

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Tazria

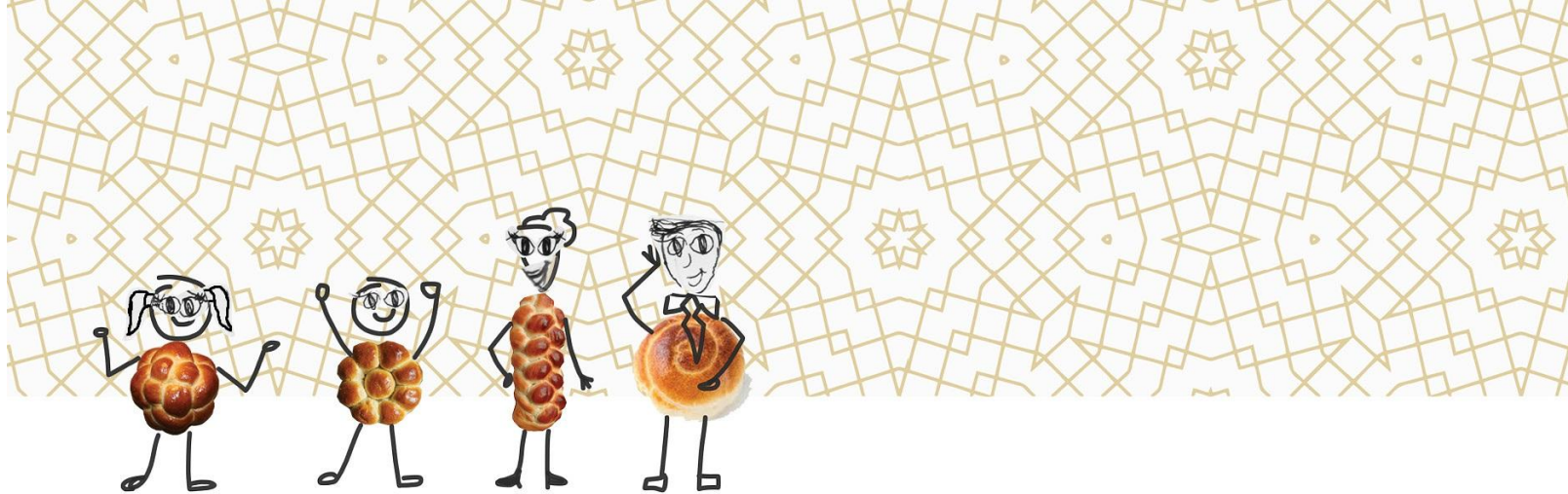
Title: Talking Face to Face

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

One of the main topics in *Parshat Tazria* is *tzara'at*, a unique sickness that causes your skin to be uncomfortable, white and flakey. It can also affect fabrics, leathers and plastered building stones. This is notoriously one of the “yuckiest” parts of the Torah. This disease does not have a physical cause; instead it seems

