“Raca”

Question:

When giving the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Mt. 5:22). What does “Raca” mean?

Our Answer:

“Raca” is an Aramaic transliteration for “reka,” a term expressing contempt, scorn, or disdain. The Greek word “rhaka” means empty, vain or worthless one, signifying a lack of intellect (i.e. imbecile or blockhead). It is only found in Matt. 5:22. The Jews used it as a word of contempt. It is derived from a root meaning, “to spit.”