



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Matot

HAMELECH

You Are What You Speak

When a man takes a vow, he must follow through with what he says. We see from here the tremendous power of speech. When Hashem made man and blew into him a soul, man became a "speaker" (Targum Onkelos, Bereishit 2:7).

Come to think of it, it is really remarkable how man moves around his lips and tongue as he exhales and thereby creates sounds which communicate messages to fellow human beings.

Shlomo Hamelech (Mishlei 27:21) teaches that a man is measured according to his praise. Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 3:148) explains this to mean: Look at what he praises and how he praises. If he praises the good and righteous, he himself is good and righteous. One who speaks well of the wicked and their treacherous deeds is himself evil and desecrates Hashem's Name.

Just One Word

Sometimes, all it takes is one word to build or to destroy. Wise people know how to use their tongue to speak softly and draw others closer to their Father in Heaven.

People tend to avoid those who speak harshly and angrily. No one wants to get anywhere near them.

Shlomo Hamelech informs us that life and death are in the hands of the tongue (Mishlei 18:21).

The tongue is like an arrow, only worse! An arrow can only fly about ninety feet, but a tongue can kill from a much further distance.

On Tisha B'Av morning, we read from Yirmiya (9:7): Their tongue is a slaughtering arrow, it speaks deceitfully. With his mouth, he speaks in a friendly fashion to his peer. But on the inside, he is setting up for him a trap!

Rabban Gamliel asked his servant Tavi to buy good food. He bought tongue. He asked him to buy bad food. He also bought tongue. Rabban Gamliel asked for an explanation. Tavi said: The tongue – when it's good, nothing is better. When it's bad, nothing is worse.

There was once a man who had a dream that all of his limbs were arguing who was the most important. In the end, the tongue proved itself, how it got everyone in trouble and eventually got them out of it.

Please Pass the Milk

Sometimes people jump to conclusions and spread rumors which could put someone out of business! Listen to this! Someone once publicized that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l disapproved of a certain hechsher on milk. Word spread and everyone stopped buying from that company.

The owners came to Rav Moshe and asked what the issue was. Rav Moshe said that he never said a word against them.

Finally, the story came out that someone saw Rav Moshe pick up a milk carton and then



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immediately, he put it down and picked up a different one, which happened to have a different hechsher. He drank from the second one.

An onlooker inferred that Rav Moshe disapproved of the hechsher on the first. The truth was that the first carton was empty! So he took the other one! Oy! What a mistake! And to publicize it and harm one's business!

Bein Hametzarim

Bein Hametzarim is a special time to focus upon watching what to say. The Arizal splits Bein Hametzarim into two parts: Tamuz and Av. Tamuz has 13 days of Bein Hametzarim which equals 312 hours. That equals שבי since Eisav took these days captive. Av has nine days of Bein Hametzarim which have 216 hours. The last four hours of Tisha B'av already have a geulah aspect to them. That leaves us with 212 hours, equaling דבור or speech. This teaches us that the churban resulted from improper speech, dating all the way back to the meraglim.

Additionally, there are 22 days of Bein Hametzarim, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Alef-Bet, which are the basic elements of speech. Shla"h Hakadosh says that tefillah is more readily accepted when it emanates from a mouth which speaks properly.

Rav Chisdai Almoshenino was the Rav of Tituan, Morocco. He performed great miracles. He attributed this to his caution in regards to Shemirat Halashon.

A Dollar Per Word

The Chafetz Chaim once visited Moscow and met with a businessman. The Chafetz Chaim's son-in-law, Reb Hirsh Levinson, was preparing a telegram. He tried to minimize the wording, as each word costs money. The Chafetz Chaim saw that his conversation with the businessman was headed towards danger-zone – lashon horah! So he pointed out how careful Reb Hirsh is to count each word when he knows that it will cost him!

Building a Gadol HaDor

When Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer came to Volozhin as a young bachur to learn by the Netziv, he felt very out of place. His clothing was all torn and worn while the other bachurim had decent-looking clothing. The Netziv tried to raise his spirits and when Reb Isser Zalman asked a question, the Netziv praised him profusely. Later on, an older bachur, Reuven Zelig Bengiss came over to Reb Isser Zalman and repeated how impressed the Netziv was with him.

Rav Bengiss went on to become the Rav of Yerushalayim. Reb Isser Zalman relocated to Yerushalayim and remained forever indebted to Rav Bengiss. Reb Isser Zalman claimed that only because of Rav Bengiss' words of encouragement did Reb Isser Zalman remain in Yeshivah!

We see how words can build and strengthen!

Let's use our words for good!

**Shabbat Shalom,
 Mordechai Malka**