

House of Sages

SPEECH

23RD AUGUST, 2026

COME & LEARN

מֹת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד-לָשׁוֹן וְאֹהֲבֶיהָ יֹאכְל פְּרִיהָ:

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue;
Those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Proverbs 18:21



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SOURCE 1 – "THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FRAMING"

FLUSBERG, HOLMES, THIBODEAU, NABI, & MATLOCK,

This is an academic review of decades of research on "framing" meaning how the specific words used to describe an event, rather than the underlying facts, shape what people believe and feel about it.

“When we use language to communicate, we must choose what to say, what not to say, and how to say it. That is, we must decide how to frame the message. These linguistic choices matter: Framing a discussion one way or another can influence how people think, feel, and act in many important domains, including politics, health, business, journalism, law, and even conversations with loved ones.”

SOURCE 2 – GENESIS 1:3

God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים יְהי אֹר וַיְהי־אֹר:

SOURCE 3 – SHACHARIT

Blessed is He Who spoke, and the world came into being, blessed is He; blessed is He Who maintains the creation; blessed is He Who says and does;

בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאָמַר וַהֲיָה הָעוֹלָם. בָּרוּךְ
הוא. בָּרוּךְ עוֹשֶׂה בְּרָאשִׁית. בָּרוּךְ
אוֹמֵר וְעוֹשֶׂה.

SOURCE 4 – RABBI JONATHAN SACKS, COVENANT & CONVERSATION

God created the natural universe with words. We create – and sometimes destroy – the social universe with words... So the first principle of language in Judaism is that it is creative. We create worlds with words.

...

Judaism is a sustained meditation on the power of words to heal or harm, mend or destroy. Just as God created the world with words, He empowered us to create, and destroy, relationships with words.

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SOURCE 5 – NUMBERS 12:1-2

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: "He married a Cushite!"

They said, "Has GOD spoken only through Moses—and not through us as well?" GOD heard it.

Now Moses himself was very humble, more so than any other human being on earth.

וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמֹשֶׁה עַל־
אֲדֹת הָאִשָּׁה הַכֻּשִׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח
כִּי־אִשָּׁה כֻּשִׁית לָקַח:
וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָרֶק אַךְ־בְּמֹשֶׁה דְּבַר ה'
הֲלֹא גַם־בָּנוּ דְּבַר וַיִּשְׁמַע ה':
וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד מְכַל־הָאָדָם
אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

SOURCE 6 – PETICHAH, ASEH 3–4 CHOFETZ CHAIM

He transgresses thereby (Devarim 24:9): "Remember what the L-rd your G-d did to Miriam on the way when you went out of Egypt." The Torah exhorted us hereby that we mention verbally, always, the great punishment [leprosy] that the Blessed L-rd brought upon the tzadeketh, **Miriam the prophetess — who spoke only about her brother, whom she loved as her soul, whom she raised on her knees, and for whom she endangered her life, to rescue him from the Nile. And she did not speak in denigration of him, but only compared him to other prophets. And she did not speak so to his face to shame him, and not in public, but only to her brother Aaron, privately. And he [Moses] was not offended by all this, (Bamidbar 12:3): "And the man Moses was extremely humble, more than any man on the face of the earth" — in spite of which all her good deeds did not avail her and she was punished with leprosy for this.**

עוֹבֵר עַל יְדֵי זֶה (א) עַל מִצּוֹת
עָשָׂה (דְּבָרִים כ"ד ט') "זְכוֹר אֶת
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְמִרְיָם
בְּדֶרֶךְ" וְגו', שֶׁהִזְהִירוּנוּ הַתּוֹרָה בְּזֶה,
שֶׁנִּזְכֹּר בָּפֶה תָּמִיד הָעֹנֵשׁ הַגָּדוֹל,
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' יִתְבָּרַךְ לְצִדִּיקֵת מִרְיָם
הַנְּבִיאָה שְׁלֹא דִּבְרָה אֶלָּא בְּאַחִיהָ
אֲשֶׁר אָהֲבָתָהּ כְּנִפְשָׁהּ, וְגִדְלָתָהּ
עַל בְּרָכֶיהָ, וְסִכְנָה עֲצָמָהּ לְהַצִּילוֹ
מִן הַיָּם, וְהִיא לֹא דִּבְרָה בְּגִנוּתוֹ
אֶלָּא מֵה שֶׁהִשְׁוִתָּה אוֹתוֹ לְשָׂאֵר
נְבִיאִים, וְלֹא דִּבְרָה בְּפָנָיו שְׂבִיבוֹשׁ
וְלֹא בְּפָנֵי רַבִּים, רַק בֵּינָה לְבֵין
אֲחִיהָ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּצִנְעָה, וְהוּא לֹא
הִקְפִּיד עַל כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּמִדְבָר י"ב ג'): "וְהָאִישׁ
מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד", וְאִף עַל פִּי כֵן לֹא
הוֹעִילוֹהָ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהָ הַטּוֹבִים
וְנִעְנְשָׁה בְּצִרְעַת עַל זֶה

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SOURCE 7 – MISHNEH TORAH, HUMAN DISPOSITIONS RAMBAM

The sages say "There are three offences for which one is punished in this world and forfeits his portion in the world to come. These are idolatry, incest and murder; but the evil tongue is equal to all the three put together". The sages further said "To indulge in evil speech is like a denial of the fundamental principle of religion, as it is said "Who said 'our tongue will we make mighty; our lips are with us; who is lord over us ?' " (Ps. 12:5). The sages also said "The evil tongue slays three persons: the utterer of evil, the listener, the one spoken about; and the listener will be punished worse than the speaker".

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים שְׁלֹשׁ עֲבֵרוֹת נִפְרָעִין
מִן הָאָדָם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְאִין לוֹ חֵלֶק
לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְגִלּוֹי
עֲרִיּוֹת וּשְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים. וְלִשּׁוֹן הָרַע
כְּנֶגֶד כָּלם. וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים כָּל
הַמַּסְפֵּר בְּלִשּׁוֹן הָרַע כְּאִלוֹ כּוֹפֵר
בְּעֶקֶר. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהילים יב ה)
"אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר שְׁפָתֵינוּ
אֲתֵנוּ מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ". וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ
חֲכָמִים שְׁלֹשָׁה לִשּׁוֹן הָרַע הוֹרֵגת.
הָאוֹמֵר. וְהַמְקַבֵּל. וְזֶה שְׁאוֹמֵר
עָלָיו. וְהַמְקַבֵּל יוֹתֵר מִן הָאוֹמֵר:

SOURCE 8 – PROVERBS 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue;
Those who love it will eat its fruit.

מָוֶת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד־לִשָּׁוֹן וְאֹהֲבֶיהָ יֹאכֵל
פְּרִיָּהּ:

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