

LASHON HARA

By: Earl Walters

For Judah to accept Him as a Rabbi, let alone be Messiah, Yeshua had to fulfill 2 important and ancient expectations in Judaism.

1. He had to be a Torah practicing Israelite according to oral and written teachings given to Moshe at Mt. Sinai, *and*
2. He must be a teacher of the oral and written Mosaic commandments to the Israelites and to the gentiles.

If Yeshua had not lived, taught, and upheld the covenant of Moshe according to these expectations, then unequivocally, He could not have been accepted as the promised Mashiach; He would have been considered an impostor.

On the basis of the Torah, the Brit Chadasha, and ancient Israelite expectations of HaMashiach, I know that Yeshua perfectly understood and taught all of Yahweh's commandments and expected his talmidim, and their students **(us)** to live by the same standards revealed at Mt. Sinai. These commandments were all words of the Father.

Devarim 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command.

Consequently, Yeshua's words must not be misunderstood.

Yochanan 14:23 - 24 Yeshua answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loves me not keeps not my sayings; and the word you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Yochanan 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

Yochanan 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

Yachanan 7:16 Yeshua answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.

If Yahweh has changed His mind concerning the eternal status of His commandments, then again we cannot truly trust Him.

But, from the scriptures, we know that Yahweh does not lie or change:

Malachi 3:6 “For I Yahweh do not change...”

Numbers 23:19 Yahweh is not a man that He should lie...

On the authority of these words we can trust Yahweh and His Torah; we have a solid foundation of truth and divine sameness to build our faith(fullness) upon.

Yeshua HaMashiach came to set the Mosaic covenant on a more firm foundation.

WHY?

Because, due to man’s tendency to interpret Scripture according to his advantage or control, the teaching of Yahweh’s word got off track.

Many small errors over a long period of time had altered man’s understanding of Torah.

Part of Yeshua’s mission as Messiah was to correct these errors in the teaching of Torah (oral and Written), putting people back on the long-term course of Truth.

Over the last 2,000 years both Judah and the church have **again drifted off course.**

It is important to understand that Torah has not changed,

Man's understanding and therefore, his teaching, is what has drifted away from the true course.

Over the last 2,000 years the church has had a vested interest in destroying the impact of Torah on society.

Over the last couple of months several of us have begun to examine the 613 commandments in detail. To examine them in light of being able to obey rather than find a reason that we do not have to be obedient to them.

We are learning that our approach to the Torah makes a difference in our relationship with Yahweh.

Last night we examined the goal of celebrating the presence of Yahweh.

Today I want to examine a specific commandment and how it relates to our personal relationship with Yahweh and our fellow man.

One commandment that is responsible for keeping many of us from His presence is the committing of lashon hara.

Let's take a more detailed look-----

LASHON HARA PROHIBITED COMMUNICATION

DO NOT GO ABOUT AS A TALEBEARER AMONG YOUR PEOPLE.

– **VAYIKRA 19:16**

The repercussions of the mitzvah of proper speech, and the transgression of Lashon Hara (evil tongue), are so intense that they have literally shaped the destiny of Israel as a people and you as an individual.

The Israelites have been in exile for thousands of years because of words that came out of their mouths, and you have faced personal trials and hardships for the same reason.

The power we wield when we speak is far beyond what we can perceive.

This is a key factor in our relationship with YHVH and our fellow men.

IF ANY MAN AMONG YOU SEEM TO BE RELIGIOUS, AND BRIDLES NOT HIS TONGUE, BUT DECEIVES HIS OWN HEART, THIS MAN'S RELIGION IS VAIN.

- YA'ACOV 1:26

AND THE TONGUE IS A FIRE, A WORLD OF INIQUITY; SO IS THE TONGUE AMONG OUR MEMBERS, THAT IT DEFILES THE WHOLE BODY, AND SETS ON FIRE THE COURSE OF NATURE; AND IT IS ON FIRE OF HELL.

- YA'ACOV 3:6

SPEAK NOT EVIL ONE OF ANOTHER, BRETHERN. HE THAT SPEAKS EVIL OF HIS BROTHER, AND JUDGES HIS BROTHER, SPEAKS EVIL OF THE LAW(Torah):...

- YA'ACOV 4:11

Just as the negative consequences of speech are so vast, **the positive** consequences of proper speech are even greater.

When a person speaks or listens to Lashon Hara, 30 mitzvot may be violated. It is important to remember how carelessness can lead one into deeper trouble.

