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PARSHAS MATTOS-MASEI

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE GIFT OF SPEECH

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Part I. Words Matter

Rav Shkop's Vort

I remember, fifty nine years ago, I was listening to a *shiur* from Reb Shimon Shkop, the Grodno *rosh yeshivah*. He was admired, Rebi Shimon Shkop; his *sefer* Shaarei Yosher was admired greatly and he was in America then. It was almost sixty years ago but I remember it like yesterday. He was standing and saying – he was a beautiful man, Reb Shimon Shkop; he was like a prince with a big white beard and he was saying, “Vos iz de *pschat in a neder*? What does a *neder* mean?” It means, how does it work?

So he said a *neder* is a *tefillah*, a prayer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He should bestow an *issur* on this object. I remember he was saying it so beautifully, so clearly. You're *davening* to Hashem that He should make this and this thing forbidden to you. And Hashem listens! That's the idea here!

The words that come out of your mouth are so important, so impactful, that Hashem acquiesces and something that was permitted to you is now *ossur mideOraysa*. Because of your words it becomes forbidden to you *min haTorah*.

A Powerful Vort!

Now how it works exactly, all the details, you have to sit and study Mesichta Nedarim. You have to learn the technicalities, the *lomdus*. It could be that others understand it differently, that it's not a prayer, that it's something else. But however it works, whatever the mechanics are, what we see is the power of a person's speech; how powerful is the mouth of a human being.

That's what the *possuk* tells us in this week's *sedrah*: ... 'איש כי ידר נדר לה' – ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה – *If a person will take a vow to Hashem ... whatever comes out of his mouth he should do* (Bamidbar 30:3). Instead of 'according to all that he said' it says 'according to all that came forth from his mouth' in order to emphasize the importance of opening the mouth to speak. Of course, the Sages learn from this expression that a *neder* is not affected by thinking but by speaking. But at the same time we are also being made aware of the weightiness of the words that a person says with his mouth. Here you are, a little man on this little earth, and you open your little mouth and it has the greatest of ramifications. It's remarkable the effect that a person's words have.

Guard Your Tongue

Everyone knows the principle of *אל תפתח פה לשטן*; we are warned not to open our mouth to speak of bad things happening (Brachos 19a). That's a Torah principle; a Jew always speaks of happy things. He won't speak of dangerous possibilities unless he adds a prayer to Hashem, "*Hashem yishmirenu*" or "Hashem forbid".

For example, a man shouldn't say to his wife, "If one of us dies, then I'm going to Eretz Yisroel to settle." It's a *goyish* way of speaking. Or to say like a boy asked his *rebbe* when they were learning Bava Kama; he said, "Rebbe, if an ox would gore you, how much would the owner have to pay?" Jews don't talk that way. It's the Torah way, to be careful with what is *יוצא מפיו*; not to verbalize unfortunate scenarios.

But the question is why? What does it matter if I said those words? So you'll think maybe that it's not respectful, it might hurt a person's feelings. It's true, it's a good *pshat*, but that's not the whole story. Because from our Sages, from stories in the Gemara, we see it's more than that; we see that

it's because *your words might come true*. Your words are so powerful that they might cause it to be.

Now, of course, that's a concept that is foreign to our minds – it's just words, we think – but we have to sit at the feet of our Sages and listen to them. And they're telling us that a person's words are very powerful; so powerful that they reverberate and have an effect on the universe.

Back to Basics

Now, to understand that we have to go back to the foundations of Torah. That's the rule, by the way. If you want to understand things in this world it's important to refer back to the fundamental principles at the beginning of the Torah. And one of the great principles, one of the greatest, is the creation of 'The Speaking Man'.

You remember when Hakadosh Baruch Hu made man, how He did it? **וּפַח בְּאַפִּי נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים** – Hashem blew into his nostrils the breath of life (Bereishis 2:7). The 'breath of life'? What's that? It can't mean that He gave man the ability to live because it doesn't say that by animals and they also have life. Hashem didn't breathe into the nostrils of horses. He didn't breathe into elephants. And they're alive anyhow. So you must say this procedure was something beyond the mere gift of life.

The Living Word

What was the result of Hashem's breath? **וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** – *Man became a living spirit (ibid.)* And the Targum says it means a **רוּחַ מְמַלְלָא** – *man became a spirit capable of speech*. You hear that? The uniqueness of man, the greatness that he achieved when Hashem blew into him the 'living spirit' was the gift of speech. He can talk! Nobody can talk in this world except human beings.

