

Voice and Speech

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)



I was struck by the use of “voice - kol” and [tongue](spirit.html) in:

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 64:2***[*Hear*](mashal.html) *my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from the terror of the enemy.*

Why Does [David](fathers.html) want [HaShem](hashem.html) to [hear](mashal.html) his *voice*? Why does he not say to [hear](mashal.html) his *words*? After all, voice is just sound, where words are snippets of sound that have clearly differentiated meanings. Words contain meaning, whereas voice is only sounds.

Now note, that [David](fathers.html)’s voice is to be contrasted with “evil-doers” who are using their [*tongue*](spirit.html) as a weapon, and *conversing* with each other. In effect, it is their words which are being heard and their words which are killing people just like weapons of steel.

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 64:4*** *Who have whet their* [***tongue***](spirit.html) *like a sword, and have aimed their arrow, a poisoned word;*

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 64:6*** *They encourage* [*one*](one.html) *another in an evil matter; they* ***converse*** *of laying snares secretly; they ask, who would see them.*

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 64:9*** *So they make their own* [***tongue***](spirit.html) *a stumbling unto themselves; all that see them shake the* [*head*](body.html)*.*

Thus we understand that this chapter of [Psalms](psalms1.html) is relating to two different ways of communicating. There must exist a difference between the sound produced by the [*tongue*](spirit.html) and the sound produced from the *voice*.

# In the [Body](body.html)

In the [physical](physical.html) structure of the [body](body.html), there is a manifestation of the idea of [connection](connection.html) which is inherent in the power of speech. It is no accident that the *voice* is produced in the [neck](body.html). Voice, kol, is the root of speech, the power of connecting [worlds](worlds.html); the [neck](body.html) is that part of the human form which [connects](connection.html) [head](body.html) and [body](body.html), the higher and lower domains. The [body](body.html) always reflects its [spiritual](physical.html) roots.[[1]](#footnote-1)

This parallel goes further. If we look more closely, we note that the voice is produced in the throat, which is at the front of the [neck](body.html). The deeper tradition states that the front of a structure represents its positive power; the back represents its lower, or fallen, aspect. The front of the [body](body.html) in general represents positivity, the [face](body.html) is a feature of the front, not the back. Human relationship is possible when people [face](body.html) each other and difficult when they turn their backs. The back is blind, impersonal, and it is the location of offensive excretion. These things are all exquisitely specific features of the human pattern.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Now we note that the front of the [neck](body.html) contains the organ of voice production; the back of the [neck](body.html) is silent. In fact, the deeper wisdom states that the front of the [neck](body.html), or throat, is identified with Moshe Rabbenu, after all, Moshe is the voice of Torah; [HaShem](hashem.html) speaks through Moshe’s throat. ”The Divine Presence speaks from Moshe’s throat.” The same sources state that Moshe’s arch-enemy, Pharaoh, is represented by the back of the [neck](body.html),[[3]](#footnote-3) he is the [one](one.html) who strives for the opposite of that which Moshe Rabbenu wishes to achieve; Pharaoh’s goal is to keep the Divine voice out of the [world](worlds.html), to silence the voice of the [spiritual](physical.html).[[4]](#footnote-4) Moshe Rabbenu’s task is to achieve [connection](connection.html), the ultimate [connection](connection.html) of [spiritual](physical.html) and [physical](physical.html) [worlds](worlds.html); Pharaoh’s work is to separate those [worlds](worlds.html). Arch-enemies indeed. And the [letters](letters.html) of the word Pharaoh”, when reversed, spell “ha’oref”, the back of the [neck](body.html)![[5]](#footnote-5)

Just as a voice travels up the throat and out the lips, so also does a ladder reach up to the heights and bring what is low, high. With this description, it is worth noting that the numerical value of the word “sulam - סולם” (ladder) is the same as that of the word “kol - קול”, meaning voice or sound. Hence, in the Kabbalah, the pasuk:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 27:22*** *And* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *went near unto* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html) *his father; and he felt him, and said: ‘The voice* (HaKol - הקול) *is the voice* (Kol - קול) *of* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html)*, but the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *are the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of* [*Esav*](edom.html)*’.*

This means that the voice or sound of [Yaaqob](jacob.html) is the ladder of [Yaaqob](jacob.html).[[6]](#footnote-6) The means of ascent, the ladder, is a progression of sounds, which lead up to, and are absorbed into, the total unity of Chakmah - חכמה.[[7]](#footnote-7) The ladder [connects](connection.html) the lower to the higher, just as the voice [connects](connection.html)[[8]](#footnote-8) the lower and higher [worlds](worlds.html).

