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# THE STUNNING POWER OF

## ≈ SPEECH III ≈

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### Reclaiming the Air Waves

We learned in the first Morasha shiur on the Power of Speech how our words are invested with an almost cosmic power to shape the universe and have the ability to change the reality of time, people, and objects. We further understood in the second Morasha shiur that negative speech can harm individuals and communities and even adversely affect the course of Jewish history, as demonstrated by the destruction of the Second Temple and our current 2,000 year exile.

In this final class on the Power of Speech, we will identify the causes of destructive speech and offer suggestions to eradicate lashon hara so that we can harness the productive power and blessings of using proper communication. Finally, we will discuss the importance of keeping one's word.

This class will address the following questions:

- ≈ If lashon hara is so bad, why do people continue to speak it? What are the causes of lashon hara?
- ≈ How can we avoid speaking lashon hara? How can we create harmonious relationships with our family, friends, and associates?
- ≈ If our chatting invariably leads to lashon hara, what recourse do we have?
- ≈ What if I've tried to stop speaking lashon hara but it didn't work?
- ≈ I'm always asked to be involved in many activities and projects by my friends, family, and community. I always say yes, but I can never honor all my commitments; what should I do?

**Class Outline:**

- Section I.      The Causes of Lashon Hara
  - Part A. A Negative Attitude
  - Part B. Arrogance
  - Part C. Hatred
  - Part D. Anger
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- Section II.     Strategies to Improve Our Speech
  - Part A. View Others Positively
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  - Part C. Love Your Neighbor as Yourself
  - Part D. Controlling Anger
  - Part E. View Yourself as a Soul, Not as a Body
  - Part F. Develop Constructive Speaking Habits and the Art of Silence
  - Part G. Prayer
  - Part H. Torah Study
  
- Section III.    The Importance of Keeping One's Word
  
- Epilogue.      Don't Even Think of Telling Me Lashon Hara

## SECTION I. THE CAUSES OF LASHON HARA

*I was awaiting my meeting with the CEO of a multi-national corporation when I saw him enter the long corridor. He entered his office and two executives followed for an informal discussion. Suddenly his voice boomed, berating one of the executives with language that shocked everyone. I decided to leave the office and took my business elsewhere (Gerald Stuart, IRT Technologies).*

If lashon hara is so terrible why do people speak it? The sources in this section discuss the root causes of lashon hara. It is important to understand the causes if we hope to be able to uproot them and avoid lashon hara altogether.

### PART A. A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE

1. **Rabbeinu Yonah, Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:217 – A negative attitude about others means that one will always find faults to mention.**

Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) wrote, “Fools highlight fault. And amongst upright people, [one can find] acceptance” [Mishlei 14:9]. This means: The fool constantly seeks out people’s faults and casts aspersions upon others. He never speaks positively about people’s positive attributes.

ואמר שלמה ע”ה “אֲוִלִּים יִלְיִין אֲשֶׁם וּבִין יִשְׁרִים רְצוֹן”  
...פירוש “האוויל יליין” חובה כי יחפש מומי בני אדם  
ואשמותם ויתן בהם דופי. ולא ידבר לעולם בשבח ודבר  
טוב הנמצא בהם...

### PART B. ARROGANCE

The character trait of arrogance can lie at the root of lashon hara, as illustrated by the following sources.

1. **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:11-14 – The prohibition against forgetting God.**

Take care that you do not forget God, your Lord ... lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle ... and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase – and your heart will become arrogant and you will forget God.

הַשְׁמֹר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ ... פֶּן תֹּאכַל וְשָׂבַעְתָּ  
וּבָתִּים טֹבִים תִּבְנֶה וְיִשְׁבַּתָּ. ... וְכֶסֶף וְזָהָב יִרְבֶּה לְךָ  
וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ יִרְבֶּה. וְרָם לְבָבְךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
הַמוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים.

2. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Sotah 5a, with Rashi – Since arrogance leads to forgetting God, we are prohibited from being arrogant.**

What is the source of the prohibition against arrogance? Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said, It is written, ‘... Lest your heart become arrogant and you will forget God’ [Devarim 8:14]. [This teaches that haughtiness constitutes disregard of God, and we are enjoined against forgetting God] as it is written, ‘Take care that you do not forget God, your Lord’ [ibid. 8:11].”

אזהרה לגסי הרוח מנלן? ... רב נחמן בר יצחק אמר:  
מוהבא כתיב “וְרָם לְבָבְךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ” וכתיב  
“הַשְׁמֹר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ”.

**Rashi**

"Your heart will become arrogant and you will forget God" – From this we see that arrogance leads to a person forgetting his Creator. And we are prohibited from forgetting God, as it says, "Take care that you do not forget God." [Thus, arrogance is prohibited since it leads to forgetting God.]

רש"י

ורם לבבך ושכחת - אלמא מגובה לב בא לידי שכחה  
ששוכח את בוראו, ובשכחה הוא מוזהר "השמר לך פן  
תשכח".

3. **Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Introduction, Negative Mitzvah #5 – One who speaks negatively about others is implicitly saying that he is superior to them, and thus transgresses the prohibition against being arrogant.**

When one speaks lashon hara, one transgresses the prohibition against forgetting God due to arrogance [Devarim 8:11-14]. The fact that he speaks condescendingly about other people is an indication that he considers himself superior and wiser than others. Were he to be aware of his own deficiencies he would not speak negatively about others.

ועובר נמי המספר לשון הרע בלאו ד"השמר לך פן  
תשכח את ה' אלקיך" שהוא אזהרה לגסי הרוח, כי כיון  
שהוא מלעיג ומתלוצץ על חברו מסתמא הוא מחשיב  
את עצמו לחכם ולאיש באנשים. כי אלו היה מכיר את  
נגעי עצמו לא היה מלעיג מחבירו.

**PART C. HATRED**

1. **Talmud Bavli, Yoma 9b – The Second Temple was destroyed as a result of unfounded, baseless hatred and lack of love and unity in the Jewish people.**

But why was the Second Temple destroyed?  
Surely the Jews were occupied with Torah,  
mitzvot, and the practice of kind deeds. Because  
there was baseless hatred between them ...

אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצוות וגמילות  
חסדים מפני מה חרב מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם...

2. **Orchot Tzaddikim, Gate 6 – Hatred causes one to speak negatively even about the positive actions of the other person!**

It is prohibited to hate another person, as the verse states, "Do not hate your brother in your heart" (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:17)...

Hatred causes many transgressions, including lashon hara, because one who feels hatred is inclined to express his negative feelings about the person ... Due to one's hatred, he will deride even the positive aspects of the other person, and seek to make those positive actions seem negative in his own eyes and the eyes of others.

השנאה המידה הזאת יש בה לאו, דכתיב (ויקרא יט ז):  
"לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך"...

והיא מידה הגורמת עוונות הרבה, כמו לשון הרע, כי  
השונא את חברו מספר לעולם בשנאתו... ומחמת  
השנאה יגנה את מעשיו הטובים, וישניאם בעיניו ובעיני  
אחרים...

## PART D. ANGER

1. **Orchot Tzaddikim, Gate 12 – An angry person cannot control his actions, and causes disputes and fighting.**

People who are angry, and who reinforce their rage, are unaware of what they do, and they do many things in their anger that they would not do when calm. For anger causes one to think irrationally and speak out of anger, thus triggering disputes and fights.

בני אדם, כשהם כועסים ומחזיקים בכעסם, אינם משימים לבם על מה שעושים, ועושים הרבה ענינים בכעסם מה שלא היו עושים בלא הכעס, כי הכעס מוציא שכלו של אדם מקרבו עד שמרבה דברי הכעס, ונכנס במחלוקת וקנטורים.

Unable to think clearly, a person who is lost in anger loses perspective. The crooked path appears straight; the forbidden seems permissible. When no longer guided by reason, insults, fighting, and even violence come within reach (see Chofetz Chaim, Chovat HaShmirah, p. 24).

## PART E. JEALOUSY

1. **Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen, Pri Tzadik, Parshat Miketz 2**

Lashon hara and slander are caused by jealousy and anger.

כי לשון הרע והוצאת דיבה בא מסיבת קנאה וכעס...

## PART F. EXCESSIVE EMPTY CHATTER

1. **Rambam (Maimonides), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at 16:10 – Speaking excessively about meaningless things can lead to speaking negatively about others.**

Such is the way of scoffers ... it starts out by speaking excessively about meaningless things, as it is written, "The voice of the fool is heard with excessive talk" [Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 5:2].

This then leads to speaking disparagingly about righteous people, as it is written, "Lips of falsehood, that disparage the righteous, shall be silenced ..." [Tehillim 31:19].

וזה דרך ישיבת הלצים... בתחילה מרבים בדברי הבאי כענין שנאמר (קהלת ה:ב) וְקוֹל גָּסִיל קָרֵב דְּבָרִים.

ומתוך כך באין לספר בגנות הצדיקים כענין שנאמר (תהלים לא:ט) תִּאְלַמְנָה שִׁפְתֵי שָׁקֶר הַדְּבָרוֹת עַל צַדִּיק עֵתָּק...

Too much speech with too little content creates a void that can be filled with negative and harmful speech, as the next article illustrates.

2. **Shayla McKnight, Workplace Gossip? Keep It to Yourself, November 15, 2009, nytimes.com – A company where gossip and talking about your colleagues is not tolerated.**

I'm a technical service assistant at an online printing company based in Livingston, Montana. I'm part of a three-person team. We provide quality control for print jobs, call local customers to notify them that their orders are ready, and send sample packs to potential clients. We also help other departments with special projects and take turns sitting at the front desk, greeting customers and answering the phone.

At the beginning of my employment interview two years ago, Marne Reed, the human resources manager who interviewed me, mentioned the company's no-gossip policy. She said something like this: "There's no back-stabbing here, and no office politics. Gossiping and talking behind someone's back are not tolerated."

I remember thinking: "Really? That's odd. How is that possible?" Everywhere I've worked people have gossiped, like when someone got into trouble or was laid off. But I signed the company's "agreement to values" form, and I remember feeling optimistic. The policy sounded refreshing. Now that I've been here for a while, I can say that it makes one heck of a difference in the work environment.

At my last job, gossip was rampant. So many people had negative attitudes. Workers would become frustrated if one person was slacking off, so they'd vent about it. I, for one, was afraid to say anything because I didn't know who might repeat something I said, change it around or use it against me. People would even gossip about what others did on the weekend, like what bar they went to. It was every man for himself, and it was uncomfortable.

There's a greater sense of being part of a team here than in other jobs I've had. If employees do violate the company policy, a manager speaks to them, and if they don't stop, they're let go.

To avoid speaking negatively about others, it is sometimes better to stick to less "interesting" topics, as the following story humorously illustrates.

*One Shabbat, the Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1838-1933) lodged at an inn, and the innkeeper, not knowing his identity, seated him at a table with several other guests who were horse traders. At every meal, the conversation was about horses.*

*After Shabbat, someone informed the innkeeper of the identity of this guest. The innkeeper apologized to the Chofetz Chaim for having exposed him to such unrefined company. The Chofetz Chaim said, "To the contrary, I was very pleased to sit with them. You see, they spoke only about horses, not about people!" (Rabbi Abraham Twerski MD, Simchah: It's Not Just Happiness)*

## KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

✧ Understanding the root causes of lashon hara is the key to removing it from our lives for good. People may be unaware of these causes, but intuitively recognize them once they are described. There are six common causes of lashon hara:

1. Negativity – a negative attitude toward others means that one will always find faults to mention.
2. Arrogance – if a person is arrogant and feels that he is superior to others, he will be more inclined to speak negatively about them.
3. Hatred – causes one to speak negatively about even the positive actions of the other person!
4. Anger – causes one to be less careful with what he says.
5. Jealousy – as long as we are bothered by another person's accomplishments, we will find something negative to focus on.
6. Excessive empty talk – people can end up talking about other people and their weaknesses if they have nothing constructive to discuss.

