

**דרכים
בפרשה
אמור**

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**ומיד בן נכר לא תקריבו את לחם אלוקיכם מכל אלה
כי משחתם בהם מום בם לא ירצו לכם (כ"ב:כ"ה)**

And from the hand of a gentile you shall not offer up as food for your God any of these [blemished animals], for their injury is upon them, there is a defect on them; they will not be accepted for you. (22:25)

The *Gemara* in *Masechta Gittin* tells the well-known story of Kamtzah and Bar Kamtzah. In an effort to take revenge on the Jewish people, Bar Kamtzah approached the Caesar and claimed that the Jews are rebelling against him. As proof, he told him to send an animal as a sacrifice to the Bais Hamikdash and see if they will offer it. The *gemara* relates that the Caesar sent with Bar Kamtzah a three-year-old calf. Just prior to arriving in Yerushalayim, Bar Kamtzah made a small cut on either the lip or the eye lid. According to the *Halacha* this would be considered a *mum*. However, in the gentile world of sacrifices, this was still considered acceptable.

The Maharal explains that there is a fundamental difference between the way we view our eyes and lips and the way a gentile does. The essence of our eyes and lips are of a spiritual nature. What separates man from animal is the ability to commit thought to expression; the ability to speak. In *Bereishis*, the Torah relates that **“Vayehi adam linefesh chaya-man became a living soul” (2:7)**. The Targum explains that this refers to HaShem’s instilling within us the ability to speak. Furthermore, “the eyes are windows to the soul” (this famous quote has always been attributed to Shakespeare. However, it is actually already mentioned in the Radvaz a century earlier). Throughout the statements of Chazal it is easy to see that our eyes are indeed of a spiritual nature.

This then is the difference between the *umos haolam* and *Klal Yisroel*. The gentile respects physical prowess, while at the same time showing little consideration for spiritual abilities. Accordingly, a blemish in the nature of a small cut on the lip or eye lid would not present itself as a defect because the animal’s strength and physical abilities have not been affected. However for the Jew, a blemish that is spiritual in nature can be far worse than a physical defect.

Bar Kamtzah understood this *yesod* all too well and therefore chose a blemish that would not be detected by the Caesar. This would prove to the Caesar that a rebellion was under way.

The *Gemara* in *Masechta Arachin* (15b) brings numerous opinions for the cause of the malady of *tzoraas*. The most commonly known opinion is that *tzoraas* comes to those that speak *loshon hara*. Another opinion is that *tzoraas* comes to those who are stingy- *tzarei ayin*.

The *gemara* in *Masechta Yevamos* relates that during the time period between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, twelve thousand pairs of Rabbi Akiva’s students passed away because they did not show proper respect to one another. The Midrash (B”R 61:3) says that they were guilty of stinginess. This in no way contradicts the *gemara*. As a result of not showing the correct respect, one can begin to begrudge someone of what is rightfully due to them.

It is the way we utilize our eyes and lips that truly show the character traits of the Jewish people. The Torah tells us very clearly that although on the streets these may not be considered a blemish, for the Yid, this is part and parcel of who we are and mistreatments of these are unacceptable.

As we count the days towards *Kabbalas HaTorah*, let us use the days of *sefiras Ha’omer* to work on seeing positive in others, and to use our power of speech in the proper way.

מרדכי אפּעל, Good Shabbos,