its life in place of his life and the sacrificial animal's major limbs in place of his major limbs.**

Now, it is true that we can postulate that the slaughtered bird constitutes a korban designed to atone for the sin of "lashon-hara." As such, the sinner bringing the bird should view it as if what is being done to the bird should rightfully have been done to him. What is the purpose, however, of leaving the second bird alive, dipping it in the blood of the slaughtered bird and then setting it free across the field? What lesson is the sinner supposed to learn from the live bird?

This question gains greater significance in light of Rashi's commentary (ibid. 14, 4) regarding the reason why the metzora brings two birds for the sake of his purification: **"לפי שהנגעים באין על לשון הרע שהוא מעשה בטפולי דברים, לפיכך הוזקקו לטהרתו ציפורים—because affliction come as a result of "lashon-hara," which is an act of verbal twittering; therefore, for the sake of his purification, birds were required that twitter incessantly with a chirping sound.** According to this understanding, it is even more difficult to comprehend why only one of the two birds is slaughtered, while the other is left alive to be sent out over the field. Seemingly, if the birds are meant to atone for improper, malicious chatter, they should have both been slaughtered—indicating that the sinner's "lashon-hara" would cease.

## Remaining Silent when It Is Necessary to Speak Requires Tikun

We shall begin to illuminate the matter by presenting a magnificent explanation from the holy master, Rabbi Yehoshua of Belz, zy" a, based on that which appears in the Zohar hakadosh (Sazria 46b). Just as a person deserves to be punished for defiling his mouth by speaking "lashon-hara," he deserves to be punished even more so for the words of kedushah he could have spoken and failed to do so by remaining silent—such as words of Torah, tefilah or tochachah (rebuke).

In this manner, we can explain very nicely the matter of the two birds brought by the metzora. The bird that is slaughtered comes to atone for idle and malicious chatter; therefore, it is slaughtered to indicate that this type of chatter must cease. The live bird, however, comes to atone for the words of Torah and tochachah which this person could have potentially spoken, but instead chose to remain silent. Therefore, it is allowed to live and is sent out over the field—indicating that this person should go from place to place and indulge in words of Torah and tochachah, in order to teach others the ways of Hashem and His Torah. This concludes his magnificent idea.

## Speech Is the Essence of Man

As it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, it appears that we can propose a novel explanation regarding the bringing of the two birds. First, however, let us explain why HKB" H chose to punish one who speaks "lashon-hara" with the affliction of tzara'as, based on a statement of Chazal's in the Midrash (V.R. 16, 6) concerning the passuk: **"זאת תהיה תורת המצורע"—this shall be the law (Torah) of the metzora:**

**"אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, חמש תורות כתובות במצורע, [א] [ויקרא יג-נט] זאת תורת נגע צרעת, [ב] (שם יד-ב) זאת תהיה תורת המצורע, [ג] (שם לב) זאת תורת אשר בו נגע צרעת, [ד] (שם נד) זאת תורה לכל נגע הצרעת, [ה] (שם נז) זאת תורת הצרעת. זאת תהיה תורת המצורע - המוציא שם רע, ללמדך שכל האומר לשון הרע עובר על חמשה חומשי תורה, לפיכך משה מזהיר את ישראל, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע."**

**Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: The word "Torah" is mentioned five times in association with the metzora: (1) "This is the 'Torah' of the tzara'as affliction," (2) "This shall be the 'Torah' of the metzora," (3) "This is the 'Torah' of one in whom there is a tzara'as affliction," (4) "This is the 'Torah'**

for every tzara'as affliction" and (5) "This is the 'Torah' of tzara'as." "This shall be the 'Torah' of the metzora"—refers to one who defames his fellow Jew ("motzi shem ra"; note the similarity to the word "metzora"). This comes to teach you that whoever speaks "lashon-hara" violates the five books of the Torah. Therefore, Moshe cautions Yisrael: "This shall be the 'Torah' of the metzora."