## SECTION II. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE OUR SPEECH

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In the previous section we discussed six root causes of lashon hara. Corresponding to these six causes, we will now discuss six strategies to improve our speech.

Remember, these tools will not just change one's speaking habits, but will altogether change the quality of one's relationships and how one looks at life.

### PART A. VIEW OTHER PEOPLE POSITIVELY

*The way you view other people is the way that they will be in your presence. Our attitude toward others is to a great extent a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you assume that others will be friendly and considerate when dealing with you, the vast majority of people will be that way toward you. If you assume that others will always be selfish and inconsiderate, you will treat them accordingly and you will get what you expected.*

*Of course, there are many people who will act toward you the same way regardless of how you act toward them. But to a great extent, others act toward you as you do toward them. As stated in Proverbs 27:19: "As in water, face answers to face, so too, the heart of man to man." Here is an old story to illustrate this point.*

*An elderly person was sitting by the outskirts of a city. Someone who was walking toward that city approached the man and said to him, "I'm considering moving from the town I live in to this city. Could you please describe to me what the residents of the city are like?"*

*"What are the people in your own town like?" asked the elderly man.*

*"That's exactly why I am moving away from that rotten place," replied the young man. "Those selfish people are all so cold and unfriendly. They are inconsiderate and impolite and I can't stand them any longer."*

*"That's too bad," said the elderly man. "The people of this city are just like the people in your own town. It wouldn't be worthwhile for you to move here."*

*A few days later, another young man came along the road and approached the elderly person with the same question as the previous fellow: "What are the people in this city like? I'm considering moving here."*

*"What are the people in your own town like?" asked the old man.*

*"They are wonderful," replied the second young man. "Almost everyone is very kind toward me. I love them dearly. But I like people so much that I would prefer to live in a much larger city. That's the reason I am thinking of moving here."*

*"You're very fortunate, young man," the elderly person told him. "The people here are just like the people in your own town. You'll love it here. You'll have an easy time making friends, and the people will treat you the same way as your own townspeople treated you."*

*When you have a sincere love for other people, they sense it and treat you with the same positive feelings as you have for them. And a person who views others in a positive manner will have fewer temptations to say things that may be hurtful ... (From Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, The Power Of Words,)*

1. **Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel, Torah World's Conference on Lashon Haa, May 2000 – Focusing on the positive in others is the cure for lashon hara.**

“The key to avoiding lashon hara is cultivating real love and respect between us ... Why focus on another's shortcomings? Note his unique positive characteristics and focus on them.”

Beyond seeing the positive in *people*, the upright strive to see the positive in *all aspects of life*, as the following source illustrates.

2. **Rabbeinu Yonah, Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:217 – An upright person sees the positive in everything.**

“And amongst upright people, [one can find] acceptance” [Mishlei 14:9] because a righteous person covers over people's shortcomings and always praises whatever is deserving of praise ... It is related that once a wise man and another individual were walking together when they came across a carcass. The other man remarked, “How disgusting is this carcass!” The wise man countered, “How white are its teeth!”

ובין ישרים רצון – כי דרך הישרים לכסות על כל פשעים ולשבח האדם כי נמצא בו דבר טוב. ... אדם אחד וחכם עברו על נבילה אמר האדם כמה מוסרחת נבילה זו אמר החכם כמה לבנים שניה.

3. **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Life is Now, ArtScroll Publications, pp. 237-238 – Total determination to overcome negativity is the prerequisite to develop a positive attitude.**

Total determination to overcome negative patterns is what influences and inspires people to stop engaging in negative thoughts, words, and actions ... Remember to focus on the positive action, not on stopping the negative one. Keep your focus on what you *do* want to think. Keep speaking and acting in positive ways. When you think positive thoughts, you are automatically not doing the opposite. When you speak positively, you are automatically not doing the opposite. When you act positively, you are automatically not doing the opposite.

A great impetus to develop a positive outlook on others is to recognize that every person is created in the image of God.

4. **Rabbi Moshe S. Gorelik, Young Israel of North Bellmore, NY, Parshiot Tazria/Metzora, April 2001 –The realization that man is created in the image of God inspires the highest appreciation for others.**

Lashon hara is a manifestation of a disregard of a person's worthiness. The antidote to this negative attitude is contained in the words of Pirkei Avot/Ethics of the Fathers (3:18): “Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God.” Hence, respect for the other person is respect for the image of God. And thus, the regard for the worthiness and dignity of fellow human beings leads to a society of good will and beneficial fellowship.

## PART B. DEVELOP HUMILITY

1. **Talmud Bavli, Arachin 16b, with Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggadot s.v. mah takanto – How does one fix the habit of lashon hara? Study the Torah, and become more humble.**

What is the strategy to prevent a person from speaking lashon hara?

מה תקנתו שלא יבא לידי לשון הרע?



If he is a *talmid chacham* [i.e. he knows how to study Torah] he should study Torah with exertion.

If he is an *am ha'aretz* [i.e. he does not know how to study Torah] he should make himself humble.

#### Maharsha

The following two transgressions are partners: arrogance and lashon hara... since a person's arrogance causes him to speak negatively about his friend ...

Also, Torah study protects and saves a person from transgressions [Sotah 21a].

אם תלמיד חכם הוא יעסוק בתורה,

ואם עם הארץ הוא ישפיל דעתו...

מהרש"א חידושי אגדות ערכין טו: ד"ה מה תקנתו  
...אלו ב' עבירות גבה רוח ולה"ר שותפין הם ... כי  
הגאווה שבו מביאו שמדבר לה"ר על חבירו ...

התורה מגנא ומצלא מן החטא כדאמרינן בסוטה

## 2. **Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Luzzatto), Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Just), Ch. 22, Humility – A humble person speaks gently, avoids arguments, and is a pleasure to be around.**

In relation to humility and one's manner of speech, the Sages said: "One should always speak gently to people" (Yoma 86a). It is also stated explicitly, "The words of the wise, spoken gently, are accepted" (Kohelet 9:17), for one's words must express honor [for others] and not be degrading ...

