

## Is Canadian Sock Culture Dangerous?

R' Mordechai Torczyner – torczyner@torontotorah.com

*Dedicated by Nathan Kirsh in loving memory of his parents Lou and Ruth Kirsh z"l and his brother Jerry Kirsh z"l*

### Inviting Divine punishment

#### 1. Two stories

- Bereishit 31:32      Whoever is found to have your idols shall die
- Isaiah 1:9-10      "We were as Sdom" "Listen to the word of G-d, officials of Sdom"

#### 2. Talmud, Berachot 19a

תנו רבנן: העוסקים בהספד... והוא עומד ומצדיק עליו את הדין ואומר "רבון העולמים הרבה חטאתי לפניך ולא נפרעת ממני אחד מני אלף, יה"ר מלפניך ד' אלקינו שתגדור פרצותינו ופרצות כל עמך בית ישראל ברחמים." אמר אביי: לא מבעי ליה לאינש למימר הכי, דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש וכן תנא משמיה דרבי יוסי, לעולם אל יפתח אדם פיו לשטן. ואמר רב יוסף, מאי קראה? שנאמר "כמעט כסדום היינו", מאי אהדר להו נביא? "שמעו דבר ד' קציני סדום."

Our sages taught: Those involved in eulogy... And [the mourner] stands and justifies his judgment, saying, "Master of the Universe, I have sinned much, and You have not punished me for even one one-thousandth of it. May Your will be to fence in our breaches and the breaches of Your entire nation of Israel, with mercy." Abbaye said: One should not say this, for Reish Lakish said, and so it was taught in the name of Rabbi Yosi, "One should never open his mouth for the Satan." And Rav Yosef said: What is the source passage? "We were as Sdom (Isaiah 1:9)," to which the prophet responded, "Listen to the word of G-d, officials of Sdom! (ibid. 1:10)"

#### 3. Talmud, Berachot 60a

תנו רבנן: הנכנס לבית המרחץ אומר "יה"ר מלפניך ד' אלקי שתצילני מזה וכיוצא בו, ואל יארע בי דבר קלקלה ועון, ואם יארע בי דבר קלקלה ועון תהא מיתתי כפרה לכל עונותי." אמר אביי: לא לימא אינש הכי...

Our sages taught: One who enters a bathhouse should say, "May it be Your will, Hashem, my Gd, to save me from this and from the like, and that no corruption or guilt befall me. And should any corruption or guilt befall me, may my death be atonement for all of my sins." Abbaye said: One should not say this...

### Inviting Disaster

#### 4. Two stories

- Shemuel I 17:19      If he can fight me, and he strikes me... (see Sotah 42b)
- Kings II 10:18      And Yehu gathered the nation and said to them: Achav served Baal a little, Yehu will serve him a lot. (see Sanhedrin 102a)

#### 5. For others

- Many have died, many will die. (Ketuvot 8b)
- Would you take this lightly if you were bereaved? (Moed Katan 18a)

### Acting Out Disaster

#### 6. Two stories

- Bereishit 12:3      Rise, walk about the land, its length and width, for to you I will give it.
- Isaiah 20:3      As My servant Isaiah has walked, unclothed and barefoot, in three years there shall be a wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia.

#### 7. Talmudic examples

- Ketuvot 68a      Pretending to be blind, malnourished or lame (for deceitful fundraising)
- Gittin 57b      Demonstrating ritual slaughter or marks of *tzaraat* on one's self

#### 8. Halachic examples

- Reciting kaddish while one's parents are alive (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 132:2)
- Putting bread directly into the hand of another at the meal (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 167:18)

## Defusing the Danger

9. Rabbi Shemuel Eidels (16<sup>th</sup> century Poland), Chiddushei Aggadot to Moed Katan 18a, citing Ein Yaakov

שלא יתן פתחון פה לשטן לקטרג ולומר הודאת בעל דין כמאה עדים דמי ולא נשאר מקום למדת הרחמים להאריך אפים כו'

So as not to leave an opening for the Satan to accuse, saying that the litigant's admission is like 100 witnesses, so that there will be no room for Mercy to extend patience...

10. Ecclesiastes 5:5, 10:5; Proverbs 18:7, 21:23

אל תתן את פיה לחטויא את בְּשָׂרְךָ וְאל תאמר לפני המלאך כי שגגה היא...  
יש רעה ראיתי תחת השמש כשגגה שיצא מלפני השליט:  
פי קסיל מחתה לו וישפתיו מוקש נפשו:  
שמר פיו ולשונו שמר מצרות נפשו:

Do not put your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the *malach* that it was an error...

I have seen evil beneath the sun, like the mistake that emerges from before the ruler.

The mouth of a fool is his destruction, and his lips are a trap for his spirit.

One who guards his mouth and tongue guards his spirit from trouble.

11. Zohar, Parshat Mishpatim 100b

Even the breath of the mouth has a place and position, and Gd does with it what He does. Even a person's word, even a person's voice is not for nothing; all have a place and position.

12. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 2:16

Each word has three aspects: Speech, Thought and Deed, *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshamah*, which are the letters, vowels and *t'amim* of the word. As the introduction to the Tikkunei Zohar (pg. 7b) states, 'The *t'amim* are the *neshamah*, the vowels are the *ruach*, and the letters are the *nefesh*.'

13. Zohar, Pekudei 264b

There is a spirit that stands over the speakers of Lashon HaRa. When people catalyze Lashon HaRa, then that evil, impure spirit above is awakened, and it rests on that activity of Lashon HaRa in which people are involved, and it rises and causes death and murder in the world through the energy of that Lashon HaRa.

14. Ramban (13<sup>th</sup> century Spain), Commentary to Bereishit 12:6

ודע כי כל גזירת עירין כאשר תצא מכח גזירה אל פועל דמיון, תהיה הגזרה מתקיימת על כל פנים... ולפיכך החזיק הקב"ה את אברהם בארץ ועשה לו דמיונות בכל העתיד להעשות בזרעו...

Know that all of the celestial decrees become irreversibly enduring once they cease being decrees and become active...

And therefore Gd had Abraham begin to take control of Israel, and He made Abraham model all that would happen with his descendants.

## Review questions

- What are three halachic reasons to wear socks rather than shoes in people's homes?
- Speech
  - Identify biblical cases in which speech could be said to invite punishment or harm on one's self.
  - What halachah teaches not to verbally invite Divine punishment on one's self?
  - Why might speech lead to Divine punishment?
  - Why might speech lead to harm to one's self or others?
  - How might one defuse our concerns regarding speech
- Actions
  - Identify biblical cases in which actions predict future good or harm.
  - What halachot teach not to physically act out harm for one's self or for others?
  - Why might actions foretell harm to one's self or others?
  - How might one defuse the concerns regarding actions?
- So are we ok wearing socks when walking around in the home?