

## Session 14- The Power of Our Words Sunday, April 21, 2013

### Core Concepts:

It is a mitzvah, a good deed, to use our words in ways that are constructive and not harmful to others. Several Jewish mitzvot remind us of the importance of this—*nedarim*, keeping promises, *samech b'chelko*, being content with our lot and not complaining, *lashon hara*, not gossiping, and *shmiat ha'ozen*, listening carefully to others' words.

### Noticing Targets: Learners will...

- Name up to four mitzvot from Jewish tradition having to do with using our words in a positive way (*Knowing*)
- Remember Jewish teachings when choosing their words (*Doing*)
- View their positive use of speech as a Jewish value or commandment (*Believing*)

### Schedule:

3:00-3:25 **Welcome/Opening Rituals/Intro** (*Davis*)  
3:30-3:45 **Kids Rotation 1/ Adult Learning** (*Raisler divisions/Davis/ Babysitting in Youth Lounge*)  
3:50-4:05 **Kids Rotation 2/ Adult Learning** (*Raisler /Davis/ Youth Lounge*)  
4:10-4:25 **Kids Rotation 3/ Adult Snack & Shmooze** (*Raisler /Davis/ Youth Lounge*)  
4:30-5:00 **Family Learning: Listening** (*Davis*)  
5:00-5:10 **Tzedakah Boxes** (*Davis*)  
5:10-5:30 **Tefillah** (*Sanctuary*)

### Materials:

Adult Handouts	Massive Rainbow & Post-It's
<i>Yettele's Feathers</i> Skit	Recording of <i>Kol Nidre</i>
<i>It's Too Crowded In Here</i> book	"Promises Packet" Handouts
Butcher Paper and Markers	Moses Beard?

### Introduction:

After singing *Mitzvah Goreret Mitzvah* and sharing mitzvot from the past few weeks, Tara will introduce today's concept: the power of our words. We've made it to the Book of Numbers in our journey through the Torah, and at many points, the Book of Numbers gives us important advice about communication. Jewish tradition reminds us that using our words in a positive way is a mitzvah, a good deed. We will start in parallel learning groups and kids will rotate through three stations learning what the Book of Numbers has to teach us about mitzvot related to gossip, complaining, and breaking promises!

### Parallel Learning: Adults

Adults will discuss with Tara how to help kids use positive language, perhaps using this blog entry: <http://kveller.com/preschooler/values/teaching-your-kids-not-to-gossip.shtml> as a starting point.

### Parallel Learning: Kids Rotations

Children will rotate through each of three stations. TA's will travel with the students while teachers teach each station three times.

Lashon HaRa- Not Gossiping

***“Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married”***  
***(Numbers 12:1)***

- Play game of telephone and discuss:
  - What happened to the information?
  - Why did this happen?
  - What happens in real life situations when information is passed?
- Teacher will tell the story of Miriam and Aaron gossiping about Moses’ wife (Num 12:1-15). Miriam is punished by getting *tzara’at*, a skin disease. What are the consequences of gossiping in real life?
- Now act out the story *Yettle’s Feathers* (teachers perform for K-1, 2-5 act themselves) and discuss:
  - What do the feathers mean/symbolize? (*All the bad words we put out into the world.*)
  - What do you think is the moral of the story? (*We shouldn’t say mean things because they can hurt people’s feelings, once we say something we can’t take it back, We have to change the way we act and try to do better.*)

Sameych B’Chelko- Contentment with One’s Lot (Not Complaining)

***“And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord”*** (Numbers 11:1)

- Teacher will tell the story about Israelites complaining about manna and getting inundated with quail, and explain that the Israelites complain a LOT in the book of Numbers.
- K-3: Read *It’s Too Crowded in Here!* and discuss:
  - What does this story try to teach?
  - How does it connect to the story in the Torah about the quail?
  - What are some things in your life that you complain about?
  - What are some things that you have in your life that make you happy?
- 4-5: Students will sit around two pieces of butcher paper. On the first, they should write an everything they want to complain about in life, using as much detail as possible. On the second, they should write everything they are grateful for in life, again using as much sensory detail as possible. After each entry, teacher should ask:
  - How did it feel to complain so much?
  - How did it feel to write about what you are content about?