At first glance, it is not clear why Chazal associate the five books of the Torah with safeguarding of the tongue—"shemiras halashon"—to the extent: **"שכל האומר לשון הרע עובר על חמשה חומשי תורה—that whoever speaks 'lashon-hara' violates the five books of the Torah.** However, it appears that we can clarify the words of our sages and explain this riddle based on that which is written regarding the creation of man (Bereishis 2, 7):

**"וייצר ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה-- and Hashem G-d formed man of soil from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul.** Rashi comments: **"לנפש חיה, אף בהמה וחיה נקראו נפש חיה, אך זו של אדם חיה שבכולם, שניתוסף בו דעה—animal and beast, too, were called 'a living soul,' but that of man is the most alive of them all, for there was added to it the faculties of reasoning and speech.** In a similar vein, Targum Onkelos comments: **"וייהי האדם לנפש חיה"—"יהיה האדם לרוח ממללא"—in other words, man was transformed into a speaking creature.**

The Ramban writes that we learn from Onkelos a very important, fundamental principle. Man's power of speech derives from the holy neshamah which HKB"H blew into him. Here are his precise words: **"וזאת הנפש המשכלת אשר נפחה השם באפיו היתה בו לנפש מדברת—and this rational soul, which Hashem blew into his nostrils, became his speaking soul.** He substantiates this point from that which is stated in the following Gemara (Sanhedrin 65b): **"רבא כרא גברא, שדריה לקמיה דרבי זירא, הוה קא משתעי ליה בהדיה, ולא הוה קא מהדר ליה, אמר ליה מן חבריא Rava created a man by means of a combination of holy names found in Sefer Yetzirah; he sent him to Rabbi Zeira; Rabbi Zeira spoke with him, but he did not respond, because he lacked the faculty of speech. Rabbi Zeira said to him, 'You were created by colleagues; return to your earth.' It appears that since this creature was not created by HKB"H blowing a living neshamah into it, it lacked the capacity to speak, which comes from the neshamah.**

## One Who Speaks "Lashon HaRa" Defiles the Neshamah of Life that HKB"H Blew into Man

It is well-known from the teachings of the Arizal: **כשעלה ברצונו יתברך שמו לברוא את העולם כדי להיטיב לברואיו—when HKB"H decided to create the universe, He did so with the intent of benefitting His creatures.** Thus, when HKB"H blew a living neshamah into man--**"רוח ממללא"—endowing him with the power of speech, He did so for the benefit of man and creation.** Therefore, it behooves man to utilize this precious gift in order to help and benefit others. Yet, if he utilizes this faculty to speak "lashon-hara," he desecrates the essence of life, which HKB"H instilled in him to benefit others.

With this in mind, we can appreciate the words of Yisrael's sweet psalmist, David HaMelech (Tehillim 34, 13): **"מי האיש החפץ חיים—חיים אוהב ימים לראות טוב, נצור לשונך מרע ושפתך מדבר מרמה—who is the man who desires life, who loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceitfully?** For, guarding one's speech—that stems from the neshamah of life—extends and enhances one's life. From the positive aspect of this statement, we can imply the negative. If a person does not guard his tongue, he causes his life to be taken from him, chas v'shalom. Addressing this situation, Shlomo HaMelech says (Mishlei 18, 21): **"מות וחיים ביד לשון"—death and life depend on the tongue.**

This is the message conveyed by the Gemara (Arachin 15b): **"במערבא אמרי, לשון תליתאי קטיל תליתאי, הורג למספרו ולמקבלו ולאומרו—in the West (Eretz Yisrael), they said: The third tongue kills three. It kills the one who speaks it ('lashon-hara'), the one who receives it and the one about whom it is spoken.** In other words, the act of "lashon-hara" involves three parties. As a consequence, three parties are affected and ultimately killed—physically and spiritually.

