



*“Words from the Heart
Enter the Heart”*

SHEMOT > Yitro

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February 10, 2012

Yitro

**Are You Having Trouble
Communicating?**



Meaningful Sermons *“Words from the Heart Enter the Heart”*

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ABSTRACT

Do you often feel that you are not getting through to others? That people are just not getting you and what you're trying to say? Is the problem with you or with them?

Why is it that a brilliant scholar and orator may convey a profound idea that doesn't resonate with his listeners, while another far less erudite person may communicate a thought that is not as cerebral, but resonates with his audience?

The answer – and the secret to all communication – lays in one word: an unusual four-letter word which opens up the Commandments (the subject of this week's Torah reading). The word is *Anochi*, which means “I,” referring to God – “I, the Lord Your God took you out of Egypt...”

But why the unusual form *Anochi*? The more common Hebrew pronoun for “I” is *Ani*?

This one word captures the meaning of true communication, which is not merely the process of conveying messages, ideas and feelings. It is about creating a relationship, a connection and bond between those communicating with each other.

Discover how communication problems are not solved by acquiring a better smart phone. They are not solved by looking outward, but by looking inward.

ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE COMMUNICATING?

The Secret of Reaching Others

1. Are You Having Trouble Getting Through?

Ginsburg was convinced that his wife was getting deaf. She refused to go to an audiologist, so he asked the doctor what could be done.

"Start at the door of the room. Tell her something in a normal tone of voice. If she doesn't respond, move a little closer, still using a normal tone of voice. That should tell you just how deaf she is.

Ginsburg saw his wife was doing the dishes. He said, "I love you my darling."

No response.

He moved a few steps into the room and repeated, "I love you my darling."

Still no response.

He moved closer, until he could almost touch her and repeated, "I love you, my darling."

With this, his wife turned around and said, "For the third time, I love you too."

Do you often feel that you are not getting through to others? That people are just not getting you and what you're trying to say? Is the problem with you or with them?

Do they just not "get it," or is something missing in your words?

Why is it that a brilliant scholar and dazzling orator may convey a profound idea that doesn't resonate with his listeners, while another far less erudite person may communicate a thought that is not as cerebral, but resonates with his audience?

The answer – and the secret to all communication – lays in one word: A word which opens up the most famous statement ever uttered in all of history.

2. *Anochi*

The most famous statement ever uttered in all of history – the Ten Commandments – begins with an unusual four-letter word: *Anochi*. The word means “I,” referring to God – “I, the Lord Your God took you out of Egypt...”

But why the unusual form *Anochi*? The more common Hebrew pronoun for “I” is *Ani*. So why *Anochi*?

Explains the Talmud¹ that *Anochi* is an acronym for *Ana Nafshi Ketovit Yehovit*, which simply translated means: “I Myself wrote and gave it [to you].”

But on closer inspection the actual literal translation is far more intriguing: “I wrote down My soul and gave it [to you].” Or more poetically: “My Soul is inscribed [in these words] that I gave [to you].”

3. Profound Significance

As the opening word of the Ten Commandments, *Anochi* clearly must carry profound significance, which sets the tone and captures the essence of all the commandments and of the entire Torah.

Indeed, the Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak emphasizes that the entire Torah is encompassed in the Ten Commandments, and all of the Ten Commandments are all contained in the first two commandments, which in turn are contained in the first commandment, and the first commandment is reflected in microcosm in the first word, *Anochi*.

Since all of existence originates from and is included in the Torah, which is the blueprint with which the Cosmic Architect constructed the universe, we can conclude that *Anochi* illuminates for us a fundamental aspect of our entire reality.

¹ Talmud, *Shabbat* 105a.

4. The Purpose of All Existence

Anochi captures the essence and purpose of all existence – to inscribe and reveal the soul in our every word and in our every experience.

No small feat.

We live in a highly fragmented and compartmentalized world. The greatest dichotomy is between body and soul, matter and spirit. Yet, beneath the fissured surface an underlying unity connects all the pieces.

Initially, we seem all separate from one another – each of us with our own range of experiences, different exposures and life trajectories. But when we begin to communicate with each other, we discover common threads, shared reactions, mutual interests, which transcend our differences. As diverse as we may be, we learn that we celebrate similar milestones, are amused by similar foibles, shed the same tears, suffer the same pains.

5. Antithesis

Fragmentation belies that unity and is its antithesis.

