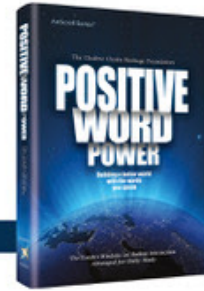


# POSITIVE WORD POWER

CHOFETZ CHAIM HERITAGE FOUNDATION



## False Hope

### In Practice:

If I offer to help someone, I will take my words as a firm commitment and do everything I can to follow through on what I have offered.

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### The Lesson:

When Nachum heard of his neighbor's financial troubles, his heart ached. The family had been quietly enduring unemployment for the past six months. Their reserves were gone, their debts were mounting and the family breadwinner, Moshe, was rapidly descending into depression.

Nachum wanted to help. "Listen, I have lots of friends in accounting," he told Moshe. "I'm sure someone knows of an opening. In fact, my sister's brother-in-law just opened his own accounting firm. I'll bet he still has some positions."

This was the first spark of hope Moshe had allowed himself for months.

Someone with a live connection — a close connection — really might be able to help him surface above the piles of resumes and be seriously considered for a job.

A week went by and Moshe hazarded a call.

"Any word from your sister's brother-in-law?"

"Oh, I have to get ahold of my sister and get his number. She's so hard to pin down. I left her a message a couple of days ago. I guess I'll try her again today."

And so it went. Every week, Moshe checked in with Nachum, whose good intentions were now lost in a sea of poor excuses. The spark of hope had been little more than an illusion, and Moshe was more disappointed than ever.

When a person is in need of a job or a shidduch, networks and connections are vital. Many people feel that they would love to be the Heavenly messenger that makes the match, and they may offer to help out of their sincere desire to do so. However, they may not see that their noncommittal “I’ll try” is being taken by the other person as a golden strand of hope. Therefore, they may not realize the hurt they inflict when they do not follow through.

Obviously, when someone suggests a shidduch or a job he believes to be a good possibility, he cannot guarantee the results. However, once a person raises hopes, he is obligated to see the matter through in a timely and sensitive way. If he builds the other person’s hopes up and then carelessly lets him down, he has made the situation worse.

To avoid inflicting this kind of pain, one must realistically assess the help he can offer before offering it. He should understand how seriously the other person takes his offer; how he trusts that every effort is being made on his behalf and eagerly waits for good news. To do less than one’s best under these circumstances transforms the original comforting words of concern into ona’as devarim. To come through, however, even if one cannot produce the solution to the problem, is a precious act of lovingkindness. It’s the follow-through that makes the difference.

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