



All of the service of Hashem is dependent upon the improvement of one's character traits.

Vilna Gaon - Even Shleima, Chapter 1

Shmiras HaLashon Module Packet 1

***מי האיש החפץ חיים אהב ימים לראות טוב.
נצר לשונך מרע ושפתיך מדבר מרמה.
סור מרע ועשה טוב בקש שלום ורדפהו.***

***Who is the person who wants life, loves days to see the good.
Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn from bad, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.***

Tehillim/Psalms, Chapter 34, Verses 13-15

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Use of Material

The material in this *ACTT Module Packet* is intended for the use of the ACTT organization’s members and any other individuals interested in creating and sustaining meaningful changes in their lives. If an organization is interested in using this material, the ACTT organization would appreciate your contacting us. Thank you.

Version 2007-04-05

ACTT Shmiras HaLashon Module – Packet 1

Goal of *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Module

To develop an awareness and a mindset that results in consistently thinking before talking and then speaking in a positive manner that is never derogatory or damaging and does not generate any animosity between people.

Module Duration

Shmiras HaLashon will be covered in several parts. This is part 1 and will last for 5 weeks.

To Do List

- If you are not yet a member of the ACTT Organization, fill out a membership application and submit it – see Membership page of www.actt613.org or ACTT Welcome Kit
- Fill out the “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Commitment Form”, keep a copy for yourself and submit a copy to the organization – see Module page of www.actt613.org or this Module Packet’s Appendix
- On a daily basis:
 - Follow the Learning Schedule and record your *Shmiras HaLashon* activity/action in your “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
 - Record your maintenance activity/action (from the *Ahavas Chesed*, *Judging Favorably*, *Kavanah During Davening*, and *Anger Management* modules) in your “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
- Participate in the chizuk activities, as desired:
 - ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 1* kickoff event and face-to-face discussion group meetings
 - ACTT online discussion group and e-mail list
 - Read inspirational material from sources recommended by the ACTT organization and also distributed by the ACTT organization
 - Recommend inspirational material to the ACTT membership and submit inspirational material to be distributed to all the ACTT members

***Shmiras HaLashon* Resources**

The following are some resources for learning about *Shmiras HaLashon*:

- Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion - The concepts and laws of proper speech as formulated by Sefer Chofetz Chaim by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman; Artscroll/Mesorah; ISBN: 1-57819-457-1

- Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson A Day - The concepts and laws of proper speech arranged for daily study by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman and Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz; Artscroll/Mesorah; ISBN: 0-89906-321-7
- Guard Your Tongue – A Practical Guide to the Laws of Lashon Hara based on the Chofetz Chaim by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Gross Brothers Printing Co.
- Apples of Gold: The Art of Pure Speech by Rabbi David Bernstein; Torah Umesorah Publications in conjunction with Discovery Books; ISBN: 0-914131-91-5
- For additional books, tapes, and other material on Shmiras HaLashon see The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation (CCHF) catalog – call CCHF, www.chofetzchaimusa.org, at 800-867-2482

“Who is the person who wants life?”

The following is reproduced with the permission of ArtScroll / Mesorah, New York, from pages 85-86, 89, and 92-93 of Growth Through Tehillim - Exploring Psalms for Life Transforming Thoughts by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; ISBN: 1-57819-401-6:

“¹³*Who is the person who wants life, loves days to see the good.* ¹⁴*Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.* ¹⁵*Turn from bad, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*“ (Tehillim/Psalms, Chapter 34, Verses 13-15)

Here King David gives us a formula for long life. What can we do spiritually that will fill our days with good? We need to be careful with what we say. Refrain from speaking *lashon hara*, speaking negatively against others. Refrain from speaking *ona'as devarim*, that is, words that cause pain to someone else.

The verse does not tell us only, not to speak against others or cause others suffering, with our words. Rather, the verse tells us, “Guard your tongue.” Just as we watch and guard our money and possessions, we need to guard our mouths. The words we say can be precious, and can do much good, but, just as a person who owns a dangerous weapon needs to guard it to prevent accidental harm and damage, so too we need to watch what we say. Otherwise, one might carelessly cause others immeasurable pain and suffering.

