

When Your Poor Speech Is on the Rocks

Rabbi Chaim Weg

Gemara in *Eirichin-kal vechomer*: If there's *loshon hora* on sticks and stones [less severe]; surely on people [more severe].

Question: Rashi [*Shelach*] says that the *meraglim* [less severe] should've learned from Miriam [more severe].

Answer-they were expected to learn from the punishment meted out to Miriam's questioning Hashem-*kefira*- not the *loshon hora*. Rashi [Devarim]: Names of travels are fictitious - they're referencing *aveiros*. '*Chatzeiros*'-refers to Moshe's rebuke regarding the *meraglim*. They should've learned from Miriam who was punished for her *kefira* in Hashem-not on her *loshon hora*.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks a different question: The *aveira* of *loshon hora* was already given

-what should they have learned from Miriam that they didn't know yet? The prohibition

on *loshon hora* was already known at Har Sinai.

Moshe was *anav me'od mikol adam*-it didn't bother Moshe at all; nevertheless, she was afflicted. The 'leniency' of Miriam's *loshon hora* was that it didn't bother Moshe, and perhaps *loshon hora* is only when it causes pain.

The lesson of Miriam is the prohibition of *loshon hora* even when there's no pain.

Why?

There is a *bein odom lemakom* component.

Rambam- *loshon hora* is defilement of the *nefesh*, and the speech of wicked people. It is a reflection on a negative lifestyle and culminates in heresy-*kefira*.

Miriam's sin was between man and Hashem; after all, Moshe wasn't bothered, as sticks and stones. Her *tzara'as* should've dissuaded the *meraglim* from their slander on the land.