



The Zera Emes Project by Rabbi Moshe Hubner was created to honor and share the Torah of over 250 Gedolim who weren't zocheh to descendants of their own. Their legacy lives on through their words of Torah and emunah that continue to inspire and touch countless lives. By bringing their timeless divrei Torah and wisdom to life, we create a powerful connection to the past to help inspire today's generation. For sponsorship opportunities or to sign up to the weekly newsletter, email weekly@zeraemes.com or visit www.zeraemes.com

Enough, I am your Rav

The Torah uses a variety of expressions to describe speech: ויקרא, ויאמר, וידבר, ויספר, and ויגד. In *lashon hakodesh*, there are no perfect synonyms—each word carries a distinct connotation, even if the difference is subtle. The Torah, being the precise and perfect Word of Hashem, does not choose one expression over another arbitrarily. Every variation reveals a nuance; every shift in terminology is meant to teach. If a “different” word appears where another might seem more natural, it’s deliberate—intended to uncover a hidden layer, a deeper message beneath the surface of the *passuk*.

Chazal teach us that ויאמר denotes a softer way of speaking, while וידבר denotes to a harsher way of speaking (*Makkos* 11a).

With this introduction, Rav Yosef Binyamin Reich asks a compelling question. The Torah cites Hashem telling Moshe Rabbeinu, “Enough, do not continue speaking (דבר) to me regarding this matter,” (*Devarim* 3:26) and uses the term דבר which refers to a harsher way of speaking. Moshe wasn’t arguing or speaking forcefully, he was pleading, אהתקן, with humility, broken-heartedness, and deep yearning, with Hashem to grant him a favor he felt was underserved. Why, then, would Hashem respond with a word implying that Moshe was speaking with a harsh tone? Hashem should have used an expression of “Enough, do not continue (even) speaking softly (אמר) to me regarding this matter.” To answer this, Rav Reich shares an insight he personally heard from the Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a.

The Sar Shalom explained that the exchange between Hashem and Moshe went far deeper than the simple reading of the *passuk*.

Moshe Rabbeinu was begging

to be allowed into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem denied the request, citing a Divine oath that precluded Moshe’s entry. An oath, after all, is not something that can simply be overturned based on another’s request.

But Moshe pressed on. He reminded Hashem of a moment in his past. The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Shemos* 20) tells us that Moshe once made an oath to his father-in-law, Yisro, promising not to abandon him to return to Egypt. Yet when Hashem later commanded Moshe to return to Mitzrayim and redeem the Jewish people, Moshe protested: “But I swore not to go!” And Hashem absolved the oath.

So now, Moshe turned that same argument back to Hashem: “Just as You absolved my earlier oath to Yisro, here too Your oath can be absolved.”



ר' יוסף בנימין רייך

R' Yosef Binyamin Reich's (1836-1928)

father, R' Shimon Yeshaya was a son in law of the Bnei Yissachar, who chose for him the name, Yosef Binyamin. R' Shimon Yeshaya was *dayan* in Ludmar, Dinov, Dolina and Ribatitz. R' Shimon Yeshaya's father, R' Meir was close with the Ropshitzer Rebbe.

R' Yosef Binyamin married the daughter of R' Shmuel Wilner of Holitsh (near Stanislov, passed away, 26 Iyar, 1854) eventually also becoming Rav there. The titles of his *sefarim* *Bnei Yosef* and *Bnei Binyamin* are because, “these are my children.” R' Yosef Binyamin writes, “I saw the words of R' Chaim Vital: ‘One who does not produce children will be forced to return to this world again,’ and I was astounded. Is it fair? Until I saw that he wrote that the Torah that one produces is in lieu of descendants. His rebbi, the Arizal, is the basis for this idea. Therefore, as I see I am going in the physical way of the world, I decided to help my soul to have this *sefer* in lieu of my children. I realize it is not just the production of original Torah thoughts, but to ensure that the words are spread and studied. I beg those who know me to take this *sefer* and to learn from it for my soul.”

