

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“What Kind of Spring Are You?”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 3:1-12; James/Jacob 1:5-8, 18-21, 26-27; 2:8-13, 26; Ps. 19:15; Luke 6:43-45; Matt. 15:17-20

Most of us have experienced a moment when something came out of our mouths that surprised even us. Perhaps we were tired, frustrated, under pressure, or having what we would call a bad day. We said something sharp, hurtful, or poisonous, and then immediately wanted to take it back. We may have explained, “I didn’t mean that,” or, “That isn’t really who I am.” But sometimes the difficult truth is that the trial did not place those words inside us. The trial simply turned up the heat and revealed what had already been boiling in our hearts.

As we enter Jacob chapter 3, it can seem as though Jacob has suddenly changed subjects. He has been talking about trials, wisdom, hearing and doing the Word, partiality, and faith expressed through action. Now he begins talking about the tongue. Yet there is a clear flow of thought running through the entire letter: God desires wholeness, maturity, integrity, and an undivided commitment to His ways. There should be a unity between what we believe, what is within us, what we do, and what comes out of our mouths. The label on the container should accurately identify what is inside, and what comes out of the container should truly reflect the One whose name we carry.

1. MATURE SPEECH BEGINS WITH A HEART SUBMITTED TO GOD

Jacob begins with a warning: *“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, since you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If someone does not stumble in speech, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well”* (Jacob 3:1-2). Those who teach are responsible for the influence of their words, but Jacob quickly makes it clear that this is not merely a warning for teachers. We all stumble. We all trip up in many ways, and one of the clearest measures of our growing maturity is what happens with our speech.

The word translated “perfect” speaks of maturity, completion, or reaching the intended goal. Jacob is not suggesting that we have already attained sinless speech. He is saying that control of our words is outward evidence that God is bringing our entire lives toward maturity. Yet the issue is deeper than simply learning to bite our tongues. Yeshua said that our words are the “overflow of the heart” (Luke 6:45). What is the conversation we are having *inside*? We may be holding our words inside while continuing an angry, bitter, or selfish dialogue within our hearts. That is why David prayed, *“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, ADONAI, my Rock and my Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:15). God is not only concerned with the words that escape our lips. He desires to transform the spring from which those words flow.

2. A SMALL TONGUE CAN DIRECT OR DESTROY AN ENTIRE LIFE

Jacob gives us three vivid pictures: a bit in the mouth of a horse, a rudder directing a massive ship, and a tiny flame setting an entire forest ablaze. *“So also the tongue is a small member—yet it boasts of great things. See how so small a fire sets a blaze so great a forest!”* (Jacob 3:5). A bit is small compared with the body of a horse, and a rudder is small compared with the size of a ship. Yet each can determine the direction of something much larger. In the same way, our words can set the course of our relationships, our families, our careers, our congregations, and even our entire lives.

Words can guide, encourage, heal, and give life, but words can also destroy reputations, fracture relationships, and kindle fires that spread far beyond the moment in which they were spoken. Jacob describes the tongue as restless, unstable, and filled with deadly poison. Humanity has subdued much of the natural world, but no human being has the power to tame the tongue completely. This is why self-discipline alone is not enough. We must look outside our own strength for help. We need the wisdom that comes from above, the implanted Word that has the power to rescue our lives, and the Spirit of God to transform what is taking place within us. The tongue cannot be permanently changed without the heart being changed.

3. DIVIDED SPEECH REVEALS A DIVIDED SPRING

Jacob then exposes the contradiction of using the same mouth to bless God and curse people who are made in His likeness. *“With it we bless our ADONAI and Father, and with it we curse people, who are made in the image of God. From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be”* (Jacob 3:9–10). We cannot separate the way we speak to people from the way we claim to worship God. To speak honorably about the Creator while speaking contemptuously about those who bear His image reveals a dividedness within us.

Jacob asks whether the same spring can pour out both fresh and bitter water, or whether a fig tree can produce olives and a grapevine produce figs. The issue is not merely the opening of the spring; the issue is the nature of the spring itself. What comes through the opening reveals what is happening at the source. In the same way, our words reveal the attitudes, resentments, desires, and wisdom we have allowed to take root within us. When bitter water comes out, we should not excuse it by saying that we were simply having a bad day. The difficult day did not create the bitterness; it revealed that something within us needs to be brought honestly before the Lord.

CONCLUSION

One of the reasons Yeshua’s reputation has been so tarnished in the world is that those of us who carry His name have not always reflected His heart. We wear the label, but what comes out of the container sometimes bears little resemblance to the Manufacturer. We bless God in worship and then speak bitterness, contempt, gossip, or cruelty toward people made in His likeness. Jacob calls us back to integrity—to a

wholeness in which what we confess, what we carry within us, how we act, and how we speak all come into unity with the character of God.

Today, we are invited not merely to promise that we will try harder to watch our mouths, but to come before the Lord and ask Him to examine the spring. Perhaps a trial has recently caused anger, resentment, jealousy, or poison to overflow from you. Do not excuse it, hide it, or blame the circumstances. Bring it into the light. Repent to the Lord, and where necessary, repent to the person who was wounded by your words. Ask God for the wisdom that comes from above and invite Him to make you whole. Let this be the cry of your heart: “Lord, search me and know me. Cleanse the spring within me so that my words will give life, reflect Your heart, and honor the name of Yeshua.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Jacob 3:1–12 connect with Jacob’s earlier teaching about trials, maturity, wisdom, and being doers of the Word?
2. Why does Jacob connect control of the tongue with spiritual maturity and the ability to bridle the whole body?
3. Which of Jacob’s illustrations—the horse’s bit, the ship’s rudder, the forest fire, the poison, the spring, or the fruit tree—most clearly communicates the power of words to you? Why?
4. Think about a recent moment when pressure or frustration caused something unhealthy to come out of you. What might your response have revealed about what was happening in your heart?
5. Is there someone you have wounded through anger, gossip, sarcasm, criticism, or contempt? What would genuine repentance and reconciliation look like in that relationship?

CLOSING PRAYER:

ADONAI, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing before You. Search me and reveal every bitterness, resentment, selfish desire, and divided allegiance that I have allowed to remain within me. Forgive me for the times I have blessed You with my mouth while speaking curses, contempt, or poison toward people made in Your likeness.

Give me the wisdom that comes from above. Implant Your Word deeply within my heart and bring me toward maturity, wholeness, and integrity. Teach me to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Cleanse the spring within me so that my words will bring healing, encouragement, truth, and life. May everything that comes from me faithfully reflect the heart and character of Yeshua.

B’Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.