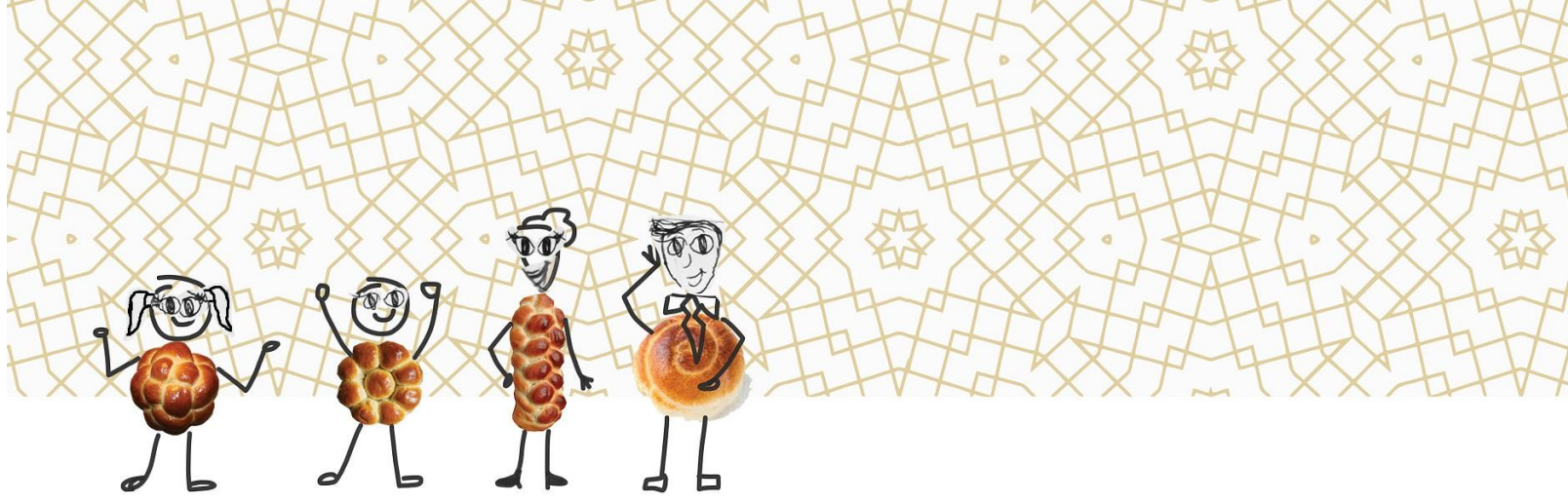


to have a spiritual cause. When you have a spiritual disease you are told to go to the *Kohanim* (priests), just like when you get sick with a physical disease and go to a doctor. The *Kohen* does not have some magical cure for it though. He simply meets with the person and diagnoses them. The *parsha* is filled with extreme detail of the disease and how the kohanim can detect if the person is pure or still infected. When a person is inflicted with tzara'at they are sent outside of the camp to be alone, only interacting with the kohanim who come to check on them. While infected the person takes on the special status of "impure." When someone is impure they are forbidden and exempt from doing certain commandments and participating in the community. Here is how the Torah says this in chapter 13 of our parsha:

46 All of the days that the disease is touching the person, the person will be impure. While impure the person must sit/live alone outside of the camp where the person lives.

מִן כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנָּגַע בּוֹ,
יִטְמָא--טְמֵא הוּא : בְּדָד
יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה
מוֹשְׁבוֹ.

This parsha emphasizes both the importance of going to seek help as well as spending time alone away from everyone. The Rabbis say that people who are sick with tzara'at need to be alone, and not even hang out with other "impure" people. Why is this the case? Usually when you want to keep someone away from others it is in order to not spread a sickness. If tzara'at is not caused by a physical disease then what is it that could spread to others? The Rabbis say that the cause of tzara'at is *lashon hara*, which means speaking badly about others. We see this in [Bamidbar 12:10](#) when Miriam speaks about Moshe's wife behind his back with Aharon.

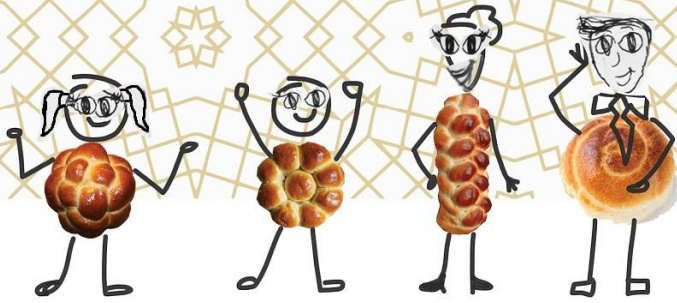


Zooming In:

HE SHALL ABIDE SOLITARY — This means that people who are unclean from other causes than that of leprosy shall not abide with him. Our Rabbis said: Why is he (the leper) treated differently from other unclean persons that he should abide solitary? They replied: Because he, by slanderous statements, sowed divisions between man and wife and between friends, so shall he be alone (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Erkin 16b).

בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב. שְׁלֹא יְהִיוּ טְמֵאִים יוֹשְׁבֵי עִמּוֹ; וְאָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ מֵה נִשְׁתַּנָּה מִשְׁאֵר טְמֵאִים לֵישֵׁב בְּדָד? הוֹאִיל וְהוּא הַבְּדִיל בְּלִשׁוֹן הָרַע בֵּין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּבֵין אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ, אַף הוּא יִבְדֵּל (עֲרֵכִין ט"ז):

Speaking badly about someone (lashon hara) can make not only the people being spoken about feel bad, but it also makes the person speaking about them feel bad. It is “ugly” and uncomfortable just like the tzara’at. This parsha is trying to teach us how lashon hara affects us and can be cured. If you are caught up in talking badly about others you can sometimes not realize the damage you are causing or how it is making you feel. The Torah shows us here that this is us in an “impure” state. We are no longer in a place where we should keep interacting with the people around us. We need this time out, away from the camp, to sit with our thoughts alone. We need to recognize the ugliness and discomfort that our words have caused. We also need this time out so we do not spread it to others. It can be easy to follow someone’s example of speaking badly about others. It even seeps into the material around us. The memory of someone saying something unkind about you can stick in your memory for a long time. Before you begin speaking about someone, take a moment to yourself to think about the ugliness that will occur if you do.

