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WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER זי"ל

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Speak with Care

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Part I. Hurtful Speech

Two Sorrows

In Parshas Behar the Torah warns the Am Yisroel against dealing unjustly with one another in monetary transactions: וְכִי תִמְכְּרוּ מִמְכָּר לְעַמִּיתְךָ אוֹ קָנָה מִיָּד עַמִּיתְךָ – When you're doing business with your fellow Jew; if you're selling to him or you're buying from him, אַל תּוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו – you shouldn't aggrieve him by cheating him or overcharging him (Behar 25:14). It's a fundamental Torah law, what the Gemara refers to as *ona'as mammon*, the

Correction and Apology:

On page 20 in the Pesach booklet and on page 34 in Sefer Toras Avigdor Moadim vol. I, an "Editor's Note" was printed. This note was written about a Q&A which was mistakenly left out of the printing. We apologize for the confusion caused by our error. A correction will be printed in the forthcoming vol. II of the Moadim series.

aveirah of causing sorrow to your fellow Jew in monetary matters.

But then, in *possuk* 17, when the Torah comes to the end of this subject matter, we're warned the same thing a second time: וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עַמִּיתוֹ – And you should not aggrieve your fellow man. And the Gemara (Bava Metzia 58b) is bothered by that – what's this repetition for? What is the second *possuk* coming to teach us?

And what the Gemara answers introduces us to an entirely new Torah commandment altogether: מָה אֲנִי מְקַיֵּם – How do we explain this second *possuk*? בְּאוֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים הַכְּתוּב מְדַבֵּר – the *possuk* is talking about hurting a person with words. The seeming repetition of these *pesukim* above actually is no repetition at all. It's not speaking about preying on your fellow Jew's money but about preying on his emotions – it's a specific *lav* against speaking words that hurt a fellowman's feelings.

Two Storekeepers

And even more than that, the Gemara tells us a big *chiddush* there. It says there that not only is

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it an *aveirah* to hurt somebody with your words, but it's even worse than hurting him monetarily. That's what Chazal say: גְּדוֹל אֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים מֵאֹנְאָת מָמוֹן – It's worse to hurt a man's feelings than to steal his money (*ibid.*). Hurtful words are worse than taking his money!

I always give the same *mashal*. Here are two storekeepers on the same avenue. One of them, when you walk in there, you have to watch him very carefully because when he's weighing the merchandise on the scale, sometimes he pushes down with his hand. He wants to add a little bit more weight to the banana you're buying so that he can overcharge you. You have to say, "Mister, please take your hand off the scale." Also, with him you always have to count your change. However, this cheating grocer is a polite fellow; he's always kind to you and he doesn't say any mean words. You have to watch out when he's handling your bananas and your money, but you don't have to beware of a sharp tongue.

Now, on the other side of the street, there's another grocer. He's a man who is perfectly honest, 100% honest. He wouldn't even think of cheating you out of a nickel. If you accidentally left a penny of your change on the counter he would put it on the side for you; he would hold it for you and give it to you next time you come in. But on the other hand, he is mean. If you say an extra word, if you ask him where the tuna fish is, he answers you with a sharp word: "Look right in front of you on the shelf! Can't you see?!" He'll never steal even a penny from you but he'll hurt you with his careless tongue.

The Bigger Crook

Now, the question is, who is better? Of course, neither of them is good because every man must strive for perfection in *all* areas of *avodas Hashem*. But for the sake of understanding our subject we have to answer this question: Who is better? The pleasant crook on this side of the street or the

grocer on the other side who's mean, but is straight as an arrow when it comes to money?

Listen to what the Gemara says about this: גְּדוֹל אֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים מֵאֹנְאָת מָמוֹן – The sin of hurtful words is worse than the sin of cheating a man out of his money. The nice crook on this side of the street is better – he's only cheating you out of your money, but at least he's not hurting your feelings. And who's the bigger crook? The honest grocer who would never take a penny from you.

We're learning now that if you put your hand in somebody's pocket and take out his money, it's a smaller *aveirah* than saying something to hurt his feelings. Here's a nice Jewish boy who would never even dream about stealing from his mother – a son wouldn't sin against his mother like that. But suppose his mother is talking a little too much, so he says, "Ma, don't talk so much." Ooooh! He's hurting his mother's feelings! That's worse than stealing money out of her pocketbook!