What does it mean to guard what we say? It means to think first. As someone new to this concept once asked me incredulously, “Does this mean that we are supposed to think before we speak?” Yes, that’s exactly what this means. If a person knows that each word he says in a given encounter will affect his entire life, he will think before he speaks, he will think while he speaks, and he will think after he speaks - to see if he needs to correct anything.

Doesn’t this become a burden? Not when we fulfill this *mitzvah* with joy. Be grateful for the understanding and realization that, what you say is valuable and important and makes a difference. Be grateful that each time you speak, you have an opportunity to fulfill Hashem’s commandments. And be grateful for the elevation of your character and your soul.

... The previous verse (14) tells us to guard our tongue from evil, and this verse adds to it. Not only should we not speak evil against others, but we should do good. The first step is, to refrain from speaking against others and to refrain from causing them pain with our words. The next step is, to utilize our power of speech, for good. We should use our words for kindness and compassion: to help others in as many ways as we can, to encourage, to alleviate distress, to comfort and console, to give beneficial suggestions and advice, and to share helpful knowledge and information.

... Expressing views that differ, is acceptable. Throughout Torah literature Sages disagree with each

other, commentators have different interpretations, but a deep sense of mutual respect is present at all times.

Peaceful communications creates peaceful relationships. This means that your tone of voice, as well as the choice of words, sound peaceful. Messages that linguistically appear only slightly different, could be worlds apart. One is said in an angry tone of voice with words that are sarcastic, attacking, and condescending, while the other is said in a pleasant tone of voice with objective words that convey ideas, without eliciting negative responses.

Pursuing peace means that, at times, we will have to go out of our way for peace. We might need to apologize. Some people tend to view apologies as a sign of weakness. While, in truth, an apology is a manifestation of inner strength.

Pursuing peace means that we might have to strive for peace over and over again. How many times is sufficient? Until we achieve the goal of peace; real peace is worth it.

The 31 Prohibitions and Positive Commandments Relating to Lashon Hara

The following is adapted from pages 13-26 of Guard Your Tongue – A Practical Guide to the Laws of Lashon Hara based on the *Chofetz Chaim* by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Gross Brothers Printing Co., New Jersey - publishers (1975):

PROHIBITIONS

- 1) “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:16)
- 2) “You shall not utter a false report” (Shemos/Exodus 23:1)
- 3) “Take heed concerning the plague of leprosy” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 24:8)
- 4) “Before the blind do not put a stumbling-block” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:14)
- 5) “Beware lest you forget the Lord, your G-d” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 8:11)
- 6) “You shall not profane My Holy Name” (Vayikra/Leviticus 22:32)
- 7) “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:12)
- 8-9) “You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:18)
- 10) “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 19:15)
- 11) “You shall not follow a multitude to do evil” (Shemos/Exodus 23:2)
- 12) “You shall not act similar to Korach and his company” (Bamidbar/Numbers 17:5)
- 13) “You shall not wrong one another” (Vayikra/Leviticus 25:17)
- 14) “(You shall rebuke your neighbor) and you shall not bear sin because of him” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:17)
- 15) “Any widow or orphan shall you not afflict” (Shemos/Exodus 22:21)
- 16) “You shall not pollute the land wherein you are” (Bamidbar/Numbers 35:33)
- 17) “You shall not curse the deaf” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:14)

POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS

- 1) “Remember what the Lord your G-d did unto Miriam by the way as you came forth out of Egypt” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 24:9)
- 2) “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:18)
- 3) “In righteousness shall you judge your neighbor” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:15)
- 4) “If your brother be waxen poor and his means fail him when he is with you, then you shall uphold him” (Vayikra/Leviticus 25:35)
- 5) “You shall rebuke your neighbor” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:17)
- 6) “To Him shall you cleave” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 10:20)
- 7) “You shall fear My Sacred Place” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:30)
- 8) “Before the gray-haired you shall rise up, and you shall honor the face of the old man” (Vayikra/Leviticus 19:32)
- 9) “You shall sanctify Him” (Vayikra/Leviticus 21:8)
- 10) “Honor your father and mother” (Shemos/Exodus 20:12)
- 11) “The Lord your G-d shall you fear” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 10:20)
- 12) “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:7)
- 13) “From a false matter you shall keep yourself far” (Shemos/Exodus 23:7)
- 14) “Walk in His ways” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 28:9)

Prayer for Siyata D’Shmaya (Divine Assistance) in Matters of Speech

The following is reproduced with the permission of ArtScroll / Mesorah, New York, from page XXIX of the Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion - The concepts and laws of proper speech as formulated by Sefer Chofetz Chaim by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman; ISBN: 1-57819-457-1 (please see page XXIX of the book for the Hebrew text of this prayer):

The following prayer is drawn from the much lengthier prayer formulated by the Chofetz Chaim. It was prepared by the Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal, zt”l:

Master of the Universe, may it be Your will, Compassionate and Gracious G-d, that You grant me the merit today and every day to guard my mouth and tongue from [speaking] *lashon hara* and *rechilus*. And may I be zealous not to speak ill even of an individual, and certainly not of the entire Jewish people or a portion of it; and even more so, may I be zealous not to complain about the ways of the Holy One, Blessed is He. May I be zealous not to speak words of falsehood, flattery, strife, anger, arrogance, hurt, embarrassment, mockery, and all other forbidden forms of speech. Grant me the merit to speak only that which is necessary for my physical and spiritual well-being, and may all my deeds and words be for the sake of Heaven.

ACTT Module Packet Appendix



ACTT Commitment Form – Shmiras HaLashon 1 Module

Remember, it is better to commit to less – you can always do more!

Please PRINT all information

This commitment does not constitute a vow; I am doing the following, bli neder

From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___

In memory of _____

As a zechus for:

a refuah shelaimah for _____

a shidduch for _____

parnassa for _____

other _____

- ___ *Shmiras HaLashon act(s) daily in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
- *Performing one or more of the following maintenance activities in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends a total of 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
 - ___ *Ahavas Chesed act(s)* *daily* or *weekly*
 - ___ *Judging Favorably act(s)* *daily* or *weekly*
 - ___ *Kavanah During Davening act(s)* *daily* or *weekly*
 - ___ *Anger Management act(s)* *daily* or *weekly*
- *Learning ___ minutes daily from* (ACTT recommends 5 minutes daily):
 - The ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 1 Learning Schedule Book* (see *ACTT Daily Activity Log*)
 - Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson A Day by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman and Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz
 - Guard Your Tongue by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin
 - Other _____

Please PRINT all information

Name: _____ Date _____

Email address: _____ Tel. number _____

Address: _____

☺ *Be happy with your ability to Improve Yourself and Grow!* ☺

Please email form: commitment@actt613.org or mail: ACTT, 48 Edgemount Road, Edison, NJ 08817



ACTT Activity/Action Ideas

Acknowledgements:

- 1) Some Ideas for Acts of Chesed adapted from Areyvut's 2005 "A Kindness a Day Calendar: 365 Ways to Make a Difference", see website: www.areyvut.org
- 2) Some of the ideas for Judging Favorably were adapted from "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet
- 3) Some of the ideas for Kavanah During Davening were adapted from Praying with Fire by Rabbi Heshy Kleinman
- 4) Ideas for Improving Anger Management were adapted from Anger The Inner Teacher @ www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Anger_The_Inner_Teacher.asp