Definitions:

Lashon Hara – any derogatory or damaging communication.(physically, financially, socially, or stress-inducing)

Rechilut – any communication that generates animosity between people. Often the repeating of Lashon Hara.

The Torah delineates different situations and conditions, and identifies when the speech is forbidden, permissible, and even desirable.

One type of Lashon Hara, speaking lies(slander) is called “**Motzi Shem Ra**” (spreading a bad name).

It is easy to see how lies and exaggeration, can unfairly damage someone's reputation.

Even Truth is not always the deciding factor in ethical speech.

The definition of Lashon Hara does not reflect truth or falsehood at all, but the damage it can inflict.

But sometimes we speak Lashon Hara because we forget that in many cases, truth can be subjective (like “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”) or elusive, in that we don’t always know the whole picture.

“IN RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL YOU JUDGE YOUR KINSMAN.”

- VAYIKRA 19:15

This verse commands us to give the benefit of the doubt. Don’t judge other people, unless you find yourself in their situation.

There is a reason that Torah requires two witnesses to enable judgment of a situation. Oh how easy it is to misread a situation even you are involved in.

We are always having to filter events through our emotions, background and beliefs.

That is one reason that Yahweh has given us so many different commandments relating to this subject.

There are 16 Negative Commandments Relating to Lashon Hara

1. “You shall not go about as a talebearer (gossiper) among your people.” – Vayikra 19:16
2. “You shall not utter a false report.” – Shemot 23:1
3. “Take heed concerning the plague of leprosy.” – Devarim 24:8
4. “Before the blind do not put a stumbling block.” – Vayikra 19:14
5. “Beware lest you forget the Lord, Your God.” – Devarim 8:11
6. “You shall not profane My holy name.” – Vayikra 22:32
7. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” – Vayikra 19:12
8. You shall not take vengeance nor bear grudge against the children of your people.” – Vayikra 19:18
9. “One witness shall not rise up against a man for iniquity or for any sin.” – Devarim 19:15

10. “You shall not follow a multitude to do evil.” - Shemot 23:2
11. “You shall not act similar to Korach and his company.” – Bamidbar 17:5
12. “You shall not wrong one another.” – Vayikra 25:17
13. “(You shall rebuke your neighbor) and you shall not bear sin because of him.” – Vayikra 19:17
14. “Any widow or orphan shall you not afflict.” – Shemot 22:21
15. “ You shall not pollute the land wherein you are.” – Bamidbar 35:33
16. “You shall not curse the deaf.” – Vayikra 19:14

There are 14 Positive Commandments Relating to Lashon Hara

1. “Remember what the Lord your God did unto Miriam by the way as you came out of Egypt.” - Devarim 24:9
2. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” – Vayikra 19:18
3. “In righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.” – Vayikra 19:15
4. “If your brother be waxen poor and his means fail him when he is with you, then you shall uphold him.” – Vayikra 25:35
5. “You shall rebuke your neighbor.” – Vayikra 19:17
6. “To Him shall you cleave.” – Devarim 10:20
7. “You shall fear My sacred place.” – Vayikra 19:30
8. “Before the gray-haired you shall rise up, and you shall honor the face of the old man.” – Vayikra 19:32
9. “You shall sanctify Him.” – Vayikra 21:8
10. “Honor your father and mother.” – Shemot 20:12
11. “The Lord your God shall you fear.” – Devarim 10:20
12. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.” – Devarim 6:7
13. “From a false matter you shall keep yourself far.” – Shemot 23:7
14. “Walk in His ways.” – Devarim 28:9

Not only are we commanded not to gossip we are prohibited from even listening to any form of gossip.

If you work in a company here in this area, it is very hard to get away from the gossip among your co-workers. But the commandments instruct us to separate ourselves.

If you are in a position where you cannot avoid hearing such then you are not to believe any of it.

The Talmud states “Lashon Hara is equal to the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder” (Arachin 15b).

Considering that a person is required to give up his life rather than commit one of these sins, this is a very strong statement.

The sages also teach, “Four groups do not merit to see the face of the divine presence: the group of **liars**, the group of **flatterers**, the group of **mockers**, and the group of those who **speak Lashon Hara**”(Sotah 42a).

The scriptures are very specific about speaking against some one behind his back.

“Cursed be the one who strikes his brother in secret.” Devarim 27:24

How do you strike a person in secret? With the spoken word.