Special Fear

Gadol ona'as devarim – hurtful words are worse than *geneivah*. And the Gemara (*ibid.*) explains three reasons why it's worse. Number one is this: Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai points out that in the first *possuk*, by stealing or cheating in money matters, it doesn't say anything about fearing Hashem. Of course we know that we have to be afraid of Hashem – everybody knows how serious it is to take away money from a Jew – but still nothing is said there about fearing Hashem.

But in the second *possuk*, when we are being warned against hurting your fellow Jew with words, the Torah goes out of its way to add the words וַיִּרְאֵתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ – You should be afraid of Hashem. Which means, *especially afraid!* A cheater also has to be afraid, but for the man who hurts feelings, the Torah says: "Be afraid of the repercussions!" No question about it. Hakodosh Boruch Hu takes action if you hurt people's feelings.

Words Are Sticks and Stones

Now, Rabbi Elazar adds a second reason why *ona'as devarim* is worse than stealing money. *Zeh b'gufo v'zeh b'mamono* – When you hurt his money it's only his money, it's something external to him, but when you hurt his feelings, you're hurting him. Words hurt the body. He's affected physically – his nerves, his heart, his mind is hurt. It's actually painful. *יש בוטח במדקרות הרב* – Sometimes words that come out of your mouth are like the piercings of a sword (Mishlei 12:18).

And Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini adds yet another reason. *Zeh nitan l'hashavon v'zeh lo* – Money you could always pay back but hurt feelings you can't pay back. You can't make it up to him!

Money you can always repay. You can do *teshuva*. You took it away, you give it back. If a man stole from you, he might mail in a check some day and pay it back; but if he hurt your feelings no check can make that up. If the feelings are hurt, they're hurt, and you can never pay back the hurt feelings. And even if you asked for *mechila* and he says wholeheartedly, “I am *moichel* you,” but his feelings are still hurt – the effect is still there.

Scarred Forever

Let's say you wound somebody; you make a cut on him with a knife. Right now there's a gash and it's going to leave a terrible scar. So you asked for *mechila* and you also paid his medical bills. Wonderful; very good. But the scar is permanent; he's a *baal mum* forever as a result. That's how it is with feelings too; they are forever.

We remember the words – even though you are kind hearted and you're *moichel*, but you still remember the incidents when your feelings were hurt by somebody. And you remember them years and years. When you'll be an old man of a hundred years and you'll look back, you'll remember, “This one hurt my feelings,” and “That one hurt my feelings.” It's engraved in your mind.

Now, I'm ashamed to admit it but I remember what people said to me many years ago to hurt my feelings. I'm *moichel* them with a *mechila gemura* but I can't forget it. I was in the *yeshiva* for many years; I dealt with maybe two thousand boys. Every one of them was polite to me; everyone was nice and polite. Only five *bochurim* in my entire career – nineteen years I was in the *yeshiva* and only five *bochurim* said something fresh to me. I remember it. Hakodosh Boruch Hu should bless them; they should have *bracha v'hatzlacha b'chol ma'aseh y'deihem*. They should grow old and have great grandchildren and they should have *parnasah b'revach*. All good things should happen to them. But what happened still remains, it remains.

The Criminal Record

You know, there's a beautiful custom that some husbands and wives have, to ask *mechila* of each other before the *yamim no'raim*. Rav Yitzchak Petterburger, when he went to shul on *erev Rosh Hashana*, before he walked out of the house he turned around and told his wife, “*Zeit mir moichel* – Forgive me, my wife.” And she said, “Forgive me too.” It's a very good *minhag* to imitate! And you don't have to wait for *erev Rosh Hashana* either. It's very wise to do that.

But even if you do that, you have to know like the Gemara said, it's *bigufo* and it's not *nitan l'hashavon*. It's pain that cannot be repaid. A man who hurts his wife with words, it's not forgotten – and even though she is willing to overlook it, in her heart it rankles! The pain is still there and it's considered a blot on his record.

And if it happens many times he should know that when he comes to the next world, the record will be taken out before the *Dayan Emes*, and he'll be judged; he won't be able to get away with the things that he did – neither will she. It's a very serious matter! It's a pity that so many people have their records filthied with blots on them. Because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is listening and he puts it down in the *sefer hazichronos*. A fine couple,

living together loyally, but still they spend their lives in hurting each other's feelings – it will be played back for them and each word is going to cause them an unimaginable guilt. *U'magid l'adam mah sicho* and they'll be condemned for every word (See Chagigah 5b).