Now, let us examine a passuk germane to this subject (Bereishis 2, 4): **"אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם"—these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created ("בהבראם").** Rashi comments in the name of the Midrash (B.R. 12, 10): **"בהבראם בה' בראם"—the word "בהבראם" conveys the fact that HKB"H created the universe with the letter "hei." The Zohar hakadosh in the Raiya Mehemna (Pinchas 216b) explains that HKB"H created the world with the letter "hei" (possessing a numerical value of five) means that He did so with the five books of the Torah—"chamishah chumshei**



Torah.” The Degel Machaneh Ephraim uses this idea to expound on the passuk (Bereishis 5, 1): **“זה ספר תולדות אדם”—this is the book of the generations of mankind.** In other words, this book—which includes the five books of the Torah—was used by HKB”H to create the universe—the most important element of the universe being man.

In fact, we find another explanation concerning the fact that HKB”H created the world with the letter “hei.” This fact implies that HKB”H created the universe **בה’ מוצאות הפה**—with the five origins of speech in the mouth—which account for all twenty-two letters of the Torah. The Ohev Yisrael writes (Bereishis): **“והנה בה’ בראם, בה’ מוצאות הפה, ויפה באפיו נשמת חיים”—behold, He created them with the letter “hei,” with the five origins of speech in the mouth; “and He blew into his nostrils the neshamah of life.”** Similarly, the Maor Einayim writes (Ha’azinu): **“ידוע כי העולם הזה נברא בה’, כדכתיב בהבראם, ודרשו רז”ל בה’ בראם, שהוא דיבורו כביכול בה’ מוצאות הפה, היא התורה, שעל ידי התורה נברא הכל, כמאמר רז”ל בזהר (פרשת תרומה קסא). אסתכל באורייתא וברא עלמא.”** It is well known that this world was created with the letter “hei” . . . This refers to His speech—the five oral origins of speech, as it were—referring to the Torah; for, everything was created by means of the Torah . . .

### **HKB”H Created the Universe with the Five Origins of Speech of the Chamishah Chumshei Torah**

Let us combine these two explanations. HKB”H created the universe with the letter “hei.” It alludes to the five books of the Torah and also explains the notion that HKB”H created the universe with the five origins of speech. After all, the Torah is composed of the twenty-two letters of the aleph-bet, which are divided up into the five origins of speech. We find substantiation for this association in the Midrash (D.R. 1, 1) regarding the passuk (Devarim 1, 1): **“אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל - משה עד שלא זכה לתורה כתיב בו (שמות ד-י) לא איש דברים אנכי, כיון שזכה לתורה נתרפא לשונו והתחיל לדבר דברים, מנין ממה שקרינו בענין, אלה הדברים.”** **“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael.”** Before Moshe was privileged to receive the Torah, it is written of him: **“I am not a man of words.”** After receiving the Torah, his speech was cured and he began to speak things. From where do we know this? From that which we read about this matter: **“These are the words that Moshe spoke.”**

Seemingly, this is a bit curious. After all, Moshe Rabeinu was cured of his speech impediment immediately after receiving the Torah. So, why does the Torah only allude to the fact that his speech returned to him at the beginning of sefer Devarim? Based on what we have learned, we can propose an answer. Seeing as the five books of the Torah correspond to the five origins of speech, it turns out that sefer Devarim completes the set of the five origins of speech. Hence, the allusion to the fact that all five of his origins of speech were cured in the merit of receiving the Torah—which is composed of five books—appears specifically in sefer Devarim. This is alluded to by the words: **“אלה הדברים”**. The word **“הדברים”** can be broken down to **ה’ דברים**, alluding to the “hei” (five) origins of speech; **“אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל”**—which Moshe employed to address all of Yisrael.

Now, we have an explicit passuk which states (Bereishis 1, 27): **“ויברא אלקים את האדם בצלמו בצלם אלקים ברא אותו”—and G-d created man in His image; in the image of G-d, He created him.** Just as HKB”H created the universe with the five books of the Torah and the five origins of speech—which are divided up among the twenty-two letters of the Torah—so, too, did He create man. He blew into man’s nostrils the neshamah of life, so that he would possess the power of speech employing the five origins of speech—in order to engage in the study of the “chamishah chumshei Torah.”

