

The Weekly Farbrengens



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SPEAKING WITH CARE (I)

THE WISDOM OF SILENCE

Shlomo HaMelech said, "There is a time to speak and a time to be silent." *Chazal* teach us to speak words of Torah, but to minimize unnecessary chatter.

(קהלת ג, ז, חולין פט)

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All my days I have grown up among *chachomim* and have found nothing more beneficial for a person than silence." Rebbi Akiva said, "A fence around wisdom is silence." This refers to unnecessary speech in worldly matters.

Chazal say that silence is good for the wise; how much more is this true for others. The best remedy is silence, for it spares a person from many issues.

(אבות א, יז, ג, וברע"ב, פסחים צט ע"א)

Rambam speaks of five kinds of speech: (1) speaking as a *mitzvah* – such as studying Torah, which is equal to all other *mitzvos*; (2) forbidden speech – like falsehood, *lashon hara*, cursing others and unclean language; (3) Redundant speech which brings neither benefit nor harm – such as discussing current events and the news. (4) Commendable talk – praising positive things and noting the damaging effect of negative things. This includes praising the righteous and their doings so that others will follow their ways, and degrading the sinners and their conduct so that they will be despised in the eyes of all. This can also be done by relating a story or singing a song. (5) Permissible speech – that which is necessary for day-to-day living and for business. One should try to concentrate most of his speech on that which is a *mitzva* and commendable, and minimize the rest.

(פיהמ"ש ל אבות א, יז)

In *Eretz Yisroel* they would say, "Speech is worth a *sela*, silence is worth two," implying that even permissible speech should be limited.

(מגילה יח ע"א)

Chazal observe that HaShem placed the tongue behind two walls, the teeth and the lips, so that one refrain from inappropriate speech.

It is said that a person was created with two ears and one mouth, so that he knows to minimize his speech.

(ערבין טו ע"ב, ארחות צדיקים שער השתיקה)

The Me'iri writes: Unnecessary speech is no different than the sounds made by animals.

(ס' התמיד להמאירי ע' ב)

whatever leaves his mouth he should fulfill," to mean that if one guards his speech, everything he says will be fulfilled by *HaShem*.

(קדושת לוי פ' מטות)

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

The chossid R. Zev Vilenker said about himself, "The Alter Rebbe's look affected me in such a way that I should never speak without thinking." Indeed, throughout his entire life, whenever a motion or hint would suffice, he would abstain from speaking.

(אג"ק הרי"צ ח"א ע' עדר)

R. Nachman of Breslov once said, "In our childhood we learn to speak, and as we age we learn to keep silent. That's the problem! We learn to speak before we learn how to keep silent..."

(טללי תשובה ע' 219)

CONSIDER

Is there a benefit to silence besides avoiding negative speech?

Why are we more careful about what enters our mouth than we are about what comes out?

HOLY SPEECH

Since the power of speech is an expression of the *Shechina* within a person, one must try to use it for holy purposes. For this reason, the tongue is hidden in the mouth, just as a treasure is kept concealed and locked.

(ראשית חכמה שער הקדושה פ"א)

After the passing of R. Yehuda ben Shoshan in the upper Galil, he appeared in a dream to his *talmid* R. Lapidos; his face shone like the sun and each hair in his beard, like a blazing torch. The *talmid* asked what he had done to merit such *kedusha*, and he replied that throughout his lifetime he had not spoken unnecessarily. A person's speech is similar to *malochim* and one should use it for *kedusha*.

(ראשית חכמה שער האהבה פ"ו)

The great chossid and *mashpia* Rashbatz would advise the chossid who would fast, "Instead of fasting with your stomach, fast with your mouth!"

(לשמע אוזן ע' 222)

R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev would explain the *possuk*, "One should not desecrate his word;

R. Avrohom, the Trisker Maggid, once said, "For yourself you do not need to speak, for thought would suffice; you only speak for the benefit of your friend. Stop and think for a moment: perhaps your friend is not interested in this 'favor' of yours..."

