



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

Thought Tools

Persuasion Power

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Note: Each week a number of you contact us to say, "Where is my Thought Tool?" Since Thought Tools started in January 2008, we have never missed a week. While you can always read the latest 3 issues from our [home page](#), you can increase the likelihood of Thought Tools arriving in your mailbox by adding thoughttools@rabbidaniellapin.com to your safe sender list as well as white listing the following: icpbounce.com, icontact.com and app.icontact.com

Have you ever emerged from a negotiation with the sinking feeling that you were out-negotiated and gave away the store? Perhaps you asked for a raise or requested a specific work assignment but retreated in defeat.

In these situations and in hundreds of other life encounters both at home and at work, knowing how to persuade others to follow the course you wish them to take is of inestimable value.

Few of the strategies found in ancient Jewish wisdom are more useful than knowing how to persuade others by means of our God-given gift of speech.

In the Book of Genesis we encounter three important principles of persuasion.

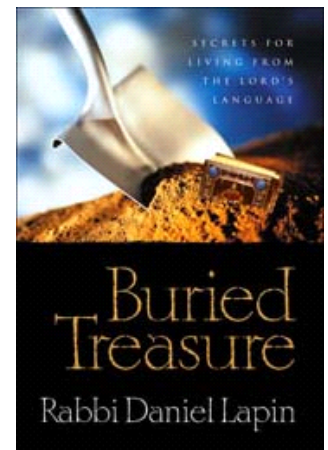
- (i) Talk with not at.
- (ii) Be 100% transparent.
- (iii) Timing is everything.

From Genesis chapter 35 through the end of the book we see that Jacob's first born son Reuben's influence fades while the fourth son, Judah, rises as the brothers' leader. How does he do it?

Judah influences people by utilizing the three permanent principles of persuasion that I listed above. Watch the drama unfold:

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In Genesis 37:20-23, ten of Joseph's brothers deeply resent him and plan to kill him. The oldest son, Reuben, urges them to throw him alive into a pit where he'll die on his own. Secretly, Reuben plans on returning to retrieve him and return him safely to their father.

Meanwhile, Judah speaks to the brothers suggesting that rather than throwing Joseph into a pit to die they should sell him for a few dollars. Here is the crucial phrase—"and his brothers listened to him." (Genesis 37:26.)

Thus we see the first difference between Reuben's ineffective and Judah's effective leadership. Though the brothers complied with Reuben's suggestion of placing Joseph in the pit, the text never says they listened to Reuben. They followed his suggestion because he was the oldest brother, not because he had persuaded them. However, when Judah made his suggestion, they accepted his way of thinking.

Judah's suggestion was a terrible one and one for which he and the brothers pay dearly. However, our focus is on what techniques he used that Reuben did not. Judah had what I call Persuasion Power.

(i) Judah engaged his brothers by including himself among them, "What profit is there in US killing OUR brother?" Reuben addressed the brothers as a group separate from himself saying "YOU should not kill him..." (Genesis 37:22)

(ii) Reuben tried fooling his brothers by suggesting that they achieve their goal of executing Joseph by throwing him into a pit while secretly intending to save Joseph. This contrasts with the second principle of Persuasion Power --- total transparency. Duplicity in negotiation or persuasion is usually detected. At the very least it creates discomfort even if the other party doesn't know exactly why he is uneasy. Judah, while misguided, was direct and honest.

(iii) Finally, in chapter 42 while trying to persuade his father, Jacob, to let Benjamin accompany the brothers back to Egypt, Reuben fails again. This time his failure was on account of bad timing. After losing Simon, Jacob was in no hurry to risk another son. When Reuben impetuously suggests taking Benjamin back to Egypt, Jacob quickly rebuffs him. Judah, understanding the importance of timing, waits until the famine is severe and Jacob himself suggests the brothers return to Egypt (Genesis 43:1-2) Now Jacob is receptive to Judah's insistence upon taking Benjamin back.

One of the most fascinating characters in Scripture, these chapters reveal a Judah who errs, sins, accepts responsibility for his actions and grows into a leader among his brothers. In contrast, Reuben fades into the background.

But all along, Judah teaches us methods of effective verbal persuasion that we can all use in our lives. Identifying with those to whom we speak, having no hidden agendas, and being sensitive to timing are ways to successfully win others over to our way of thinking. May we all be blessed to use such power wisely and well.

Last week we had an unusual number of Thought Tools delivery failures. In recognition of this we are extending through Thursday the 20% off sale on [Buried Treasure: Secrets of Living from the Lord's Language](#), providing you with chapter after chapter of practical and valuable guidance for daily life as seen through the prism of the Hebrew language.

[Ask the Rabbi](#)



Good Afternoon Rabbi,

In your Thought Tools from January 8, 2009, you refer to Deuteronomy 22:4 and mention :

"From this verse, ancient Jewish wisdom teaches that God wants us to help only those who are doing everything possible to help themselves."

I have always felt it morally wrong to give a beggar on the street any money for the reason stated above. I always treat them with respect and say "No thank you" then wish them a pleasant day. Am I acting in a moral fashion?

I ask because you begin this installment with the story of the man giving the beggar a dollar everyday and it made me question whether or not I am acting in a moral fashion or not. I would love your thoughts here?

Thank You for all you do -

With great respect,

Bryan Y.

[See Rabbi Lapin's Answer](#)

[Ask a Question](#)

Susan's Musings

To post comments and feedback, forward to a friend or print, go to www.susanlapin.com. You can also reach me at susan@rabbidaniellapin.com.

This week's musing -
[Building a *Little House on the Prairie* Home](#)
in a *Gossip Girl* World

Have you ever seen the TV show, *Gossip Girl*? Well, I haven't, which means that I went out on a limb a bit by mentioning it in the title of a presentation I am giving in a few weeks, "Building a *Little House on the Prairie* Home in a *Gossip Girl* World." I thought it was a safe bet...

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

To see Rabbi Daniel Lapin's television show, click on the blue button

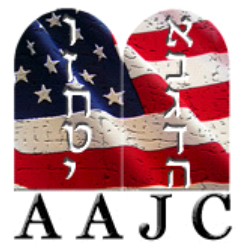


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