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| **How does our speech influence the people around us?** |
| **Today’s Question for the Board:**    · How does our speech influence the people around us? |
| **Goals:**  Students will:    · Learn the Biblical story of the Meraglim and the connection between speech and action in this story.  · Analyze social dynamics through the study of Pirkei Avot sources dealing with interpersonal relations.  · Understand the consequences not only of their actions but also of their words.  · Develop a schema for a “Ta’anit Dibbur” which we will encourage them to observe on this day and hopefully integrate into their regular social interactions. |
| **Lesson Activities:**  · Hook: Domino Destruction  · Spy Drama I: The report  · Spy Drama II: Israelite Reaction  · Spy Drama III: Yehoshua and Calev’s response  · Wrap up: How could this have been avoided? |

**Lesson Activities**

**Hook: Introducing Dominos**

* Bring the students to the rug to begin the lesson. While students are coming to the rug, continue working on a simple domino structure which should have already been started. When all of the students come to the rug, “accidentally” knock down one of the dominoes, knocking down the whole chain of dominoes

* Focus on one of the dominoes in the middle of the structure, asking students, “Why did this domino fall down? Why did it knock down the domino after it? How could this have turned out differently? Conversation in which students discuss these questions, coming to the conclusion that if the dominoes had been a little farther away, or perhaps stronger, they would not have fallen down.

Follow-up questions: Could changing the layout of this domino structure have changed the end result?

**Spy Drama I: The report**

* Verbally Introduce the story of the Meraglim (spies) from Numbers 13:17-14:10, providing background on why the spies are being sent out. Just like we looked at the impact of one domino on the other dominoes in the structure, we are going to be examining the impact of the words of the characters in the story on the rest of the community.

* Hand out worksheets with instructions for the activity. In this activity, the class will be broken up into groups of 4-5 students. Each group will get a set of dominoes- each set will have 12 dominoes labeled with the names of the 12 spies and 15 or so unlabelled dominoes (representing Am Yisrael). Have a volunteer read through the directions for the first part of the assignment (below).

* Task 1: The report- Each group will be given a single page of text. This page will include a one paragraph summary of Nu 13:17-33. (See last page for summary paragraph). Following the text, there will be three questions for the group to discuss:

1) What did Moses ask the spies to report back on?

2) What did the spies report on at the beginning? What did the spies report on after Calev’s brief intervention?

3) Did the spies follow Moshe’s command?

* Read a translated version of the line from Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Fathers) 1:17: “One who talks excessively brings on sin.” How does this line from Pirkei Avot relate to our passage?

* Dominoes: Using the dominoes that you have, design a model which represents this segment of the story. You can choose to keep your dominoes standing or knock them over, whichever you think represents this story. While designing your model, think about the following questions: Where are the spies in your picture? Where is Am Yisrael? Is God in your picture? If the dominoes are knocked over (or in a position in which they can be easily knocked over), who is going to knock over whom? Write a brief response about what is happening in your model, or record a member or members of your group explaining your model.

**Spy Drama II: Israelite Reaction**

* Once your group has finished the response to task one, pick up a copy of “Spy Drama II: Israelite reaction”. This page will include a one paragraph summary of Nu. 14:1-4 (See last page for summary). Following the text, there will be three questions for the group to discuss: 1) What did Bnei Yisrael decide to do? 2) Why did they make this decision? 3) How did the spies’ report in the previous story impact Bnei Yisrael in this story?
* Read a translated version of the line from Pirkei Avot 4:1 – “Who is a hero? The person who conquers his evil inclination, as it says, “Being slow to anger is better than being strong, and a person in control of his emotions is better than the conqueror of a city.” How does this Mishnah from Pirkei Avot relate to our passage?
* Dominoes: Using the dominoes that you have, design a model which represents this segment of the story. You can choose to keep your dominoes standing or knock them over, whichever you think represents this story. While designing your model, think about the following questions: Where are the spies in your picture? Where is Am Yisrael? Is God in your picture? If the dominoes are knocked over (or in a position in which they can be easily knocked over), who is going to knock over whom? Write a brief response about what is happening in your model, or record a member or members of your group explaining your model.