Don't believe the fools, the academicians, who try to foist on us their childish fantasies; how over many eons we 'learned' how to speak and that monkeys can do it too only they're a little behind yet. It's as silly as could be! First of all, they don't have the machinery. We have a complicated voice box, the larynx, that's made especially for speaking. And our teeth and lips and tongues are assistants to the larynx; they're especially made to function in tandem with the voice box.

If a man *chas veshalom* lost his larynx in an operation, his lips won't help him. His teeth and tongue won't help him. The lips and the teeth and the tongue are only assistants to the larynx. And so man was created from the beginning with a voice box to be able to speak. The larynx of the monkey was made to grunt and hoot, that's all.

The Gift of Speech

But more than that, Hakadosh Baruch never blew into them the **רוח ממללא**, the spirit that makes us capable of speech. It's not merely that a man learned how to use his lips and his tongue and his palate and his teeth to express certain things that used to be mere grunts. No; it was the *ruach* of Hashem that made him a *ruach memalleluh*, a speaker. And it happened that way so that we should understand that it is words that make a man. We'll see soon that your words are your ticket to greatness.

Only that it's such a powerful tool, such a dynamic implement, that we have to study how to use it. It's dangerous otherwise. That, by the way, is why we don't thank Hashem every morning for speech. You know, we thank Him for our eyes. We thank Him for the ability to walk. We thank Him for the fact that we are able to stand up. Why don't we thank Him for talking? We should say *baruch atah Hashem Elokeinu melech haolam meisiach ilmim*.

The Gift of Dynamite

The answer is we *should* make such a *brachah* but because it's such a powerful gift, it's also the most dangerous. It's like dynamite; if you'll give dynamite sticks into the hands of *shotim*, it's big trouble. People who don't understand the subject so for them talking is one of the biggest calamities. When they get to the Next World they'll wish they had been incapable of speech like the monkey.

It's a fact that most suffering in the world is a result of talking. Wars are fought because of words. All the fights going on in the homes are because of talking. Murders are committed because of talking. How many people became sick because of their mouths? How many became blind because of their mouths? How many died young? The mouth is the cause of all emotional disturbances.

And therefore although the mouth deserves a very big *brachah* – it's one of the greatest blessings – however we are forced to postpone that *brachah*. In the Next World you'll be able to thank Him – after you see that you succeeded. But in this world we have to be reminded, 'Be on guard! When Hakadosh Baruch Hu created you, He gave you a most powerful tool. So powerful because it came from His breath!'

Divine Speech

That's what we are learning as a foundation of Torah. Man is not just a speaker. He's a Divinely created speaker! And that's why his words are so weighty, so powerful. We have no idea of the measure of the profundity and the sublimity of a human being's words. They reverberate forever.

Now don't think it's such a surprising thing because actually, in the physical world it reverberates forever. You know that? Sound energy goes out into space and it lasts forever. Only it becomes so dissipated you can't measure it anymore. But if you had the right instruments even if you'd be standing way up in the Andromeda, way past the solar system, you could measure those sound waves. It might be very faint, diffused, but it's there. It's scientifically true.

Now, I'm just saying this example to be *mekarev el haseichel*. But now we come back to the bigger truth because a person's words are tremendously more powerful than even the sound waves. Because not only in the sense of physics is it true that the energy of your word doesn't go lost, but also in the sense that it's forever in a spiritual sense. A man's words are tremendously more powerful than the sound waves. The fact that they travel out into space forever, that's only a *marshal* for what your words are actually, for how powerful they are.

Now that's a very big doctrine. It's such a tremendous principle that it's hard for us to assimilate. It's difficult to think such thoughts because we live with *gashmiyus* and so we tend to forget the *yesodos haTorah*. But that's what we learn in Torah; that the creation of man meant the creation of a man whose words are most powerful – words that reverberate in very many ways.

Part II. Words Make Man

External and Internal Effects

Now, when people speak about the power of speech it's usually discussed in the sense of its effect on others. They'll talk about *lashon hara* and *onaas devorim*; they'll talk about words of anger and not being *פותח פה לשטן*. They'll talk about its positive effects too; about speaking kind words, encouraging words, and giving blessings to our fellow Jews. That's how the power of words is generally understood – the effect it has on others.

And all of that is very important, absolutely, but tonight I wanted to speak about something else, something even more important than that. And that's about how your words affect yourself; how *you are made* by your words. Like someone once made a play on words about the *possuk* in this week's *sedrah* that we began with: *ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה* – *What comes out of your mouth, makes you*. It's a play on words but the idea is true. By means of words, of *dibbur*, a person is capable of bringing out from within him or her an almost infinite greatness.

