

WORDS AND AN OCEAN

by Community Contributor

The word דְּבָרִים can be split into two words דָּבָר יָם, which literally means *word* and *ocean*. What's the connection?

The Medrash states, *"Words, like the ocean, can be stormy or calm. An evil mouth, like turbulent waves, can destroy and kill. A sharp tongue, like deep water, is feared. Good words, like pearls on the ocean floor, are precious..."*

Another word that's similar to דְּבָרִים is דְּבָרִים, *bees*.

Picture the following scenario:

You're with a group of friends. You say a "good line" at the expense at one of one of your friends and everyone is rolling in laughter. Your friend – that everyone is laughing at – laughs along in order not to appear as a bad sport. Yet, your comment hurt him like a bee sting.

The wisest man of all times said, *"Gentle words of the wise are heard, but a harsh word stirs up anger."* Rabbi Jonathan Gewirtz states, *"Words should not be confused with weapons - they are much more powerful."*

Here a few quotes about the impact of our words:

*"Words are free. It's how you use them that may cost you." "Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs." "The tongue has no bones but is strong enough to break a heart. So be careful with your words." "Be careful what you say. You can say something hurtful in ten seconds, but ten years later, the wounds are still there." "Don't mix bad words with your bad mood. You'll have many opportunities to change a mood, but you'll never get the opportunity to replace the words you spoke." "No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world." "...People will forget what you **said**, people will forget what you **did**, but people will never forget how you made them feel." "Open your mind before your mouth." "Be careful with your words. Once they are said they can only be forgiven not forgotten." "Speak in such a way that others love to listen to you. Listen in such a way that others love to speak to you." "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind." "Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another."*

A philosopher once said, *"Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder."* All we do when we raise our voice is get the other person to shut down and stop listening. Remember

that it's our words - the *tone, tenor, texture* and *inflection* of our speaking voice - that are effective and have meaning, not how *loud* we say them.

Just how powerful are they? Here's a story that illustrates this point:

A man came to Rav Chaim Kanievsky and asked for a blessing on behalf of his sick mother. Rav Chaim blessed her with a complete recovery. The visitor was not satisfied with this and said, "I cannot bear to see my mother suffer; I am willing to accept my mother's sickness upon myself if she will only recover."

Rav Chaim reacted strongly. "Do not speak like that! Say, rather, that you will study Torah on her behalf."

As soon as this visitor left, a man entered Rav Chaim's study with dark circles under his eyes from lack of sleep and stress.

He told the following tale. "Last week, I wanted to take a day off from work. With no way to convince my boss to let me off, I told him that my grandmother had passed away suddenly. He graciously granted me a day off. Two days later, my grandmother, who had been completely healthy, suddenly passed away! Since then I have had no rest. Did I cause my grandmother's death?"

Rav Chaim spoke to him severely. "You acted extremely foolishly. Chazal teach that 'a covenant is formed with the lips': the words that a person says can have a profound effect and therefore a person must be exceedingly careful about what he says. Now, you should study Mishnayos for your grandmother's soul for the next year, and with this Hashem will help you."

The man left and Rav Chaim turned to his family members who were in the room. "Where is the man who said he would accept his mother's illness? Tell him to ask this person how careful a person must be with his speech!"

Dovid Solomon Eibeschutz tells us, "*G-d fixed a creative power in the mouths of human beings which resembles His own power of speech. When a person speaks, his words create spiritual forces.*" As Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai says, "*Every word a man utters rises upward, splitting the heavens to reach its destined place.*" In fact, the *Bnei Yisoscher* states that every person is granted a certain amount of words to speak during his lifetime, except for that which pertains to Torah and mitzvos. Thus, every person can add some years to his life by carefully choosing what to speak about. As the *Novi* says, "*He [i.e. Hashem] recounts to a person the words he spoke.*"

Therefore, the next time before you speak, THINK:

T – is it True?

H – is it Helpful?

I – is it Inspiring?

N – is it Necessary?

K – is it Kind?

Treat your words like gold. They have more value than you think!

Dedicated:

- In memory of Shlomo Avraham Moshe ben Yechezkeil Yosef, Rochel bas Menachem Mendel Boruch, Eliyahu ben Mordechai, Mashah Tzivyah bas R' Shlomo Zalman, Altah Soshah Devorah bas Aryeh Leibush, Chaim ben Shmuel Efraim Zalman, Tuvyah Shlomo ben Naftali Tzvi HaKohein; Yisroel ben Yeshayah, Elisheva Basyah bas Yechiel Ephraim, Leah bas Leib Yehudah, Dovid Pinchas ben Moshe Aharon, Malka Devora Sima bas Meir Nosson, Esther Perel bas R' Shlomo, Miriam bas Zelig Shaul, Menachem ben Shimon, Menachem ben Zev, Sarah bas HaRav Yisroel, Avraham Yosef ben Meir Dovid, Zushe Yosef ben Shmuel Tzvi, Dovid Tzvi ben Yosef Yochanan, Kayla Rus bas Bunim Tuvia, Dovid ben Uri HaLevi, Dovid Avraham ben Chiya Kehos, Yosef ben Moshe HaLevi and all the other departed souls of our nation.
- For the complete recovery of Chayah Malka bas Bas-Sheva and among the other sick ones of our nation.

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