(טללי תשובה ע' 219)

When R. Simcha Bunim of Pshischa was instructed by his Rebbe, the Chozeh of Lublin, to journey to a small town, he asked some chassidim to join him, and they set out without knowing the purpose of their trip. When it was time to eat, R. Simcha and the chassidim were informed by their host that they were going to be served *fleishigs*, whereupon they began to question how the food had been prepared and delved into many *halachic* details. Suddenly, they were interrupted by a beggar, warming himself near the fireplace, "You are so careful with what goes into your mouths, but you don't monitor what comes out – your words!"

When R. Simcha Bunim heard this, he understood why his Rebbe had sent him, and promptly set out on his journey home.

(סיפורי חסידים זיון תורה ע' 95)

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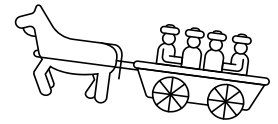
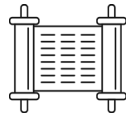
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CHIPS BAG ON SHABBOS

What is the best way to open a bag of chips on Shabbos?

A full-fledged utensil may not be built or dismantled on Shabbos due to the *melachos* of *Boneh* and *Soser* (building and dismantling). Yet, the Gemara says that one may rip open a container fashioned from palm leaves to access the food inside it.¹ These “flimsy” containers aren’t subject to the prohibition of *Soser*, especially because they are subordinate to the food inside and don’t have significance on their own merit.²

Regarding the opening of cans, some *poskim* recommend rendering them unusable before opening to circumvent the prohibition of “building” a usable can (see issue 311). This isn’t necessary for bags, which are seldom reused. While some *poskim* hold the contents must be emptied right away, the custom is to be lenient and allow using the bag until the contents is consumed.³

What about the *melacha* of *Korei’a* (tearing)?

Chazal state that one may tear the skin covering of a barrel, provided one doesn’t make a nice opening (which would transgress *Makeh B’patis*, perfecting a utensil).⁴ Some *poskim* explain that this destructive tearing is only *midrabanan*, and an allowance is made for the sake of food and possibly other Shabbos needs. However, the Alter Rebbe holds that *Korei’a* only applies to separating two pieces that are attached, but not to a substance that is a single entity, such as the skin on the barrel, or paper or plastic in our times.

Separating a bag at its glued opening would be prohibited. Some claim that according to the Alter Rebbe there must be a third substance that attaches the two parts, and today’s snack bags that are heat sealed without glue (as is apparent from the lack of a sticky residue) may be opened. However, there doesn’t seem to be a basis for such a distinction.⁵

If the package has a perforated line where to rip, some *poskim* are concerned for the *melacha* of *Mechatech* (cutting to a specific size).⁶ Yet, others counter that this isn’t one’s intent, and the furthermore, the bag has no importance.⁷ In practice, one may be lenient.

Of course, when tearing a package, one must avoid ripping the print on the package. However, as long as one is cautious, one needn’t be concerned if letters are torn by accident, since this is unintended (*davar she’eino miskavein*) and it not inevitable (*psik reisha*).

1. ראה או"ח סי' ש"ד ס"ח.
 2. ראה אג"מ ח"א סי' קכ"ב אות ט'.
 3. ראה חוט השני פי"ח לחומרא, אבל
 ראה להלכה סי' ל"ב ס"ה שרוב
 הפוסקים מקילים בזה.
 4. תוספתא שבת פי"ז ה"ט.
 5. הוראת הרי"א העלער שליט"א.
 6. ראה ארחות שבת פי"א הע' ג"ב.
 7. מנחת שלמה ח"ב סי"ב.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

R. YAAKOV YISROEL OF TCHERKAS

R. Yaakov Yisroel of Tcherkas was born to R. Mordechai of Chernobyl in 5554 (1794), and he married the Mittlerer Rebbe's daughter, Rebbetzin Devorah Leah. During his father's lifetime, he became a *maggid* in Hornosteipel and later moved to Tcherkas. He passed away Shabbos the 13th of Elul, 5636 (1876).