Furthermore, his company is very pleasant and he automatically finds favor in people's eyes. It is obvious that such a person will be brought neither to anger nor argument. Rather, all [that he does] is done quietly and calmly. Fortunate is the person who has the privilege to acquire this virtue!

בהתנהג בשפלות ... בדבורו, אז"ל (יומא פ"ו): לעולם  
יהיה דבורו של אדם בנחת עם הבריות, ומקרא מלא  
הוא (קהלת ט): דברי חכמים בנחת נשמעים, צריך  
שיהיו דבריו דברי כבוד ולא דברי בזיון...

ועוד שחברת העניו נאה עד מאד ורוח הבריות נוחה  
הימנו בהכרח, לא יבוא לידי כעס ולא לידי מריבה אלא  
הכל בהשקט, הכל במנוחה. אשרי מי שזוכה למדה זו!

## 3. **Orchot Tzaddikim, Sha'ar HaAnavah (The Gate of Humility), 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph – Conducting ourselves with humility in all of our interactions.**

One must conduct oneself with humility in dealing with people in everyday interactions and in business.

וחייב להתנהג בענוה במשא ומתן עם בני אדם.

## PART C. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

Baseless hatred and the accompanying lashon hara was the cause of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. One could say that the opposite is true: baseless love and positive speech will cause the arrival of the Third Temple (Rabbi Yisrael Lau, Yachel Yisrael 13).

Additionally, if hatred causes one to speak negatively about others, then love will cause one to speak positively about them. As the following sources describe, love is the cure for lashon hara.

1. **Vayikra (Leviticus), 19:18 – Treat others as you would want to be treated, i.e. with respect.**

And you shall love your fellow as you love yourself; I am God.

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'

2. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #243 – Loving your neighbor as yourself translates practically into not hurting others, including through speech.**

The elements included in this mitzvah follow the general principle that one should treat another person in the way he would treat himself, e.g. protecting his property, preventing him from being harmed, speaking only well of him, respecting him, and certainly not glorifying oneself at his expense.

ודיני מצוה זו כלולים הם בתוך המצוה, שכלל הכל הוא שיתנהג האדם עם חבריו כמו שיתנהג עם עצמו, לשמור ממונו ולהרחיק ממנו כל נזק, ואם יספר עליו דברים יספרם לשבח ויחוס על כבודו ולא יתכבד בקלנו,

3. **Rabbi Menachem Shlanger, Midot Ha'Emunah, p. 54 – “Loving others as yourself,” and focusing on the positive in others is the cure for lashon hara.**

[In light of what we have learned, it should be clear that it is not enough to merely abstain from lashon hara.] The prohibition against lashon hara requires us to become people who are not focused on others' faults and foibles. The root of lashon hara is relating negatively in one's heart to others. In contrast to this is the commandment to “love your fellow like yourself” [Vayikra 19:18], and indeed that commandment requires us, in the words of the Rambam, “to speak the praises of others.” For it is a positive mitzvah to see the good in others.

ומכאן שאיסור לשון הרע מחייב את מידות האדם שלא להיות בעל לשון הרע ... שורש לשון הרע בהתייחסות שלילית שבלב ... כנגד דרך זאת באה מצות “וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ” שמחייבת, “לספר בשבחיו” של חבריו (רמב”ם דעות ו:ג). והרי זה מצות עשה לראות את הטוב שבחבירו.

4. **Sifra 2:12 – A central principle in the Torah.**

“And you shall love your friend as you love yourself” – Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a fundamental principle of the Torah.”

ואהבת לרעך כמוך, רבי עקיבא אומר זה כלל גדול בתורה

5. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #243 – The fulfillment of many other commandments is dependent upon “loving your neighbor as yourself.”**

In the Sifri, it is stated that Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a fundamental principle in the Torah,” meaning that many commandments are related to this one, in the respect that one who loves his fellow will not steal his belongings, nor be

ואמרו בספרי, אמר רבי עקיבא זה כלל גדול בתורה, כלומר שהרבה מצוות שבתורה תלויין בכך, שהאזהב חבריו כנפשו לא יגנוב ממונו ולא ינאף את אשתו ולא יונהו בממון ולא בדברים ולא יסיג גבולו ולא יזיק לו

unfaithful with his wife, nor will he defraud or insult him, nor trespass upon his property, nor cause him damage in any way. Thus, the fulfillment of many other commandments is dependent upon the fulfillment of this one.

בשום צד. וכן כמה מצוות אחרות תלויות בזה, ידוע  
הדבר לכל בן דעת:

6. **Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud), Nedarim 9:4 – Hurting another is tantamount to hurting yourself.**

Imagine a person sitting and cutting a piece of meat and he accidentally cuts his own hand with the knife, would it be logical for him to hit the hand which is holding the knife in revenge?

ודי רווחת יכו ויכסב ודי הכהו רשב דתחמו בשויש ימ  
סקנהל ודי הכתו.

**PART D. CONTROLLING ANGER**

1. **Ramban (Nachmanides), Iggeret HaRamban (A Letter for the Ages) – Speaking gently and respectfully is a habit that should be practiced because it prevents a person from becoming angry.**

Train yourself to always speak gently to all people at all times; in doing so, you will be saved from anger. When you are saved from anger, you will attain humility, the greatest of the positive character traits ... Therefore, I will explain how you should act with humility: You should always speak in a gentle manner ... consider everyone else to be greater than you ...

תתנהג תמיד לדבר בנחת כל דברך לכל אדם בכל עת,  
ובזה תנצל מן הכעס... וכאשר תנצל מן הכעס תעלה על  
לבך מידת הענוה שהיא המידה הטובה מכל המידות...  
ולכן אפרש איך תתנהג במידת הענוה ללכת בה תמיד:  
כל דברך תמיד יהיו בנחת... וכל אדם יהיה בעיניך גדול  
ממך...

2. **Rambam, Hilchot De'ot (Laws of Conduct) 2:3 –Although concerning most character traits one should take the “middle path” of moderation, concerning anger one should take the “extreme path” and avoid it altogether.**

There are certain character traits that one must distance oneself from in the extreme. In fact, it is forbidden to take [the standard approach of] the “middle path” regarding these character traits ...