Why would this particular sin be considered so important? The basic idea is that people who speak **Lashon hara** will frequently **pretend** that they don't realize that they are speaking maliciously, and they will try to avoid speaking in the presence of the person they are disparaging.

This kind of behavior demonstrates that a person is afraid of the opinions of other human beings and of the anger of their victim, but they do not fear the judgment of Yahweh.

Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. – Psalms 34:13-14

Since we are not to judge someone, care must be taken in what we accept as truth from another person. Remember it takes **2** eye witnesses to convict a person of any guilt.

Even if you see something done by another person that is a sin or impropriety you are not to tell anyone or believe that what they did is wrong.

You mean that even if I see a person do something, I am not to tell about it?

That is correct. You must remember the 2 witness command. All things are not as they appear.

You may not know all the circumstances of the occurrence. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Only Yahweh knows all the facts involved.

This does not mean that you are to be naïve in your dealings with this person. If it is recurring, you should approach the person and discuss the matter with them.

A person who is suspected of something should make sure that he clears himself of suspicion. **Always avoid even the appearance of evil!**

Our negative actions affect others – they might be used as a model for others to follow or foster an environment where such behavior is acceptable.

The fear is removed that **“if he/she says that about him – what is he saying about me?”**

Therefore, it is important to continually be aware of the results of what we say.

I believe that many of the divorces today would have been avoided if the husband and wife had agreed to never speak Lashon hara about their mate or their in-laws.

All of us here are aware of families and friendships that are torn apart because of harsh words in the past.

We say that we are sorry and ask forgiveness of those we have harmed. Unfortunately, it is not so easy to put families and friendships back together. In fact, in most cases it is impossible to repair the damage to lives.

What is so sad is that we try to justify what we have done to ourselves and others. This is the same action Adam used in the Gan Eden.

Some of you may be thinking that it is against the Torah to listen to the news each evening. In my opinion, as I understand the commandment, that would be true.

But, you might ask, how do we keep up with what is going on in the world?

Are you in position to do anything about the news events? If not, what constructive purpose can it have on your relationship with other people or Yahweh? Why would you need to know all the filth going on in society?

Many times people are accused in an action with bold headlines but when it is proven they are innocent, a small note on page 22 tells of the mistake.

Much of the political news today is an effort to destroy those that the press disagree with.

If you have time to listen to the news, use the time to study Torah. Most of us do not study enough anyway.

Or, even better, begin to write your own copy of the Torah. Using this ½ hour each day, you will soon have a hand written copy of the Torah just for yourself.

Yes, I am just as guilty as you are but that does not justify it for either of us. It just means we all need to change.

Watch out for the following:

Do not speak lashon hara “even in front of the person.

Prohibited even if true. If it would embarrass or hurt the feelings of a person do not say it.

Such action “adorns” the speaker with the trait of arrogance and audacity.

Do not use lashon hara as a joke.

Even if done in fun, it is forbidden.

Much of what passes for comedy today is nothing more than a personal attack upon a person in the audience. The performer will pick up a persons appearance or dress and begin to ridicule them.

Do not tell something negative even if no names are given if there is any connection to a real person.

In most cases someone will figure out who is being discussed or attach the statements to a person incorrectly.

Beware:

Even facial expressions or body language can be considered lashon hara.

Always judge people favorably.

Remember the commandment (Vayikra 19:15) “Judge your fellow man righteously.”

Is there a time when it is permissible to use lashon hara?

YES:

1. When it could save a persons life.
2. When someone you know is establishing a business or personal relationship with someone you are permitted to warn that person if you are aware of something that could cause harm.
3. If someone proves himself to be one who does not care about Torah observance, either by
 - a. demonstrating a flippant attitude in these matters, or
 - b. intentionally violating any commandment several times or intentionally violating a commandment which everyone knows about...

it is permissible to embarrass him and publicly speak derogatorily about him both in front of him and behind his back.

This allows others to avoid the presence of those who desecrate the name of Yahweh.

Caution: *be sure that you have witnessed the situation above, do not give second hand testimony on anything.*

As we become more in line with Torah, we will have to continue to grow spiritually. Learning to improve our relationship with our fellow man will allow us to grow closer to Yahweh.

As we gather this week to enjoy this Moedim of Yahweh, why don't we begin to be obedient to this group of commandments.

As we look at other commandments over the next year, let us begin to apply the principles to our daily walk.

Torah is given to us to provide instructions for a proper life style.

At first some may be a little hard to adjust to, but it will be well worth the effort to

“Do What Yeshua Did”.