



# CLEAN SPEECH UK

PROMOTING POSITIVE SPEECH



RESOURCES



SCHOOL SYLLABUSES



STARTING 21st MAY

# THE CLEAN SPEECH PROJECT UK

Enhancing The Way We Communicate



CONTENT



SOCIAL MEDIA



COMMUNITY



[www.cleanspeech.co.uk](http://www.cleanspeech.co.uk)

Clean Speech UK is a collaborative project of GIFT and Seed promoting positive speech, through the lens of Jewish wisdom.



# Seed

Life tools for Jewish families

# TEEN SHAVUOT STUDY GUIDE

**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



A SPECIAL EDITION DISCUSSION BOOKLET AND STUDY GUIDE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**STUDY GUIDE 1:  
6-19**

**STUDY GUIDE 2:  
20-32**

**STUDY GUIDE 3  
33-45**



# THE NUMBERS:

**100,000,000,000**

**NUMBER OF WHATSAPP  
MESSAGES SENT EVERY DAY**

**23,000,000,000**

**NUMBER OF TEXT MESSAGE  
SENT EVERY DAY**



**655**

**WORDS PER MINUTE SPOKEN BY THE  
WORLD'S FASTEST TALKER  
(FOR COMPARISON, IN THAT LAST BIT OF  
GODZILLA EMINEM RAPS  
AT 450 WORDS PER MINUTE)**

**6,000**

**NUMBER OF TWEETS  
TWEETED PER SECOND**

**54 HOURS, 4 MINUTES**

**LONGEST CONTINUOUS  
PHONE CALL**

## **CAN YOU THINK OF...**

- ...any celebrities who have said things that ruined their career?
- ...any politicians who have had to apologise for things they've said?
- ...any cases of libel or slander that went to court?

## **OUR USE OF SPEECH:**

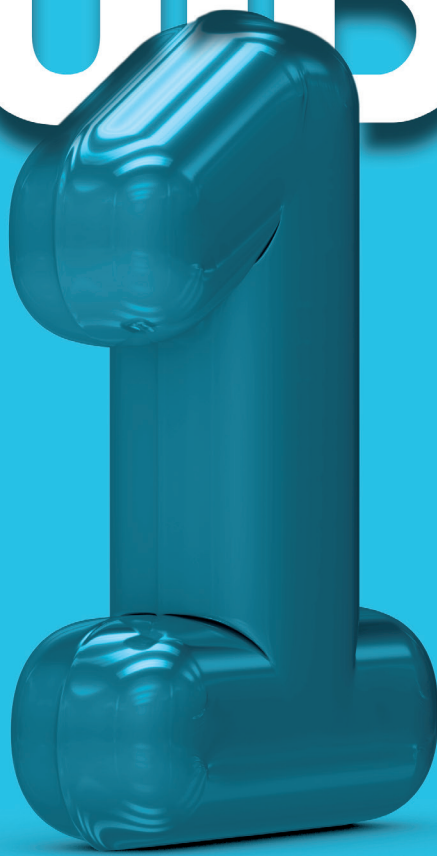
We use our words and speech to:  
communicate information,  
make friends,  
understand other people,  
interact with the world,  
ultimately, to express ourselves.

This gives speech a very prominent position in our lives – what are we doing to make sure we don't misuse the power of speech?

## **CONCRETE CONCEPTS:**

- 1.Speech is one of the most powerful tools in existence.
- 2.There are many different types of 'bad speech'.
- 3.Judaism has a view of 'clean speech' that promotes God-consciousness

# STUDY GUIDE



SHAVUOT  
5783

## Chag Sameach!

Welcome to this study guide and discussion booklet specially designed for this year's Clean Speech Project. There are three topics in total, this being Topic 1 which is aimed at older years. Each three can be read in isolation or in conjunction; if the latter, then the arc is as follows:

First, we begin with the power of speech. Then, we see how bad that can be when that power is misused and abused. Finally, we conclude with both the converse of Topic 2, and the lofty goal of the status of language discussed in Topic 1 – that of using language to promote God-consciousness.

Within each topic, there are subheadings to take you through the topic. Each subheading has a core idea, some sources to learn through, and then a question for further study and an activity. The questions should help prompt you to think beyond the sources, and about what they might signify. They are also a suggested discussion topic, to discuss with your group. The activity may either encapsulate the idea under discussion, or just be a fun game with obvious connection to the subject matter at hand.

Use this resource either directly with your participants or by reading through it yourself to help run the activities and discussions contained within this. For any questions in advance, or to give any feedback, please contact Ben at [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org).

Happy educating!

Ben Rothstein,  
Chinuch Worker  
Bnei Akiva UK





## TOPIC 1:

# SPEECH HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN

### Starter Discussion:

Jane is ordering a new dress for Shavuot. This will be the fifth parcel to arrive from ASOS, having sent the other four back as they didn't look good on her when she tried them on. When the dress arrives, Jane is with her friend Linda. Jane tries on the new dress and is thrilled with it; the fit is perfect and it falls just the way she wants – or so she thinks. Linda has never seen a more hideous dress in her life! Jane tells Linda that she's going to keep it, and she's so happy that she's found it in time for Shavuot. She asks Linda what she thinks of it...What should Linda say? Should she lie about what she thinks, or tell her the truth?



# SPEECH AND HUMANITY



## IDEA:

**THE HUMAN IS THE PINNACLE OF CREATION,  
ASSIGNED WITH THE POWER OF SPEECH.  
THIS EPITOMISES HUMANITY.**

## SOURCES:

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח  
בְּאַפָּיו נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

'And the Lord God formed the adam, dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils a soul of life, and the adam became a living soul (Bereishit 2:7).'

Onkelos writes on the words 'living soul' - וְהָיָה בְּאָדָם לְרוּחַ - מִמְּלַלָּא 'it became in the adam a speaking soul.' Similarly, the Kuzari defines the highest 'type' of creation as the 'speaking' type.

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

Why would Onkelos equate 'living' with 'speaking'? Why is speech considered the pinnacle of creation?

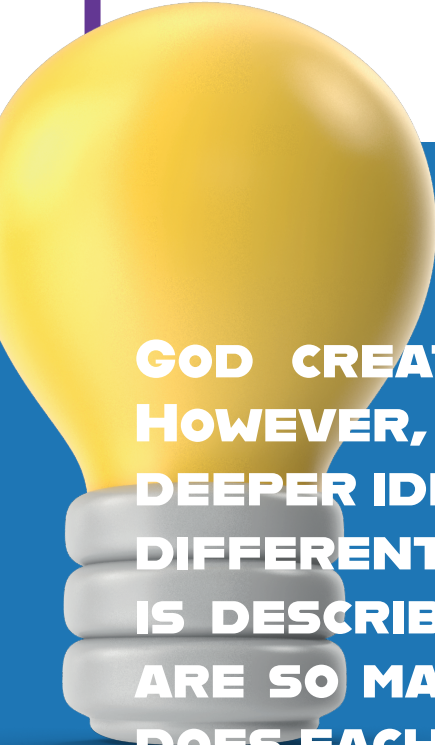


Have participants arrange themselves in order of date of birth, or alphabetically by surname, etc. without speaking. Then have them arrange themselves based on something else, e.g. shoe size, but able to speak. Use the comparative ease with which the second task was carried out to show the power of speech, and how to conducive it is to interpersonal relations (but don't get too conducive - #towerofbabel).

