

Children and Clean Speech

- Every home should be an oasis of purity in the current decadent culture. Coarse and vulgar¹ language have absolutely no place in the Jewish home.
- Refined speech² is conducive to a refined temperament and outlook³.
- Language impacts and defines the reality in which a person lives⁴. The cleaner a child's language, the purer his thought process will be⁵.
- The Torah approach to language⁶ is to avoid, when possible, overt⁷ description of any negativity⁸.
- The Torah approach to vocabulary is to minimize the use of specificity⁹ in reference to the lower components of human anatomy¹⁰ and their

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1. *Nivul peh* is a terrible thing. *Shaarei Teshuva* (*shaar 3 ois 229*) explains that, besides for the *arayos* element, it flows from and enforces the negative character traits of brazenness and impudence. I once heard Rav Mordchai Schwab Z"l of Monsey, NY comment that the *Chofetz Chaim* discusses the severity of all forms of negative speech, but never in all his *seforim* addresses *nivul peh*. Rav Mordchai Schwab Z"l explained that the *Chofetz Chaim* did not see a need to address this topic because it is so terrible that he never imagined that Jews would have a problem in that area.
 2. *Shaarei Teshuva* (*shaar 3 ois 230*) elaborates that adherence to refined speech can also serve as a great barrier against prohibited speech. The *Shaarei Teshuva* divides speech quality into three levels: 1) *lashon megunah* - indecent or negative speech, 2) *lashon nikiya* - clean or refined speech, and 3) *lashon kavod* - dignified or highly refined speech. See further the examples given there.
 3. See story mentioned in *Pesachim* (3b).
 4. In Russia, where the idea of personal space is not encouraged, there does not exist a word (in Russian) for "privacy". In English there is no word for *mechutanim* because that special relationship does not exist in American culture. In Yiddish, there is a word "fargin", which means being glad with somebody else's success. However, other languages don't have a term for this concept. In *Lashon Hakodesh* there are no words to describe "fun", "adventure", "pastime", and "killing time" because there is no room for these concepts to people who live a *Torah* driven life.
 5. Descriptive vocabulary concretizes and highlights concepts in a person's mind. Thus, using unrefined and explicit language will cause these concepts to occupy more and more of a person's mind, subtly leading him to become a more unrefined person.
 6. See *Pesachim* (3a) where a number of sources and illustrations for this idea are brought.
 7. When declaring something untrue, the *Chazon Ish* would encourage people to use the words "untrue" instead of saying outright "lie". See "With Hearts Full of Love" by Rav Matisyahu Solomon *Shlita* (p. 184).
 8. The *sefer Mekor Baruch* (authored by the *Torah Temmima*, *mavo perek 4*) sites a plethora of instances where *Chazal* were extremely stringent in *lashon nakiya*. For example, in regard to descriptions of blindness (*sagi nahor*), night (*ohr*), death (*nesaf el amov*, *niftar*, *nesbakesh l'yeshiva shel maala*), cemeteries (*bais hachaim*, *bais almen*), private parts of the human anatomy (*ever*, *oso makom*), and even activities such as sweeping ones house (*mechabdin es habais*) and many other items and concepts. All this illustrates the great refinement of the *Torah* way.
 9. The *Gemora* in many places even avoids mentioning the term "*chazir*" calling it instead a "*davar acher*" - something else. The *Gemora* also customarily refers to marital relations and bathroom usage with the vague term "*asiyas tzrachav*" - performance of one's needs. It is known that the *Chazon Ish* in his great refinement would not even say the word "*kelev*", referring to it instead as a *chaf-lamed-bais*, see *Maaseh Ish* (vol. 4 p.194).
 10. The *Rambam* in *Moreh Nevuchim* (3:8) (also mentioned by *Ramban* in *Shemos* 30:13) states that Hebrew is called *Lashon Hakodesh* because it is holy in that it does not possess any words referring directly to the reproductive process.

function¹¹.

- Many seemingly innocent expressions in popular culture have their roots in vulgarity.
- A child's mode of expression is a direct product of the form of speech he hears at home¹².
- It is wise to avoid using any descriptive terms regarding bodily functions with children¹³.
- Inevitably, young children will bring home from school or camp negative terminology¹⁴; parents should not over react to this¹⁵. However, they should just reiterate firmly to the child that "in our house we do not speak like that"¹⁶.
- Parents should train children to avoid name calling¹⁷ (such as crazy, stupid, *meshuge*, liar, and the like) when quarreling with their siblings and friends.



11. When someone would offer food to someone else, the custom among Eastern European *Yidden* was to say "*mach a beracha*" instead of mentioning eating outright.

12. See *Sukkah* (56b)

13. Beyond the vague terms "dirty" and "wet", all other descriptions in this area should be eliminated from household use. This is true in regards to diapers and other related matters.

14. More often than not children don't even understand the meaning of the terms they pick up.

15. By over reacting you are showing the child that these words have power and they might use them again and again just to garner the resulting negative attention.

16. It is important to stress to the child that "even if these words are used in other homes, in our home we do not".

17. Besides perhaps being *onas devorim*, it also acustoms children to use negative language.