It is clear that the voice, whether the tone, the tenor, or the volume, communicates what is in the lower [body](body.html), specifically what is in the [heart](body.html). The voice contains the soul of the person, that part which is unspoken and ethereal. Note well how the emotions, the soul, are carried in the kol, in the following excerpt from a shiur by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss:

*Plato[[9]](#footnote-9) and other philosophers questioned and indeed attacked the written word as inadequate. They hypothesized that when* [*one*](one.html) *reads something from a written text they might misinterpret the meaning and intent of the author. Conversely, when giving over a thought verbally,* [*one*](one.html) *has the ability to create a dialogue with the presenter and elucidate those areas of concerns and questions.*

*Throughout the Torah and the prophets there are references to this special kol that was transmitted, and each* [*time*](time.html) *it appears,* [*one*](one.html) *can feel the sensitivities and anguish, the majesty and omnipotence that is represented by this word.*

*A few examples; When Almighty G-d* [*first*](one.html) *appeared to* [*Adam*](adam.html) *after he* [*ate*](eating.html) *from the Tree of* [*Knowledge*](thetree.html)*,* [*Adam*](adam.html)*, with terrible fright and trepidation, said to G-d, “I heard your kol in the garden, and I was frightened, for I am naked and so I hid”.[[10]](#footnote-10) In the voice of* [*Adam*](adam.html)[*one*](one.html) *can feel the terror and the panic of the kol of Almighty G-d.*

*When Cain killed Abel, G-d said the kol of the* [*blood*](body.html) *of your brother are calling out to me from the earth”.[[11]](#footnote-11)* [*One*](one.html) *can only imagine this sound, a sound of foreboding and sadness, of Abel’s wailing.*

*When* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html) *bestowed his blessings on* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *and not on* [*Esav*](edom.html)*, he uttered the words “the kol is the kol of* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *but the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *are those of* [*Esav*](edom.html)*”.[[12]](#footnote-12)* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html)*’s kol was soothing and sensitive, caring and compassionate; not so the harsh kol of* [*Esav*](edom.html) *his brother.*

*Finally, after the* [*Jewish*](gen-jew.html) *people received the* [*Ten*](ten.html)[*Commandments*](cmds613.html)*, the Torah states, “And the entire* [*nation*](nations.html) *saw the kolot.[[13]](#footnote-13) They felt through this sound the majesty and power and the omnipotence of Almighty G-d.*

*The mention of kol is referenced in dozens of places in the Torah, and each* [*time*](time.html) *it appears,* [*one*](one.html) *is filled with wonder and amazement in its powerful and profound implication and meaning.* [*One*](one.html) *thing is for sure; this kol is a key element that sustained the* [*Jewish*](gen-jew.html) *people throughout the ages and has enabled us to survive the travails of our history and glorify in the triumphs of our victories.*

[*One*](one.html) *is reminded of the “the still voice” of our* [*prayers*](prayer.html) *ascending to* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *on* [*Rosh HaShana*](teruah.html)*h and* [*Yom Kippur*](kippur.html)*im, and the words of King* [*David*](fathers.html)*:[[14]](#footnote-14) “There is no speech or words that their kol goes unheard”.*

*G-d endowed us with the unwritten Torah, because he* [*knew*](daat.html) *that this kol, our kol, was vitally important for our survival. Our Rabbis emphasize that when* [*one*](one.html) *is studying Torah it is not sufficient to read only with* [*one*](one.html)*’s* [*eyes*](body.html)*; there must also be a kol, the same kol that was heard repeatedly in our history, the same kol that parents have sung for* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to their children in* [*time*](time.html) *of pain and times of promise.*

*Every day we must sensitize ourselves to continue to say and* [*hear*](mashal.html) *this kol and commit ourselves to G-d’s calling, that this same kol that has strengthened us during our centuries of dispersion will continue to support our people in hastening the* [*coming*](coming.html) *of our* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html) *in our days.*

Kol is the essential voice or sound that the listener hears (rather than the specific words that the caller may be utilizing). [One](one.html) example of Kol is someone calling my [name](name.html). I don’t [know](daat.html) what the specific message (dibur) is going to be, but when I’m called, I honor the caller by responding. In responding, I am reacting to the caller as a person, not to the words being spoken. Kol is primal. In utilizing kol I am making all of myself available to the other person. Another example of kol might be a certain kind of whisper. The whisper itself can express a depth of relationship more profoundly than the words chosen for articulation. The [shofar](shofar.html) is a kol, it is all sound and no words.