**ACTIVITY:**

## **SPEECH AND CREATION:**

### **IDEA:**



**GOD CREATED THE WORLD THROUGH SPEECH. HOWEVER, THAT IS JUST A METAPHOR FOR A DEEPER IDEA. IN THE SOURCES BELOW, WE'LL SEE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT GOD'S CREATIVE SPEECH IS DESCRIBED. CAN YOU WORK OUT WHY THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS? WHAT DOES EACH ONE MEAN?**

## SOURCES:

**בַּעֲשֶׂרָה מְאָמְרוֹת נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. וּמָה תִּלְמוּד לּוֹמֵר, וְהֲלֹא בְּמֵאֶמֶר  
אֶחָד יִכּוֹל לְהִבְרָאוֹת, אֲלֵא לְהַפְרֵעַ מִן הַרְשָׁעִים שְׂמֵאֲבִדִין אֶת  
הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בַּעֲשֶׂרָה מְאָמְרוֹת, וְלִתֵּן שָׂכָר טוֹב לְצַדִּיקִים  
שֶׁמְקִימִין אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בַּעֲשֶׂרָה מְאָמְרוֹת:**

'The world was created with ten statements (ma'amarot). What does that teach me? Surely it could have been created with one statement! Rather, it is to punish the wicked who destroy the world which was created with ten statements, and to reward well the righteous who validate the world which was created with ten statements.' (Avot 5:1)

Yirmiya 23:29

**הֲלוֹא כֹה דְבַרִי כְּאֵשׁ נֹאמֶה וּכְפֶטִישׁ יִפְצֹץ סֶלַע:**  
Is my word not like fire, says Hashem, and like a  
hammer that smashes rock?

Yeshaya 55:10-11

**כִּי כְּאֲשֶׁר יֵרֵד הַגֶּשֶׁם וְהַשֶּׁלֶג מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמָּה לֹא יָשׁוּב כִּי  
אִם־הִרְוָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהוֹלִידָהּ וְהִצְמִיחָהּ ... כֵּן יִהְיֶה דְבַרִי  
אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּי לֹא־יָשׁוּב אֵלַי רִיקִים כִּי אִם־עָשָׂה אֶת־אֲשֶׁר  
חָפְצָתִי:**

For as the rain and snow fall down from heaven, and do not return there without fertilising the land, causing it to yield and sprout... So shall be My word which comes out of My mouth – it shall not return to me empty-handed without doing that which I desire.

Tehillim 33:6, 9

בְּדִבַּר הַשָּׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָּל־צַבָּאָם:  
כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד

With the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the wind of his mouth all their host. For he spoke – and it was. He commanded – and it stood.

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

What do you make of the similes above? What do they convey about the type and qualities of the divine word?



Activity: Come up with some words or sentences that can have two completely different meanings, such as 'What field are you in?'. Have you ever been misunderstood that way? Similarly, can you think of any puns that play on the fact that words can have multiple meanings?

**ACTIVITY:**

Print off (see Page 18 & 19) or write down a number of different quotes from the berakhot before the Shema and Pesukei Dezimra that discuss God actively creating/speaking to us. Hand one out to each participant and ask them to write down (or just think if it's Shabbat) what they would reply to God! He's speaking to you, what will you say back? If you had a two-minute conversation with God, what would you talk about?

# WHAT IS GOD'S SPEECH?

## IDEA:

**CREATIVE SPEECH, OR λόγος [LOGOS] HAS TWO CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES:**  
**PLATO [GREEK]: GOD'S SPEECH CREATES IN THE CONTEXT OF A PRE-EXISTING ORDER.**  
**PHILO [HEBREW]: GOD'S SPEECH CREATES THE ORDER ITSELF. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CREATION TO US, AND WE CAN RESPOND.**

## SOURCES:

Bereishit 1:4

**וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ**

'And God separated between the light and the darkness.'

Tefilla

**הַמְחַדֵּשׁ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּכָל־יוֹם תְּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית**

'[God] renews the acts of creation, in His goodness, every single day.'

**יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ**

'[God] forms light and creates darkness.'

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

There are some VERY significant theological corollaries that stem from how you view creative speech (i.e. Plato vs. Philo). Can you think of any? To start you off, what does this mean about the creation of the universe?

What about 'metaphysical structures'? Or 'Can God make a rock that's too heavy for Him to lift?' (Stupid question if you ask me... but no one did, so I'll keep shtum.)

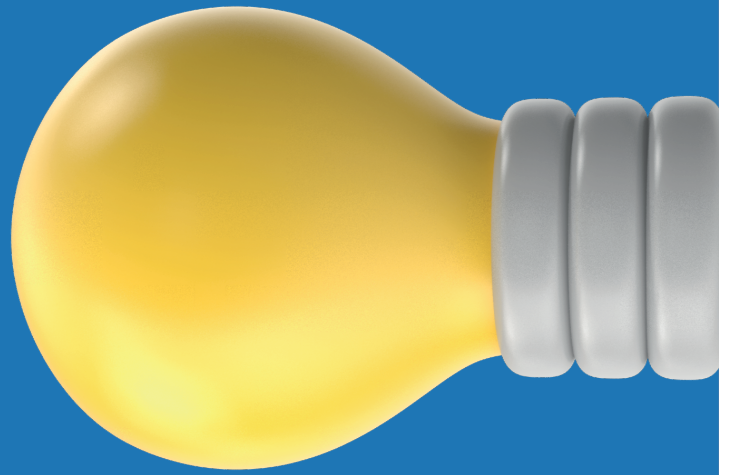


Sit participants in a circle. Ask them to go around and come up with something that doesn't exist, e.g. a pink elephant, (make it quickfire so no one can come with anything too complex).

Afterwards, explain that saying things like 'pink elephants' is not really creating anything new – they just took 'pink' (pre-existing) and combined it with 'elephant' (pre-existing). This reflects Plato's view of creative speech. Next, ask the participants to think for a minute and come up with something that no one else in the room could have thought of. E.g., Gila says 'A proton with four quarks.' Rafi could not have thought of that, as he does not know particle physics. This is similar to Philo's view of God's creation, in which He creates the reality as He speaks it.

**ACTIVITY:**

# HUMAN CREATIVE SPEECH:



## IDEA:

**HUMANS ARE ENDOWED WITH SOMETHING AKIN TO THE POWER OF GOD'S SPEECH/CREATION! SPEECH HAS A MASSIVE CREATIVE, AND THEREFORE ALSO POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE, POWER. WE, WITH OUR SPEECH, CAN IMITATE GOD'S POWERS WITH HIS SPEECH. WE CAN CREATE A REALITY.**

## A DEEPER LOOK:

This idea is expressed in the very first command: 'let there be light'. The pasuk reads:

**וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי אֹר**

There are two separate leining notes on the two words 'let there be' and 'light', but there is just one note for the two words 'and there was light'.

This attests to the absolute simultaneity between God's word and creation, for His word IS creation.

