



RABBI DANIEL LAPIN.COM  
..:MODERN PROBLEMS ..:ANCIENT SOLUTIONS

Thought Tools

## DRiving up or RiDing down?

January 20, 2010

8th day of Shvat, 5770

Volume III Issue #3

[Forward to a Friend](#)

I was not the nicest high school student. So it was with malevolent glee that I greeted a new teacher when he walked jauntily into our class of rambunctious boys and smilingly told us, "Hi, my name is Mike and I'll be teaching you English. I want us to be friends. We're going to have a fun year."

We boys did have a fun year. Mike did not.

A different type of teacher might have started off by setting the rules and announcing his expectations. These are two entirely conflicting approaches and every new teacher has to make the choice. Do you select Mike's warmth and informality and hope to introduce rules as you go along? Or do you start with structure and rules with the intention of relaxing a bit as time goes by?

The same decision faces everyone cast into a leadership role. Parents of toddlers find themselves torn between wanting to surrender to the cuteness of their offspring and knowing that the word "brat" is another name for a child raised with no discipline. Not only are brats not beloved by others – they themselves are unhappy.

Aspiring entrepreneurs, business leaders and managers must learn how to handle this tension or they fail. Pastors and rabbis often rise or fall on this.

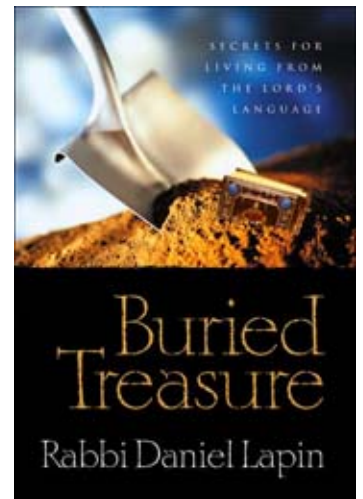
Even car designers struggled between the laws of physics and the desire to stick large fins onto the design of the 1957 Cadillac Eldorado.

This fundamental tension appears in many areas of life sometimes described as tension between firm and soft; male and female; function and form; or law and love.

However, ancient Jewish wisdom most often refers to this spectrum as the tension between justice and mercy, in Hebrew DiN and RaCHaMim respectively. I mention the Hebrew terms because the opening sound of each word, teaches the lesson.

The fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the Dalet which is the sound 'D'. It is

## [Buried Treasure: Secrets for Living from the Lord's Language](#)



Wouldn't you like to know more about:

Love  
Happiness  
Faith  
Wealth

and 24 more important

[Learn More](#)



[View All Products](#)

[Ask the Rabbi](#)

the first letter in the Hebrew word for justice—DiN. Here is what it looks like:



The Hebrew letter which starts the word for mercy—RaCHaMiM—is Reish which has an 'R' sound:



I want you to notice that the 'firm', 'unbending' letter, the Dalet, symbolizing justice, law, and rules, changes direction from horizontal to vertical at a sharp, well defined right-angle. Furthermore, D is a 'plosive' letter, one coming to a decisive stop.

By contrast, the Reish, symbolizing mercy and gentleness, changes direction from horizontal to vertical in a gentle arc with no precise point of change. This letter is an example of a 'continuant' letter, the R sound continuing with no finality

What timeless truth does the shape of these letters teach? Well, combining these two letters gives us two distinct Hebrew words. One places the D first and then the R while the other reverses them.

The first word is DoR and it looks like this:



DoR means generation. It frequently appears in Scripture signifying enduring stability.

Now here comes the second word with our two key letters reversed:



This word also frequently appears in the Torah but its context is one of decline, descent, and general deterioration over time.

The lesson is clear. Whenever you start a new relationship in which you need to lead, maybe even when the person you need to lead is YOU, start off with structure and rules, the 'D' idea. After that framework is established, there is time to introduce a more personal and compassionate approach, the 'R'. This create enduring, stable, and warm conditions.



Dear Rabbi,

I've been widowed now a year and 5 months. I'm 59 years old, and instantly became responsible for running my late husband's business. I just recently ordered [Thou Shall Prosper](#).

With all this new responsibility...it got a little overwhelming. I called on the mercy of God, and am trusting like I have never trusted before. A new walk of faith for me.

The question I have for you is, well...I have to find purpose in my life. I seem to have such a sense of lack. My duty as a wife gave me a sense of purpose. I need advise on this, because I truly need to find myself again. I don't know where or how to begin again. I feel like I'm doing everything because I have to be responsible.

Help me out if you can. I really am looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sonya K.

[See Rabbi Lapin's Answer](#)

[Ask a Question](#)

[American Alliance  
of  
Jews & Christians](#)

The American Alliance of

However, should you mistakenly start off with the soft and shapeless 'R' approach, you will never successfully introduce the disciplined element and your enterprise will decline and descend into chaos.

With happy schoolboy memories, I can assure you that this is exactly what happened to English teacher Mike.

I am constantly fascinated by the messages that flow from the Hebrew language. Hebrew isn't just a means of communication that allows me to explain how to get to the cleaners, tell my wife I love her, or write a business plan. It is God's communication to people, harboring information that helps us live more successfully. I share insights such as the one above, from twenty-eight Hebrew words, in my book, [Buried Treasure: Secrets for Living from the Lord's Language](#). I think you will find it as enriching as I do.

---

## Susan's Musings

This week's musing - [How Dare You!](#)

*A brief housekeeping note: A number of you have written and said that you would like to print some of my Susan's Musings or forward them to a friend, but the various computer powers that be have made that difficult. To solve that problem (I hope), I have set up a blog page at [www.susanlapin.com](http://www.susanlapin.com). From now on, I will post each entry both here and on that page. As time and ability allow, I will post the archives and figure out some of the other available features. You will also be able to leave comments for me and others to read.*

This past week my daughter brought her homeschooled six year old son in for his state-required annual evaluation. Now, Emily (name changed upon request) may have her own family and business and present herself to the outside world as the competent adult she is...

To read the rest of Susan's Musings click [here](#)

Jews and Christians (AAJC) is an educational organization working to advance our nation toward the traditional Judeo-Christian values that are the foundation of America and the blueprint for her greatness.  
[Learn More](#)

[Donate Now](#)

---

Sunday football ends and your radio rabbi returns!

[KSFO](#)

Sundays 1-4 PST

This message was sent from Rabbi Daniel Lapin to [gail@rabbidaniellapin.com](mailto:gail@rabbidaniellapin.com). It was sent from: American Alliance of Jews & Christians, POB 58, Mercer Island, WA 98040. You can modify/update your subscription via the link below.

Email Marketing by  
**iContact**   
try it free

 [To be removed click here](#)

 [FORWARD TO A FRIEND](#)