Anger is an extremely negative character trait, and it is fitting for a person to distance himself from it to the opposite extreme. A person should train himself not to get angry even about something which is appropriate to get angry about.

ויש דעות שאסור לו לאדם לנהוג בהן בבינוניות אלא  
יתרחק מן הקצה האחד עד הקצה האחר...

הכעס מדה רעה היא עד למאד, וראוי לאדם שיתרחק  
ממנה עד הקצה האחר, וילמד עצמו שלא יכעוס  
ואפילו על דבר שראוי לכעוס עליו.

Although the Rambam generally teaches that a person should balance his character traits – be strong yet flexible, compassionate yet firm – anger is an exception. Regarding anger there is no middle way, and one must avoid it altogether. Since this may seem like an unattainable goal, a person should begin by training himself for short periods, as described in the next source.

3. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. II, p. 215 – Set aside approximately fifteen minutes a day when you practice responding to everything with patience and without becoming angry.**

We will train ourselves to be patient: we will fix a specific amount of time every day – for example, approximately fifteen minutes – in which we will strive to bear with patience all that we see and hear, even when things may be upsetting to us, and even if they are hurtful to us, without losing our composure at all. In cases where it is necessary or obligatory to react, we will do so with measured, calm words, without becoming overly emotional.

נתלמד, איפוא, להיות סבלנים: נקבע לעצמנו זמן מסוים כל יום, כרבע שעה, ובו נשתדל לשאת ולסבול כל מה שאנו רואים ושומעים, אע"פ שאינו כלל לפי רוחנו ואפילו אם הוא פוגע בנו, מבלי לאבד מנוחת נפשנו כלל, ובמקרה שיש צורך או חיוב להגיב – נגיב בדברים שקולים ומדודים בלי שום התרגשות.

Based on the two previous sources, a person should set aside approximately fifteen minutes to go to the “opposite extreme” from anger and practice being patient.

#### **PART E. VIEW YOURSELF AS A SOUL, NOT AS A BODY**

When we understand that the Jewish people's souls are interconnected to one another - כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה - Shavuot 39a – each with a unique mission, there is no reason to speak pejoratively to anyone. Rather, we should realize that we are in this world to help, encourage, and support one another to reach our potential.

1. **Rabbi Noson Weisz, Sticks and Stones, Parshat Metzora, aish.com – The soul vs. body perspectives on life: the more one identifies oneself as a soul living in a limitless world, the less one is inclined to compete and bad-mouth someone else's success. The more one identifies as a body, the more inclined one is to speak negatively about another.**

Through the medium of “good” and “evil” speech, the tongue measures the balance between physicality and spirituality to be found in each person. We human beings are a mixture of the physical and the spiritual; of bodies and souls.

As bodies we inhabit a world of limitations. We compete with each other for a limited supply of goods and honors. Theoretically whatever our colleagues have are things that could have been or could still be ours instead. In this sort of situation we tend to put each other down. Since everyone's position in a competition is relative to first place, if I bring someone down that puts me so much closer to the front; or at least gives me the comfort of knowing that I am not the only loser. This type of world-view leads directly to evil speech.

As souls we are in a limitless world. Each one of us was sent to the world to accomplish something unique and given the means and the equipment to do it. Our bodies are the suits that we wear in order to be able to function in this physical world. Clothes never define the man. None of us is in competition with each other; it is impossible for anyone to get hold of anything that was written for someone else. There is nothing to be gained from anyone else's failure. On the contrary, one of the elements of my own mission is to assist anyone I possibly can to be successful at his. There is nothing to be gained by bringing anyone down. There is no incentive to “evil speech.”

The amount of lashon hara a person speaks provides an accurate existential measure of how much that person sees himself and other people as primarily spiritual and how much he regards himself as physical. Spiritual levels cannot be measured by the dogma in people's heads. A person can walk around with the conviction that he is primarily a soul and refute his own convictions by speaking lashon hara, which is the behavior that is only appropriate to someone who is primarily a body ...

The centrality of the idea of social unity in Judaism is clearly reflected in that bedrock of statement of Jewish ethics: “*All Jews are responsible for one another.*” (Talmud, Shavuot 39a)

The implications are clear; we all benefit from each other's merits and we all suffer from each other's faults. If all Jews truly felt this way, we would feel the same compulsive impulse to conceal the faults of any fellow Jew as we feel toward concealing our own shortcomings. Indeed, we would be so biased, that we would only perceive the flaws in our fellow Jews with the same difficulty we experience in recognizing our own faults ...

2. **Ibid. – A person who speaks lashon hara declares himself in competition with everyone else. By learning to speak properly we unify the Jewish people.**

When Jews are on a high enough spiritual level, the misuse of the tongue can make itself physically manifest. Death is the severance of the connection between the soul and the body. Severance between the spiritual and the physical is a type of death. Lashon hara, the force that severs the connection between the physical and the spiritual causes a type of death that makes a physical appearance in the form of a skin disease akin to leprosy.

The *metzora*, the leper, is like a dead person [see Vayikra 13, 14]. By speaking lashon hara, he severed the connection between his soul and his body and defined himself as a physical being. He declared himself in competition with everyone else and attempted to isolate people from each other.

When there is a Temple standing that testifies to the state of unity with God, such a person is forced to live out his inner lifestyle. He develops a terrible skin disease that isolates him from the rest of humanity. People avoid him and he becomes a social outcast. He gets to live within the spiritual atmosphere that he was busy generating through his *lashon hara*. He experiences the world as defined by his own tongue. He remains apart until he finds a spiritual cure for the misuse of his Divine attribute of communication. When that happens, the gateway to his soul is reopened and the power of holiness pouring in cures him.

If we would only learn to speak properly we would open the channels to each other and unlock the spirituality in the universe.

**PART F. DEVELOP CONSTRUCTIVE SPEAKING HABITS AND THE ART OF SILENCE**

1. **Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at 16:10 – By developing constructive and productive speaking habits, one will naturally avoid lashon hara.**

Such is the way of cynical and negative people: it starts out by speaking excessively about meaningless things, as it is written, “The voice of the fool is heard with excessive talk” [Kohelet 5:2] ...