## SOURCES:

Mishlei 18:21

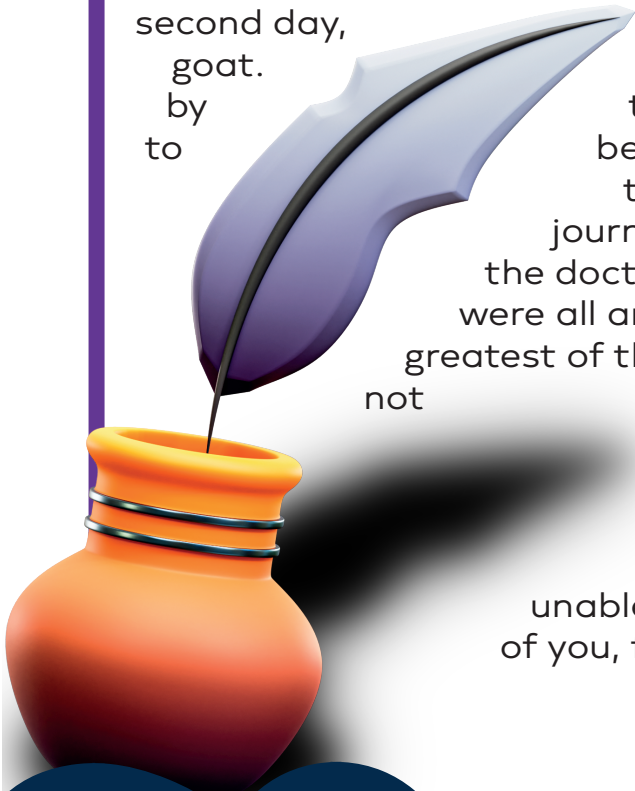
מֹת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד לָשׁוֹן

Death and life are in the hand of the tongue.

## MIDRASH SHOCHER TOV

**A story occurred** regarding the King of Persia, who was close to death and very weak. The doctors said to him, 'There is no cure for you unless someone can bring you the milk of a lioness, and you drink it until you recover.' He sent a message to King Solomon, with lots of money, and Solomon immediately called Benayahu ben Yehoyada. Solomon said to him:

How can we find milk of a lioness? Benayahu replied, 'Give me ten goats.' He and the king's servants went to a lion's den where there was a lioness suckling her cubs. On the first day, Benayahu stood from afar and threw down one of the goats, and the lioness ate it. On the second day, he drew a little closer and threw another goat. He did the same on each successive day, and by the tenth day he was close enough to the lioness to be able to draw milk from it. He returned and gave the milk to the king's messengers, who began the journey back to their king. However, on the way back, the doctor had a dream. In the dream, the doctor's limbs were all arguing with each other. The legs said, 'we are the greatest of the limbs, for were we not to walk, the body could not bring the milk to the king!' The hands said, 'we are the greatest of the limbs, for were we not to feel, we could never take the milk!' The eyes said, 'We are above all of you, for were we not to see the way, you would be unable to go anywhere!' The heart said, 'I am above all of you, for had I not given the advice to get the milk, you would not have been of any use at all!'





The tongue said, 'I am better than all of you, for were it not for speech, what could any of you do?' All the other limbs replied to the tongue, 'You live in the dark and you have no bones! How can you be like us?' The tongue said to them, 'Tomorrow you declare that I rule over you.' When the man woke up, he remembered the dream and kept it in mind, and continued to the king. He went in to see the king, and said 'Here is the dog's milk you asked for, so that you can drink it.' Immediately the king grew angry and ordered that he be hanged. As he was being carried out to the gallows, all his limbs began to shake. The tongue said to them, 'Didn't I say to you today that you have no substance? If I save you, will you concede to me that I rule over you?' They said 'yes', and immediately the tongue said to those hanging him 'Return me to the king!' They returned him to the king and he said: 'Why did you command to hang me?' The king replied, 'You brought me the milk of a dog!' The doctor replied 'What do you care? I called the 'lioness' a 'dog', this will still work!' The king took the milk, drank it, and was healed. All the limbs said: 'Now we accept that you rule over all the limbs' (Midrash Shocher Tov).

### **BEYOND THE SOURCES:**

Can you think of any situations where you have said something that had a drastic effect, and wished you could take it back? Has your speech ever created an unpleasant 'false reality' for someone? Was that reality ever shattered?



Play 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 with the above story! For those who don't know, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 is a game where you begin with five actors assigned different roles in the above story. A narrator reads through the story and they act it out. At the end of the scene, the audience votes one of the actors off and then votes to give their part to one of the remaining four chanichim. Act out the story again, and repeat the voting off until you're left with one person acting the whole story themselves!

**ACTIVITY:**

# CONVERSATION-STARTERS WITH GOD

## SOURCES:

יוצר אור ובורא חשך

He forms light and creates darkness

הַמְחִידֵשׁ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּכָל־יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

[God] renews the acts of creation, in His goodness, every single day.

בורא יום וְלַיְלָה גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר

He creates day and night, revolving the dark and light.

וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה

He separates between day and night.

# CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH GOD

## הַמְכֶסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים הַמְכִּין לָאָרֶץ מָטָר הַמְצַמֵּיחַ הָרִים חֲצִיר

[God] who covers the heavens with clouds, prepares dew for the land, and makes mountains sprout grass. actions the land is sated.

## הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֶג כַּצֹּמֵר כַּפּוֹר כַּאֲפֹר יִפֹּזֵר

He puts out snow like a fleece, scatters frost like ashes.

## הַמְשַׁלַּח מַעֲיָנִים בְּנַחְלִים בֵּין הָרִים יְהַלְכוּן

[God] sends springs through valleys, between the mountains they go.

## מִשְׁקָה הָרִים מֵעֲלִיּוֹתָיו מִפְרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ תִשְׂבַּע הָאָרֶץ

[God] waters the mountains from His upper stores, from the fruit of His actions the land is sated.

# STUDY GUIDE



# SHAVUOT 5783



## TOPIC 2

# DIFFERENT LEVELS OF BAD SPEECH

### Starter Discussions:

Abi and Sam are hosting Shavuot lunch. Sam invites their good friend Gideon to join them, and adds that he is thinking of inviting another guest, Josh. Upon hearing this, Gideon has a sinking feeling – he was at a shabbat meal with Josh a year ago, and ALL Josh talked about the whole meal was leshon hara! Should Gideon tell Sam and Abi this, to prevent them hearing his bad speech? Would that itself be leshon hara? After all, maybe Josh has improved his speech since Gideon last saw him! What would you do? If you were on a WhatsApp group and one person insulted someone, would you call it out? Do you think people's speech has got better or worse because of social media?

# PEDDLING STORIES



## IDEA:

**THE FIRST LEVEL OF 'BAD SPEECH' IS REKHILUT, WHICH MEANS 'PEDDLING'. SOMEONE WHO SPEAKS REKHILUT IS LIKE A PEDDLER, WHO COLLECTS WARES FROM ALL AROUND AND BRINGS THEM TO DIFFERENT PLACES TO GIVE TO PEOPLE.**

## SOURCES:

אִיזָה הוּא רְכִיל--זֶה שֶׁהוּא טוֹעֵן דְּבָרִים וְהוֹלֵךְ מִזֶּה לָזֶה  
וְאוֹמֵר כֶּךָ וְכֶךָ אִמַר פְּלוֹנִי, כֶּךָ וְכֶךָ שִׁמְעַתִּי עַל פְּלוֹנִי  
אִף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא אוֹמֵר אֱמֶת, הֲרִי זֶה מַחְרִיב אֶת  
הָעוֹלָם.