A Breath of Great Air

I'll explain that. You remember, we said earlier that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu created Man by breathing into him, He gave him the power of speech. But it's more than that because you know when you breathe into somebody, you're breathing what your breath is. If you have onions on your breath, you're breathing onions into him. If you have some sweet flavor in your breath, you breathe a sweet flavor into him. **מֵאֵן רִנְפָח מִדִּילִיָּה נֶפֶח** – *When a person blows, he's blowing from inside, from himself.*

So what does it mean that He blew into man the soul? Hashem has a breath? The Ramban says that it means that He blew from His wisdom into man. And he quotes a *possuk* on this: **כִּי הָשֵׁם יִתֵּן חָכְמָה** – *Hashem gives wisdom, מִפִּי וְרָעַת וְהִבֹּנָה* – *from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding* (Mishlei 2:6).

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu breathed something of Himself, man became possessed of Divine wisdom. Not like we think if a person tries to learn, Hashem helps him gain wisdom. No, we're not talking about wisdom that can be imported from the outside. We're talking about a native fountain of wisdom, something that's already there inside him.

The Wisdom of Attitudes

Now, when we say 'wisdom' it doesn't mean a man has inherent knowledge of logarithms. It doesn't mean he has the inherent knowledge of how to repair a television set. It's not talking about that. The fundamental wisdom that is deeply seated in a man's mind means the wisdom of attitudes, all the Torah principles and ideals.

In a man's mind there is an Awareness of Hashem. How much? A tremendous amount! There is *ahavas Hashem* in a man's mind. How much? An endless amount! There's a deep well of *bitachon*, of *emunah*, of understanding Hashem's ways, of *ahavas Yisroel*. All of the ideals that we came into this world to accomplish – the ideals we speak about right here all the time – are inside you. **מִיָּם עֲמוּקִים עֵצָה בִּלְבַב אִישׁ** – *There are deep waters of wisdom within a man that seek to guide him, וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָתוֹ יִדְלָנָה* – *and the discerning person draws it forth* (Mishlei 20:5). Hashem breathed it into you but it's up to you to actualize it. You need to lower a bucket and bring it up.

And the best way to draw forth all of the greatness that Hashem breathed into us is by means of the *koach hadibbur*, the power of speech that He blew into us. That's why it was given as one package: When Hakadosh Baruch Hu blew from Himself the potential for infinite greatness, along with that 'breath' came the power of speech. Man became a **רוּחַ**

ממללא, the one creation capable of speech, because it's speech that helps you bring forth your greatness and to accomplish in this world.

Discover Life

In Mishlei it says **לְמַצְאֵיהֶם הֵם חַיִּים** – *The Torah is life for those who discover it* (Mishlei 4:22). That means if you search, you'll discover Torah; you'll find within yourself these principles. And it's more than principles, knowledge. You're finding life.

It's a tragedy that some people never think about achieving these attitudes. You'll say 'Awareness of Hashem' and they look at you with a blank face. Gratitude to the Creator? A blank stare. *Ahavas Hashem*? It doesn't register. If they're polite they'll nod, yes, yes. But they're not doing it. Nodding, agreeing, is not enough. We have to work on discovering these attitudes because those who are **מְצַאֵיהֶם**, who find them, they're finding life.

But on this the Gemara says **אל תקרא למוציאם** – don't read 'for those who find it', **אלא למוציאיהם** – instead; 'for those who utter them with the mouth' (Eiruvim 54a). If you want to find these Torah attitudes, thinking is not enough. You have to verbalize them.

Now, the Gemara is telling us not that the thoughts are unimportant. Oh, the thoughts are very important! Like the *Chovos Halevavos* says, **רוב ההפסד והתיקון** – most of the injury that a man accomplishes in his life and most of the achievements that he accomplishes in his life are by means of his thoughts. Thoughts are supreme!

Talk Yourself Into Greatness

But now we are listening to the Gemara and it's telling us how to sharpen our thoughts, how to give life to them. **חַיִּים הֵם לְמוֹצִיאָהֶם** – *If you say it with your mouth then it's life!* Your ideas become alive. And because you are what you think so you become alive.