Nedarim- Keeping Promises

***“If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath ... he shall not break his word.”***  
***(Numbers 30:3)***

- K-3: God made a promise to Noah that God would never destroy the earth again. Read or tell the Noah story to the students. Explain that the rainbow was the sign of the promise that God would keep.
- Each student will get a bunch of Post-It’s. The teacher will name, one at a time, different people that students might make a promise to: parents, a friend, a sibling, God, etc. They

should write or draw one promise that they want to make to that person on one Post-It (Suggestions: I promise to always tell the truth, I promise to keep my room clean, I promise to try hard in school, I promise to do all my chores, I promise to be kind to animals, I promise to not tell on my friends).

- Each student can share one the promise they made. The teacher should ask for each one: Do you think this promise will be HARD to keep, or EASY to keep? There will be a large rainbow on the wall. If the promise is HARD to keep, the student should place the Post-It on the RED strip of the rainbow. If the promise is EASY to keep, they should place it on the PURPLE strip of the rainbow. Older students can place it somewhere along the spectrum of easy-hard.
- Teacher will explain that it is very important in Judaism to keep promises that we make, and that the Book of Numbers tells us how important that is. The teacher should read the quote above. As we can see on the rainbow, though, not all promises are realistic. Ask:
  - What are the results when someone does not keep a promise?
- If extra time, discuss: How is keeping promises related to telling the truth? When are times when we should tell the truth? When are times when it might be okay not to tell the truth?

### **Family Learning: Listening**

Rock Story: Teachers will act out the Moses striking the rock story (Numbers 20: 1-13):

**Israelites:** Wah, wah, we're so thirsty! Bring us water! This wilderness is worse than Egypt!

**Moses:** God, the Israelites are seriously complaining about being thirsty. Remember when you told me to strike that rock and we gave the Israelites water? That was rad. Let's do that again.

**God:** Moses, speak to the rock before the eyes of the Israelites and ask it to bring forth water, and it shall bring forth water for your people to drink.

**Moses:** Huh? (strikes rock twice)

**Israelites:** Woohoo! Water!

**God:** Moses, you did not listen to me.

**Moses:** What do you mean? (To families:) what did I do wrong? (*God did not tell him to strike the rock*)

**God:** Because you did not listen to me, I will punish you and you will not be able to go into the Promised Land.

Tara will explain that part of the mitzvah of positive speech is listening carefully to others' words. We are going to do some exercises to practice listening. Make sure you are sitting with your family.

### Soundmaking

Choose one family member in each family to be the "sound-maker." That person makes whatever sounds he or she wants—words, humming, sighs, grunts, loud sounds, soft sounds. The other family members try to echo the initiator's sounds as closely as possible. After a few minutes, pick another family member to be the "sound-maker." Then, discuss as a group:

- Was this exercise easy or difficult?
- Did you need more concentration than normal to really pay attention?
- What kinds of actions did you do to be successful? (*make eye contact, not listen to anything else, put away cell phones...*)

### Body Language

With your family, think of five ways of sitting or standing that show you are not really listening. Then think of five ways that show you are truly listening with your whole self. Each group will share by performing their poses for the larger group. Then, discuss:

- How does listening help in our family? (*helps us understand each other, gets tasks done, makes us closer...*)
- Which specific people should we listen to and why? (*parents because they keep us safe and healthy, siblings so we can know what they need, children so we get to know them as people...*)
- What might happen if we don't listen to one another?

### **Tzedakah Boxes**

Families should add to their tzedakah boxes for last week and this week.

### **Tefillah:**

- One positive way of using our words is by saying the words of prayer.
- Shema: Connect to Listening
- Silent prayer: your turn to use your own words of prayer
- Possibly look at Elohai Netzor or Yehiyu L'ratzon (p. 100 in MT) before or after silent prayer