What is a rakhil? One who carries matters and travels from here to there, saying 'Such-and-such said this person', 'I heard such-and-such' about this person'. Even though what he is saying is true, such a person destroys the world. (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, De'ot 7:2)

הוֹלֵךְ רְכִיל מְגַלֵּה סוֹד וְנֶאֱמַר רוּחַ מְכַסֶּה דְבָר:

One who goes as a rakhil reveals secrets, but one of faithful spirit covers matters. (Mishlei 11:13)

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

A peddler does not just give something out – they get something in return too. What do you think a rakhil/rekhila is getting in return for the information they give? How might they feel, being the source of so much?



Begin with a game of 'I went to the shop and I bought...'. Participants sit in a circle and take it in turns to say 'I went to the shop and I bought X'. After they finish, the next person must open with 'I went to the shop and I bought X' and then add their own item.

Play continues until someone cannot remember everything in the correct order, at which point they are out of the game. After one round, change the title to 'I went to the shop and I heard that...'. Each person must make up a short statement about someone (fictional). It can be positive or negative, such as 'I went to the shop and I heard that Erica got a new car.' Play continues as above. Use this to convey the idea of the peddler/rakhil.

**ACTIVITY:**

# REKHILUT – CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES



## IDEA:

**REKHILUT IS THE RELAYING OF ANY INFORMATION – GOOD OR BAD. NO MATTER THE INTENTION, PASSING ON INFORMATION IS PROBLEMATIC; IN THE WRONG HANDS, IT CAN HAVE DISASTROUS EFFECTS. IN THE FOLLOWING SOURCES, WE'LL SEE SOME OF THE EFFECTS REKHILUT COULD HAVE.**



## SOURCES:

Mishneh Torah, Deot 7:1

א הַמְרַגֵּל בְּחֵבְרוֹ--עוֹבֵר בְּלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "לֹא-תִלְךָ רְכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ" (ויקרא יט, טז). וְאִם עַל פִּי שְׂאִין לֹקֵחַיִן עַל לֹא זֶה, עוֹוֹן גָּדוֹל הוּא וְגוֹרֵם לְהִרְגַּנְךָ נְפֹשׁוֹת רַבּוֹת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל; לְכָךְ נִסְמַךְ לוֹ, "לֹא תַעֲמִד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ" (שם). צֵא וּלְמַד, מֵה אֵרַע לְדוֹאֵג הָאֶדוֹמִי

One who peddles stories regarding his friend transgresses a negative commandment, as it says 'Do not go peddling [stories] among your people' (Vayikra 19:16). And even though one does not receive lashes for this violation, it is a great corruption and causes many deaths among the Jewish people; therefore next to it in the pasuk is 'Do not stand upon the blood of your friend'. Go and see what happened with Doeg the Edomite!

As some background, Shaul is persecuting David who briefly took refuge in Nov, a city of kohanim. Shaul asks where David is, and Doeg tells Shaul:



Shemuel I, 22:9, 18-19

ט וַיַּעַן דֹּעַג הָאֶדְוִמִי, ... וַיֹּאמֶר: רָאִיתִי, אֶת-בֶּן-יֵשׁוּ, בֶּא נְבָה,  
אֶל-אֲחִימֶלֶךְ בֶּן-אֲחִטּוּב... יַח וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְדוּיַג (לְדוּאֵג), סָב  
אֶתָּה, וּפָגַע בַּכֹּהֲנִים; וַיִּסָּב דוּיַג (דוּאֵג) הָאֶדְוִמִי, וַיִּפְגַּע-הוּא בַּכֹּהֲנִים,  
וַיָּמַת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׁמֹנִים וְחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ, נָשָׂא אֶפֹד בָּד. יֵט וְאֵת נָב  
עִיר-הַכֹּהֲנִים, הִכָּה לְפִי-חֶרֶב, מֵאִישׁ וְעַד-אִשָּׁה, מֵעוֹלָל וְעַד-יוֹנֵק;  
וְשׁוֹר וְחֲמֹר וְשָׂה, לְפִי-חֶרֶב.:

And Doeg the Edomite answered, ... saying 'I saw the son of Jesse come to Nov, to Achimelekh the son of Achituv'... And the king said to Doeg, 'You besiege [Nov], and attack the kohanim.' And Doeg the Edomite besieged the city, and he attacked the kohanim, and he killed on that day 85 men, bearers of the linen apron. And [as for] Nov, the city of kohanim, he smote by the sword, man and woman, baby and child, ox, donkey and sheep, by the sword.

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

Can you think of any situations in which you have inadvertently given over a piece of information that has had vast ramifications? Whom do you think suffers the most from misplaced information – the person who tells it, the person who hears it or the person about whom it is said?




Take a look at the following news samples:  
Example 1: Leaked Covid Messages  
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64823096>)

Discuss what you think the impact of these leaked messages were. Does the public have a right to know these things? What about Isabel Oakeshott, the person who leaked them? How does the release of this information affect her, Matt Hancock and the general public?


## Matt Hancock: Eight government WhatsApp Covid messages revealed

© 2 March

 Coronavirus pandemic

### 1. 'What a bunch of absolute '

After congratulating the then education secretary Sir Gavin Williamson on delaying A-level exams for a few weeks - a shorter period than some teaching unions called for - Mr Hancock had some choice words.

On 1 October 2020, Mr Hancock messaged Sir Gavin: "Cracking announcement today. What a bunch of absolute  the teaching unions are."

Sir Gavin replied: "I know they really really do just hate work."

In response, Mr Hancock returned two laughing out loud and a bullseye emoji.

### 2. 'I WANT TO HIT MY TARGET'

Mr Hancock texted his old boss George Osborne, ex-chancellor and then-Evening Standard editor, on 28 April 2020 to "call in a favour" asking for a favourable front page, as he tried to reach his own deadline to reach **100,000 daily Covid tests**.

Mr Osborne replied: "Yes - of course - all you need to do tomorrow is give some exclusive words to the Standard and I'll tell the team to splash it."

After replying with a quote, Hancock later writes in capital letters: "I WANT TO HIT MY TARGET!"

The editor answered bluntly: "I gathered."

In another interaction, on 9 November 2020 Mr Hancock asked for an explanation about Mr Osborne calling for Boris Johnson to make testing his number one priority and insisted: "OK but mass testing is going very well."

"No-one thinks testing is going well, Matt," Mr Osborne replied.

ACTIVITY!