After their marriage at a young age, the Tzemach Tzedek and his brother-in-law R. Yaakov Yisroel would spend their time learning in a secluded attic.

R. Yaakov Yisroel decided to play a prank on the Tzemach Tzedek. He dressed two poles in a robe, and sticking them up to the attic where the Tzemach Tzedek was sitting, he imitated the voice of a soul asking for a *tikun* (path to rectification).

The Tzemach Tzedek stealthily moved to grab a water pail that lay in the attic. Pouring it down on R. Yaakov Yisroel's head, he exclaimed, “*Tahor, tahor!*”

(רשימת היומן ע' רפ"ט, וראה תר"מ ח"ג ע' 288)

The Tzemach Tzedek and R. Yaakov Yisroel once performed *gilgul sheleg*, the practice of rolling in the snow as a form of atonement. When they entered the *beis midrash* to warm up, the Alter Rebbe saw them and exclaimed “Ah!” He then placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

(רשימת היומן ע' רצ"ז)

An intense discussion once broke out between R. Yaakov Yisroel and the Tzemach Tzedek about a certain *shochet* who had committed a grave *aveira*.

At the end of a *halachic* correspondence, R.

Yaakov Yisroel wrote to the Tzemach Tzedek that the *shochet* himself was by him and he had not noticed any remnant of the *aveira* on his forehead. The Tzemach Tzedek replied that the mark had been washed away with tears of *teshuvah*, but since there were witnesses to what he had done, and halacha follows what is physically visible, his *shechita* is forbidden.

The Rebbe told this story and concluded, "This goes to show that even when *teshuvah* doesn't help for the earthly *beis din*, it still help one's judgment in the *beis din shel maalah*."

(ש"פ עקב תשי"א)

The *shidduch* between R. Yaakov Yisroel and the Mittlerer Rebbe's daughter came about as follows:

The Alter Rebbe was once visiting R. Nochum of Chernobyl, and the Alter Rebbe reminded him that their Rebbe, the Mezritcher Maggid, had once said that Moshiach will be a descendant of either his oldest or youngest disciple. The eldest talmid was R. Nochum of Chernobyl and the youngest was the Alter Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe suggested, "Let us not remain in doubt and arrange a *shidduch* between our children."

The Alter Rebbe then entered the room were R. Nochum's young grandchildren were sleeping and felt each one's head. When he reached R. Yaakov Yisroel, he said that he is choosing him as a husband for his granddaughter Devorah Leah, the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe.

When the couple grew older, the *chassuna* took place in the presence of the Alter Rebbe who said the *maamar* "*Shir Hashirim Asher Lishlomo*". After the *chassuna*, R. Yaakov Yisroel remained in Liadi to learn with his brother-in-law the Tzemach Tzedek and they set up a fixed *shiur* with the Alter Rebbe.

A Moment with The Rebbe



BRIBERY

The Jewish mayor of New York, Ed Koch, came to the Rebbe several times, once spending half an hour in *yechidus*. At the Purim 5746 (1986) *farbrengen*, he sat on the dais not far from the Rebbe, and the Rebbe addressed some public issues.

When he ran for reelection in 5749 (1989), he came to the Rebbe for a *bracha*. During the brief encounter, he told the Rebbe that the Rebbe's leadership is appreciated not only in New York,

and not only within the Jewish community, but throughout the world. Saying so, he began heaping praise upon the Rebbe.

Suddenly the Rebbe interrupted him. “Do you want to bribe me?” the Rebbe asked.

“Oh, I see that you are smart!” the mayor exclaimed.

“That is also bribery...” the Rebbe replied.

(Zorea Tzedakos Matzmiach Yeshuos, Page 136)