The Devil and the Deathbed

Of course it could be that they forgive each other before they die. On her deathbed, she forgives her husband. He approaches the bed and says, "Please forgive me for everything I said." At least he should have *seichel* to say *that*. Some don't even have *seichel* to say that. And when he is dying, his wife should approach him and say, "Please, my husband, forgive me for everything I said or did against you."

I know one man who was evil to his wife; he was always belittling her. He made her life a *Gehenom*. I know the story very well. I spoke to him; I called him a devil! And he was a *frum* man! A *frum* devil! And when she was on her deathbed, he came to her and he asked her to forgive him. And she said, "I won't forgive you." And then she died. A true story. He was finished! She had left the world and he hadn't acquired her *mechila*.

Frum Hamsters

That's why the subject of *Ona'as Devarim* just can't be ignored. We have to realize that hurting someone's feelings is a *lav* just the same as eating ham. It's worse. Eating ham is a *lav d'oraysa*, but it never happens. *Frum* Jews eating ham? We cringe at the thought of eating *chazir*; but when it comes to *ona'as devarim* we're trampling on it all the time.

And I want to tell you something – the place where many of us are trampling it most often is in our homes. So many people are sinning with their mouths in their homes. Imagine a Jewish home where all day long they're eating ham. A bite of ham in the morning, a ham sandwich in the afternoon, and some ham for supper! Is that a *frum* house?

A home where a husband and a wife or where brothers and sisters are transgressing *ona'as devarim* all the time, what kind of home is that? A place where they're transgressing a very serious *lav* all their lives – very many times; sometimes thousands of times – is that a *frum* home?

Part II. Venomous Speech

The Heavenly Drama

The Gemara in Mesichta Eirichin (15b) says that *l'asid lavo*, in the time to come, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to put on a great drama, a pantomime. And who's going to be the audience? Who's going to come and watch the play? Us! All of mankind will be assembled to watch.

Now, we understand that plays are usually a waste of time – sometimes they have to make *tzedakah* plays, things like that, but *stam* plays for entertainment are a *narishkeit*. But if it's a performance put on by Hashem, if Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the Producer and the Director of the drama, then we understand that there's a big lesson to be learned.

Now, it says there that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to bring onto the stage all the wild animals – all the animals together on one side, and on the other side all by himself will be the snake. And the animals are going to confront the snake; they'll fall upon the snake and accuse him, "You wicked creature! What did you get out of biting people and injecting your venom into them? אַתָּה מַה הֵנָּה לֵךְ יֵשׁ לְךְ – What benefit do you have from that?"

"When we fell upon prey," the animals will tell the *nachash*, "at least it was because we were hungry. But you didn't do it because you wanted to eat – any creature that crossed your path, you bit! Merely to inject venom and to kill for no purpose at all, that's wickedness!" That's what the animals are going to say at that great drama – and all mankind will be viewing and listening.

So the snake will defend itself: “Why are you attacking me? There’s a creature that’s even worse than me. Go after him first!”

The Wicked Man

“Worse than you?! Who’s worse than you?” the animals will ask. And the *nachash* will turn and point at the audience, at us: “It’s him! The man with the wicked tongue! What benefit does he get by talking about other people and slandering them? I at least have an instinct to protect myself. So when I think somebody is an enemy, I have an instinct to poison him. But what does this man get out of poisoning people? Just to inject venom for no reason, for some puny little pleasure of shooting off the mouth?”

“So all of you wild animals,” says the *nachash*, “should assemble and accuse the real guilty party – the *ba’al haloshon*, the one speaks *lashon hara*. *מה יתרון לבעל הלשון* – *What benefit is there to a man of a bad tongue?* He is the very worst creature there is in the world!” It means, he’s the very worst of all creatures. The very worst person is the *baal lashon hara*. That’s what this pantomime is going to demonstrate. And we have to remember who he’s talking about. He’s talking about us!