# LESHON HARA

## IDEA:

**EVEN THOUGH REKHILUT IS SO BAD, AND IT DESTROYS THE WORLD AND CAUSES MULTIPLE DEATHS, LESHON HARA IS EXCEEDINGLY WORSE. LESHON HARA CAN PERMANENTLY TAINT THE WAY YOU VIEW SOMEONE OR SOMETHING. IN THE FOLLOWING SOURCES, WE'LL SEE MANY STATEMENTS OF OUR RABBIS ABOUT THE BAD EFFECTS OF LESHON HARA.**



## SOURCES:

Mishneh Torah, Deot 7:3

ג יש עוון גדול מזה עד מאוד והוא בכלל לאו זה, והוא לשון הרע; והוא המספר בגנות חברו, אף על פי שאמר אמת. אבל האומר שקר, מוציא שם רע על חברו נקרא. אבל בעל לשון הרע--זה שישב ואומר כן וכך עשה פלוני, וכך וכך היו אבותיו, וכך וכך שמעתי עליו, ואומר דברים שלגנאי

There is a corruption that is much much worse than [rekhilut], contained within this negative commandment, which is leshon hara. This is one who tells over the disgrace of his friend, even though he is telling the truth. But one who says something false is called someone who 'brings out a bad name [motzi shem ra]' against his friend. But a master of leshon hara is someone who sits and says 'someone did such-and-such', 'so-and-so were his ancestors', 'I heard such-and-such about him', and says words of disgrace.

## A DEEPER LOOK:

Rambam in Hilkhot Nega'im (the laws of tzara'at) links the requirements of one who is afflicted with tzara'at with what happened to Miriam. He observes that if Miriam – who was older than Moshe, helped raise him, risked her life for him, and did not speak disgracefully about Moshe, but simply made a mistake and equated him with any other prophet, AND Moshe didn't even mind – was nonetheless immediately punished with tzara'at, then how much more so the 'foolish, wicked people' who speak in grandiose ways about others and put them down! 'Someone who wishes to act in the correct way should distance themselves from such people, so as not to be caught in their trap.'

Sota 35a

(Context: After the bad report of the 10 spies)

וְתִשָּׂא כָל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ אָמַר רַבֵּה אָמַר  
רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם עָרַב תִּשְׁעָה בָּאֵב הָיָה אָמַר  
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הֵן בָּכוּ בְּכִיָּה שֶׁל חֲנָם וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֵּעַ  
לָהֶם בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת

'And all the congregation raised their voice and cried.'  
Said Rabba quoting Rabbi Yochanan: That day was the  
eve of Tisha B'Av. Hashem said: They cried for nothing –  
I'll give them something to cry for, for generations!

Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah 1:1

אַרְבַּעַה דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵן נִפְרָעִין מִן הָאָדָם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה  
וְהַקָּרָן קִיָּיֶמֶת לוֹ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְאִילוּ הֵן עֲבוּדָה זָרָה  
וְגִילּוּי עֲרִיּוֹת וְשִׁפְיֹכֹת דָּמִים. וְלִשׁוֹן הָרַע כְּנֶגֶד כּוֹלֵן

Four things are punished for in this world, but the main punishment waits for a person in the next world. They are: idolatry, immorality and murder. But leshon hara is equal to all of them!

Arakhin 15b

וְאָמַר רַב חִסְדָּא אָמַר מַר עֻקְבָּא כָּל הַמְּסַפֵּר לִשׁוֹן  
הָרַע אָמַר הַקָּבִ"ה אֵין אֲנִי וְהוּא יְכוּלִין לְדוֹר בְּעוֹלָם

And said Rav Chisda quoting Mar Ukva: [Regarding] anyone who tells over leshon hara, Hashem says: 'This world ain't big enough for the both of us [lit. I and he cannot live in the same world].'

One explanation of the above is that Hashem sees everything in a person, all the good and the bad, in the full context of that person's life. If someone comes along speaking leshon hara about someone, spreading only the bad, then that is totally incompatible with Hashem's view.

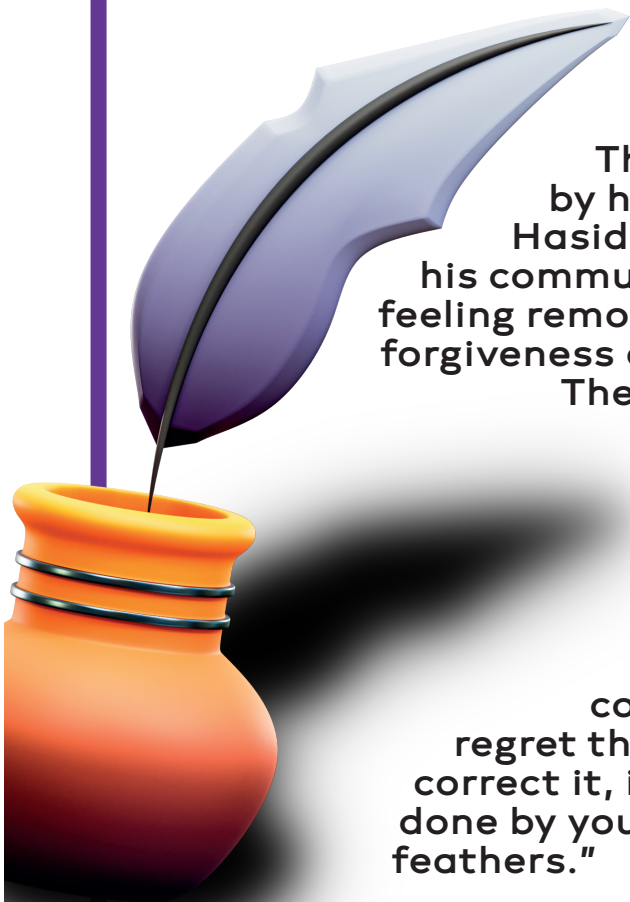
Tehillim 34:13-14

מִי־הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים אֲהֵב יָמִים לְרְאוֹת טוֹב: נֹצֵר  
לְשׁוֹנְךָ מֵרַע וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מִדְּבַר מְרָמָה:

The usual translation: Q: Who is the person who desires life – loving his days, [in order] to see good? A: Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit!

But this pasuk can also be read another way: Q: Who is the person who desires life? A: One who loves their days, seeing the good [in things]!

[Q: And how do we see the good in things? A:] Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit!



## RABBI TELUSHKIN:

The impossibility of undoing damage done by harmful gossip is underscored in a Hasidic tale about a man who went through his community slandering the rabbi. One day, feeling remorseful, he begged the rabbi for forgiveness and said he was willing to do penance.

The rabbi told him to take several feather pillows, cut them open, and scatter the feathers to the winds. The man did so, but when he returned to tell the rabbi that he had fulfilled his request, he was told, "Now go and gather all the feathers." The man protested, "But that is impossible." "Of course it is. And though you may sincerely regret the evil you have done and truly desire to correct it, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it will be to recover the feathers."

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

What effects might leshon hara have on people that are worse than rekhilut? Why do you think leshon hara is equated with the three cardinal aveirot for which one must give up their life rather than transgress? What is a 'master of leshon hara', and how is such a person described – what makes them different from a rakhil/rekhila?



Make a deliberately large mess and have the participants clean it up (in as fun a way as possible!) After that monstrously fun activity, ask them if they think there is such thing as a mess that can't get cleaned up? After that discussion tell them the above story about the feathers.

