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The Power of Silence **Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

It says in Pirkei Avot "Shimon says: I grew up among the Sages, and I haven't found something that is better for the body than silence. Its not the theory that is of primary importance but the action. And someone who speaks a lot will be brought to sin." Rabbi Dr Twerski when discussing failed marriages and fights between couples, said that had they been more careful with their words and what they said, these couples could have saved themselves a lot of trouble. Less talk is less trouble. Yirmiya HaNavi compared speech to an arrow. Once an arrow leaves the bow, its gone. The same applies to words. No matter how deeply you regret saying something, once you said it, it has been said and its out in the world.

Rabbi Dr Twerski comments on the fact that the Mishnah uses the term its good for the body. Rabbi Dr Twerski says that during times of stress, anguish and trouble we say things that are harsh which cannot be taken back. He says that these words may not leave black and blue marks but they can hurt and cause more damage then any physical blow. The problem is that G-d created us as speaking beings. If we do not speak, then no one will know what we are thinking or what we need or want. Speech is our method of communication. Rabbi Shimon comes to tell us that there is a way to communicate without having to speak much. He calls "keeping speech to a minimum" an action.. One is able to communicate through one's deeds and behavior.

Lets take an example of a man and his wife. How can the man show his wife that he loves her without have to use excessive speech? One of the ways he can do that is by buying her flowers. Or he can do something even simpler than that. imagine its Sunday morning and the house is now a total mess, because the kids had a messy seudat reviyit the night before. The husband gets up on Sunday morning and after returning from shul cleans the mess that the children made. Now the wife comes down and sees that its not a huge mess like every Sunday morning, knowing that her husband did this so she can have a break, she realizes how much he cares for her and loves her, and no words were even needed.

We can teach our children by example. This is what Hashem said about Avraham Avinu, I love him because he taught his children and future generations. Who did Avraham teach? He acted in an exemplary fashion, and was a role model for Yitzchak and for future generations. Talking is our main method of communication but we are still able to limit our speech and perform the act of communication. One who speaks excessively brings chet. Chet can mean a sin or it can mean nothing. The one who speaks excessively generally does nothing (no action). This is why we say that actions speak louder than words.

The Chafetz Chayim says in the Mishnah Berura that if someone is in the process of eating something really good, and once he is about to go for another piece he stops himself, the Chafetz Chayim says that this is an affliction which atones for his sins. . The Chafetz Chayim tells us that there is an even better fast than one of abstaining from food. This Taanit is called a Taanit Dibur a fast where a person abstains from speaking. He says that this is better for the body because when abstaining from speaking one does not harm the body, and it wont hurt his neshama or make him weak.

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HaGaon Rav Eliyahu told his family in his famous letter, that one should not afflict himself with a fast that hurts the body, but should muzzle his mouth and refrain from speaking, and this is considered Teshuva. This is what Rabbi Shimon was telling us, that if you want to eat and enjoy life then take on a Taanit Dibur since its better for the body. Shelomo HaMelech says that even a foolish person who is silent is considered wise! If a guy doesn't speak you will not find out how foolish he really is! When a person thinks he is performing a very spiritual act, his Neshama is at work, and many times you have great ideas and they should be spoken, but think for a moment that you are taking something that is entirely spiritual, a thought, and turning it into a physical thing, a word. When you think, you are in control of your body, but when you speak, your body is in control of you.

There is good speech. For example, if you go to a mourner's house and speak some soothing words or if your friend is in trouble and you help him speak out his problem and solve it. Giving great advice to help people out. This is extremely praiseworthy. The Rambam says that even with all this we still must be economical with our speech. Even when its a Mitzvah to speak, it is best to speak as less as possible.