Human compartmentalization was acutely and powerfully captured in the words of Bertrand Russell. When asked how he, as a professor of ethics, could behave unethically, Russell said, “I am also a teacher of mathematics and I am not a triangle.”

Academics often take pride in their detachment. They say: “I can be completely knowledgeable of a given topic, and it has nothing to do with my behavior, and vice versa.”

Contrast this dualistic attitude with the words of Maimonides, who writes that a true scholar is recognized by his actions: how he talks, walks, sleeps and does business.² He only truly knows what he knows when he has integrated his knowledge within himself in a seamless flow between knowledge and behavior.

² Mishne Torah, Hilchot De'ot 5:1.

6. Way of All Flesh

When he made his statement, Bertrand Russell was following nothing less than the natural laws of all beings – “the way of all flesh” – which seeks to justify why we compartmentalize our ideals and actions. What you teach is not necessarily what you do, and vice versa. Your writing does not necessarily reflect your soul.

Maimonides, on the other hand, was following the lead of *Anochi* – seamless integration between soul and words.

You are what you teach. And you teach what you are.

7. Unifying Soul

The opening word of the Ten Commandments, *Anochi*, defines the essence of our life’s purpose – of all our interactions and of all our words – to manifest the unifying soul in our fragmented universe.

Had God not inscribed His soul into the words, our relationship with the Divine would remain detached.

The same is true on a human level. If all our interactions were commercial and mundane, we would never connect, *truly connect*, with one another.

By inscribing His spirit in His words, every word became imbued with profound spirituality and was able to evoke a unifying tranquility in all of existence.

As the Midrash beautifully describes the state of the universe when God spoke all these words³ of the Ten Commandments which, incidentally, in the original Hebrew are called *Aseres ha’Dibrot*, or Ten Words/Statements:

³ Exodus 20:1.

No bird twittered, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, none of the angels stirred a wing, the seraphim did not say “Holy, Holy,” the sea did not roar, the creatures spoke not, the whole world was hushed into breathless silence and the voice went forth: *Anochi Hashem Eloheycha*, “I am the Lord your God.”⁴

8. True Communication

We, too, can and ought to learn this form of communication – how to inscribe our souls into our words, so that our every utterance becomes a transparent channel for our soul’s expression.

True communication is not merely the process of conveying messages, ideas and feelings. It is about creating a relationship, a connection and bond between those communicating with each other.

A writer, a speaker, a composer inscribes – engraves – his soul in his work. This allows him to reach into the soul of the reader or listener. Words from the heart enter the heart. And a work that is lacking sincerity and soulfulness will not resonate.

True communication means that you say what you are, and you are what you say. In stark contrast to one who “says one thing with his mouth and thinks otherwise in his heart.”⁵

Think of it this way: During an average day how many of our conversations are about superficial subjects, spoken with hollow words? How many of our interactions and transactions are transitory experiences? How many of our desires and craving are fleeting and short-lived? And how many of our words don’t reflect our true feelings and thoughts, and may even conceal them, or are even duplicitous?...

⁴ Shemot Rabba 29:9.

⁵ Talmud, Pesachim 113b. Rambam, Mishne Torah Hilchot De’ot 2:6.

We are instructed to emulate God – “you shall walk in His Ways.”⁶ We thus take the cue from God, who etched His soul into the Divine words He imparted to us, to do the same in the way we communicate with others: to reach deeper into ourselves ... to reveal the soul in every one of our experiences, even casual or trivial ones.

Imagine how people would react to you if they heard your spirit singing instead of your body whining ... your beckoning soul instead of your hawking mouthpiece ... your gentle words instead of your aggressive demands.

9. The Anochi Method

Always remember that people won't care about how much you know until they know how much you care.

You may expound brilliant ideas. You may be an eloquent orator. But your words won't resonate until your listener (or listeners) feels your soul being expressed in your words.

Invest your “*anochi*” – your soul and all of you – in your words, and people will respond.

Try it out: Next time you and your spouse – or child, friend or anyone – are having communication issues, try a new tactic – let's call it the “*anochi*” method: Speak from your heart and soul, and observe the results.

Speak from your heart and soul, and you, too, can bring soothing stillness to a chaotic and turbulent world.

May we all be blessed to do just that. Amen.

⁶ Deuteronomy 28:19. Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot Mitzvot Eseh 8. Mishne Torah, Hilchot De'ot 1:5. See Talmud, Sotah 14a. Shabbat 133b. Sifrei Eikev 11:22. Mechilta Beshalach 15:2.

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