



WANT TO EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN?

HEAR FROM THE HEAD COACH.

Patti Celori Said is the Executive Director of the New England Cognitive Center and one of the creators of the cognitive training program, Mind Aerobics. She'll be joining us for a fascinating research update on maintaining brain health and the importance of mental stimulation.

When: July 25th at 1pm or 5pm (*same presentation*)

Where: Jewish Family Service, 6555 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield

To sign up, or for more information on Mind Aerobics classes, contact Angela Popoff at apopoff@jfsdetroit.org or 248.592.2671.

Jewish Family Service will be offering Mind Aerobics classes starting in September. Classes are organized by cognitive level and meet twice a week for 12 weeks. Each of the 24 classes is designed to stimulate six major functions of the brain:

- Reaction time • Visual/spatial relations
- Attention and concentration • Memory
- Language • Problem solving



spirit

torah portion

Words Have Power



Our Words, Our Bond

So I make a left here? Right. Right? Or yes, left?

Such are the wonders of communication in America ... where a tree can bark, a patient must be patient, and a flying bat can seriously injure an umpire.

Double entendres, homophones and homonyms can be both fun and annoying, depending on what side of the conversation you are on. Such are the realities of a language created by man.

The Torah's language however, must be perfect. In a language used to create the world, every word must match its definition.

As an example, the word for mankind, *Adam*, must match the reality of man. And so it is, when you dissect Adam (aleph, daled, mem), you find that the combination of letters describes the essence of man: Daled, mem (*dam*) blood, the life force of mankind attached to an Aleph, the letter representing God. This perfectly describes mankind's flesh and blood, infused with the spirit of the Almighty, the *Tzelem Elokim*.

With this in mind, we turn to this week's Torah portion and the Torah commandment about keeping your word when making a vow.

It is important to understand that, in general, when it comes to Jewish law, words alone are not binding. When a sale, lease or exchange of goods is to occur, the validity of the agreement depends on an action being taken in order for the agreement to be binding. The conversation merely creates the understanding of what is to occur, with both parties retaining the ability to withdraw from the deal until the action has been taken.

This begs the question then: Why is it necessary to keep one's own promises? Are spoken words that affect only the speaker herself more binding than an agreement between two parties? When no one has relied on you and you wish to renege on your spoken vow, shouldn't that be easier?

The source of this question comes from a lack of understanding. Certainly, in the physical world, a

Parshat Mattot/
Massei: *Numbers*
30:2-36:13;
Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4.



Rabbi Shragie Myers

physical action is necessary to make an agreement binding. But when there is no other physical party, rather a conversation between you and the Almighty, that's a spiritual conversation. In the spiritual world, words have the utmost power.

Words, as clumsy and limited as they are, are the medium by which spiritual thought is

brought into reality in this world. God himself in *Genesis* "spoke" this world into existence.

Once you have spoken a commitment into this world, it is immediately a reality, and it is incumbent upon you to fulfill your word in its entirety.

You may have a thought for years, but it can remain forever an intangible. Speak it aloud, however, and it is now of this world.

This, too, is the power of a spoken commitment. Once spoken out loud, once shared with the world, it is incumbent upon you to fulfill.

A friend of mine recently quit smoking, using this exact method. The first day he quit, he posted on Facebook, "Today is one day that I am free from smoking." After eight days, he posted, "Today is eight days since I have stopped smoking." And so he continued, week by week, until his commitment to quit smoking was so well known he had no possible option to restart.

And so his final post read, "I will no longer be posting how many days I have quit for, as I am done forever."

May we all harness the power of our own words, to create a better place for ourselves and our extended communities to inhabit. ♣

Rabbi Shragie Myers is an educator and the executive director of the Yeshiva Beth Yehudah.