The Gemara tells us that Hashem created 10 measures of speech and women took 9 out of the 10. Now what is the reason that the Gemara tells us this? Rav Chaim Freidlander explains that this is the women's purpose and its her being. The job of women is to be involved with chitzoniut. And by doing that, she is doing her job as being an ezer kenegdo. A man's purpose is to be a thinker! To learn Torah and Halacha and Kabbalah, this all requires development of the inside. The silence that a man has is good for him, and the woman's speech is functional for her, but the speech that the woman has must be Kosher! Women are allowed to speak, to be able to function, but they must make sure to stay away from bad speech, and even though they need to speak they must be careful about what they speak about. Rav Friedlander says that it is in our nature to want to talk and to talk a lot, but we must work slowly to develop a system to be able to cut our talking down to what is necessary.

Think before you speak. Imagine the following situation. A few women are sitting in a room speaking to one another and one woman says you will never believe what my little girl did today it was so cute she wanted to help me make coffee so she took the pot to the bathroom and filled it up with toilet water, and the other one goes *aaaww* that is so cute. Do you know what my little boy did today? He took a towel and put it over his head and said look im davening like dad. Now the third woman in the room is not able to have children. **IMAGINE THE PAIN SHE IS FEELING!!! THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK!** Realize my dear people the Zohar Hakadosh says that the way you make a person feel in this world is the way you will feel **FOREVER** in Olam Haba!

The only way to avoid such devastating situations is to limit your speech, because if you do not start to think before you speak then there will be many situations like this one! Then you will say okay so I will speak the bad stuff in front of her. For example, my child misbehaved in school and the Rabbi called me to complain. But the woman who cant have children is thinking **I WISH I had a child that can misbehave!** And this is Kosher speech **OH HOW CAREFUL WE MUST BE WITH WHAT COMES OUT OF OUR MOUTHS!**

Woe is to a man who lets something come out of his mouth who doesn't understand how he is saying it! Every word that comes out of your mouth is written and recorded whether for good or for bad. (Midrash Tanchuma) Can you imagine the scene in Shamayim when they play everything you said

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You will realize that there are many things that you said that you wish you didn't! The Zohar says that when a person is born, Hashem gives them a certain amount of words for a lifetime and after they use up that number they cannot speak anymore! The Orchot Tzaddikim says that the tongue is very light and it goes very quickly, and we must weigh it down so we will not speak too much. When your friend is speaking be quiet and do not speak until the other person is done! Shlomo HaMelech says that one who does not listen is a fool. Ezehu Chacham? Pirke Avot asks? Halomed Mikol Adam. How can you learn if you never listen!!?

One who is quiet is saved from many sins, Lashon Hara, lying, cursing, flattery, etc! Who is the person who has a HUGE portion of Olam Haba? Those who can take embarrassment without answering back! David HaMelech is walking with his army and Shimi Ben Geyra walks out and throws stones at David and curses him. The soldiers want to kill him. But David HaMelech says no don't kill him, he isn't cursing me, Hashem is, I did something wrong and Hashem is telling me! One who can respond like David to a situation like this has a huge reward waiting for him in Olam Haba.

The Orchot Tzaddikim tells us to be very careful not to embarrass anyone, and we should not be bothered by someone who is trying to embarrass us. We should not bring up past pains. Don't tell someone, for example, oh you look gorgeous I remember when you were a fat boy! Don't even remind someone of painful times in joking manner! Do not remind a baal teshuva of his past life! It could be a joke to you, but painful for the other person!

Just like a store, at times it is open and at times it is closed, our mouth must be the same way. There are times when we should speak and there are times when we should be quiet! Watch your mouth like you watch your gold and silver and diamonds which you lock in a safe! We are all into Segulot, everyone knows all the segulot better than they know the mitzvot, The Orchot Tzaddikim says that if a person watches his mouth like he does his diamond and jewels it is a great segula to be zoche to pray with Kavanah! A quiet person has much more fear of Heaven than one who talks too much.

Rabainu HaKadosh who compiled the Mishnah, never spoke a useless word in all his life! With all the people he had to speak to, he managed to not speak a useless word! He was the Nasi of Klal Yisrael! The Kotzker Rebbe says that our egos stand between us and Hashem, we speak so people will know how funny and smart and amazing we are! Work on perfecting yourself on the inside and don't worry so much about what everyone else thinks.