IDEAS FOR SHMIRAS HALASHON	
Think before speaking Pause to think about what to say and how to say it before responding to someone Give each person the benefit of the doubt Train yourself to avoid judging others Think positive thoughts and avoid negative thoughts Stay calm and avoid getting angry Avoid joking around that could lead to making fun of others Develop a character of humility - avoid arrogance	Be extra careful with Shmiras HaLashon for 1-2 hour(s) each day Never give up hope of one's ability to guard one's tongue Accept the idea that it is possible to speak without gossiping Train yourself to avoid complaining about others Learn the laws of Shmiras HaLashon Walk away from a group that is speaking Lashon Hara If someone starts speaking Lashon Hara to you respectfully ask them to stop Realize and say to yourself: "It's Not That Important"

IDEAS FOR ACTS OF CHESED		
Offer to run an errand for a friend Cheerfully greet someone Bake an unexpected treat for a friend Remember someone's birthday Call someone going thru a difficult time Leave a friendly note for a family member Listen patiently to others Clean up after dinner without being asked Call someone who lives alone Greet everyone you see with a smile Introduce yourself to someone Apologize for something you've done Take out the garbage without being asked	Give someone an unexpected compliment Spend time with a child with a disability Help strangers in shul feel welcome Take an elderly person shopping Pay attention to what people are saying Spend quality time with family & friends Call or visit someone who is sick Cook a meal for a person in need Visit someone who may be lonely Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while Say thanks - no matter how small the deed Help a child with his / her homework Compliment someone who helps you	Give someone an encouraging note When asked to do something, respond right away in a cheerful and willing manner Drive someone to the doctor Help out family members even if you're busy Help someone find a job Buy a gift for a loved one for no reason Greet everyone with a pleasant "good morning" Write a letter to an elderly person Take a neighbor's garbage cans in from the curb Call someone who recently lost a loved one Congratulate siblings on recent accomplishments



ACTT Activity/Action Ideas (continued)

IDEAS FOR JUDGING FAVORABLY

<p>Don't jump to conclusions</p> <p>Judge your neighbor's actions favorably</p> <p>"Judge your fellow man fairly" (Leviticus 19:15)</p> <p>Look for possible explanation in another's behavior</p> <p>Give your friend the benefit of the doubt</p> <p>Look for the good in others</p> <p>"Judge all people to the side of merit" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:6)</p> <p>Realize that your friend did not see you carrying packages when he/she passed by</p>	<p>Remember, it could be a miscommunication...</p> <p>Are we missing any facts?</p> <p>Look for people's strengths</p> <p>Remember, things are not always what they seem!</p> <p>Try to explain... not complain about other people's actions</p> <p>Focus on solutions - not recriminations</p> <p>Remember the excuses one makes for oneself - apply these excuses to the one who wronged you</p>
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IDEAS FOR IMPROVING KAVANAH DURING DAVENING

<p>Meditate for 5 minutes before davening</p> <p>Write translations to difficult words in your siddur</p> <p>Think about all Hashem has given you</p> <p>Say the words, "I am standing before Hashem" out loud</p> <p>Remember that Kavanah During Davening is a Halachik requirement of prayer</p> <p>Pronounce each word slowly and clearly</p> <p>Use a siddur, even for Tefillos I know by heart</p> <p>Establish a specific place for davening</p> <p>Concentrate for 3 seconds on each word of a specific tefillah</p>	<p>Learn the meanings of words you do not know</p> <p>Select one prayer a week to say with more kavanah</p> <p>Write down your favorite phrases from davening and focus on them when you daven</p> <p>Arrive before the minyan begins to daven and be ready when they start</p> <p>When davening at home, remove distractions from around you</p> <p>Select one word a day to say with more kavanah</p> <p>Select one phrase a day to say with more kavanah</p> <p>Before you start to daven, review what Hashem has given you in the last 24 hours</p>
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IDEAS FOR IMPROVING ANGER MANAGEMENT