Act out various pre-determined social situations in front of the participants, who have to vote on whether they think it is leshon hara. If it is, see who can guess whether it is rekhilut, leshon hara or motzi shem ra. (Bonus points for avak leshon hara or ona'at devarim which we haven't covered here!)

**ACTIVITY:**

## **CASE STUDY- WAGATHA CHRISTIE:**

**IN 2019, COLEEN ROONEY PUBLICLY ACCUSED REBEKAH VARDY OF LEAKING HER PRIVATE INSTAGRAM MESSAGES TO THE SUN. VARDY DENIED THIS ACCUSATION AND SUED ROONEY FOR LIBEL. HERE'S A SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOME:**

## Rebekah Vardy has lost her libel claim against Coleen Rooney, bringing an end to the so-called "Wagatha Christie" trial.

In the judgement, released online on the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website, Mrs Justice Steyn said it was "likely" that Vardy's then-agent, Caroline Watt, "undertook the direct act" of passing the information to The Sun newspaper.

"Nonetheless," the ruling continued, "the evidence... clearly shows, in my view, that Mrs Vardy knew of and condoned this behaviour, actively engaging in it by directing Ms Watt to the private Instagram account, sending her screenshots of Mrs Rooney's posts, drawing attention to items of potential interest to the press, and answering additional queries raised by the press via Ms Watt." Mrs Justice Steyn said she accepted that Rooney's post, in which she accused Vardy of leaking stories to a tabloid newspaper, was

"substantially true" and "a matter of public interest" due to "the undesirable practice of information (in the nature of mere gossip) about celebrities' private lives being disclosed to the press by trusted individuals".

However, the legal costs for each side are expected to be upwards of £1m, and even the winner will only recover about 70% of their legal bill, leaving them with around £300,000 still to pay, media lawyer, Jonathan Coad, told the BBC.

The two women, who became friends through their footballer husbands, Wayne Rooney and Jamie Vardy, were at loggerheads over a series of leaks to The Sun.

The case was "a modern-day whodunnit", said Bethany Minelle at Sky News, "complete with warring celebrities, alleged betrayal, social media traction and perhaps the most famous ellipses of the last century".

There are some pretty crazy parts of this story! For example, the fact that Caroline Watt 'accidentally dropped her phone in the North Sea' before anyone could check her messages!

How might these events have played out if the parties had been adhering to the laws of rekhilut and leshon harda? Which halakhic issues arise out of this case? Have a debate to argue the case of both sides!



# STUDY GUIDE



# SHAVUOT 5783



## TOPIC 3:

### GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

#### Starter Discussions:

Joel has been inspired by The Clean Speech Project to try and watch the way he speaks. He resolves that for the first half of the day, he will not speak any leshon hara or speak in an unclean way. But his friends have unfortunately not taken part in The Clean Speech Project this year, and so they aren't being careful with the way they speak. How should Joel navigate hanging out with his friends? Should he tell them about his decision, or will that alienate him from them? Should he leave whenever they start speaking leshon hara?

# LESHON HAKODESH:



## IDEA:

**HEBREW IS CALLED LESHON HAKODESH BECAUSE IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY WORDS THAT DIRECTLY MEAN PHYSICAL THINGS. THIS MEANS THAT TO SAY ANY VERY PHYSICAL THINGS, HEBREW USES A EUPHEMISM. LET'S LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES BELOW:**

## A DEEPER LOOK:

The translation of 'Leshon HaKodesh' as 'Holy Language' is actually incorrect; the word 'kodesh' is a noun, not an adjective (which would be 'kadosh'). It therefore means 'Language of the Kodesh', i.e. the language spoken in the Beit Hamikdash. This ties into our idea at hand because the Beit Hamikdash was the focal point of heightened hashgacha, or providence. Thus it was necessary to speak there in the language that promotes a higher level of God-Consciousness, as we shall see below.

## SOURCES:

Rambam, Moreh Nevukhim III:8

במה שנקרא לשוננו זה לשון הקודש... שהלשון הזו המקודש, לא הונח בו כלל שם לכלי המשגל, לא לגברים ולא לנשים, ולא לעצם הפעולה גורמת ההולדה, ולא לשכבת זרע, ולא לשתן, ולא לצואה, כל הדברים הללו לא הונח להם ביטוי ראשוני כלל בשפה העברית, אלא מכנים אותם בשמות מושאלים וברמזים... ושם הרעי - צואה, נגזר מן יצא ושם השתן מימי רגלים

Regarding that we call this language leshon hakodesh... [is] because this holy language has no noun referring to overly physical activities (for example, there is no word for 'faeces' or 'urine') – there are no terms that are primarily used to refer to these matters in the Hebrew language, but rather one refers to them through borrowed terms and euphemisms...

The noun for faeces is 'tzoah' – from the root יצא, meaning 'that which goes out.'

The noun for urine is 'meimei raglayyim' [lit. 'leg water'].

## Yeshaya 36:12

(Context: The Judean kingdom is holed up in Jerusalem, surrounded by the unstoppable Assyrian army. The people are very quickly running out of food and water. Leading the Assyrian army is ܪܒܫܟܐ (more commonly known as 'Ravshake'), who gives a demoralising propaganda speech directed towards the Jews. King Chizkiya's officials beg him to speak to them in Aramaic to conduct negotiations, and not in Hebrew which everyone can understand. He replies:)

וַיֹּאמֶר רַב־שָׁקָה הֲאֵל אֲדֹנֶיךָ וְאֵלֶיךָ שְׁלַחְנִי אֲדֹנֵי לְדַבֵּר  
אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הֲלֹא עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַיֹּשְׁבִים  
עַל־הַחוֹמָה לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־[צוֹאָתָם] (חֲרָאִיהֶם) וּלְשִׁתּוֹת  
אֶת־[מִיַּי רַגְלֵיהֶם] (שִׁינֵיהֶם) עִמָּכֶם

And Ravshake said: 'Was I sent here to talk to you and your master?! [No!] Was I not in fact sent to address your citizens, stuck inside the siege, who are forced to eat their own [excrement] (faeces) and drink their own [leg water] (urine)!'

Look at the words in the pasuk – the (circle brackets) are what is written in the text, but the [square brackets] are what we read (this is called *keri ukhetiv*). Ravshake spoke in an inappropriate way, using words that we don't, so when we read the story, we substitute the words he used for their euphemisms.

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

Before looking at the next section, why do you think it's important not to use words that refer to physical things? Surely whether you say 'urine' or 'leg water', everyone knows what you're talking about! Why does it matter?



Before Yom Tov, choose a well-known event that your participants will have heard of. Every leader should write a short two- or three-sentence summary of the event, each in their own style.

Then, mix them up and get the participants to read them. They must now match up the description of the event with the leader who wrote it. Use this to show how our language and type of speech indicates who we are and show how our minds think of/frame things differently.

