

# GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

[www.gatherthepeople.org](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)

## FAMILY SIDDIR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 24

**WE'VE COME TO THE END OF THE עֲמִידָה, ON PAGE 38.**

- Someone please read the first seven words of the Hebrew paragraph in the middle of page 38: אָלֶּהִי נִצּוֹר לְשׁוֹנֵי מָרַע וְשִׁפְתֵי מְדַבֵּר מִרְמָה.
- And now someone please read the first sentence in the middle paragraph in English on page 38.

### **SO WHAT ARE THESE WORDS ABOUT?**

- We all know the difference between telling lies and telling the truth.
- ***But what do you think it means when it says, “keep my tongue from speaking evil”?***
- The Hebrew word that’s translated as “evil” is מִרְמָה.
  1. ***Does anyone have an idea of the שׁוֹרֵשׁ, the three root letters in the word מִרְמָה?***
  2. The שׁוֹרֵשׁ of the word is ה-מ-ר, which means to “mislead.”
  3. ***So what does it mean to “mislead” someone?***
- ***What would be an example of “misleading” someone?***
- Maybe you have been the *leader* of something or somebody—like maybe taking care of a younger brother or sister, or even in a game of some kind, like baseball or soccer?
- Or maybe you have been a leader on the job or in some kind of organization.
- Sometimes it’s possible as a leader to cause other people to make a mistake or do something wrong or be hurt in some way?
- ***Have you ever had someone tell you something that was misleading, gave you the wrong idea about something or someone else?***
  1. ***Why do think that person told you something bad or misleading?***  
[BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED YOU WOULD LISTEN TO IT]
  2. ***What did you think about the person mentioned after you heard something bad or misleading about him or her?***
  3. ***How would you feel if someone was telling people bad or misleading things about you?***
- ***Is that possible? Have you ever done anything bad?***

1. *Would it be fair for someone to tell other people about that bad thing you did?*
  2. *What might people think of you if they heard about what you did?*
  3. *Do you think they would have a good idea of what kind of person you really are?*
- So in this prayer we begin by asking God to help us not to mislead people by saying bad things about other people.

**SOMEONE PLEASE READ THE NEXT THREE WORDS IN HEBREW, BEGINNING WITH וְלִמְקַלְלֵי תוֹדֵם. וְלִמְקַלְלֵי**

- The English translation in our סידור is not as good as it might be.
- The English should read: “To those who curse me, let my soul be silent.”
- *What might that mean?*
- To understand this sentence we have to know what the Hebrew words really mean.
  1. The first word וְלִמְקַלְלֵי—does anyone have any idea of the שׁוֹרֵשׁ that would tell us the meaning of the word?
  2. The root letters are ק-ל-ל mean to make something *less* than it was—like if someone takes away your money or something else that belongs to you.
  3. So the idea is that when someone *curse*s us, they want to take away from us something we have.
- *What can people take from you?*
  1. *Are there things other than your possessions that people can take from you?*
  2. *What about your reputation—and what is a “reputation,” anyway?*
  3. *How could someone take that away?*
- Now the next two Hebrew words, תוֹדֵם, נַפְשִׁי, mean “let my soul be silent.”
  1. We talked about the soul recently.
  2. The Hebrew word we had then was נַשְׁמָה.
  3. But the word translated as “soul” here is נַפְשִׁי—in a simpler form, נַפֵּשׁ.
  4. *So what is the נַפֵּשׁ?*
- The נַפֵּשׁ is the part of each and every one of us, created by God, that makes it possible for us—once we grow up—to get all the things we need to survive because we learn how to do what God asks of us.
- So these first couple of words, וְלִמְקַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי תוֹדֵם, are saying: To any person who tries to take away something from me, let the part of me that makes it possible for me to get the things I really need, be *silent*.
  1. *What do you think that means?*

2. *Why should we be silent if someone tries to take our reputation by saying bad or misleading things about us?*
3. *Maybe what it means is that we shouldn't say anything bad to them or try to get even with them.*
4. *Does being silent mean, if we are young people, that we should not tell our parents or a teacher or the rabbi if someone is trying to hurt us—even if it's with words?*
5. *Does being silent mean, if we are adults, that we should not tell our colleagues or employers, police or other officials, if someone is trying to hurt us—even if it's with words?*

**LET'S GO ON TO THE NEXT SENTENCE THAT BEGINS WITH THE HEBREW WORD פתח.**

Someone please read the six words in Hebrew: פתח לבי בתורתך ובמצותיך. תרדף נפשי.

- Our Siddur translates the sentence as: “Open my heart to your Torah, that I may *pursue* Your מצוות.”
- *What does it mean to “open our heart” to something?*
- The Hebrew again uses the word נפשי, so it's saying: Open my heart to your Torah, so that my נפש, my soul, may *pursue* Your commandments.
- *What do you think it means to have our נפש “pursue the commandments”?*
  1. We already said that our נפש, our soul, is that part of us created by God so that, when we grow up, we can get all the things we need to survive.
  2. *What kinds of things do we need to survive—what are the most important things?*
  3. But here the prayer is saying we should pursue or go after the מצוות, which is not anything like the usual things we need to survive, like food and shelter.
- *What do you think that means?*
- Maybe it means that when we follow the מצוות, God's commandments, using all the strength we've been given, God makes sure we get all the basic things we need to survive.
- So if you do not work on שבת, you will still be able to do well enough on tests to pass your courses in school or earn enough money on the job to live a good life—if you have faith in God (which is a subject for another day).