However, the virtuous and righteous of the Jewish people speak only words of Torah and wisdom.

וזהו דרך ישיבת הלצים הרשעים: בתחילה מרבים בדברי הבאי כענין שנאמר (קהלת ה:ב) וְקוֹל קְסִיל בָּרֶב דְּבָרִים.

...אבל שיחת כשרי ישראל אינה אלא בדברי תורה וחכמה.

Like all good habits, developing them requires consistency and patience, as the next source illustrates.

## 2. **Rabbis Finkelman and Berkovits, Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day, p. XXIV – Inevitably one will become a better person by always looking for constructive things to say.**

The Chofetz Chaim says that when one observes the laws of shmirat halashon, one inevitably evolves into a better person. That is because in every interaction, one is focused on not causing others pain. Time after time, day after day, the person who is careful with speech calls that imperative into play. It informs his decisions about what he says and what he thinks. Eventually, it becomes who he is.

Sometimes, one might need a creative solution to change one's speaking habits. The following story is a humorous and poignant example.

*It seems that when Rabbi Yisrael (Lipkin) Salanter (1809-1883), the father of the Mussar Movement passed away, he was just about penniless. He left very few, if any, material possessions to his surviving descendants. There was, though, one man in R' Yisrael's neighborhood who managed to get hold of R' Yisrael's hat.*

*The hat was old, creased, and misshapen from years of wear. Yet this man treasured it and wore it every Shabbat. At first people in his shul paid no attention to the hat, but eventually they began to ridicule him about it.*

*"How can you wear such a thing?" they asked in derision. "It is so dirty, worn, and tattered. To wear that hat is a lack of kavod (respect for) Shabbos."*

*The man gazed at these people and replied softly. "Would you agree that there is a certain 'hiddur' (extra refinement) in not speaking lashon hara on Shabbat?"*

*"Yes," they agreed reluctantly. "Not speaking lashon hara certainly is a measure of kavod Shabbat."*

*"Then you should know," continued the gentleman, "that when I wear R' Yisrael's hat, I find it impossible to speak a word of lashon hara!" (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, In the Footsteps of the Maggid, p. 169).*

Sometimes one's efforts to speak positively will not be enough. Sometimes remaining silent is the only solution.

## 3. **Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer, Commentary on Iggeret HaGra – Remaining silent carries great reward.**

For every single moment that a person remains silent [instead of speaking lashon hara], he merits for himself a great, hidden light [in the World to Come] which no angel or creature can fathom.

כל רגע ורגע שאדם חוסם פיו, זוכה בשבילי לאור הגנוז שאין מלאך ובריה יכולים לשער.

"Death and life are in the tongue" (Mishlei 18:21) – avoiding lashon hara can bring new life, as the following story dramatically illustrates.

*More than 80 years ago in Shavil, Lithuania, there were no washing machines or dryers. Women did their laundry by hand and hung it out to dry on clothes lines in the alleyways.*

*One afternoon in Shavil, Mrs. Leah Henig [the name has been changed] was making her way home from the market. Irritated by the sheets hanging in the alley that obstructed her way, she pulled one of them down onto the muddy ground. The owner of the laundry, a woman named Chaya Musia, was standing nearby and was shocked at what she saw, but she controlled herself. After the angry Leah walked away, the woman picked up the soiled sheets, washed them again, and hung them somewhere else to dry.*



A few days later, Mrs. Henig's son developed a life-threatening fever, even though he had been in perfect health and had showed no signs of an oncoming illness.

Wishing to get a blessing from a great tzaddik (righteous person), Leah rushed to the home of Rav Yosef Zecharye Stern, who was the rabbi of the town. She cried hysterically as she recounted how her son had suddenly become so seriously ill. Patiently, R' Yosef Zecharye explained that all that God does is for a reason, even though we don't always know what it is. After a few moments, she recalled the incident of the laundry a few days earlier.

"If you know whose sheets they were, you must go to her home right now and ask her for forgiveness," ordered the Rabbi. "It is the only way that you will have atonement" [see Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:9].

Leah went directly to the home of her victim and knocked. The lady's husband, R' Avrohom, opened the door. "I must speak to your wife immediately," Leah said. "I must apologize for something terrible that I did to her."

"She's not in," R' Avrohom said. "Besides, she hasn't said anything to me about anyone hurting or aggravating her, so you probably have nothing to worry about."

"No," Leah protested. "Last week I pulled down two of her sheets that were hanging on the line. I threw them in the dirt. I was wrong and I must apologize."

"I think you have the wrong house," R' Avrohom replied. "My wife did not mention anything about dirty sheets. I would imagine that if someone had upset her, she would have told me about it. But she didn't, so I think you have to try somewhere else."

Leah left the house confused and frantic. She was sure that it was this particular woman's laundry. She had even turned and had seen the woman pick up the sheets.

Leah went back to R' Yosef Zacharye with great concern and told him what had occurred. R' Yosef Zacharye exclaimed, "I know that family. They are a very special couple. The fact that she did not even tell her husband about the incident is even greater than the fact that she did not say anything to you when she saw you pull down the sheets. She preserved your dignity by not confronting you, and preserved it still further by not saying anything to her husband, as most other people would have done."

"That woman has had numerous miscarriages. I give her a blessing that she should have a son who will light up the world."

That woman eventually had a son – her only child. His name is Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv of Jerusalem – one of the world's greatest and most sought-after halachic authorities!

And indeed, just as R' Yosef Zacharye foretold, he enlightens the world with his brilliance in Torah and authoritative rulings. (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, *Along the Maggid's Journey*, p. 144.)

Most people are uncomfortable to be in silence. They prefer to hear someone talking, even if it's nonsense or negative speech. But the following story reminds us that silence can be inspiring and uplifting. And it can be a great remedy for lashon hara.

In the shul that I attend here in Jerusalem, something occurred at the end of Yom Kipper day that was very memorable. Paradoxically, this was not because of the words we uttered, but the words we did not utter.

