



SAGE ADVICE
THE CHOFETZ CHAIM
R' YISRAEL MEIR KAGAN

Life: 1839-1933
 Home: Belarus
 Works: Teachings on
Lashon Hora
 Buried: Belarus



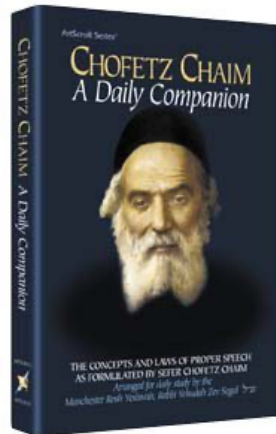
Psalm 34:12-13

Who is the man who **desires life**, and loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.



- ☞ Was a great Torah scholar, but generally kept this hidden from others.
- ☞ Published his first book – *Sefer Chofetz Chaim* - anonymously when he was 35 years old.
- ☞ Went on to publish additional works on the subject of *lashon hora* (“evil speech”).
- ☞ Went from town to town as an anonymous book peddler.
- ☞ *“Our negative conversations are the key which opens the door for Satan to prosecute.”*

After R' Yisrael Meir published Chofetz Chaim, people would ask him, "Now that you published this book with so many restrictions on speech, how are we able to speak?" To this he replied, "To the contrary! Before I wrote this work, you were forbidden to speak, for you did not know the pertinent laws. But now that my book details what is forbidden and what is permitted, you may speak!"



An Excerpt from A Daily Companion:

The Chofetz Chaim points out how mild this case of loshon hora was. Miriam spoke about her brother, whom she loved and for whom she had risked her own life. She did not say something derogatory about him; all she did was mistakenly equate Moshe with other prophets. Moreover, her words were not said in Moshe's presence or in public. And we know that Moshe wasn't hurt by her words and that there was no negative fallout. The Chofetz Chaim explains that this is precisely why the Torah uses this incident to teach us the evils of loshon hora. Despite all these factors and Miriam's great personal merit, she was still punished.

Another Excerpt from A Daily Companion:

Married couple often mistakenly think that passing information from one to the other is not rechilus ["gossip"]. They assume that because their lives are so intertwined, each should know what the other knows. This, the Chofetz Chaim cautions us, is wrong: "One should not reveal this to others, even to members of his own household." A classic illustration of the dangers of rechilus between husband and wife is the tragic episode of Korach's rebellion...

REFERENCES

* *Great Jewish Classics*, R' Moshe Bamberger (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, p.272)

Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion – Mesorah Publications, Ltd., available from Artscroll Publishers