

## And Hashem Elokim formed the man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and Man became a living being. (2:7)

Adam *HaRishon*, and, subsequently, all of mankind are a creation comprised of both earthly and Heavenly elements. His body is composed of dust of the earth, his soul from the spirit. As the *Zohar HaKadosh* comments to *Vayipach b'apav nishmas chaim*, "And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life," One who blows flows from within himself, thereby indicating that man's soul is an aspect of Hashem's essence. It was this soul that was blown into him that made man into a living being. *Targum Onkelos* defines this metamorphosis as transforming Adam into *ruach memalela*, "speaking spirit." Thus, the life which only Hashem can grant and which is unique to mankind alone is the rational/cognitive soul, which includes his ability to communicate through speech. Man is elevated over the animal kingdom by his ability to think and speak intelligently. With a gift comes responsibility; therefore, man must make use of these in service of the Almighty.

The power of speech symbolizes man's elevated status and also his mission. When man devastates his G-d-given power of speech by using it wrongly, such as for *lashon hora*, evil speech, slanderous speech, or simply wasting words on insignificant foolishness, he thereby destroys the *tzuras ha'adam*, image of man. He may look the same, but, on a Heavenly scale, his virtual appearance has been significantly altered.

This is a novel idea. While one may concede that speaking *lashon hora* is truly wrong and agree that it does have a negative impact on him, this acquiescence is only with regard to his committing a sin which transforms him into someone less than virtuous. He does not, however, realize that his entire *tzurah*, image, is changed. He has sort of recreated himself in an image counter to the one Hashem gave him. This is serious and bespeaks the egregious nature of evil speech.

As always, there is a flipside. The individual who guards his speech, who is careful to maintain a clean mouth, a tongue which focuses on the positive, oral expression which is reserved for Torah study, prayer and speaking positive, morally elevating speech, is actually affirming and ratifying G-d's creation. By guarding one's speech, he repairs and elevates himself in a way unlike the performance of any other *mitzvah*.

The following lesson is attributed to **Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl**. When we think about it, Adam was originally created alone. The entire world was to be reserved for him – and him alone. What need was there in his power of speech? After all, with whom would he converse? He certainly was not going to carry on a conversation with members of the animal kingdom. The Only One with Whom he could speak was none other than Hashem. This indicates that originally the purpose of man's creation was to converse with and pray to Hashem. This is alluded to when the *pasuk* (2:5) states: *V'adam ayin laavod es ha'adamah*, "And there was no man to work the soil." The world required man with his cognitive ability to realize the importance of rain for vegetation to grow. He prayed,

and the rain fell. Without his prayer, nothing would happen. Without his brain, there would be no prayer. Thus, man's function is to think about what is important and to express his need through prayer. Everything else is a waste.