The Other Lashon Hara

Now, I know that when you talk about *lashon hara* today, it’s a popular subject. People learn the *sefer Chofetz Chaim* and *Shmiras Haloshon* and they think that *lashon hara* means gossip, talking evil about people. And of course it does, and that’s a subject that needs a great deal of circumspection, a great deal of caution! *נצור לשונך מרע* – *You have to guard your tongue from wickedness!*

Now, a person who talks bad about other people is a *rasha gamur*, no question about it. But he’s not the only poisonous person that the *nachash* was pointing at. There’s a different type of *lashon hara* that is often overlooked and that is the *lashon hara* of saying hurtful words to your

fellowman. To hurt people’s feelings, that’s the real *lashon hara*; that’s the most wicked tongue.

Don’t think that what you say just bounces off of people. Many times people have committed suicide because of an unkind word. They were already loaded down with so much discouragement – all they needed was one more word and they said, “To heck with it all.” A woman, a sensitive woman, told me that her husband almost killed her once. She wasn’t well and he came home and said something careless and he pierced her with a sword. He almost finished her off.

The Dangerous Tear

I’ll tell you a little story of a *tzadik* who didn’t vex his wife with any words – but even without opening his mouth he hurt his wife unintentionally. That’s also a form of *ona’ah*. Yehuda, the son of Rabbi Chiya, he was a great man. Yehuda and Chizkiya are the two famous sons of Rabbi Chiya. Now, Chizkiya lived much longer and he was the rebbe of Rabbi Yochanan and he’s frequently in the Gemara. But Yehuda is found rarely in the Gemara. Now, why is he so rarely found? Because he died when he was young.

The Gemara tells what happened. All week he sat in the Yeshiva and learned. He didn’t come home at night. Erev Shabbos, that’s when he came home. And so, every Friday his wife would wait by the window, looking down the road, “Maybe he’s coming now,” “Maybe now.” She’s so happy – her husband is coming home for Shabbos. Without a father what kind of Shabbos is it?

One Friday afternoon, it was getting late and somebody asked Yehuda a Talmudic question in which he was interested and he became involved in a discussion that dragged out; and it became later and later. And his wife was sitting at the window waiting; she saw it was getting late and there was no sign of him. And so her heart fell within her and she thought, “Maybe he’s not coming for this Shabbos.” And a tear dripped out of her eye, down her cheek. And Hakadosh Baruch

Hu, at that time, took Yehuda's life. "Be careful of *ona'ah* against your wife! If she sheds a tear, your punishment will be swift!" That's what the Gemara (Bava Metzia 59a) says.

Dangerous Words

Now, Yehuda was an innocent man who loved the Torah with all his heart and he certainly intended to come home, but because of a certain disregard for the feelings of his loyal wife who was waiting for him, he was punished so severely.

Now that's a story that should cause us to tremble. **וְיִרְאֵתָּהּ בְּאֵלֶיךָ** – *You should be afraid of Hashem!* We begin to understand what it means, *ona'as devarim*, to vex people with words. If a tear caused unintentionally has such severe repercussions, how much more so when a husband pierces his wife with the sword of a sharpened tongue?

And therefore, it becomes necessary for people to think, "What did I say during the day? Maybe I should train my tongue to be restrained. Maybe I am too careless with my words." Husbands and wives, boys and girls, old sages and business people, everyone must spend some time thinking about how they speak.

Marriage Counseling

You should know that I consider *ona'as devarim* the most serious *michshol* in marriage. For many years I've dealt with people coming to me. Sometimes I succeeded, sometimes I didn't succeed, but I can tell you that most of the time the troubles began with *ona'as devarim*, words that hurt.

That's why, when a *chosson* or *kallah* come and ask for advice, this is one of the first things they should know. It's a very serious *chet*. Unfortunately, some people spend all their lives saying unpleasant words to each other—fifty years of bickering and constant quarrelling; each time hurting each other's feelings. These people who are spending their lives in careless words and

recrimination, they have to know what a very great burden there's going to be on them! A very great guilt!

Now, of course if you're a wise person you'll say, "What do words mean? I'll forget about the words!" That's right! That's what you should do – make believe you never heard it. But not always are both wise – sometimes one is not so wise. And what you said to her, or what she said to you, who knows how long it will rankle? And it becomes a poison, like the venom of a snake! And then, on that great day of judgement, the snake will point at you: "That's the truly wicked one," he'll say.

