



The Campus Rabbi's Message

Dvar Torah

This coming weekend we will be fasting and mourning the loss of our two temples and our exiles from the land of Israel.

The Gemara states (Ta'anit 30b) that one who mourns over the destruction of Jerusalem will merit to see it rebuilt. One approach taken by the Rabbis of how best to approach the day of Tisha B'Av, is to use part of the day to focus on what caused our loss and how we can merit to rebuild that which was lost.

As is well known, the reason provided for the destruction of the second temple is due to the lack of unity among the Jewish people: there was lashon hara (evil speech/gossip) being spoken which sowed the seeds of animosity among the nation.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz writes a very important idea which if applied can help us to combat the spreading of lashon hara. He writes that the Jewish people were punished with wandering in the desert for forty years because of the evil report given by the spies (which occurred on the 9th of Av). The Torah writes (Bamidbar 14:34): "for the number of days which you travelled the land, forty days, one day corresponding to a year you shall bear your sin". We see that the Jews were punished proportionally in years for the amount of days that the spies travelled in Israel. The question that arises is, if the sin committed was for the sin of *speaking* badly about Israel, why then does the punishment correlate to the travelling of the spies and not their speech?

Rav Shmuelevitz answers that we learn from this verse that the root of their sin was not the evil speech, rather it was their perspective of the land. Their eyes focused on the negative in the land and that is what caused their evil speech. So it is with all lashon hara: it can be lessened or even avoided completely if one looks at people with a favourable eye. The speech is the final expression of what the eye has seen. So in order to truly work on making this Tisha B'Av the last one we experience in galut let us delve into the root of lashon hara and double our efforts on focusing on the good of the people that surround us.

Please G-d, may we all be blessed to see the good in others and thereby merit to help bring about the final redemption.