

כ' טבת תשע"ט
DON'T TALK, JUST LISTEN

ויהי בימים ההם ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא בסבלתם וירא איש מצרי
מכה איש עברי מאחיו. ויפן כה וכה וירא כי אין איש ויך את המצרי
ויטמנהו בחולי¹

Speech is a unique gift that the **הקב"ה** bestowed specifically on man, setting us aside from all

of the other creatures of the world. When used incorrectly, one is essentially saying the thing that makes them human isn't important. Therefore, the **הקב"ה** sends punishments that show what it's like to not be human. By one who speaks **הרע** לשון הרע, we see a skin disease appear, and he is confined from the camp, alone, for a week. By the **מרגלים**, we saw the very device of speech, the tongue, being eaten away by maggots. As we get into the story of becoming the Jewish People, I felt it was important to see what makes us people first. Sometimes we may abuse our privileges, and we may not know of the terrible results that will occur down the line.

Our story involves **משה** leaving the confines of **פרעה's** palace, and finally seeing what his brothers are going through. The first thing he lays his eyes upon is an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jew. **משה** decided that the right thing to do was to kill the **מצרי**, as a non-Jew who beats a Jew is **חייב** ² **מיתה**. The backstory behind the fight is quite interesting, as brought down by the **מדורש**.³ When the Egyptian taskmaster rounded up the workforce, he set his eyes upon a very beautiful Jewish woman. After her husband had left, the **מצרי** went into the house, and had relations with the woman, with the woman not knowing it wasn't her husband. When the Egyptian found out that the husband found out what had happened, he started to beat the husband. This woman was **שלומית בת דברי**, who was famous for being the mother of the blasphemer.⁴ What was the household like that this kid grew up having a **הקב"ה** to curse out **היה אמינא** and then eventually went through with it?

The **פסוק** tells us that he was "the son of an Israelite woman, who was the son of an Egyptian man." We know from the seemingly extra word "איש" in "איש מצרי", that it must be referring to a specific man. The only other time **איש מצרי** is used (aside from the daughters of **יתרו** referring to **משה**) is by the story of the **מצרי** **איש** beating the Jew.⁶ In terms of his mother, the **מפרשים** tell us how her name signified her character. **שלומית** comes from "שלום", which is a greeting. **דברי** comes from "דבר", meaning speech. It also comes from "דבר", meaning a plague (as we see in the **מכות**). We see that **שלומית בת דברי** was very talkative, always saying hello to every man she encountered.^{7,8} While this may seem like a nice gesture, the delineates the conditions where a man may divorce his wife, without **משנה** being obligated to compensate her with her **כתובה**. The conditions are put into two categories, "העוברת על דת משה ויהודית". One is considered to be violating **דת משה** when she violates **הלכה**, while violating **דת יהודית** involves engaging in behaviors unbecoming to a Jewish woman, such as talking to every man she sees. With a father who grew up high in the immoral Egyptian society, and a mother

¹ שמות ב.יא-יב

² עיין סנהדרין נח ע"ב; אבל להלכה, עיין י"ד החזקה להרמב"ם הלכות מלכים יו. עם כסף משנה

³ שמות רבה א.כח

⁴ ויקרא כד.י-כב (בפרט פסוק יא)

⁵ שם י

⁶ גור אריה שם

⁷ רש"י שם יא ד"ה "בת דברי"

⁸ ויקרא רבה לבה.

⁹ כתובות עב.

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who was acting immorally by Jewish standards, it's clear how it is that this blasphemer was able to do what he did. Without the proper upbringing and education, one is destined for doom.

This concept of words being destructive to one's life has reached the world of חסידות and קבלה. When I first heard this as a kid, I thought my friends were making it up. However, after doing some research, I have found a source that quotes this. The Shandishover Rav, a תלמיד of the נועם פסוק¹⁰ writes that everyone has a finite amount of words in their lifetime. He bases this on the פסוק¹¹ of "נפשי יצאה בדברו", "I was faint because of his words". Because of his words, הקב"ה is saying that He was faint in a sense, meaning the נשמה he gave man left because of his speech. Therefore, the דרכי צדק warns us to use our words wisely, as once we use them up, we lose our privilege of speech, and of life.

While it is definitely possible that the דרכי צדק isn't literal, it teaches us an important lesson nonetheless. We were put here for a purpose. We have to serve הקב"ה in the best way we possibly can. Oftentimes, engaging in unnecessary chit-chat and badinage, if not leading to an obvious negative, is just a pure waste of time. רבי יהודה and רב דימי both taught¹² that silence is worth more than whatever you're going to say. Your lifespan may not decrease because of this conversation or argument, but your short window of time to be the best person you can be is dwindling, because this particular conversation isn't leading to anything productive. This doesn't mean to say that we can never talk about our interests such as politics, sports, literature, and the like. By having common interests, we form relationships with our friends and people in our environment, that are vital to being able to serve הקב"ה. However, we learn from the דרכי צדק that we have to be careful with the way we speak, and we learn from שלומית בת דברי to be careful who we speak to. הקב"ה grants us so many gifts every second. We are constantly able to breathe, walk, talk, think, eat, and many other things we don't realize and often take for granted. Just as easy as it is for הקב"ה to give us all of these things, He can take them away too. By being careful with our speech, we can gain a greater appreciation for the wonderful gift we have. אם ירצה השם, we should be able to recognize הקב"ה's benevolence even without the absence of these gifts, which will ultimately lead to a greater appreciation for life, bringing about a desire of דביקות and great strides in our השם עבודת.

¹⁰ דרכי צדק א.נג

¹¹ שיר השירים ה.ו

¹² מגילה יח. עם פרש"י ד"ה "סמא"