Kol is unfettered by the specifics of the message. It is a degree of expression that requires no words because it is the projection of the essence of the caller. The message is the person, pure G-dliness without filtering or manipulation. Dibur[[15]](#footnote-15) (we will explore this in a bit) conveys the thoughts of the person’s mind, but kol projects the very person himself.

Vayikra (lit. *And He called*) means the caller is utilizing kol and projecting all of his selfhood, his most essential and G-dly part, onto the listener. As a result, the kol itself creates a communion between the caller and the listener.

As an aside, the above idea is part of Moshe’s life: *Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived. No prophet who lived or will live could comprehend G-d more than Moses.*[[16]](#footnote-16) To understand this, let’s briefly look at:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 6:28 – 7:2 28*** *And it came to pass on the day when* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)[*spoke*](mashal.html)(Dibur) *unto Moses in the land of Egypt,* ***29*** *that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)[*spoke*](mashal.html)(Dibur) *unto Moses, saying: ‘I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*;* [*speak*](mashal.html) *thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto thee.’* ***30*** *And Moses said before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*: ‘Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?’* ***1*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moses: ‘See, I have set thee in God’s stead to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.* ***2*** *Thou shalt* [*speak*](mashal.html) *all that I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *thee; and Aaron thy brother shall* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto Pharaoh, that he let the children of* [*Israel*](gen-jew.html) *go out of his land.*

Notice, in the above pasuk, that Moshe is commanded twice to [speak](mashal.html) unto Paro. The [first](one.html) [time](time.html) he protests, because he has uncircumcised lips. The second [time](time.html) he goes without complaint.

So, what made Moshe change his mind?

Our Sages indicate that between the [first](one.html) and the second [command](cmds613.html), [HaShem](hashem.html) told Moshe that Aharon would be his prophet; despite the fact that Torah [law](law.html) forbids [one](one.html) prophet from saying the message given to another prophet! [HaShem](hashem.html), then, tells Moshe that Aharon will not [speak](mashal.html) the message [HaShem](hashem.html) gives to Moshe, but rather, Moshe will BECOME THE MESSAGE that Aharon will [speak](mashal.html) out!!! That is the meaning of the words: ‘See, I have set thee in G-d’s stead to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet’.

Now we [know](daat.html) why Mainmonides made Principle [number](nchart.html) 7 a unique principle:[[17]](#footnote-17) Moshe’s prophecy was *qualitatively* different from all other prophets because he became the message that Aharon, his prophet, [spoke](mashal.html) out into the [world](worlds.html), so much for this aside.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The essence of korbanot is direct communication with [HaShem](hashem.html) on a primal level, unfettered and unmanipulated; with korbanot we give all of ourselves to [HaShem](hashem.html). For this reason, the Sefer which contains the [mitzvot](cmds613.html)[[19]](#footnote-19) of korbanot, signifying the relationship between [HaShem](hashem.html) and Klal [Israel](gen-jew.html) at its most essential, *kol*, aspect, is appropriately named Vayikra, “And He called”.

The most primal kol is that of the [shofar](shofar.html). *Shofrot* ([*shofar*](shofar.html)*-*blowing) indicates, along the lines we have been discussing, reaching for the [heart](body.html), reaching for the root of the *soul* and the personality. The essence of the [*shofar*](shofar.html) is that it has a voice, a kol – קול, but no words, no dibur - דיבור. The mystics explain that the voice is the root of speech and contains far more than the individual finite words. Words may convey information, but the voice conveys the person. This is why prophecy is referred to as “voice”, not words. When [HaShem](hashem.html) tells [Avraham](avraham.html) to listen to Sarah’s prophetic advice the verse says *“*[*Shema*](shema.html) *b’kola* - Listen to her *voice”*, not “Listen to her words”.

***Bereshit (Genesis 21:12)*** *Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her* ***voice****.*

The word *voice* seems extraneous here. The verse could also have read, “Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her”. Why is the word “voice” added? The Torah commentator Rashi[[20]](#footnote-20) states that the word *voice* refers to prophecy and that this verse, “[teaches](teacher.html) us that [Avraham](avraham.html) was secondary to Sarah in prophecy”.

In his commentary on this verse, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch suggested that G-d was really telling [Abraham](avraham.html), “Don’t only listen to her words, her demands; listen to your wife’s anguish, her [fear](fear.html), the tone of pleading the voice of the woman you have been married to for so many years”. In other words, the emotion in our voice is as important as the words which emerge from our [mouths](body.html).

G-d in effect tells [Abraham](avraham.html) to trust the “voice” of his wife. This trust provides a [tikkun](tikkun.html) for the mistrust left by [Adam](adam.html) and Chava.