**Spy Drama III: Yehoshua and Calev’s response**

* Once your group has finished the response to task two, pick up a copy of, “Spy Drama III: Yehoshua and Calev’s response.” This page will include a one paragraph summary of Nu. 14:6-10 (See last page for summary). Following the text, there will be three questions for the group to discuss: 1) How did Yehoshua and Calev respond upon hearing the nation? 2) Why do they disagree with the nation’s analysis of the situation? 3) What do they think the people need to do in order to succeed in coming into the land?
* Read a translated version of Pirkei Avot 1:7: “Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not associate with a wicked person, do not despair about heavenly punishment.” How does this line from Pirkei Avot relate to our passage?
* Dominoes: Using the dominoes that you have, design a model which represents this segment of the story. You can use any item from the classroom that you would like to represent Hashem. You can choose to keep your dominoes standing or knock them over, whichever you think represents this story. While designing your model, think about the following questions: Where are the spies in your picture? Where is Am Yisrael? Is God in your picture? If the dominoes are knocked over (or in a position in which they can be easily knocked over), who is going to knock over whom? Write a brief response about what is happening in your model, or record a member or members of your group explaining your model.

**Wrap up Discussion**

Bring your class back to the rug to have a reflection and summary of their learning experience. You can ask the following questions:

1. Think about the advice that we have learnt in the Pirkei Avot texts, what have we learnt about being positive in our speech?

2. Imagine you are either one of the spies/ Israelites: How would you have reacted in the situation differently?

3. Do you think you could have induced a more positive outcome?

4. Think about situations that you find yourself in today either at school or at home, can you think of an example where you could make a real effort to be positive in order to have a positive effect on those around you?

Explain to the class what a Ta'-anit Dibbur is: A day where we abstain from speaking badly about anyone/any situation negatively. In a similar manner to the way we fast from food on Yom Kippur a Ta'anit Dibbur is a day where we fast from negative speaking.

Ask the following questions:(Using a Think-Pause-Speak protocol)

1. Do you like the idea of a Tan'anit Dibbur; what do you think you could learn from it?
2. Do you think it will be hard/easy for you to do? Why?
3. How do you think you will be able to stop your self from speaking negatively for a whole day?- (Maybe introduce the idea of, think, pause, speak)
4. What should you do if you have something negative to say, can you think of a way to say it is a nice way?

**Summary for Part I:** G-d commanded Moses to send out men from each tribe to check out the land of Canaan. Moses selected the men and said to them. 'Go and see what the country looks like, what are the people who live there like, are they strong or weak, how many of them are there? What kind of towns are there, are they safe? What is the soil like?' Moses added 'Make sure you bring back some of the fruit from the land'.

So the spies traveled and arrived in Canaan. They had a good look around. They cut down some grapes, some pomegranates and some figs. After 40 days they returned to Moses, Aaron and all of the Israelites.

They told everyone what the land was like and showed them the fruit that they had collected. They said 'the land is flowing with milk and honey' they continued 'the people who live there are powerful and the cities are really secure'. The Amalekites live in the Negeb area and the Cannanites live by the sea and along the Jordan.

Caleb (one of the spies) told the people to be quiet. In an encouraging voice he said 'we can do this, we can get the land'. But the other men who were with him said,'we cannot attack the people they are bigger and stronger than we are'. The Israelites began to panic. The scouts continued 'There are giants in the land, the Anakites are giants, we must have looked like grasshoppers to then'.

**Summary for Part II:** The whole community broke into a commotion and they cried the whole night. They came to Moses and Aaron and demanded of them 'if only we had died in the land of Egypt'. They were angry and wanted to know why was g-d taking them too new land I order that they would be killed by the sword. They continued to demand that g-d return them to Egypt.

**Summary for Part III:** Two of the spies Joshua and Calab were really upset about what was happening. They ripped their cloths as if they were in mourning. They said to the whole community 'The land we are going to is a good land, g-d will deliver us, you cannot rebel against him'. They continued 'don't be scared of the other people living there, g-d will protect us'. The whole community prepared to throw stones at the two men