

“And Hashem Elokim formed the man... and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being.” (2:7)

The “soul,” the nishmas chaim, which Hashem blew into man’s nostrils is defined by Targum Onkelos as “ruach memalela,” a speaking spirit. This means that the essence of life, which only Hashem could have imparted to man, is the soul that includes the power of speech. The ability to use intelligent speech to communicate is what elevates man above the animal world. We must endeavor to understand with whom man was designed to communicate. At this time, no one else had yet been created. Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., derives from here that the primary purpose in creating man with the “koach ha’dibur,” power of speech, was so that he would “speak” to Hashem in order to supplicate Him through prayer. Speech is inherently holy, for it was created for us to be able to communicate with the Almighty. One who does not sanctify his speech – using it instead to disparage and slander – has defiled G-d’s gift.