**ACTIVITY:**

## PART 1:



THIS TRAIN  
TERMINATES AT  
GOD, VIA  
CLEAN SPEECH:

## IDEA:

**BY NOT USING WORDS THAT REFER TO OVERLY PHYSICAL MATTERS, I.E. BY USING 'CLEAN SPEECH', WE FREE OURSELVES FROM BEING ENTRENCHED IN GASHMIYYUT/PHYSICALITY AND WE ARE NOW ABLE TO FOCUS ON GODLY MATTERS. THIS CHANGES THE WAY WE PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE THINGS. BY CONTRAST, SPEAKING BADLY DISTANCES YOU FROM GOD.**

## SOURCES:

Mishneh Torah, Tefillin, Mezuzah, Sefer Torah 6:13

וְכָל עֵת שִׁכְנַס וַיֵּצֵא, יִפְגַּע בִּיחוד שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל־הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא--וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶהְבֵּתוֹ, וַיַּעֲזֹר מִשִּׁנְתּוֹ וּשְׁגִיתוֹ בְּהַבְלֵי הַזְּמַן; וַיֵּדַע שֶׁאֵין שֵׁם דְּבַר הָעוֹמֵד לְעוֹלָם וְלְעוֹלְמֵי עוֹלָמִים, אֲלֵא יְדִיעַת צוּר הָעוֹלָם, וּמִיֵּד הוּא חוֹזֵר לְדַעְתּוֹ, וְהוֹלֵךְ בְּדַרְכֵי מִישְׁרִים. אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים, כָּל מִי שֵׁישׁ לוֹ תַּפְלִין בְּרֵאשׁוֹ וּבְזֵרוּעוֹ, וְצִיצִית בְּבִגְדוֹ, וּמְזוּזָה בְּפֶתְחוֹ--מִחֲזֵק לוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא יַחֲטֵא: שֶׁהָרִי יֵשׁ לוֹ מְזִכְרִים רַבִּים; וְהֵן הֵן הַמְּלֵאכִים שֶׁמְצִילִין אוֹתוֹ מִלְּחֲטֵא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "חֲנָה מְלֵאכֵי-הַיָּם סָבִיב לִירְאִיו; וַיַּחֲלֹצֵם"

[By having a mezuzah] every time that one enters of leaves, they will encounter the unity of God's name, and recall His love and awaken from their sleep and foolishness in following the current meaningless popular trends. And [this person] will know that nothing lasts for ever except for God's knowledge, and thus they will return to the straight path. The wise sages said: anyone who has tefillin on his head and arm, wears tzitzit on his garment and has a mezuzah on his entrance is assured of not sinning, for he has many reminders. These 'reminders' are in fact the 'angels' who save a person from sinning, as it says: 'The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear Him, and saves them.'

We can see from the source above that the benefit of mitzvot such as the mezuzah lies in directing a person's thoughts towards God. Similarly, the Hebrew language serves the same purpose:

## **JUDAISM RECLAIMED, P.204**

By limiting references to [physical matters] to euphemism, Lashon Hakodesh [sic] becomes a powerful weapon in the armoury of the Jew who is attempting to make [their] mind "holy," by limiting the [physical] thoughts and imagination which inhibit his intellect from perceiving God and His truths.



**EXTRA SOURCE:  
STAPLETON, BEERS FÄGERSTEN,  
STEPHENS, LOVEDAY,**

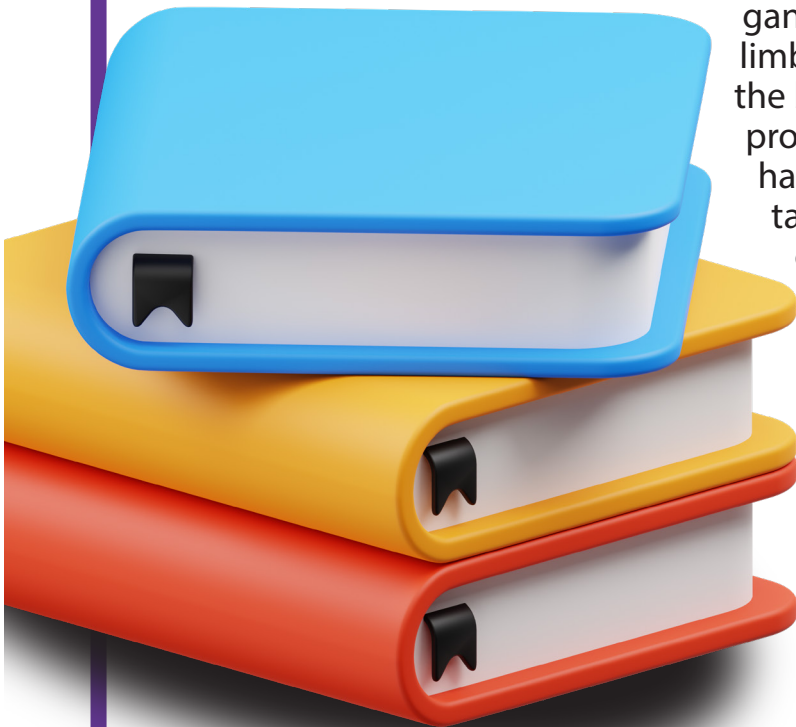
**'THE POWER OF SWEARING: WHAT WE KNOW  
AND WHAT WE DON'T', LINGUA, VOLUME  
277, 2022.**

[I]t is suggested that swearing may be located and processed in different parts of the brain from other speech activities (van Lancker and Cummings, 1999, Harris et al., 2003, Bowers et al., 2011, Vingerhoets et al., 2013, Bergen, 2016, Finkelstein et al., 2016, Finkelstein, 2018, Sulpizio et al., 2019).

The emotionality and/or catharsis associated with swearing suggests that it might activate the basal ganglia, amygdala and other parts of the limbic system; these are deep structures in the brain that play a central role in processing memory and emotion. Thus, it has been hypothesised that swearing taps into an ancient and emotional set of response structures, akin to those involved in recognising and responding to threats (Pinker, 2007, Bowers et al., 2011). Processing in the amygdala/limbic system is automatic and impulsive in nature, is difficult to inhibit, and can remain intact following damage to other areas of the brain (Finkelstein, 2018). In effect, then, swear words might be seen to trigger an evolutionary-based 'fight or flight' response in the individual

(Stephens et al., 2009), which would partly explain why, in laboratory settings, swear words increase attention and recall, generate heightened autonomic or physiological responses, and produce both pain-relief and heightened stamina/strength.

**TL;DR – SWEARING, OR 'UNCLEAN SPEECH', ACTIVATES AN ANIMALISTIC SIDE OF THE BRAIN. AS PART OF ASPIRING TOWARDS TZELEM E-LOHIM, WE NEED TO KEEP OUR HUMAN BRAIN IN CONTROL, USING ONLY CLEAN SPEECH, WITHOUT REVERTING TO ANIMALISTIC SWEARING.**



## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

What other parts of Judaism encourage focus on Hashem? What might be the outcome of making sure that our minds are God-oriented?



Any games that restrict word usage are good for this one. Here are a few ideas:  
**Articulate:** Choose certain words that need to be explained without saying what the word is. Use words that are conducive to the idea at hand – you could even have 'urine' as an example!

**Taboo:** Similar to Articulate, but give three or four other, related words that the person describing also can't say.


**Sausage and Mash:** Print off a famous speech, or famous song lyrics and have the participants take it in turns to read it out/sing the song. Every time they come to a word that begins with the letter 's' they must substitute the word for 'sausage' and every time they come to a word beginning with the letter 'm' they must substitute the word for 'mash'. If they make a mistake they're out, or they pass the paper on to the next person.

