



GOOD SIGHT, GOOD SPEECH

Erev Shabbos Parashas Behaalosecha 5783

Dear Parents,

The end of this week's *Parsha* (*Bamidbar 12:1-16*) features the well-known incident of *Aharon HaKohein* and *Miriam HaNeviah* speaking about their brother *Moshe Rabbeinu* in a manner considered to be *Lashon Hara*. *Lashon Hara* is a challenge for everyone, and as the Torah reveals to us, even for the greatest of the great.

"Lashon Hara is a challenge for everyone, ... even for the greatest of the great."

Lashon Hara flourishes in an atmosphere of negativity. When a person consistently views others critically, looking to find fault with the other person's appearance, interests, opinions, lifestyle, etc., he is providing himself with fertile ground to transgress the prohibition against speaking disparagingly of others. If one's attitude and thoughts are permeated with the feeling that others have significant faults, and do things that are not appropriate, or not smart, not honest, not cool, or not according to the strict letter of *Halacha*, or just plain not good enough, he or she is likely to verbalize those feelings openly, in a way that is a violation of *Hilchos Lashon Hara*. Thought leads quickly to speech.

The Torah's antidote to this way of thinking is the mitzvah of being *Dan L'Chaf Zechus* – *judging others favorably*. If we can look at people, events and situations around us with a positive spin, much if not most of what we see can and will be interpreted in a way that casts others in a good light, or at least a sympathetic light. If they are doing something good, then there is nothing to speak *Lashon Hara* about. When we look for the good in others we will likely speak about the good in others.

"Our children's worldview and attitude is a direct outgrowth of what they hear at home..."

Our children's worldview and attitude is a direct outgrowth of what they hear at home, from us their parents. Is the dinner and *Shabbos* table conversation replete with analyzing the day's happenings including dwelling on what foolishness and evil resides in others? Are neighbors, business associates, relatives, Rabbis, teachers and public figures held up to ridicule and critique? If so, what can be expected of the children when they complain about everything, especially about their parents? Is it any surprise when practically every suggestion or instruction of the parent is met with a "no", "you're so mean", "you never let ___", or in older children a rolling of the eyes and visible disdain?

There's a beautiful anecdote that was shared by noted *mechanech* Rabbi Dovid Kaplan that models a beautiful example of the right way to act and speak. It demonstrates the exact antithesis of the negativity just mentioned. He describes a young lady who impressed him with her poise and self-confidence as she went out of her way to reach him, thank him and compliment him on a talk he had just delivered. When he shared with her that he was quite taken by her effort and her ability in delivering the compliment, she told him the following: ***"...if you're thinking something good about someone, say it."***

"We have a policy in our home that if you're thinking something good about someone, say it."

What a great message for all of us, and what a gift for our children.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,



Rabbi Kalman Baumann
Principal