[HaShem](hashem.html) tells the prophet *“Kra b’garon, al tachsoch -* [Cry](mashal.html) out in your *throat,* do not hold back”;[[21]](#footnote-21) prophecy is not from the [mouth](body.html), the origin of words, but from the throat, the origin of raw sound, which is why the Prophet compares the voice to a [shofar](shofar.html). The blessing we pronounce on [hearing](mashal.html) the [*shofar*](shofar.html) is *“lishmo’a kol* [*shofar*](shofar.html)*”,* to “[hear](mashal.html) the *voice* of the [*shofar*](shofar.html)*”.* The [*shofar*](shofar.html) is raw sound, a raw [cry](mashal.html), and that is why it has the power to open the *neshama, the soul.* All the words in the [world](worlds.html) cannot convey the emotion of a scream of a child in the night. The [*shofar*](shofar.html) is that scream.

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) distinguishes between *kol* (voice), which we just looked at, and *dibur* (speech). *Kol* is the [cry](mashal.html) behind the speech, *dibur* is the expression of that impulse through words. Keep this in mind as we begin examining speech.

# Speech

In the Torah, there is no conception of intellect or imagination separate from [physical](physical.html) speech,[[22]](#footnote-22) even reflective thought is called “[speaking](mashal.html) to [one](one.html)’s [heart](body.html)”. The [midrash](orallaw.html)[[23]](#footnote-23) and the targumim,[[24]](#footnote-24) from the earliest texts on, understand the power of language or speech to be a major part of what distinguishes humanity from other species.[[25]](#footnote-25) In a similar vein, Targum Onkelos[[26]](#footnote-26) translates “nefesh chayah” in Genesis 2:7 as, “And He blew in his nostrils life’s breath and it became in [Adam](adam.html) the spirit (i.e., power) of [speaking](mashal.html)”.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Speech is the [world](worlds.html) of [connection](connection.html).[[28]](#footnote-28) Understood simply, speech [connects](connection.html) the speaker[[29]](#footnote-29) and the listener. A relationship can develop, can flourish, because deep communication is possible by means of speech. In Torah, “[speaking](mashal.html)” is sometimes used as a euphemism for intimacy (“They saw her [speaking](mashal.html) with [one](one.html)…”) *This is not a usage borrowed from a distance*; the parallel is intrinsic.

At a deeper level, speech represents the [connection](connection.html) between higher and lower [worlds](worlds.html). Speech is the mechanism by which an abstract idea which exists only in the higher dimension of thought can be brought down into the material [world](worlds.html): when I [speak](mashal.html), I transform ideas into the [physical](physical.html) medium of sound, which is tangible enough for you to [hear](mashal.html) with the [physical](physical.html) tools of [hearing](mashal.html). Of course, you immediately transform my words back into their abstract state of ideas in your own mind. We have used the [physical](physical.html) medium of speech to transmit non-[physical](physical.html) ideas; we have connected the abstract with the material. We have brought the higher [world](worlds.html) into the lower [world](worlds.html).

Prophecy is a higher form of speech. When a prophet speaks, a direct [connection](connection.html) is formed between higher and lower [worlds](worlds.html). Human *speech* reveals the thoughts and intentions of the speaker (based on the chakmah, the wisdom from [HaShem](hashem.html)), while *prophecy* reveals the thoughts and intentions of the Divine.

Divine speech is ultimately potent in its creativity. The expression used for speech is, “fruit of the lips”. The prophet states that [HaShem](hashem.html)’s word always bears fruit, “For as the rain… descends from the [Heavens](heaven.html) and shall not return there until it has caused the land to flourish and it has given [birth](birth.html) and caused to sprout, and given [seed](flower.html) to the sower… *So shall be My word*…”

Speech is also the act of taking something which lives in potential, i.e. thoughts, and bringing them down into the [world](worlds.html) and making them tangible; they are brought into the [world](worlds.html) of action. Speech is the [connection](connection.html) between the higher and lower [worlds](worlds.html).

[One](one.html) of the [first](one.html) obstacles to understanding the [fourth](four.html) book of the Chumash,[[30]](#footnote-30) Bamidbar,[[31]](#footnote-31) is thinking of it as a book. Bamidbar literally means “in the desert”.[[32]](#footnote-32) But, the root of *midbar*, desert, is “MiDibur - מדיבור”[[33]](#footnote-33) which means literally means “from speech”, but used with the prefix bet, means a “place of speech or [speaking](mashal.html)”,[[34]](#footnote-34) a place where thought is translated into action. Dibur is [speaking](mashal.html) to someone with articulate, verbal communication.