Eleven Blessings

Now, as much as a tongue can be a most dangerous weapon in the hands of a careless person, the opportunities for doing good with your tongue, to heal instead of destroy, are just as readily available. The Gemara (Bava Basra 9b) says, **הַנּוֹתֵן פְּרוּטָה לְעֵנִי** – if you give a penny to a poor man, you have six *mitzvos*, six *brachos* and he quotes six glorious *pesukim* from Yeshaya. You read the *pesukim*, it's such an enormous benefit for you if you give something to a poor man!

The Gemara adds, **וְהַמְפִּיֵּסוֹ** – but if at the same time, you say some friendly words to the poor man, you give him a *bracha*, you encourage him, you get five *brachos*. Let's say you give a poor man a dollar, you're finished? No, you're not finished. And so you wish him he should be at the wedding of his great grandchildren. Say that, you'll get five wonderful *brachos*.

Now the question is, what does it mean five *brachos*? Tosfos explains, **וְהַמְפִּיֵּסוֹ** – even if you don't have any money to give, you just speak kind words, it's five *brachos* more than the money. It's eleven *brachos*, Tosfos says! That's how important it is, to speak kind words to a poor man.

Now if the Gemara makes that statement, it's a promise. Just think how easy it is to do that. You pass by a poor person, let's say a *frum* person and

you give him a dollar, and you go on coldly, unemotionally you walk by. No. A wasted opportunity. You lost an opportunity. **הַמְפַיֵּסוּ** – say kind words to that person and you’re going to gain a tremendous amount.

The Poor Millionaire

Now, if your wife serves you at the table and you’re sitting with gusto and enjoying the meal that she prepared to you, what about a few kind words, “it tastes very good”. Why shouldn’t you say that? You can be sure it’s gratifying to her to hear that. She’s waiting. But it’s nothing. He eats. He’s destroying the food. How will you make up for the food you’re eating up? Say at least, “You’re an excellent cook”? Ah! “Excellent wife,” you want to say? Even better. You must say something. You must be *mefayes* people.

Let’s say, you went to a barber. Let’s say you went to a *shoimer Shabbos* barber and of course you’re paying him. When you’re finished, don’t get up and give him the money and walk out. Add, “You did a good job.” He looks at you with surprise. It’s the first time he ever heard that! You don’t realize what a big *zechus* you have. You’re filling in what’s necessary. It’s lacking in the world! Lacking encouragement!

Even if a millionaire is talking to you, you say some words. Of course not to flatter him, you think you might get some money out of him. No. You can praise him. “You know, the yeshiva that you’re supporting is a tremendous thing. You’re doing a great *zechus*,” tell him, “when you supported that yeshiva,” or whatever institution they’re supporting.

And therefore, this is an opportunity, to say words of encouragement to people. Make it a principle to think about that. And it’s so easy. And the easier something is, the bigger the obligation is. **גְּדוֹל עוֹנָשׁוֹ שֶׁל לָבָן יוֹתֵר מֵעוֹנָשׁוֹ שֶׁל תְּבֵלֶת** (Menachos 43b). The white threads in *tzitzis* were cheaper than the *techeiles* threads in the olden days. If a person neglected *lovon* it’s a bigger sin than

neglecting *techeiles*. What’s easier is more obligatory. And so since it’s so easy to do these things, the obligation is much greater.

Part III. Healing Speech

Become a Professor

In Mishlei (15:4) it states: **מְרַפֵּא לְשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים** – A healing tongue is a tree of life. That means if you train yourself to console people, to make them feel good, you’re going to become a very great professor of medicine.

With your tongue you can accomplish more than physicians do; people are ailing and they need a lift – everybody needs a word of consolation, a friendly expression or a compliment. You’ll be surprised how important a friendly word is. Don’t think that because a person is an extrovert and he’s bubbling with talk and it’s hard to get a word in sideways, that he doesn’t need it. Don’t worry. He’s listening for something from you.

Calling For Advice?

What people need more than anything else in this world are a couple of kind words. I hear it when people call me on the telephone. Many people call me up for advice. But they don’t let me talk! It’s remarkable! It looks like they’re coming for advice but they don’t want to listen to me. They are waiting for a “wow.” Once in a while they’ll give you a space of a few seconds to say a word or two in between, “You’re right. You’re right.” Of course you can’t always say, “You’re right,” but that’s what people want. They don’t want advice; they want justification and kind words.