Use these games to illustrate the way in which we talk around topics without mentioning certain words – and also show them that it's possible.

# ACTIVITY

# **PART 2: SPEAKING THE BEST IN PEOPLE:**

## **IDEA:**



**JUST AS OUR SPEECH AFFECTS OUR ABILITY TO CONNECT TO GOD, SO TOO IT AFFECTS OUR ABILITY TO CONNECT TO EACH OTHER. BY USING POSITIVE SPEECH ABOUT OTHERS, NOT ONLY DO WE HELP OURSELVES SEE THE BEST IN THEM, BUT WE HELP THAT PERSON AS WELL SEE THE BEST IN THEMSELVES!**

## **SOURCES:**

Mishna, Avot 1:6

**יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרָחְיָה אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רֵב, וּקְנֵה לְךָ חֵבֵר,  
יְהוִי דִן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת**

Yehoshua ben Perachia said: Make for yourself a Rav,  
acquire for yourself a friend, and judge every person  
favourably.

דַּע, כִּי צָרִיךְ לְדוֹן אֶת כָּל אָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת, וְאִפְלוּ מִי  
שֶׁהוּא רָשָׁע גָּמוּר, צָרִיךְ לְחַפֵּשׂ וּלְמַצֵּא בּוֹ אִיזָה מְעַט  
טוֹב, שֶׁבְּאוֹתוֹ הַמְעַט אֵינוֹ רָשָׁע, וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה שֶׁמוֹצֵא בּוֹ  
מְעַט טוֹב, וְדָן אוֹתוֹ לְכַף זְכוּת, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה מַעֲלָה אוֹתוֹ  
בְּאַמַּת לְכַף זְכוּת, וַיּוֹכֵל לְהַשִּׁיבוּ בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה

Know, that it is necessary to judge every person favourably – even someone who is completely wicked, one needs to search and find within them some remnant of good. Because through that remnant, they are not wicked, and through this person who finds that good remnant, and judges them favourably, through this the one judging genuinely raises the wicked person to the favourable position, and can thus help them return in teshuva.

## BEYOND THE SOURCES:

Why does speech have such a powerful effect on us? If speaking well of someone can completely raise them up, imagine how hurtful it would be to speak badly to them.



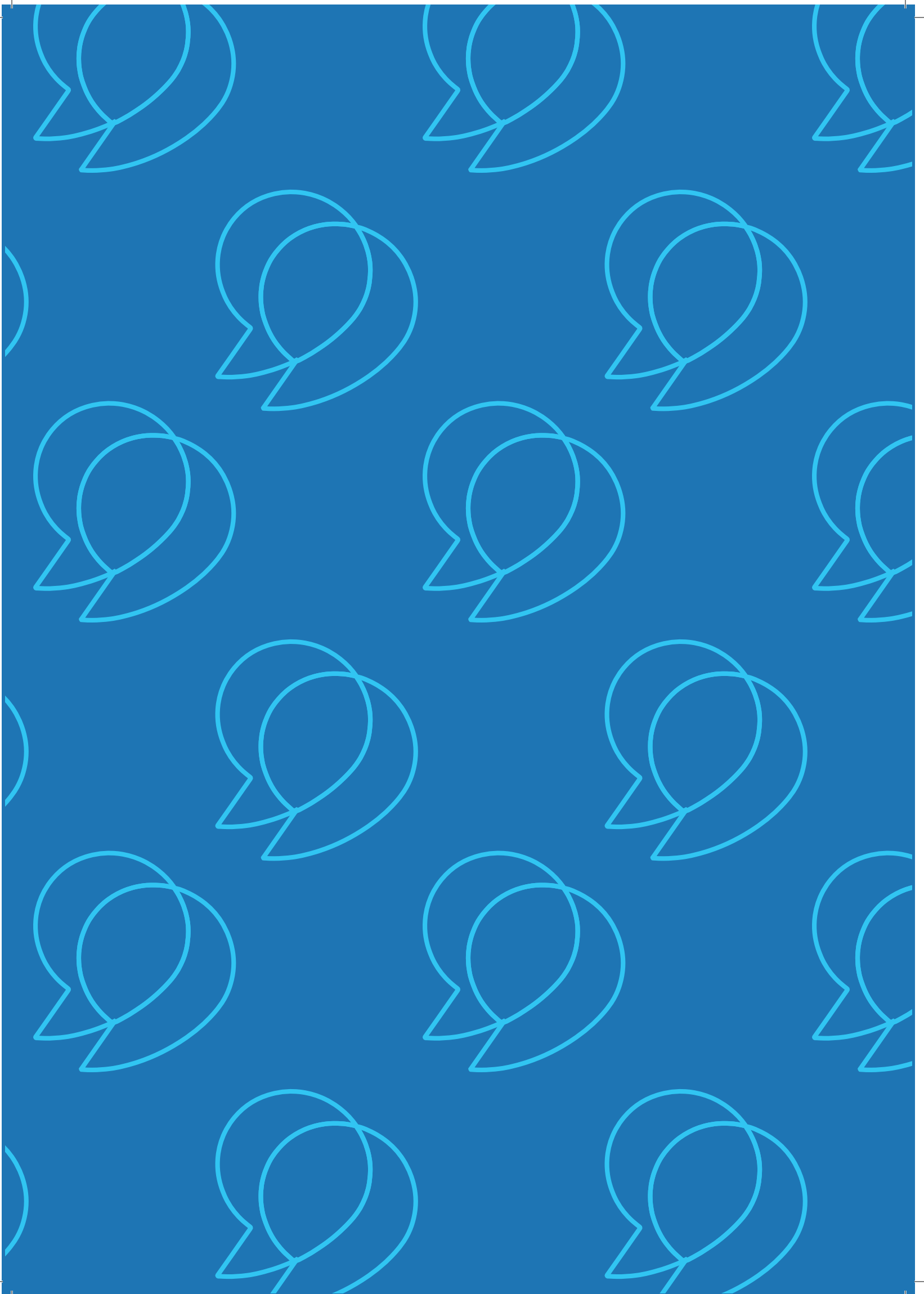
Ask participants if they can remember a time that someone believed in them, or their abilities, and that gave them motivation and self-confidence to achieve. Discuss how important these moments of positive speech are, and how damaging moments of negative speech can therefore be.

And to end off with a game... play two contrasting games of bang bang (or splat, as they call it nowadays). Someone stands in the middle of a circle of participants and calls a name out. The person whose name was called needs to duck, and the two people on either side point a 'hand-gun' at each other and say 'bang bang' (or 'splat'). Whoever says it first wins, and the other person sits down.

The variation on this theme is 'insult bang bang'. Instead of shouting 'bang bang', you shout a (mild) insult at the person opposite you.

The variant of the variant is 'compliment bang bang'. Same rules, but compliment activity. (The variant of the variant is 'backhanded-compliment bang bang' – you get the idea.)

# ACTIVITY:





**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



*Seed*

Life tools for Jewish families



Designed by infinitistudios  
© copyright



**CLEAN SPEECH UK**

PROMOTING POSITIVE SPEECH



**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



*Seed*

Life tools for Jewish families