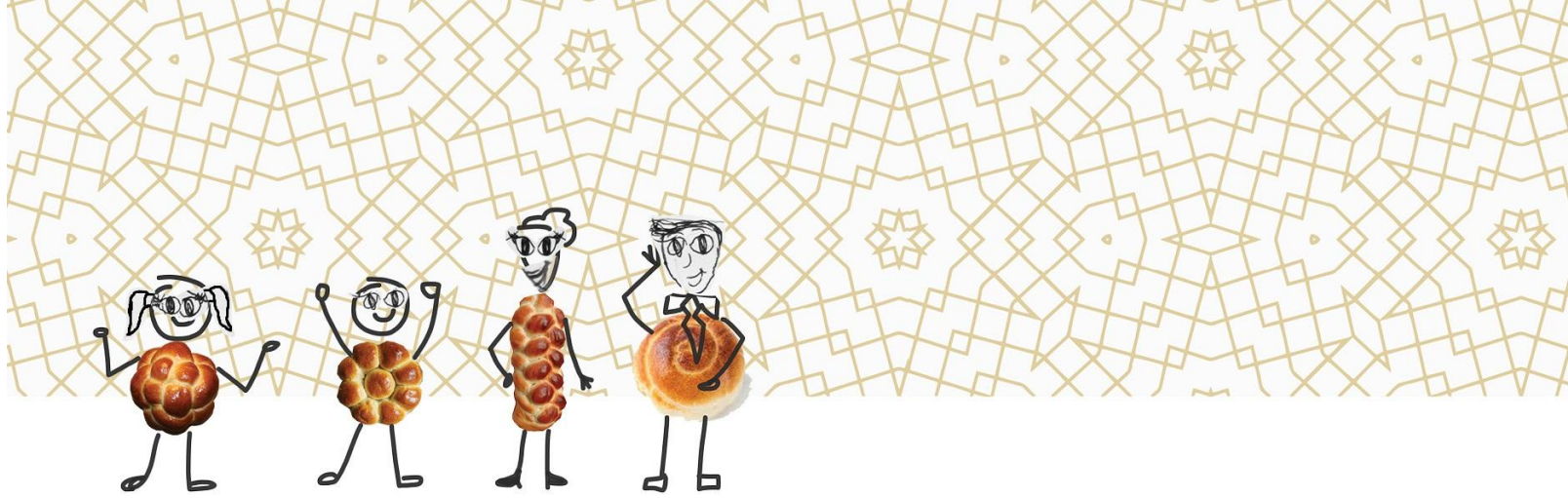


Questions for Consideration:

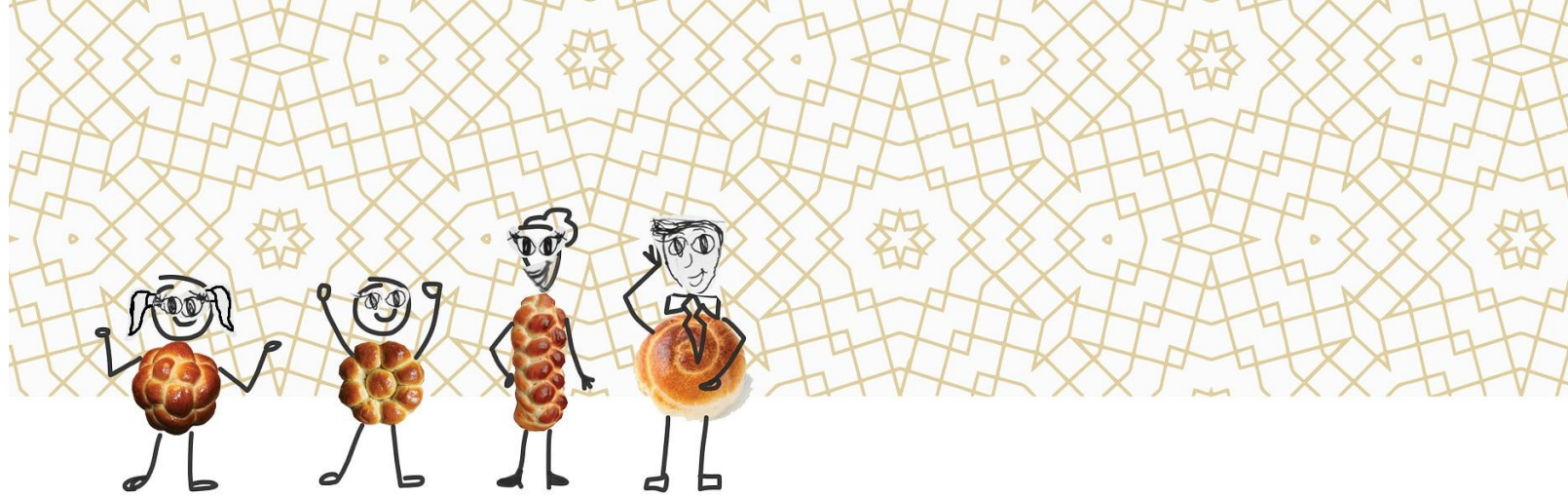
- Have you ever talked badly about someone because someone else was doing it?
- Why is the punishment for talking badly about others in the Torah a very “yucky” and uncomfortable disease?
- Who can you go to when you feel like you have done something that you are not proud of?
- How can taking some time to remove yourself from the situation and be alone help?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Picture This, Part 1:



1. Ask your child to look at this picture and tell you a story about what is happening.
2. Ask them how each child feels in this moment. How will they feel later in the day?
3. Ask them to choose a child from the image that will decide to tell an adult about what is happening. Who would that child go to and why?
4. We don't get tzara'at today (thank goodness!). What kind of damage happens instead from speaking badly about others?
5. What does your child think is a fair consequence for someone who does this?



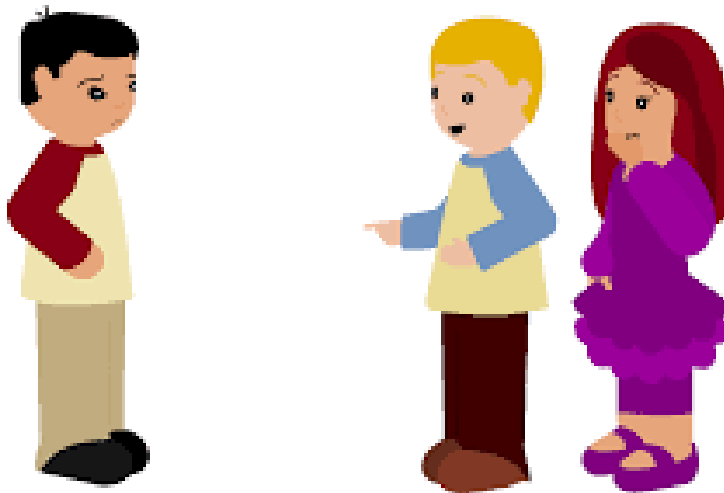
Picture This, Part 2:

When Miriam spoke lashon hara to Aharon about Moshe, here is what God said to her before making her sick with tzara'at:

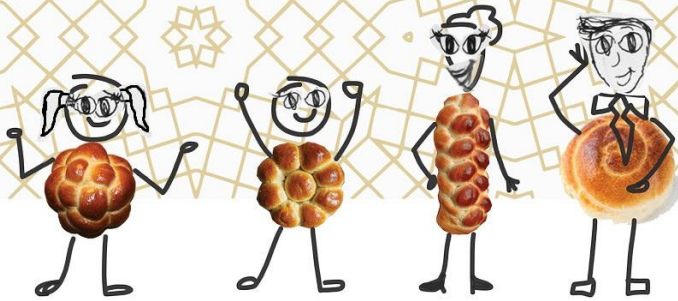
Numbers 12:8

With him (Moses) I (God) speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD. How then were you not afraid of speaking against My servant Moses!

פֶּה אֶל-פֶּה אִדְבַּר-בוֹ, וּמְרֹאָה
וְלֹא בְחֵידוֹת, וַתִּמְנַת יְהוָה
יְבֵיט; וּמְדוּעַ לֹא יִרְאֶתֶם
לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדִּי בְמוֹשֶׁה.



1. Miriam is unhappy about who her brother Moshe is married to. Instead of talking to him about it she talks to Aharon, her other brother. Why do you think she made this decision?



2. How can you tell someone face-to-face when they are doing something you don't like or you are concerned about?
3. Why does God make it clear that God talks "mouth to mouth" with Moshe? What lesson is God trying to teach Miriam and Aharon?
4. Create a story where the kids above decided to do the right thing and tell their friend face-to-face something that bothered them instead of talking behind his back.

Shabbat Shalom!