Speaking is the perfection of your mind because when you bring your thoughts forth in the form of speech it sharpens the thought. It brings the ideal into focus and it becomes that much clearer. And you hear it too! That makes an impression because instinctively your conscience reacts; your *seichel* says yes. **נִכְרִים דְּבָרֵי אֱמֶת** – The words of truth are recognized because they find an echo in your mind and in your soul.

And so the *koach hadibbur*, that's the great implement for achieving perfection in life, for accomplishing great things in life. The Torah is given to you to verbalize the highest aspirations of life and to build up in your mind the most noble ideals.

Talk Yourself Into Love

Now, this *eitzah* is good for all the Torah ideals that we seek to acquire. Suppose you're ambitious to love your people. Isn't everyone? It's that time of the year so we read about it, we think about it a little. Very good. But we have to do something too! *Ahavas Yisroel* is included in the innate wisdom that was breathed into us but now you want to draw it forth.

The first step is to say, "I love my people, Yisroel."

Don't think it's silly. It's silly to disregard it because this is the way you train yourself.

You never said it once in your life? You know after a hundred and twenty years when your time is up and you'll come to the Next World, they're going to ask you, "Did you love your people?"

Attaining True Love

So you'll hem and haw. You'll scratch your head. "One time I was sitting in a shul in Flatbush and I heard someone speaking about it." You don't remember what happened after that.

No, that's not going to be a good *terutz* and so you have to get busy speaking. Say it constantly and put in as much emotion as you can. It's Tuesday afternoon, you're walking on the street, or you're eating breakfast Monday morning; say, "I love my people." Say it until your eyes flow with tears.

Try that. You'll see; the words will bring forth feeling. Your eyes begin to flow with tears of emotion. "I love my people. I love my noble people. I love my holy people. I love my people." Again and again. Say it constantly. And little by little, *המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור* – your thoughts begin to follow your words. Little by little, it enters your mind. You become an *oheiv Yisroel*. Not overnight but you change; gradually it changes you from the inside out.

Every Word, An Inch

Of course, you have to beware. Like we said, it's a very powerful tool, the mouth. I once saw a woman standing in the street talking to her friend. Nearby was her baby in a baby carriage. The baby was climbing out of the carriage, falling over. The mother got so angry. She ran over to the baby, picked her up, and said, "I would kill you for that!"

Of course she didn't kill her baby. She won't. But these words are a destruction of her *neshama*. Just to say, "I would kill you," – you don't mean it but the words make a *hashchasa*. They ruin your *neshama*.

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Up till now, she was a million miles away from killing her baby. Now she's a million miles and one inch less, one inch closer to killing her baby.

"One inch," you'll say, "What does that mean?"

It means she's not the same person anymore.

Inching Towards Greatness

But we want to inch closer in the opposite direction, towards perfection. And once you understand that this is one of the most effective ways of changing yourself, new vistas, wide panoramas, suddenly are opened up before you. Because what you say becomes what you think.

Just verbalizing *Hashem echad*. Verbalizing *Hashem hu haElokim*. Oh, that's a good idea! You can't say it in Hebrew? Say it in Polish. Say it in Russian. *Hashem hu haElokim!* Hashem is G-o-d! *Hashem Elokei Yisroel* – Hashem is the G-o-d of Yisroel!

We know all these great truths by instinct but if you don't formulate them in your mind and then say it with your mouth so life passes by and the opportunity goes lost. It's only by dint of constantly drawing forth these great Torah ideals – the living waters of *da'as* – from ourselves, eventually a man can become extremely great. The great metamorphosis that we want to make in our minds, in our character, we'll accomplish most easily by means of our words.

Part III. Words Make Man Great

Unnatural Greatness

Now, the subject tonight means I'm going to have to repeat what I once said on a previous tape and that's as follows: We cannot be natural if we want to succeed. If you want to be aware of Hashem, if you want to trust in Him and love Him and love His Torah you must be artificial.

A natural person won't love anything except food and other things of the body because 'natural' means superficial; it means that you never brought forth any wisdom from within. To become something you have to talk yourself into it; that's how you bring it forth. That's how you learn to love Hashem. That's how you learn to love the Torah. That's how you learn to be aware of Hashem. That's how you learn to love kindness and to love your fellow Jews. By means of the *koach hadibbur* you become a new person.

Hishtadlus in Bitachon

Every day we read the following *possuk* in our *davening*: ואמרו הושיענו אלוקי ישענו - Say "Help us, the G-d of our salvation" (Divrei Hayamim 1 16:35). Now the question is why does it have to say "And say"? It should say הושיענו - Help us! That's where the sentence should begin. Why does the sentence begin with אמרו - And say? What's that preface for?