We can now better appreciate the depth and wisdom of our blessed sages’ statement: **חמש תורות כתובות במצורע... ללמדך “חמש תורות כתובות במצורע... ללמדך” שכל האומר לשון הרע עובר על חמשה חומשי תורה—the word “Torah” is mentioned five times in association with the metzora . . . This comes to teach you that whoever speaks “lashon-hara” violates the five books of the Torah.** As stated, HKB”H created the world with the “chamishah chumshei Torah” corresponding to the five origins of speech, so that they would be used to benefit His creations. Therefore, a person who uses the five origins of speech to speak “lashon-hara” is desecrating the “chamishah chumshei Torah”—the source of the five origins of speech.

Likewise, we can now better appreciate why HKB”H punishes the person who speaks “lashon-hara” with tzara’as. The Gemara explains (Nedarim 64b) that a metzora is comparable to a corpse. Proof of this is brought from Aharon’s statement to Moshe regarding their sister Miriam, who was afflicted with tzara’as (Bamidbar 12, 12): **“אל נא תהי כמת”—let her not be**

**like a corpse.** Let us provide an explanation based on what we have learned. One who speaks “lashon-hara” defiles his speech that emanates from the neshamah that HKB”H blew into man. As a consequence, he deserves to forfeit his life. Instead, HKB”H punishes him with the affliction of tzara’as. Thus, he is considered to be dead, so that he will realize that he must perform teshuvah to make amends for the damage he has caused to the essence of his existence.

### Avraham’s Self-sacrifice versus Yitzchak’s Self-sacrifice

Let us proceed with this line of reasoning. We have learned that HKB”H commands the metzora to bring two birds on the day of his purification; one is slaughtered and the other is left alive to be set free across the field. Now, our sacred sources teach us that there are two categories of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Torah. The first category is when a person is ready and willing to actually sacrifice his life in order to sanctify the name of Heaven. Avraham Avinu demonstrated this form of self-sacrifice when Nimrod threw him into the fiery furnace; he was willing to sacrifice his life to sanctify the name of Heaven. Similarly, Yitzchak Avinu demonstrated this form of self-sacrifice at the “akeidah”; he was bound and prepared to be a sacrifice to Hashem.

Notwithstanding, there is a second category of self-sacrifice. We are referring to a person who endures self-sacrifice in Olam HaZeh in order to live a life based on Torah and mitzvot. He toils and forgoes the pleasures of this world in order to engage in Torah-study and perform mitzvot. Of him, the Gemara states (Berachos 63b): “מנין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו” —**from where do we learn that words of Torah are retained only by someone who is willing to sacrifice himself on its behalf? For it is stated: “This is the ‘Torah’ concerning a man should he die in a tent.”** The Gemara does not mean that he should actually kill himself, chas v’shalom. Rather, he should kill and eliminate all of his body’s physical desires and earthly pursuits. This is the nature of the self-sacrifice characteristic of a person who engages in Torah-study.

Upon closer consideration, we find that our holy Avot—Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu—already paved the way for us with regards to these two types of self-sacrifice. Let us refer

to what the great author of the Machatzit HaShekel writes in his commentary on the Magen Avraham (O.C. 591, 7). He addresses the formula instituted in the Mussaf service on Rosh HaShanah: “וּתְרָאָה לַפְּנִיךָ עֲקִידָה שְׁעָקֵד אֲבִרָהֶם אֲבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ”—**and see before You the image of the “akeidah,” when Avraham Avinu bound his son Yitzchak on the mizbeiach.** Surprisingly, no mention is made of Yitzchak’s merit. It would seem that his merit and self-sacrifice exceeded that of Avraham in the matter of the “akeidah.” After all, he was already thirty-seven years old at that time, and he willingly agreed to be placed atop the mizbeiach as a korban to Hashem.