Everyone needs a little more joy in their lives and you can be the one who pours salve on the wounds of your discouraged fellow Jews. That’s the medicine that mankind craves most – some recognition and kind words – and you have the medicine to give them. That’s what your tongue is

for – it's not for *ona'as devarim*, it's for *refuah*. And if you say one kind word, he'll remember that and it'll change not only his day, it could be it will change his life too. Because as much as a wicked word remains forever, a kind word is even more.

I'm ashamed to tell you this story. I once spoke to a *galach* when I was a little boy – I was about twelve years old and the *galach* said to me a little something, a compliment. It meant almost nothing but I can't forget it. I even know his name. To this day I remember his name. He had a white necktie – I remember exactly the picture before my face. When somebody says a good word to you it's inscribed in your memory forever.

Home Sweet Home

The opportunities are all around you, everyone can use a kind word. But of all the opportunities there's not one that is as prolific, as fertile, as the home. The Jewish home is the scene where the *avodah* of *marpei lashon* can be carried out in the best possible way. Your family members; your parents, your brothers, your sisters, your children – those are the best opportunities because they're always available in the house.

Children who are encouraged in the home learn better. They are more neat in their habits. They are cooperative if they are encouraged. And most of all it's the best vitamins! Encouragement, compliments, praises – those are the best vitamins for your children. When he does a little bit, make it better than it is and let him feel that there's an incentive to do good. If a mother or father see a child making a *berachah* with *kavanah* they should praise him. The principle of encouragement, of *marpei lashon*, of kind words and compliments, is one of the foundations of a Jewish home.

And by the way children should seek to encourage parents. Don't forget about that. You have to encourage your father. You have to encourage your mother. Don't think it's just a one-way business. There are a lot of ways you could

encourage your parents, and they need it too because the world is busy doing the opposite. And therefore a few kind words from children mean a great deal.

The Outcry of Many

It's so easy to gain *olam habo* if a man would make it a principle once in a while to give his wife a compliment. That's the outcry of very many women: "He never once gave me a compliment." Now, the husband is an honest man. He's not a superficial fellow, and he thinks it's ridiculous. He thinks, "She knows I appreciate everything – I have to say it?!" And because he is begrudging in words, his life goes by with lost opportunities.

It's very important to keep in mind that you have a whole treasury of gold that costs you nothing to share. And your wife is right there and she is willing and ready to hear encouragement from you. Your poor wife, after a day in the hot kitchen, after hours of taking care of the children, is waiting for it; and if you'd be willing to donate one or two words of encouragement, you don't know what you're accomplishing. You can say, "I see you're working very hard to bring in *Shabbos Kodesh*. What a big *mitzvah* to be involved with all day." Say something like that; encourage her. With a thoughtful kind word you can gain success in every encounter with your wife – not only your wife; every person you meet is an opportunity.

The Man With Thirty Wives

You have to realize that a man is measured, a man is judged, by how many people he encounters successfully. It pays to think about that; to make a *cheshbon hanefesh* about that. So you start thinking. In the morning you went to the *beis hamedrash* to pray, and you encountered somebody on the way and then in the synagogue you encountered a few people. You didn't speak to most of them but maybe one or two you did. And then you went home for breakfast and encountered your son who was on his way out the door to *yeshivah*. Then you

ran to the corner to catch the bus, so the bus driver was also an encounter. And then in the place where you work or *lehavdil* if you're in the yeshivah, you also bumped into a few people.

Look back at your day and see how successful these thirty or forty or fifty encounters were. Were you successful in the important *avodah* of *marpei lashon*? Or did you *chas v'shalom* use your tongue for the opposite, for *ona'as devarim*. You're being tested all day, every day. Every human being is a test, and the more people you encounter, the more tests you have.

Now, you have to know that your wife is a lot of people! You don't have one wife. Even after the *cherem d'Rabeinu Gershom*, it's not one wife. The many times that you encounter your wife add up to many people; same thing with a husband. Each encounter is another opportunity, another test. The thirty times in one evening that you had some *masa umatan*, a talk, exchange of words, or something, that's thirty encounters; it's like thirty different people.

