



Entrance Into The World To Come
Parshas Ki Setzeh

Rabbi Ben Zion Apter was a righteous man, well very respected by all. We have recently marked 40 years since his passing. I once asked him, why in his opinion he was respected by all, he preceded to recall a Purim he celebrated once in the Yeshiva of the Chafetz Chaim¹ in Radin, Lithuania, long ago, and even which transpired between the two World Wars.

During the Purim festivities, led by the Chafetz Chaim, one of the participants, who drank too much, came to the Chafetz Chaim, took hold of him and said: "I will not let go of you until you promise me that my place in the World to Come will be adjacent yours". The other participants tried to move him away, but he was strong and did not budge. And so, the festive meal continued, as the man stayed with the Chafetz Chaim. The day came to an end, and the Chafetz Chaim wished to go and pray. The man did not allow him to get up. The Chafetz Chaim turned to him and said: "You must know that watching your tongue, what you say, has a unique quality of ensuring that you will receive entry into the next world. If you promise me to watch what you say from now and on, I promise you will sit next to me in the World to Come."

We learn the significance of watching what we say in our weekly parsha: "Remember what the Lord, your G-d, did to Miriam on the way, when you went out of Egypt."² Rashi explains: "If you wish to take precautions against being stricken with lesions of tzara'as, then do not speak slander and derogatory remarks. Remember what was done to Miriam, who spoke against her brother Moshe and was stricken with lesions of tzara'as."

We are commanded to remember what G-d did to Miriam, not Miriam's actions. Why is this so?

The Jewish Nation left the bondage of Egypt on the way to the Holy Land. The Land of Israel is different, it is "Higher than all other lands", as our sages teach us, higher in its spirituality. To enter the lands one

¹ Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838 – 1933), known popularly as The Chafetz Chaim, was an influential Lithuanian Jewish rabbi of the Musar movement, a Halakhist, posek, and ethicist whose works continue to be widely influential in Jewish life.

² Dvarim 24:9.

requires completeness. One must be perfect in all his aspects, and if one speaks ill of others, then he is not whole, and cannot live in the Land of Israel. For the sin of speaking negatively about the Land of Israel the spies did not enter the land, and the Jews were punished to stay in the desert for forty years. They were not complete, and therefore did not merit entering the land.

This is what Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai alluded to in the Talmud: "The Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, and all of them were given only through sufferings. These are: The Torah, the Land of Israel and the World to Come."³ These three gifts require completeness, and that's what Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai means when he speaks of suffering, much toil to maintain the required level.

G-d had the Jewish People wander in the desert so that they could achieve a state of completeness. G-d commanded us to remember the punishment so we will remember why we were punished and for what purpose, and so they would refrain from speaking negatively.

We were astounded by the story. As the drunken man heard what the Chafetz Chaim told these words to him he became completely silent. The Chafetz Chaim immediately commenced with his prayers. As they took the drunken man away, the Chafetz Chaim said painfully: "I offered him entrance through the gates of happiness, but he did not enter them."

³ Tractate Brachot 5a.