"Lying"

MAGAZINE PAGE 9

This article looks at the physical signs exhibited when someone lies, and the science behind the use of lie-detectors. In this lesson, students will learn about the Biblical sign of improper speech (*tzara'at*) and discover what traits they see when someone is lying.

OBJECTIVES

- **Students will explore the physical signs associated with lying.**
- **Students will learn the connection between improper speech and the Biblical affliction called *tzara'at*.**
- **Students will explain how dishonesty can isolate someone from the community.**

VOCABULARY

טֻמְאָה	**spiritual impurity**
שֵׂעָר	**hair**
בְּגָדִים	**clothing**
בָּדָד	**alone**

Send your students to play an online version of "Two Truths and a Lie" about famous Jewish personalities at babaganewz.com.

ACTIVITY: TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

1. To begin the lesson, play a game of "Two Truths and a Lie" in which several students take turns telling the rest of the class three statements about themselves. Two statements must be true while one is a lie. Everyone tries to guess which one is the lie. For example, one could say, "I won the spelling bee in second grade. My favorite color is fuchsia. I saw the fourth *Harry Potter* movie seven times." Explain to students that to be extra tricky, they should phrase the lie so it contains an element of truth.

After hearing the three statements, everyone in the class then holds up one, two, or three fingers to indicate which statement they think is the lie. After a few students have had a turn telling two truths and a lie, ask the class:

What helped you figure out which statements were true and which were lies?

Were you ever fooled? How?

If you were to compile a list of ways to tell if someone is lying, what would you include on the list?

2. Read the article on page 9 of BabagaNewz.

What are physical signs of lying mentioned in the article? Were any of these the same as the signs we thought of as a class?

Why might the game we played not have prompted the same physical signs as those discussed in the article?

3. Read the Jewish card that explains how *tzara'at* served in Biblical times as a physical sign of improper speech, including slander, dishonesty, etc. Study the Jewish texts and accompanying questions cited below.

4. To conclude and extend the lesson: Together as a class draft a "truth contract" in which students lay out ways to maintain honesty and truth in the classroom and preserve and strengthen the sense of classroom community in the process.

JEWISH TEXTS

VAYIKRA 13:45–46

And the person who is afflicted with tzara'at *shall have his or her clothes torn and his or her hair shall grow long and wild.... He or she shall cry out, "[I am] spiritually impure, spiritually impure." All the days of the affliction, he or she is spiritually impure. The person shall live alone, outside of the camp.*

Although the references to someone with *tzara'at* do not include an explicit explanation for the cause of the affliction, tradition teaches that it is a punishment for improper speech. A person who has *tzara'at* is called

a מְצֹרָע (*metzora*). According to rabbinic tradition this word is a contraction of the Hebrew words מוֹצִיא (*motzi*) and רַע (*ra*), which loosely means "one who brings forth bad [speech]." Thus, a person becomes afflicted with *tzara'at* as a punishment for improper speech.

Why do you think that someone with *tzara'at* is commanded to rip his or her clothes and go without a haircut?

Why do you think that someone with *tzara'at* is isolated from the community during the affliction?

How does improper speech separate someone from the community?

How can lying spread like a disease in a community today?

SEFER HAḤINUKH 171

The root of this law is that a person should realize the comparison in his or her soul as the person withdraws from society: Because of the wrongdoing the person has committed, he or she is distanced from everything that is good, in order for the person to [be compelled] to do teshuvah.

According to this text, why must the person afflicted with *tzara'at* be separated from the community? How is the separation therapeutic?

How might the signs of lying explored in the article have the same effect as *tzara'at* and being isolated from the community?