When the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People left Egypt, they went straight into the desert. There’s something special about the desert. It’s very difficult to give directions there. “Turn left at the [third](three.html) cactus” will not get you very far. In [Hebrew](hebrew.html), the word for desert is “midbar”, which is from the root mi’dibur, “from speech”. The desert is the place that is removed from speech. Since the desert is the maximum place of non-speech, of non-direction, it is the ideal place to rebuild the power of speech from the ground up.

And that’s what the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People were to do in the desert. When the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People left Egypt, they had to rebuild this power of speech that had been in [exile](galuyot.html) with them. The  [Zohar](orallaw.html)[[35]](#footnote-35) says that the Divine Word (*dibur*) went into [exile](galuyot.html) during the period of Egyptian slavery and was not totally liberated until the Giving of the Torah when G-d [spoke](mashal.html) directly to every [Jew](gen-jew.html).

To help us rebuild the power of speech, after the [exile](galuyot.html), [HaShem](hashem.html) gave us the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the [Pesach](passover.html) [seder](haggada.html).

The [fifth](five.html) stage of the sedar is called *maggid* (storytelling) and it is [one](one.html) of two Torah-level [mitzvot](cmds613.html) that are fulfilled by the evening’s ritual. (The second is [eating](eating.html) [matzah](chametz.html).) And *maggid* is further distinguished as [one](one.html) of the two [mitzvot](cmds613.html) *(*out of 613) that are fulfilled by reciting a story. (The second being the tithe of bikkurim). The *maggid* portion of the [Haggada](haggada.html) actually combines both of these “[speaking](mashal.html)” [mitzvot](cmds613.html). It begins with several short passages that are directed toward the children who might not stay awake for the whole [Seder](haggada.html). And then it segues into a Torah portion that was to be spoken aloud when we offered our [first](one.html) fruits to the [kohanim](priests.html) ([Temple](temple.html) [priests](priests.html)).[[36]](#footnote-36) The *maggid* is a brief narrative of our [exile](galuyot.html) in Egypt, our [redemption](redemption.html), and the source of our obligation to fulfill the [*mitzvah*](cmds613.html) of *bikkurim*. In the [Passover](passover.html) [haggada](haggada.html), every word of this script is unpacked and elaborated.[[37]](#footnote-37) This is true dibur, true speech.

The whole point of the telling is to take dibur us, and speech, out of [exile](galuyot.html) and use us in [HaShem](hashem.html)’s service.

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) tells us that [one](one.html) of the [first](one.html) reforms inaugurated by the newly emergent conscience was to institute [freedom](freedom.html) of speech. Actually, it was more organic than that. As soon as the balance of power inverted, the gates of inspiration opened and speech emerged from [exile](galuyot.html).

*As an aside*, Each book of the Torah deals with particular [millennium](millenium.html), thousand-year periods. They prophecy to that [millennium](millenium.html) as follows:

The story of [Creation](bara.html) in Sefer *Bereshit* represents the [**first**](one.html)[**millennium**](millenium.html) of the [world](worlds.html)’s existence;

the rest of *Bereshit* refers to the **second** [**millennium**](millenium.html);

Sefer *Shemot* tells of the [**third**](three.html)[**millennium**](millenium.html);

Sefer *Vayikra*, the [**fourth**](four.html)[**millennium**](millenium.html);

Sefer *Bamidbar*, the [**fifth**](five.html)[**millennium**](millenium.html) and

Sefer *Debarim*, the [**sixth**](six.html)[**millennium**](millenium.html). Each of the [ten](ten.html) parshiyot in Debarim (with Netzavim[[38]](#footnote-38) and Vayelech[[39]](#footnote-39) counted as [one](one.html)) represents [one](one.html) century of the [sixth](six.html) [millennium](millenium.html).

Now lets return to our discussion of speech.

The ultimate [liberation](freedom.html) of *dibur*, called [Oral Torah](orallaw.html), is when a person speaks personal truth with such authenticity that it also conveys precisely what [HaShem](hashem.html) sought to reveal through them.  The [Talmud](orallaw.html) declares: “[HaShem](hashem.html)’s seal is truth”[[40]](#footnote-40) meaning that “Where you find truth, [you find [HaShem](hashem.html), and] there you find Torah”.[[41]](#footnote-41) Now let’s return to that [time](time.html) just after dibur, and us slaves, were freed. Let’s see the desert [experience](experience.html) and the effects it had on dipur, speech.