Somehow, the final Neilah service had ended a bit earlier than scheduled. We recited the climactic Shema Yisrael, followed by the sevenfold affirmation that, "God, He is the Lord." Normally, the shofar is sounded at this point, which marks the return of the Divine Presence to its celestial abode. But it was too early. It was only 5:38, and the shofar could not be sounded until 5:48. Ten minutes to go.

What to do? Would there be a brief sermon from the rabbi? Some announcement by the gabbai? A communal recitation of Psalms to fill the void? There was none of the above. Everyone – a congregation of over five hundred people – simply remained in their seats and waited. Some looked into their prayer books, some studied, some closed their eyes and meditated.

Whatever it was they did, one fact stood out: no one talked. No one engaged in the most popular activity known to man: conversation, chit-chat, banter. A congregation of five hundred people, sitting close to one another, and no one talked. For ten whole minutes, an unworldly stillness pervaded the air.

In some ways this silence equaled in its power and inspiration the entire day of prayer. The congregation was not going to destroy the holiness of the moment by empty prattle and chatter.

And then the anticipated moment arrived. The chazan raised the shofar to his lips, the awesome blast enveloped the synagogue. What remains in memory is not only the sound of the shofar, but the sound of the great silence that preceded it. This was a powerful lesson for our cacophonous times that are so inundated by cascading speech. We yak endlessly: we OD on talk-radio, television talking heads, the ubiquitous use of cellphones.

Silence makes us uneasy, but we have forgotten that silence can be therapeutic for the body and the spirit. As Rabbi Shimon remarks that he was raised amongst the wisest of men, and that he “found nothing better for a person than silence” [Pirkei Avot 1:17]. Silence is actually good for you. That congregation abstained from food and drink for over 24 hours, but their ten-minute abstinence from talk was the exclamation point that gave spiritual emphasis to that holy day. A little silence goes a long way. (Adapted from Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, *Tales Out of Jerusalem*, Feldheim, 2010, pp. 119-122)

## PART G. PRAYER

Our efforts to reach our goals are accompanied by prayer to request that God assist us. We conclude the Amidah (Silent Prayer) three times daily with the hope that we can meet the ongoing challenge of improving our speech.

### 1. End of Amidah – Request for Divine protection to speak properly.

My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully ...

אלקי נצור לשוני מרע ושפתי מדבר מרמה...

## PART H. TORAH STUDY

Torah study is the foundation of Jewish life. One goal of Torah study is to learn how to refine our character. Furthermore, a mitzvah is the way to concretize Torah learning – it expresses and maintains the wisdom one absorbs through Torah study. Therefore, as with any mitzvah, an essential way to help us improve our speech is to study Torah, which will help us to understand the significance and follow the guidelines of proper speech.

### 1. Mishnas Rabbi Aharon, Vol. I, p. 34 – Observance of the mitzvot is dependent upon Torah study.

All of our wisdom, recognition of our faith, and the observance of the commandments are dependent on Torah study.

וכל הדעת וההכרה באמונה ושמירת המצוות הכל תלוי בלימוד התורה.



## KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

☞ “Avoid lashon hara? But I’m so used to being the first to know all the gossip!” It might take a many months and even years of work, but it can be done if we:

1. Focus on the positive in others – it is the way of the wise to focus on the positive in everyone, especially since each person is made in the image of God.
2. Develop humility – being humble means that one speaks gently, avoids arguments and is a pleasure to be around.
3. Love others as yourself – just as you wouldn’t want someone speaking lashon hara about you, don’t do it to someone else.
4. Control anger – speaking gently and responding patiently, even for just fifteen minutes a day, will change a person’s speaking habits.
5. See yourself as a soul, not as a body – identify oneself as a soul living in a limitless world, instead of as a body competing for limited resources. When one does this, one is less inclined to criticize someone else’s success.
6. Develop constructive and productive speaking habits, because we are prone to speak lashon hara when engaged in idle chatter. Practice remaining silent if one has nothing positive to say.
7. We pray that God assist us in our ongoing effort to improve our speech.
8. Study Torah in order to help refine one’s character and understand the significance and guidelines of proper speech.

☞ Although these suggestions take effort, they have the power to transform a person’s entire life.

## SECTION III. THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING ONE’S WORD

In the first Morasha class on the Power of Speech we learned how each expressed word has the potential to join with those of God in sustaining the universe. In that context, we can understand the importance of telling the truth and keeping one’s word. We address telling the truth in the Morasha shiur, *Can You Ever Tell a Lie?* Here we will discuss the importance of credibility.

The strength of our relationships with others is built on trust. Breaking one’s word is a breach of that trust and undermines the relationship.

### 1. **Vayikra 19:35; Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 49a – The Torah tells us to keep our word.**

You must not commit a perversion of justice in measuring length, weight or volume. You must have accurate scales, accurate weights, an accurate *ephah* [a volume measure of 43.2 liters] and an accurate *hin* [a volume measure of 7.2 liters].

#### **Bava Metzia 49a**

Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Yehudah says, “Why does the verse specify an accurate *hin*? Surely a *hin* was included in the *ephah* [mentioned earlier in that verse! An *ephah* is equivalent to six *hin*. If the Torah is concerned about the slightest

לא תעשו עול במשפט במדה במשקל ובמסורה.  
מאזני צדק אבני צדק איפת צדק והין צדק יהיה לכם  
אני יקנן אלהיכם.

#### **בבא מציעא מט.**

רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר: מה תלמוד לומר “הין צדק”? והלא הין בכלל איפה היה?

deviation from a large measure such as an *ephah*, is it not obvious that it is also concerned about a deviation from a smaller measure such as a *hin*?!]

Rather, the verse is telling you that your “Yes” must be accurate, and your “No” must be accurate. [I.e. one should keep one’s word. The word *hin* can be read as *hein* which means “yes.” Therefore, when the Torah states “an accurate *hin*” it means that when one says “yes” or “no,” one should make sure that it is accurate.]

אלא לומר לך: שיהא הן שלך צדק, ולאוי שלך צדק!