He explains the matter based on a Midrash (B.R. 55, 1). It states that the test of the “akeidah” surpassed all of the previous tests which Avraham was subjected to. The Nezer HaKodesh (ibid.) is perplexed by this Midrash. After all, Avraham was already subjected to a similarly difficult test. In his very first test, he was willing to sacrifice his life and be burned alive in Nimrod’s furnace. He only survived, because HKB”H miraculously saved his life. So, why was the ordeal of “Akeidas Yitzchak” considered a greater test than that?

The Nezer Kodesh answers that the suffering associated with being burnt alive is short-lived; it ends when the person’s life expires. Sacrificing one’s only son—who was born to him when he was one hundred years old and whom he loved dearly—would result in a constant, lifelong suffering. Nevertheless, due to his extreme love for Hashem, he was prepared to sacrifice his son. Therefore, the ordeal of “Akeidas Yitzchak” was considered a greater test and ordeal than being thrown into the fiery furnace.

In this light, the Machatzis HaShekel justifies the mentioning of Avraham Avinu’s merit in our prayers: “וּתְרָאָה לַפְּנִיךָ עֲקִידָה שְׁעָקֵד אֲבִרָהֶם אֲבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ”. For, the ordeal for Avraham Avinu—sacrificing his only son, born to him at the age of one hundred, and enduring a constant, lifelong misery—was far greater than the ordeal experienced by Yitzchak Avinu—which was only momentary.

It turns out, therefore, that the ordeal for Yitzchak Avinu, who was willing to sacrifice his life as a korban olah, falls into the first category of self-sacrifice for Hashem—actually giving up one’s life. On the other hand, the ordeal of the “akeidah” for Avraham Avinu falls into the category of living a life of self-

sacrifice devoted to learning Torah and serving Hashem. In truth, these two types of self-sacrifice complement each other. For, only someone who is prepared to actually die is also capable of serving Hashem with a life of self-sacrifice.

### The Intent to Sacrifice One's Life Atones for the Penalty of Death

We can now complete the task at hand and explain why HKB"H commanded the metzora to bring two birds on the day of his purification. The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 2, 26) presents the words of the Zohar hakadosh (Bamidbar 121a) that there are sins such as "chilul Hashem"—desecration of the Name—for which there are no other forms of atonement other than death. Apropos those sins, the passuk states (Yeshayah 22, 14): **אם יכופר העון הזה לכם עד תמותו—this sin will never be atoned for you until you die.** Nevertheless, it is recommended that one have in mind to sacrifice his life for the sake of sanctifying the holy name. By doing so, it will be considered as if the person actually did die, and he will merit atonement as if he died.

Thus, we can begin to comprehend why HKB"H commanded the metzora to bring two birds on the day of his purification. Seeing as he defiled his faculty of speech—which emanates from

the neshamah of life which HKB"H blew into man—he deserved to die; however, HKB"H had mercy on him. He afflicted him with tzara'as. Thus, he was considered as dead, allowing him time to make amends for all of his harmful misdeeds by performing total, sincere teshuvah. Therefore, on the day of his purification, he must bring two live, pure birds. The first bird is to be slaughtered—alluding to the fact that he must rectify and repair the damage he caused to his source of life. He does so by being prepared and willing to actually sacrifice his life for the sanctification of Hashem.

Yet, the prophet proclaims (Yechezkel 18, 32): **כִּי לֹא אֶחְפֹּץ בְּמוֹת הַמֵּת נֶאֱמַר ה' אֱלֹקִים וְהִשִּׁיבֻ וְחִיּוּ—for I do not desire the death of the dead person; these are the words of Hashem G-d; repent and live!** Hence, HKB"H commanded that the second bird be left alive. It is to be dipped in the blood of the slaughtered bird, symbolizing that it is imperative to serve Hashem by living a life of self-sacrifice. For, only a person who is actually prepared to sacrifice his life for Hashem—as represented by the slaughtered bird—is capable of serving Hashem while alive through self-sacrifice. This live bird is then set free across the field to indicate that it is our mission in Olam HaZeh to serve Hashem through self-sacrifice.



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