If we look back over the Book of Bamidbar, the book of “In the desert”, we will notice all of the [events](feasts.html) dealt with speech. Let me say that again: *Every* [*event*](feasts.html) *is Sefer Bamidbar deals with speech, for the most part it deals with the misuse of speech*. Consider the following examples:

**Chapter 1: The** [**first**](one.html) **census where the** [**eleven**](eleven.html)[**tribes**](tribes.html) **were counted** (the Levites were NOT counted, which is a story unto itself). It is well [known](daat.html) that a “teller” counts money and [one](one.html) who retells a story is said to “recount” it. Thus, we understand that counting is another way of telling a story.

**Chapter 2: The camping order**. We all understand that there is non-verbal speech that has no sound. The order of the [tribes](tribes.html) in the desert was [one](one.html) such speech. Note that each [tribe](tribes.html) had a place and each [tribe](tribes.html) had its own banner. The story of chapter [one](one.html) continued with a precise count for each of the [eleven](eleven.html) [tribes](tribes.html).

**Chapter 3 & 4:** [**HaShem**](hashem.html)**’s speech and plans** regarding the [tribe](tribes.html) of Levi and their service. The Levites count is now included as part of their speech. As part of this census, money is used to give a silent speech about the [redemption](redemption.html) of the remainder of the firstborn Levites.

**Chapter 5: Speaks of leprosy**, the mis-use of speech for lashon HaRa, evil speech. This pasuk also contains the speech of a sinner when he confesses his [sin](sin.html), and the testimony of the woman suspected of adultery (sota).

**Chapter 6: Speaks of the nazirite vow**, another form of speech. This pasuk also details the aaronic blessing given to the Bne [Israel](gen-jew.html), another form of speech.

**Chapter 7: Speaks of the dedication of the offerings** of the [tribes](tribes.html). These non-verbal speeches each [spoke](mashal.html) to the uniqueness of their [tribe](tribes.html) (despite the fact that they were all the same). This pasuk concludes with [HaShem](hashem.html) [speaking](mashal.html) with Moshe.

**Chapter 8: Details the lighting of the menorah, the purification of the Levites,** with their offerings. This chapter contains [HaShem](hashem.html)’s speech in the form of instructions.

**Chapter 9: Continues** [**HaShem**](hashem.html)**’s speech regards** [**Pesach**](passover.html) **observance**. This pasuk also details the marching instruction speech that [HaShem](hashem.html) gave to Moshe. These detailed instructions also told their own story.

**Chapter 10: Finds the Bne** [**Israel**](gen-jew.html) **making two silver trumpets** to be used to instruct the Bne [Israel](gen-jew.html) on marching and camping. Unlike a plain blast, or a [crying](mashal.html) blast, these blasts were instructive and carried a specific message. This pasuk also details the marching order, another non-verbal speech that was spoken with all of the [bodies](body.html) of every man, woman, and child.

**Chapter 11: Murmuring,** [**speaking**](mashal.html) **evil**. [HaShem](hashem.html)’s [fire](fire.html) devoured the evil-speakers. This pasuk also speaks of the lust for meat and its murmuring. This murmuring was complaining about manna. This pasuk also speaks of the 70 elders becoming prophets.

**Chapter 12: Miriam** [**speaking**](mashal.html) **negatively** about Moshe because of the Cushite. Miriam is afflicted with Tzaraat, leprosy.

**Chapter 13: The spies** [**speaking**](mashal.html) **against the Land of** [**Israel**](city.html).

**Chapter 14: The people all** [**crying**](mashal.html) **and maligning the land**. The people are all murmuring.

**Chapter 15: Offerings and** [**atonement**](atonemen.html). Man collecting firewood on the [Sabbath](sabbath.html) is stoned. This pasuk also contains the [command](cmds613.html) of tzitzit.

**Chapter 16 & 17: The rebellion of** [**Korach**](qorach.html) (a rebellion about who should lead the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People; who should be its “speaker”).

**Chapter 18: Aharon and his sons get the priesthood**. This soliloquy is by [HaShem](hashem.html).

**Chapter 19: The red** [**heifer**](heifer.html). She, too, has a non-verbal message.

**Chapter 20: Murmuring over the lack of water** because Miriam’s well has disappeared. [Edom](edom.html) denied passage. Moshe striking the [rock](rock.html) instead of [speaking](mashal.html) to it. Aharon dies and the people wail for him for 30 days.

**Chapter 21: The Bne** [**Israel**](gen-jew.html) **make a vow to destroy their enemy**. The people murmured against [HaShem](hashem.html) regarding the manna. They also complained that there was no water. [HaShem](hashem.html) will send fiery serpents with a pole serpent for the cure. Sihon and Og are defeated.

