



## הרב הראשי הרב מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת מאור ישראל, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, וסניף סימנר בית יעקב  
החדש, ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
Chief Rabbi of Elad MORDECHAI MALKA, Israel Founder & President Institutions "or Hamelech"



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### Parashat Vayelech – Shabbat Shuvah

#### Take Words With You

In the *haftara* for *Shabbat Shuva*, the *Navi* Hoshea states (14:2-3), "Return Israel to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in sin; Take words with you and return to Hashem; say to Him, 'May you forgive all sin and accept good, and my our lips take the place of bulls.'"

Rashi explains this to mean that instead of the sacrificial offerings we were to have offered before You, take the words of our lips instead as an appeasement.

#### Questions:

- 1- The question begs to be asked: What is the *Navi's* intention when he says, "Take words with you and return to Hashem?" What does this mean? The commentators explain that the *pasuk* is referring to *viduy*, man's confession of his sins. Nevertheless, this is still difficult, for nowadays, people recite *viduy* by rote, without feeling. If so, how can these words constitute a *teshuvah* that will reach Hashem's Throne of Glory?
- 2- Furthermore, the *Yerushalmi* (*Berachot* 1:2) teaches that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said, "If I was at Har Sinai, I would have asked for two mouths, one mouth to speak Torah and one mouth for mundane things. It is inappropriate for Torah to be spoken with the same mouth that one uses for mundane things, [and we should] distinguish between holy and profane. This leads us to ask: We know that the *halacha* forbids one to perform the mitzvah of sounding a shofar with a cow's horn. This is so, even though the cow constitutes a mere accessory for the mitzvah of blowing the shofar. How much more so, therefore, if man's mouth is sullied by sin, that it should be unfit to sound the shofar!

#### All of Man's Toil is for His Mouth

We will begin by mentioning the Zohar's teaching regarding the words of Shlomo Hamelech (*Kohelet* 6:7), "All of man's toil is for his mouth." The Zohar (*Shemini* 41b) teaches that this *pasuk* refers to when man is judged in this world and retribution is meted out. The Zohar states that man's judgment and his eventual suffering are all on account of his speech – this is the intent of Shlomo's words that man's toil, i.e., his suffering, is "for his mouth" – because of sins committed by improper speech [this idea is also echoed by the *Menorat Hameor* (*perek* 18)].

#### The Seriousness of Lashon Hara

We must be especially careful in avoiding *lashon hara* – speaking negatively about others. The Gemara in *Erachin* (15b) says that the severity of *lashon hara* is greater than the three worst sins - murder, adultery, and idol worship. The *Chafetz Chaim* writes in his introduction, that a person can come to transgress 30 commandments if he regularly speaks *lashon hara*. Moreover, the *malach* told the *Beit Yosef* (*Maggid Mesharim Parashat Vayakhel*) that when a person speaks *lashon hara* about his fellow, the speaker's



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merits are taken away from him, and the sins of the one he spoke against are given to him instead. This is completely true. If a person would know this, he would send the person who speaks ill about him a present of gold and silver. The *Sefer Chovot Halevavot (Sha'ar Vav)* says the same idea. It relates the story of a pious man who heard that somebody had spoken ill of him, and so he sent his defamer a present. When questioned about his strange behavior he said, "This person sent me a present – his merits, so I am sending him a present as well."

### If Someone Speaks *Lashon Hara* His Prayers are not Accepted

The *Shelah* writes that it is known that whoever contaminates his mouth and his tongue with forbidden speech, all his Torah and prayers are also defiled. His Torah and prayers are therefore not allowed into the presence of Hashem. Instead, he receives a punishment because of them. This is similar to somebody who brings a present to a king and puts his gift inside a container full of disgusting things. Certainly, the king will be furious with him. Since this is the case, how can a person get up and pray to Hashem on these awesome days, when his mouth and tongue are defiled much like the disgusting container brought to the king? *Rachmana litzlan*, he will certainly be punished for presenting such a gift (prayer) to Hashem. Therefore, to give his prayer the ability to be accepted, a person is obligated to make sure that his mouth is clean from all impurity.