And the answer is he wants to teach us how important it is not to keep the thoughts bottled up in your mind. Those words are beautiful! 'Help us, the One Who brings us salvation'. So noble, so inspiring. But if they remain just a thought, it won't have the effect it could. If you have a noble idea, let's say the idea that you should trust in the salvation of Hashem, then be sure to say it. *Imru!* Say these words! Vocalize them and they'll change you.

So let's say you are trying now to succeed in a business venture; you're meeting with a customer and you want him to make an order with you. Or maybe you're going for an examination to pass a test or an interview for a better position; whatever you're trying to do. And let's say in your heart you're intelligent enough to think "It's in the Hand of Hashem. It's all *beyad Hashem*. Despite my efforts I need Your help Hashem." So you're thinking that. Very good.

Say It!

But that's not enough. That's only the first step. So why don't you go one step further and open your lips and actually say it? That's what he's telling us, ואמרו - Say it.

Now, if people are around and they're not supposed to hear it - let's say your wife will maybe ridicule you if you say that; she doesn't come here so she doesn't know what you're doing. Or maybe you're in the office and the people there will look at you. They'll start tapping their heads when they see you.

So get up and walk out in the corridor where you're alone and say the words. Say it! By vocalizing these words you're taking that thought and making it that much firmer in your mind. The previous thought is changed now and becomes real by saying it.

It doesn't mean it'll happen immediately but the way you talk, little by little will give life to your ideals. If you don't say it with words it becomes stifled eventually in the mind; but if you verbalize it so your words bounce back into your own ears and that changes you.

Words of Love

Now, this *eitzah* is good for all the Torah ideals that we seek to acquire, that we *have* to acquire. Suppose you're ambitious to love Hashem. After

all, it's a commandment of the Torah to love Him. We say it every day, morning and evening. But how do you fulfill it?

So train yourself to say the right thing. You know, in the *mezuzah* it says, **וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ** – *you should love Hashem*. So why not do it. When you pass a *mezuzah* – I'm telling you now something that's worth money; it's worth a thousand dollars to hear this – when you pass a *mezuzah*, stop and say, "I love You, Hashem." Will you do it? I hope so because if you say nothing, you remain nothing. You kiss the *mezuzah*? Very good but it's not enough. Say, "I love you, Hashem." And little by little, that love becomes part of your thoughts. You'll begin to love Hashem.

Love Learning

What about loving His Torah? It's an important ideal that a lot of people are unaware of. You have to love the Torah. You have to train yourself to love the Torah. **אֲנִי אֹהֲבִי אֹהֶב** – *The Torah says, "I love those who love me"* (Mishlei 8:17).

Here's a yeshiva man who spends all day long in the yeshiva learning the Torah. Excellent! The yeshiva men, they're the pride of our nation. The working men who learn in the morning before work, and then again in the evening, they too. The Torah learners, those are the ones we look up to.

But do they love the Torah?

So he says, "It's silly. Sure I love the Torah."

And it's true, he does. But he never brought it to life! He's learns Torah – why? Maybe because it's an obligation; he wants to do what's right. Or he's ambitious; that's also good. And deep within him there's *mayim amukim* of *ahavas Torah* too, no question about it. But how does he best bring it forth, that's the question.

The answer is by saying it. Start saying it. Whenever you open a *sefer*, in the yeshiva, wherever you are, say, "I love the Torah." Constantly. "I love Mesichta Bava Kama." "I love Hashem's Torah." You're walking to the *beis medrash* to learn with your *chavrusa*? Say it! "I'm going now to learn because I love the Torah." And little by little, the love of the Torah begins to take shape in your mind.

Pleasure or Pain?

And then it becomes a pleasure to read the Torah. You're in love with it. That's why on Tisha B'Av when you can't eat and you can't bathe, you're not allowed to study Torah either; because it's a pleasure. People today are surprised. What's the pleasure of learning Torah? On the contrary, just like we fast on Tisha B'Av we should also force ourselves to learn too. We afflict ourselves by learning Torah.

The answer is, because we don't understand. Torah is a pleasure. It's really a pleasure. And once you start saying it, you'll realize it's so. You'll open the Gemara and it's as if it's printed not on paper but on pages made out of cake. And the margins would be chocolate icing. Imagine that; it could be, if you could have a good baker, he could print, let's say, *arba avos nezikin* on a cake page. And while you're learning from time to time, you take a little munch from the side. Not from the *osiyos*, but from the side, the margin. You can be sure that it would be an enjoyable *shiur*. That's how it is when you talk yourself into loving the Torah.