**Chapter 22, 23, & 24: Bilaam and Balak to curse the** [**Jewish**](gen-jew.html) **people**. Here we see a [donkey](chamor.html)’s speech, a [Gentile](gen-jew.html) prophet’s speech, and the evil speech of Balak.

**Chapter 25: False worship of Peor**. Phineas kills Zimri and Cosbi.

**Chapter 26: A second census**. Thus we understand that counting is another way of telling a story. Nadab and Abihu die after [offering](korbanot.html) strange [fire](fire.html).

**Chapter 27: The daughters of Tzelafchad want land**. Women always have a greater love for the land.[[42]](#footnote-42) Yehoshua is anointed as the [future](future.html) leader of the Bne [Israel](gen-jew.html).

**Chapter 28 & 29: Offerings made by** [**fire**](fire.html), and [festivals](festivals.html).

**Chapter 30: Vows**. Here we see the proper and the improper use of vows.

**Chapter 31: Midianites are avenged**. All the men and married women are killed. Spoil is divided, part for [HaShem](hashem.html) (Levites).

**Chapter 32: Reuben and Gad want the land** [**east**](east.html) **of the** [**Jordan**](stages.html). There is a back and forth between them and Moshe. Reuben and Gad put animals before the children, in priority. Moshe, rearranges the order to put the children [first](one.html).

**Chapter 33: The story of the** [**journey**](stages.html). Frome Egypt to the Promised land and all the stops in-between.

**Chapter 34:** [**HaShem**](hashem.html) **defines the borders of the land**.

**Chapter 35: The** [**cities of refuge**](elul.html).

**Chapter 36: Moshe allots the daughters of Tzelafchad their** [**inheritance**](inherit.html) **in the land**.

Even if we might otherwise have missed the centrality of this notion, the book’s ‘*orality’* is brought to our attention right from the start: “These are the words that Moshe [spoke](mashal.html).” The text clues us in to the fact that, as opposed to the other [four](four.html) books, Bamidbar, to its very core, is an oral work.

The [fourth](four.html) of the [five](five.html) layers upon which the [world](worlds.html) is built, is the layer of speech. The [fourth](four.html) part of any structure is where all of the action is taking place. Consider the Chumash, the [five](five.html) books of the Torah.

**Bereshit** – something from nothing. – [Ratzon](needs.html) ([desire](needs.html)). This is the point of origin. This is a [male](male%2Bfemale.html) process. This sefer represents the maximal [male](male%2Bfemale.html) process.

**Shemot** – machshavah, a thought with no form. by which the soul is revealed inwardly. It will be revealed externally in Bamidbar as “speech” (*dibur*) and “deed”. A flash of inspiration.

**Vayikra** – Hirhur – imagination. The thoughts become explicit. The plan becomes complete. The [Mishna](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html) that Hirhur (thought) is k'dibur (like speech). If not, there would be no reason to have Hirhur! Hirhur is not like Dibur. If it were, he should say the words![[43]](#footnote-43)

**Bamidbar** – dibur also means a place of [speaking](mashal.html), a thought translated into action – Speech - Any translation of plan into action. This is where the potential is turned into the actual.

The whole book speaks to speech and the misuse of speech, every incident.

And where do we go after the rebuilding, the [tikkun](tikkun.html), of the power of speech? To the “Book of Devarim”, literally, “The Book of Words”.

**Devarim** – The words that were spoken. Maser – action – kol and dibur (voice and speech). All of this sefer’s duplicated [commands](cmds613.html) are the [commands](cmds613.html) needed in [eretz Israel](gen-jew.html).

The recipient, this sefer, gives back what she has received from the [male](male%2Bfemale.html) (Bereshit). Debarim represents the maximal [female](male%2Bfemale.html) level. That is why the words are repeated, or doubled, the job of a woman. This is the root of the oral [law](law.html).

**Notes for** [**future**](future.html)[**study**](study.html)**:**

[Exile](galuyot.html) of speech - [redemption](redemption.html) of the faculty of speech

12 characteristics of reality, [six](six.html)-sided reality bounded by 12 lines.

[Nisan](feasts.html) = right leg = speech = [letter](letters.html) hay ([first](one.html) sound of all speech)

[Pesach](passover.html) = [mouth](body.html) talks ... Moses, the [one](one.html) who represents the bne [Israel](gen-jew.html), could not [speak](mashal.html).

speech = abstract [connection](connection.html) between [world](worlds.html) of abstraction and manifesting it in practice.

[Neck](body.html) = beginning of vocalization: Front = Moshe, back = Paro

Dead are conscious but silent.