## 2. **Rabbeinu Yonah, Sha’arei Teshuvah 3:183 – Breaking one’s promise and not keeping one’s word is considered a lack of trustworthiness.**

The sixth category of prohibited falsehood is when one promises to do a favor, and makes his words false by not keeping his word. For after a person promises another that he will do him a favor, and the other person is relying on him to do it, he should not break his promise.

This also applies even when one does not state it as a promise, but simply offers a small favor to a friend. The Sages said that [reneging] shows that one lacks trustworthiness (Bava Metzia 49a). For his friend is relying on him and trusts him, since the gift is small, and it is expected that he will give it.

החלק השישי - המבטיח את חברו להיטיב עמו וישקר דבריו וישים לאל מלתו, כי אחרי אשר אמר להיטיב עמו בלשון הבטחה ובטח בו לב חברו, אין לו לחלל הבטחתו...

וכן האומר לתת לחברו מתנה מועטת, אף על פי שלא הזכיר לשון הבטחה. ואמרו רבותינו (ב"מ מט): כי יש בו משום מחוסרי אמנה, כי לב חברו סומך עליו ובטח בו, אחרי שהמתנה מועטת, כי נתון יתן לו.

There are three ways in which one’s word can be considered a “promise”:

1. If the word “promised” is used.
2. If the word given is for so small a favor that the recipient has no reason to doubt that it will be kept.
3. If one gives his word in a public setting, since people naturally assume that such a commitment will be honored (Rabbi Avrohom Ehrman, Journey to Virtue, p. 92).

For example, one’s word must be kept in the following cases:

- “*I promise to take you to see ...*”
- “*I will take you home.*” (A five-minute drive.)
- At a public meeting: “*I will work on setting up a committee.*”

### KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ☞ The strength of our relationships with others is built on trust. Breaking one’s word is a breach of that trust. If a person is relying on you to fulfill a promise or do a favor, one should not break one’s word.

## EPILOGUE – DON'T EVEN THINK OF TELLING ME LASHON HARA

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Eradicating lashon hara is a collective effort and it's happening everywhere – it's on people's minds, in their homes and in the workplace. Today, there are study groups, classes, organizations, book clubs, symposiums, and international telecasts dedicated to improving our speech. I knock on my friend's door, he's got this sign when entering, "Don't Even *Think* of Telling Me Lashon Hara.!" We are living in momentous times when there is a desire to treat each person with dignity and respect and restore harmony among all Jews. It's something that is transforming the world, as illustrated by the following story:

*There was a funeral recently of a Jewish man who lived well into his eighties. His twenty-one-year-old grandson, who had a very limited connection to Judaism, stood up and eulogized the virtues of his grandfather. He concluded with two of the few Hebrew words he had ever learned, "There's one more thing I want to say about my grandfather, he never spoke any lashon hara."*

*Where did he get that from? He never had a Jewish education. Never went to a Jewish class at university. Oh, he once heard the idea from a relative. It made an impression on him and it resonated. He understood, that after all is said and done, not speaking lashon hara is a legacy worth emulating.*

### CLASS SUMMARY:

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#### IF LASHON HARA IS SO BAD, WHY DO PEOPLE CONTINUE TO SPEAK IT? WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF LASHON HARA?

Most people aren't familiar with the root causes of lashon hara, and therefore find it difficult to stop speaking it. There are six common causes:

1. A negative attitude toward others
2. Arrogance, which causes us to look down on others
3. Hatred toward others
4. Being angry
5. Harboring jealousy toward others
6. Excessive empty talk, which leads to lashon hara

#### HOW CAN WE AVOID SPEAKING LASHON HARA? HOW CAN WE CREATE HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ASSOCIATES?

We can focus on rectifying the above causes of lashon hara by the following six corresponding antidotes:

1. Developing a positive attitude toward others
2. Developing humility that reflects in your attitude and behavior
3. Loving your neighbor as yourself – treating others as you would want to be treated, i.e. with respect
4. Controlling anger
5. Viewing oneself as a soul; all Jews are interconnected with a unique mission and we are in this world to help one another reach our potential
6. Develop constructive speaking habits and recognize that silence is golden.
7. We pray that God assist us in our ongoing effort to improve our speech.
8. Study Torah in order to help refine one's character and understand the significance and guidelines of proper speech.

### IF OUR CHATTING INVARIABLY LEADS TO LASHON HARA, WHAT RECOURSE DO WE HAVE?

Before a conversation starts, prepare a mental list of neutral topics to talk about with this person – travel plans, the weather, sports, etc. When you see the conversation moving toward lashon hara, tactfully interrupt with one of these topics – it may sound awkward, but it can be done! Also, avoid asking questions about certain people that are likely to elicit negative comments.

### WHAT ABOUT IF I'VE TRIED TO STOP SPEAKING LASHON HARA AND IT DIDN'T WORK?

A different course of action and plan of improvement may be required since every person's personality is different. After trying to focus on the positive in others and being more humble, other methods might be required to improve further, such as: avoiding idle chatter, keeping silent if there is nothing positive to say, and studying Torah to sensitize ourselves to this issue. Finally, seeing oneself as a soul living in a limitless world, instead of as a body competing for limited resources, means one is less inclined to bad-mouth someone else's success.

### I'M ALWAYS ASKED TO BE INVOLVED IN MANY ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS BY MY FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY. I ALWAYS SAY "YES," BUT I CAN NEVER HONOR ALL MY COMMITMENTS; WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Keeping one's word is a serious matter. For those commitments you've already made, tell the other people if you're unable to keep them, rather than simply letting them down. Regarding future commitments, say clearly, "I will only try, but I'm not committing" – that way, they have the option of choosing someone else. Better yet, practice choosing fewer commitments and keeping your word.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

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*Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day* (concepts and laws of proper speech), Rabbis Shimon Finkelman and Yitzchak Berkovits (ArtScroll/Mesorah, 1995)

*Guard Your Tongue*, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin (Pliskin, 1975)

*Journey to Virtue: The Laws of Interpersonal Relationships in Business, Home and Society*, Rabbi Avrohom Ehrman (ArtScroll/Mesorah, 2002)

*Successful Relationships at Home, at Work and with Friends*, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski (ArtScroll/Mesorah, 2003)