And therefore, with whom is it more frequently possible to utilize your tongue for *chesed*, than a husband to a wife and a wife to a husband—they see each other more than anybody else. What difference does it make if it's your wife or your neighbor or another neighbor or another neighbor? Your wife is like a hundred neighbors. Each encounter is a new test. Did she have a pleasurable response to your company, or the opposite?

Sing Her Praises

And therefore you should say good words when your wife cooks for you supper. Tell her it's a good supper. Usually it's good. And even if not, say it anyhow "It's a good supper." You know how encouraging that is? You might think it's nothing; no, it's not nothing – it's everything! Choose your words; only compliments and praises. When your wife hands you something to eat, let's say, it's an opportunity. Other things too; when you walk into

the house, say, "How nice and clean your house is." Or say, "You're an expert manager—a good *balabuste*." From time to time, tell your wife she's an *eishes chayil*. Show appreciation—it costs no money. The human being is capable of finding the right expressions and that's your job; to look for ways and means of complimenting your wife. Sing her praises – not once and finished. Investigate, find what to praise – that's your function.

Sometimes it's worth giving little presents. Some husbands don't have the knack of expressing themselves – they have to learn, they have to practice; even if it sounds strange in the beginning, keep at it. But sometimes, until you get the hang of it, you can buy little gifts. If you have trouble expressing yourself, one of the best ways a husband can continually compliment his wife is by frequently, at least once a week, buying some small article, an inexpensive gift, and bringing it home to his wife.

A Wife's Business

Wives to their husbands too. Your husband maybe puts on a facade, but he craves the *toras chesed al leshonah* (Mishlei 31:26) of his wife. So your poor husband when he comes home tired from a day in the office or in his shop – he has so much friction with customers, with supervisors, with competitors. Maybe his boss was mean to him and he's knocked out. If you're a wise wife, you greet him with a couple of nice words. "Chaim, I'm glad to see you. I made a nice supper for you today."

As much as possible she has to show appreciation for her husband. If she sees that her husband is *oseik* in *Torah*, she should praise him. Anything he does, she should praise. It doesn't mean she has to stand there like a canary all day long and sing his praises but she should look for opportunities to say a good word. A woman must make it her business always to look for opportunities to drop a word of encouragement to her husband. "Chaim, you fixed the sink very well.

It's working perfectly now." Or "You're looking good today." It's all part of the great career of *marpei lashon*.

The Beginning of the Great Career

And therefore, when we read about *ona'as devarim* in this week's *parsha*, and we study the words of Chazal describing how wicked it is to say hurtful words to your fellow – we must understand that avoiding that sin is only the beginning of our careers. Even if people are successful in other forms of *avodah*, but if they're belittling each other, it means they're doing the opposite of what's expected in this great career, this great mission, which Hakadosh Baruch Hu requires of us.

And therefore, people who have a head on their shoulders and they think about the tremendous opportunity that they have, they won't be satisfied if they just don't criticize or recriminate. It's not enough if they won't bicker and belittle. Avoiding *ona'as devarim* is most vital, but it's not enough. Because really it is only the foundation for much greater things – it's the stepping stool for the great career of *marpei lashon*.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Acquiring a Healing Tongue

The sin of *ona'as devarim* is greater than stealing money. Hurtful words are like sharp swords, like the venom of a snake. This week I will *bli neder* endeavor to speak words of healing and encouragement. At least three times each day I will use my tongue to make someone feel good, and thereby acquire eleven *brachos*.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

154 - Career of Encouragement | 604 - Exile
645 - Gift of Speech | E-215 - The Marriage Counselor

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How does one know when he comes across the right *shidduch*?

A:

And the answer is, he will never realize because there is no one right *shidduch*. There are a thousand right *shidduchim*. If you are rich enough and Rabbeinu Gershon wasn't born yet, you could marry a thousand women *al pi Torah* as long as you can support all of them. And nothing would be wrong; you could be very much in love with every one of them. And it's not silly at all. Why shouldn't you be?

But since you can only choose one, so there is no such thing as *the* right one. You can say, when can I know I met *one* of the right ones? That, I've spoken about many times; I'm not going to go over it now because the most important thing is that you should be the right one. You make sure that you're the right one and that's how you'll have a successful marriage. The one you married is one of your *zivugim* so you do the best you can with that one *zivug* and that's your success in this world.

TAPE # 405

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