[womb](thebirth.html) = Egypt

**\* \* \***

This [study](study.html) was written by

Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben [David](fathers.html) (Greg Killian).

Comments may be submitted to:

Rabbi Dr. Greg Killian

12210 Luckey Summit

San Antonio, TX 78252

Internet address: gkilli@aol.com

Web page: <http://www.betemunah.org/>

(360) 918-2905

Return to [The WATCHMAN](http://www.betemunah.org/) home page

Send comments to Greg Killian at his email address: gkilli@aol.com

1. This study is based on the lectures of Rabbi Dr.Akiva Tatz. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The back of the neck is called HaOref who’s letters can be rearranged to spell Paroh. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In fact it was*kol, crying,*that initiated the redemption: Shemot 2:23. “… the king of Egypt died; and the people of Israel sighed because of the slavery, and they cried, and their cry came up to G-d because of the slavery.. And G-d heard their groaning, and G-d remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob…..” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bereshit (Genesis) 28:12ff [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Chakmah is commonly translated as ‘wisdom’ and is the first of the lower seven sephirot. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Daat* (knowledge) and *dibur* (speech) are linked together. Hence the first time we find *daat* mentioned in the Torah is when Adam knew his wife Chavah. He felt connected to her. It follows that all spoken reproof is really a form of connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Plato (348/347 BCE) was a philosopher in Classical Greece and the founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. He is widely considered the most pivotal figure in the development of philosophy, especially the Western tradition. Unlike nearly all of his philosophical contemporaries, Plato’s entire œuvre is believed to have survived intact for over 2,400 years. Along with his teacher, Socrates, and his most famous student, Aristotle, Plato laid the very foundations of Western philosophy and science. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bereshit (Genesis) 4:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Bereshit (Genesis) 27:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Plural ‘voices’ - Shemot (Exodus) 20:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Tehillim (Psalms) 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Dibur = Speech or words. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘*Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles:* Principle #7 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Principle 7:Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived. No prophet who lived or will live could comprehend G-d more than Moses. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Maharal [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The simple translation of mitzva (pl. mitzvot) is *commandment*, but there is a deeper meaning in the word. Mitzva comes from the root word *tzavta*, which means *connection*. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Rashi comments, “Because Ruach Hakodesh [prophetic intuition] speaks from her throat. She is greater than you in prophecy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 58:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The first term for speech, "dibur" comes from the same root word as "Asseret Hadibrot", the ten words, or commandments. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Midrash (מדרשׁ) is an interpretive act, seeking the answers to religious questions (both practical and theological) by plumbing the meaning of the words of the Torah. (In the Bible, the root d-r-sh [דרשׁ] is used to mean inquiring into any matter, including occasionally to seek out G-d’s word.) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The targumim (singular: "targum", Hebrew: תרגום‬) were spoken paraphrases, explanations and expansions of the Jewish scriptures (also called the Tanakh) that a rabbi would give in the common language of the listeners, which was then often Aramaic. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Bereshit Rabbah [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Attributed to Onkelos, a Roman convert to Judaism thought to have lived c.35-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Targum Onkelos changes “the adam” to “in Adam”. Rashi (ad loc.) also interprets the phrase “nefesh chayah” to mean speech: ‘“And the adam became a nefesh chayah’, even a beast and a [wild] animal are called nefesh chayah, but this [nefesh] of Adam is more living than all of them, because in him was added knowing/dei'ah and speech/dibur”. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Speech - Any translation of plan into action. This is where the potential is turned into the actual. There is always a trace of *chidush* (originality) in true *dibur.* [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. R. Tsadok HaKohen adds that *dibur* always carries some imprint of its spokesperson. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. AKA Torah [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. AKA Numbers [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. A desert is a place where no speech is possible. A desert is like an ocean with no landmarks. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. So midbar is exchangeable with midaber, meaning speech that comes forth automatically, of its own accord. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Speech (dibur) also means leadership in Hebrew, the king rules with his word. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Vaeira 25b [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 26:5-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The Haggada itself states: “To elaborate on these ideas is praiseworthy”. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 29:9-30:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 31:1-31:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Shabbat 55a; Yoma 69b, Sanhedrin 64a. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Rosh Hashana 18a [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. **Eretz** (land) means running towards, while **Shamayim** (heavens) are the endpoints that we were running towards. Thus we understand that women have a greater connection to the lower world, the land, while men have a greater connection to the upper worlds, the spiritual realms. Never the leee, we always want what we don’t have. That is why men seek the lower world and its pleasures, while women seek the spiritual world and its pleasures. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Sotah 32, Rav Chisda [↑](#footnote-ref-43)