



Introducing...
The Rubin Feldman Memorial "Monthly Mussar Message"
Practical Steps for Improving Our Lives and Our Relationships
Brought to you by
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St. Louis Kollel Chair of Talmudic Law and Tradition
In Loving Memory of Dear Friend Mr. Rubin Feldman, a"h
Through the generosity of Mrs. Gloria Feldman and Family
"The Power Of Words"

Chanukah is a time when families love to come together and celebrate this joyous holiday. These parties include delicious food, competitive dreidel games and of course lots of schmoozing. Humans love to gossip and talk about others, and there is no better time than a big family party. Does the Torah care how one talks? Does it truly matter to Hashem how a person uses his mouth and what is said?

There are two verses that teach us the Torah's approach to speech. In Psalms, King David writes: *"Who is the one who desires life and loves days of good? Someone who protects his tongue from speaking evil and his lips from speaking deceit."* King Solomon also states, *"Life and death are in the hands of the tongue."*

The implication of these two verses is that the keys to life are based on the way one uses his speech. It is not only about the way one speaks to others, but also the way one *relates* with others. If a person views his friend unfavorably and is always looking to put him down, he will undoubtedly speak in a derogatory way about him.

The way one communicates with others has the power to drastically affect another person in either a negative or positive way. There is a story about a man named Chaim, who spread gossip about a fellow member of his shul. After a while, Chaim felt bad about this sin and went to the Rabbi to ask how to do teshuvah. The Rabbi responded, "Go to the store and buy a bag of seeds and then go to the top of a big building and throw all the seeds off the top". The Rabbi told Chaim to come back one week later. When Chaim returned, the Rabbi told him to pick up every single seed that was dropped from the building. Chaim responded that it's impossible to pick up the seeds as they must have scattered everywhere and some may have even taken root. The Rabbi explained that this is exactly the point, because when one speaks badly about another, the harm it causes is drastic and can never be fully repaired. Words have the power to travel the entire world while being greatly beneficial to someone or extremely damaging.

The Chofetz Chaim, one of the greatest tzaddikim of the last century, wrote a sefer that explains all the details of proper speech. He explains all the benefits which proper speech can bring to one's life and about how harmful evil words can be to one's soul.

In the coming months, as *The Rubin Feldman Chair of Talmudic Law and Tradition*, I would like to write about some of the important lessons found in the works of the saintly Chofetz Chaim. Through studying these lessons, we will be able to benefit in our relationships with others and help us to have a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

As one sits around the table this Chanukah, please enjoy the conversation, just remember that each word uttered is powerful. Wishing everyone a wonderful and uplifting Chanukah.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Frank