One More of Thousands

Now, I only said a few examples but actually there are thousands. I would say 'hundreds of thousands' but you won't understand – you'll think I'm exaggerating – but actually it's so because in a person's mind there is an endless store of Torah idealism.

I can't resist so I'll say one more before I let you go. 'שמחו צדיקים בה'! All of you righteous people – it means all *frum* Jews – *be happy in Hashem!* (Tehillim 97:12). It means to be actually happy *קדשו והודו לזכר קדשו* – *and grateful to the One Who is giving us the gifts of this world* (ibid.).

A Happy Soul

Everyone has a deep store of happiness within him and the *frum* Jew has to draw it forth. There's a deep well of happiness in us, but it's bottled up. In a person's mind there is an endless store of happiness; that's included in *ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים*. It's right here, inside you. There are thousands of things to be happy about only that you have to prime the pump. And we do that with the *koach hadibbur*.

Let's say for example that you like the sunshine. Instinctively, you do; everyone has a reflexive reaction of happiness when the sun shines. Like it says, *ומתוק האור* – *How sweet is the light*, *וטוב לעיניים לראות את השמש* – *how good it is, how pleasant it is, for the eyes to see the sunlight* (Koheles 11:7).

Negligible Returns

But because you ignore it, your enjoyment is negligible. You only have a minimal pleasure, maybe like the pleasure of a cat sitting on the sidewalk and basking in the sun. It has very little effect on you.

But let's say you have the good sense to use this lesson we're speaking about now. As you're walking down the avenue you decide, "Maybe I should finally try that thing Rabbi Miller was speaking about, about using the power of speech that Hakadosh Baruch Hu blew into me."

Happy Bathing

And so you begin speaking. Not only do you formulate in your mind how beautiful it is to see the sunlight, but you say it with your mouth too: “How much fun it is, this cascade of gold that is pouring down on me.” You’re bathing in it; you’re actually bathing in it. “How sweet is the sunlight! How good it is to be bathing in this warm light!” Oh, that’s something different altogether! So now, because you’re speaking about it, the pleasure increases a hundred fold.

And it’s like that with all the pleasures of life. Breathing and walking and seeing and everything. If you train yourself with the right *chinuch* to say it with your mouth too, then the happiness becomes much greater. You start enjoying life much more than otherwise! And like all the other Torah attitudes, you begin to live them.

And the more people begin to understand how valuable the tongue is, what a great opportunity it is to bring forth the greatness that’s in you, to develop the beautiful qualities that are hidden within you, the more you’ll live life to the fullest. You don’t need big money. You don’t need a big brain or big bank account. All you need is a tongue. A tongue and the knowledge that **בכל היצא מפיו יעשה**, whatever you speak about, that’s what you’ll become.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let’s Get Practical

Utilizing the Gift of Speech

One of the lessons we learn from the mitzvah of *nedarim* is the great power of speech. Speech is the defining characteristic of man, the *ruach memallehuh*. The power of using words to change who I am for the better is too valuable of a tool to leave unutilized, especially during this time of the year when we have to focus on increasing our *ahavas Yisroel*. Every day this week I will *bli neder* work on making myself into an *oheiv Yisroel* by saying that I love my people. Three times every day I will take a half minute to repeat again and again “I love Your people, Hashem” and put thought into it as I say it.

This week’s kuntress is based on tapes:

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QUESTION

Was the Beis Hamikdash destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred, among *frum* Jews?

ANSWER

No, there's no *sinas chinam* among the Jews. Don't let anyone tell you that. The *sinas chinam* the Gemara talks about means the causeless hatred of the type that comes from Avneri, the representative of *toeivah* in the Knesses today. He hates decent Jews. The communists there too, or the Mapai, they hate the Jews. That's the *sinas chinam*; but decent Jews don't have *sinas chinam*.

In the times of the Beis Hamikdash it wasn't Shamai and Hillel and their *talmidim* who had *sinas chinam*. It wasn't the Pharisees and the multitudes of the *frum* Jews who were their followers, who were the problem. The *sinas chinam* was from the Tzedukim and the Notzrim. They hated the Sages and the *frum* Jews who sided with the Sages. And it was because they were Jews, it was their *sinas chinam* for which the Jewish nation suffered. I understand that even some well-meaning writers and speakers have attempted to apply the accusation of baseless hatred to the *frum* Jews at the time of the *churban*, but it's a serious error.

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