<p>In the past, when you have been able to overcome anger quickly, how did you do it?</p> <p>Learn from people who are able to remain calm in situations that get you angry</p> <p>Learn from people who are able to let go of their anger easily</p> <p>Give anger a chance to subside before speaking by counting from 1 to 10, 1 to 20, etc.</p> <p>When you notice that you are feeling angry, breathe slowly and deeply, exhale slowly</p> <p>When you are about to get angry because of something that someone did to you, focus on some good quality of that person</p>	<p>Use physical exercise to release anger: take a brisk walk, run, dance, jump rope, etc.</p> <p>Meditate on: "Ein od milvado - There is nothing else besides G-d"</p> <p>When you get angry, look at yourself in a mirror to see and hear yourself as others see and hear you when you are angry</p> <p>Write down all your angry thoughts in a letter addressed to the person you are angry at, but do not send it</p> <p>When you are about to get angry, ask yourself, "How important is this in my life?"</p>
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ACTT Daily Activity Log – *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Module

Abbreviations: 1) CCDC = Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman; 2) SL = *Shmiras HaLashon*; 3) AC = *Ahavas Chesed*;
 4) JF = *Judging Favorably*; 5) KDD = *Kavanah During Davening*; 6) AM = *Anger Management for Positive Results*

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
EXAMPLE DAILY ENTRY – current module’s activity/action and up to 2 maintenance activities/actions					
Day	m/d/07	√	CCDC	x	√ SL: Paused to think about what to say and how to say it before responding; and/or AC: Helped someone find a job;
					√ and/or JF: Did not jump to conclusions; and/or KDD: Meditated for 5 minutes before davening;
					√ and/or AM: Focused on some good quality of a person who did something to me that started to get me angry
Sun	03/18/07		CCDC	1	
Mon	03/19/07		CCDC	2	
Tue	03/20/07		CCDC	3	
Wed	03/21/07		CCDC	4	
Thu	03/22/07		CCDC	5	
Fri	03/23/07		CCDC	6	
Sat	03/24/07		CCDC	7	
Sun	03/25/07		CCDC	8	



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Mon	03/26/07	CCDC	9		
Tue	03/27/07	CCDC	10		
Wed	03/28/07	CCDC	11		
Thu	03/29/07	CCDC	12		
Fri	03/30/07	CCDC	13		
Sat	03/31/07	CCDC	14		
Sun	04/01/07	CCDC	15		
Mon	04/02/07	CCDC	16		
Tue	04/03/07	CCDC	17		
Wed	04/04/07	CCDC	18		
Thu	04/05/07	CCDC	19		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon 1* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action		
Date		√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Fri	04/06/07		CCDC	20		
Sat	04/07/07		CCDC	21		
Sun	04/08/07		CCDC	22		
Mon	04/09/07		CCDC	23		
Tue	04/10/07		CCDC	24		
Wed	04/11/07		CCDC	25		
Thu	04/12/07		CCDC	26		
Fri	04/13/07		CCDC	27		
Sat	04/14/07		CCDC	28		
Sun	04/15/07		CCDC	29		
Mon	04/16/07		CCDC	30		

Glossary

Ahavas Chesed	.....loving kindness
B'li Neder	.....without making a formal commitment
Bitachon	.....trust in Hashem
Chesed	.....kindness
Chizuk	.....moral support
Davening	.....praying
Hakaras HaTov	.....gratitude
Kavanah	.....concentration
Klal Yisrael	.....the Jewish people
Lashon Hara	.....evil tongue (speech) - any derogatory or damaging (physically, financially, socially, or stress-inducing) communication
Midah, Midos	.....character trait, character traits
Mitzvah	.....a commandment
Mussar	.....ethical teaching
Neshamah	.....soul
Nisayon	.....a test
Ona'as Devarim	.....causing hurt through the spoken word
Parnasa	.....livelihood
Rechilus	.....gossip-mongering - any communication that generates animosity between people
Refuah Shleimah	.....a complete recovery from an illness
Sefer	.....a book
Shidduch	.....a match of two eligible and marriageable Jewish singles
Shiurim	.....classes
Shmiras HaLashon	.....guarding one's tongue
Siddur	.....prayer book
Siyata D'Shmaya	.....Divine Assistance
Talmid, Talmidim	.....student, students
Tefillah, Tefillos	.....prayer, prayers
Teshuva	.....repentance
Zechus	.....merit