### True Story

I read a true story about one of the elderly Rebbes of the generation. When he was lying ill with what would eventually be his final illness, he was connected to a respirator and other devices. Rosh Hashanah came along, and it had always been his custom as well as that of his ancestors, to lead the *Mussaf* prayer on that day. He was brought to the *beit haknesset* on his sickbed. He requested his attendant to call one of his *chassidim* and asked that the mask he was wearing be removed. He told the *chassid* that *he* would be the *chazzan* this year instead of him. But then he told him, "You should know that I am accustomed to begin my Rosh Hashanah preparations already from Shavuot. How do I prepare myself? By guarding my mouth so that it be fitting to offer prayers to Hashem; for an impure mouth that is not guarded from speaking forbidden words is not fitting to offer prayers to Hashem! Therefore guard your mouth and then the prayer will be accepted."

### The *Navi's* Advice: "Take Words with You"

According to this, we can understand the *Navi* Hoshea's words, "Take words with you and return to Hashem, for you have stumbled in your sin." His intention is to advise man to make use of the greatest means available after he has sinned and needs atonement. The advice is to overlook other's wrongdoings and say that he forgives all those who hurt him. Hashem will act measure for measure and forgive him.



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### Story About the *Divrei Emet*

The son of the *Divrei Emet*, R' David Becher zt"l was soon to be married. On the evening of the wedding, R' Becher hired a wagon driver to transport them to the hall. However, the wagon was moving slowly, and the *Rav* therefore suggested that he drive faster, as they were waiting for him to conduct the *chuppa* ceremony. However, the wagon driver did not heed the *Rav's* words. After being ignored time and time again, the *Rav* remarked derogatorily, "How much longer will this go on, you simpleton? How much longer will you ignore me telling you that it's late?" The wagon driver was offended, but indeed drove faster, and they arrived at the wedding on time. Following the *chuppa*, the *Rav* asked where the wagon driver was, but he was told that he had already left. He immediately requested that another wagon driver be hired. He requested the driver to drive speedily so that they would catch up to the first driver. They caught up to him, and the *Rav* asked forgiveness for what he had said. He asked him to understand that that he had been under pressure to perform the *chuppa*, and he had asked him to drive faster a number of times. Nevertheless, he was now asking for forgiveness. Yet the driver refused. He tried to implore him to understand that he had left his son's wedding to request forgiveness from him, but it did not help. He offered even to appease him monetarily, but to no avail. He then asked him what he had to do to earn his forgiveness. The driver replied that he would be willing to forgive the *Rav* only if he would give him half of his share in the World to Come. The *Rav* immediately agreed, and signed a contract to that effect. The driver then forgave him. Anyone who hears this story will certainly be astounded how the *Rav* was willing to forgo half of his share in the Coming World, because of a few words that he had uttered. But this is indeed how grave a sin it is to even slightly offend another. It is so severe that he was willing to relinquish half of his share in the World to Come.

### Words of Mussar

We have learned just how much each individual is required during these days of mercy and *selichot* and especially during the *Aseret Yimei Teshuvah*, to merit a favorable verdict and a *gmar chatimah tovah* on Yom Kippur. A great way to merit this is by purifying his mouth and guarding it carefully during this period. He should try to use his mouth to speak only good, until he gets used to speaking in such a fashion. Then he will have a mouth that is fitting to present an offering to Hashem in the form of prayer, and it will be accepted mercifully and favorably. If an individual does not lower his mouth's level of holiness, he merits that every word he utters is fulfilled. Then we will all merit having our prayers answered, and we will be inscribed and sealed for a good and peaceful life.

Shabbat Shalom and *Ketivah V'chatima Tovah*,

Rav Mordechai Malka