

The
**CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE**
with Reb Yoel Kahn

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Parshas Noach contains lessons on the themes of both improper sights and improper speech. *Shem* and *Yefes* learned that their father was exposed, and endeavored to cover him while facing backwards so as to catch nary a glimpse. And, earlier in the *parsha*, *tamei* animals are euphemistically referred to as "not *tahor*," which the *Gemara* understands as a lesson in proper speech.

PROPER
AND CLEAN

However, the last point seems to be undermined by the fact that the *Torah* consistently refers to animals as *tamei* when discussing the laws of *kashrus*. The solution lies in the fact unlike a story, *halacha* must be dictated in unmistakably clear language. The *Rebbe* notes that this isn't to say that concerns regarding halachic clarity override the problem with unclean speech, but rather that in a halachic context, this kind of otherwise inappropriate wording itself turns into something proper and clean. The *Rebbe* then extends this point to 'improper sights' as well.

When encountering a disgraceful phenomenon, one might feel the urge to react negatively. But when viewed through the lens of '*halacha*,' the *Torah's* perspective on what must be done, it is something else entirely. The *Baal Shem Tov* reinterpreted the *Mishna* which states "All [skin] maladies can be viewed [to determine whether they are *tzara'as*] – other than one's own" as "All [spiritual] maladies which one views in others – [are really] one's own." Namely, that when we are unable to recognize our own failings, Heaven holds others up to us as a mirror in order to force us to contemplate our own shortcomings. Yet isn't it

possible that Heaven actually led one to witness some iniquity so that he take a stance and attempt to fix it?

"The Frierdiker Rebbe once said that when cleaning a precious object, one doesn't exult in finding more dirt but in rendering it pristine."

SEEING SOLUTIONS

WHAT DO
YOU NOTICE?

The '*halacha*' response to troubling behavior is to focus on the solution without getting caught up in the outrage – rendering it a 'proper sight,' and acting quietly, discreetly and lovingly – 'proper speech.' And if that isn't the case, then this is definitive proof that what one is seeing is simply a reflection of his own equally questionable behavior. [In this vein, the Frierdiker Rebbe once said that when cleaning a precious object, one doesn't exult in finding more dirt but in rendering it pristine. Likewise, the excitement in tackling a problem cannot arise from discovering it but from successfully resolving it.] *Shem* and *Yefes*

thus didn't simply avoid seeing their father's actual exposure, but rather their reaction proves that their entire perspective to begin with was one in which instead of being provoked, they set out to solve the problem.

The lesson here is that we must view and react to things in the manner which the *Torah* prescribes. Whether it involves quietly protecting someone's privacy, speaking up tactfully or even something more forceful, we must process what we experience purely through the prism of '*halacha*,' without seeing or saying anything 'improper.'

For further learning see 'לקוטי שיחות חלק י' נח ב'

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