To this, Hashem responded with a layered message hidden in the words רב לך that explain the difference between the two situations. The Tosafos (*Daas Zekeinim*) explain: *Rav lach*—“I am your Rav,” meaning that I had the authority to annul your vow, but you are not My Rav; no one stands above Me to annul My vow. Therefore, my oath cannot be absolved and as such, you cannot enter Eretz Yisrael.

The Sar Shalom went further, reading the next words in the *passuk* אל תוסיף דבר as a continuation of this delicate exchange. Although the Gemara (*Moed Katan* 16b) teaches that when a tzaddik issues a decree, even Hashem is compelled to comply, here, Hashem implores Moshe: Don’t go that route. Don’t continue speaking... don’t try to use the power of the tzaddik to overturn My decree and force Me to absolve my oath.”

That plea—אל תוסיף דבר—is not just a refusal. It’s a request from the

Ribbono Shel Olam to His most faithful servant: “Do not speak to Me as a leader, as one who decrees, compelling Me to fulfill your command.”

This was the idea that Rav Reich personally heard from the Sar Shalom of Belz.

Rav Reich builds on this explanation to answer his question. While דבר often connotes harsh speech, it also denotes leadership. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 8a) explains: דבר אחד לדור—there is one leader in each generation. Here, too, the word דבר carries that dual meaning.

Thus, the *passuk* can now be read: Do not continue speaking as a **leader**—as one with the authority to decree that I annul My vow. Do not use the power of leadership to force My Hand.

The Live Version

This profound *vort* appears in Rav Reich’s *sefer Bnei Yosef*. But the description of the Sar Shalom reciting this idea in the presence of Rav Reich is worth learning. It is recorded in the *sefer Doresh Litzion* by Rav Eliezer Hagar who heard it from his father Rav Menachem who was a *dayan* in Holitsh when Rav Reich was there. This description is cited on page 29 (fn. 93) of the introduction of the new reprint of Rav Reich’s *sefarim* (2018)

It was *seudah shelishis* on Parashas Va’eschanan. The Sar Shalom of Belz, זצ”א, sat at the table, his holy eyes brimming with tears that flowed without pause. And with a voice trembling with longing, he shared:

“Moshe Rabbeinu turned to the Ribbono Shel Olam with a heartfelt plea: Please, let me cross over [into Eretz Yisrael]. I beg of You, Master of the Universe, in every expression of supplication, allow me to

cross the Jordan. Let me take just a few steps [in Eretz Yisrael], that I might merit to tread upon the holy soil of the Promised Land.

But Hashem responded, ‘It is a decree before Me. Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me...’ (*Bamidbar* 20:12).

Still, Moshe continued: ‘Ribbono Shel Olam! All my days I have been Your faithful servant. With all my heart, my flesh, and my very soul, I have acted beyond the limits of human strength to increase Your honor and to lead the nation in the path of Torah. I therefore ask — forgive me this once, and accept my *tefillah*, that I may see the goodly Land.’

Once again, the response came: ‘It is a decree before Me.’

Undeterred, Moshe pressed on: ‘Hashem Elokim — You are merciful even in judgment. Please, now magnify Your attribute of mercy and annul Your decree. And if You have made a vow or an oath that

I may not enter the Land, then go and seek to annul Your vow, just as You permitted me to annul my own vow when I swore to Yisro.’

Hashem answered: ‘Moshe, רב לך — there is a Rav over you who may annul your vows, but I have no Rav above Me; there is no one who can annul My vows.’ (See *Daas Zekeinim Mibaalei HaTosafos*)

At that moment, a new thought arose in the mind of Moshe Rabbeinu: If not through annulment, then perhaps through nullification. For the tzaddik has the power to decree and Hashem fulfills it — “The righteous decrees and the Holy One, Blessed is He, fulfills” (*Ta’anis* 23a). Likewise, Hashem may decree, and the tzaddik may annul it (See *Sukkah* 14a; *Tanna D’vei Eliyahu*, ch. 2).

And it was then that he was commanded: Do not continue to speak to Me further regarding this matter.’ (*Devarim* 3:26)