SPRINGING WITH CARE (III)

CAREFUL SPEECH

A peddler once wandered through the markets near Tzipori announcing his wares: “Who wants to buy life?” Rebbi Yannai heard him from his home and called the peddler over. “No, sir,” said the man. “It’s not for you or for people like you.” When Rebbi Yannai insisted, the man approached and opened a Tehillim to the pesukim, “Who is the man who wants life?... Hold your tongue from speaking evil...” Rebbi Yannai confirmed his claim by quoting the advice of Shlomo HaMelech, “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue protects himself from troubles.”

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel once asked Tavi, his servant, “Go out to the marketplace and buy me a good food.” Tavi returned with the tongue of an animal. Rabban Shimon then asked him to buy something evil. Tavi returned, once again, with a tongue. In response to Rabbon Shimon’s surprise, Tavi replied, “Both good and evil come from the tongue. In response to Rabbon Shimon’s question, the tongue said, “I will save you, and you will see that I am in charge.”

The King of Persia was once unwell, and his doctors prescribed the milk of a lioness. One brave man responded to the challenge, and set out with ten goats. Nearing the lion’s den, he stopped at a distance and sent a goat towards the lioness, which she quickly pounced upon and devoured. The next day, he came a little closer and gave her another goat. After ten days, he was able to approach the lioness, pet her, and take some milk in peace.

Napping on his way home, he dreamt that his farm, and took his leave. Reb Mordechai then explained the background to this event to his talmid. The visitor had been close to the tzaddik, who had lent him the strength to stay away from sin, but since his visits had dwindled, he had been dragged down by many aveiros. Too embarrassed to appear before his Rebbe in this state, he continued to fall lower, until after a long while he decided to forsake Yiddishkeit completely. However, before doing so, he decided to visit Neshchiz just one last time as a test: If he would be accepted warmly, he would know there was hope, and he would begin behaving like a proper Yid. Reb Mordechai concluded: “I didn’t want all my hard work and my tefillos on behalf of this Yid to be endangered by your rash tongue. That’s why I asked you to go home a few days earlier.”

The stranger fled, but the tzaddik, sensing that something had happened, hurried home and asked who had come. Hearing the story, he ordered Reb Naftali to hurry and bring the visitor back.

When the stranger arrived, Reb Mordechai welcomed him warmly and asked why he had not come for so long. The man promised to come more often, offered the tzaddik gifts from his farm, and took his leave.

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Reb Mordechai explained that in addition to refraining from speaking negatively, one should also make a point of using his speech for good things. In fact, by increasing positive talk, one automatically comes to refrain from bad speech. After all, this is the approach of Chassidus - to banish the evil by increasing the good.

CONSIDER

Why is so much ascribed to the tongue if it only expresses what’s inside the person?
How does speaking positively hold a person back from speaking negatively as well?

HOLD YOUR TONGUE

After spending a year learning at the feet of Reb Mordechai of Neshchiz, Reb Naftali of Ropshitz was suddenly advised by the tzaddik to return home. He pleaded to be allowed to remain but was ignored, so he turned to the Rebbetzin. When she requested that Reb Naftali be allowed to stay, Reb Mordechai agreed, but remarked, “I hope there will be no reason for regret.”

A few days later, while Reb Mordechai was still in shul, a stranger came to his home. Reb Naftali, sensitive to the visitor’s aveiros, called out, “Get out of here! How dare you come to the Rebbe’s home!”

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MINyan WITH MINORS

Can a child holding a chumash be counted for a minyan?
The recital of a davar shebidkusha (e.g. kaddish, barchu, kedusha) requires a quorum of ten Jewish men, a gathering on which the Shechina rests.1 A boy who is thirteen years old2 may be counted, and an honest looking child is believed to say that he is thirteen.3

Shulchan Aruch quotes an opinion that a boy over six years old and who knows to Whom we are davening may be included as one of the ten, for the Shechina resides upon him as well. (Still, there must be nine adults, out of respect to the davar shebidkusha, so that it at least seems as ten adults in the room.) Others disagree and hold that the Shechina only resides when there are ten adults.

The Alter Rebbe rules like the stricter opinion, but writes that one needn’t protest against those who are lenient in times of need, preferably with the boy holding a chumash. However, they may only rely on this leniency for obligatory parts of davening (kaddish, barchu, kedusha, krias hatora, and kaddish tiskabel), but not for customary parts (kaddish yasom, kaddish drabanan, birchas kohanim).4

If one finds himself in such a minyan, he need not leave, though one needn’t protest against those who are lenient in times of need, preferably with the boy holding a chumash. However, they may only rely on this leniency for obligatory parts of davening (kaddish, barchu, kedusha, krias hatora, and kaddish tiskabel), but not for customary parts (kaddish yasom, kaddish drabanan, birchas kohanim).4

Maftir for a Minor

The Alter Rebbe writes that although we customarily don’t give children aliyyos, a child may be counted with maftir and he may read the haftora (even of the four special parshiyos).5 However, the Chabad custom is not to give children maftir unless there’s a great need.6

One reason for this may be due to the importance of maftir and its brachos.7 Additionally, there is concern that if we permit children to receive maftir, people will assign maftir to children who cannot read the haftora.8

R. Shmuel Gurary

R. Shmuel was one the ‘Yoshvim’ - young men who learned in Lubavitch in the times of the Rebbe Maharash, and was instructed by the Rebbe to go into business. He was the trusted agent of the Rebbe Rashab in community work. He was devoted to the success of Tomchei Temimim and many other things that the Rebbe Rashab stood for, and he supported them financially.

In the summer of 5680 (1920), the economic situation in Russia took a turn for the worse, and many of the wealthy chassidim lost their possessions. As a result, the situation of the yeshiva Tomchei Temimim reached a point that on some days there was simply no food for the bochurim.

R. Shmuel had moved to Rostov the previous year and had dedicated himself to supporting the yeshiva. At that point he was not a rich man; in fact, he had lost everything in the revolution and the economic ruin. Yet R. Shmuel took out loans and sold expensive possessions, donating all the money for the talmidim. The yeshiva in Rostov continued to exist with all sixty of its bochurim for another full year due to R. Shmuel’s selflessness.

A Moment with The Rebbe

5 Iyar 5708

Rab Shmuel Zalmanov related:

5 Iyar 5708 (1948), the day Mr. Ben Gurion announced the independent State of Israel, was a Friday. The next day, early Shabbos morning, I arrived at 770, and I found the Rebbe, then known as the Friederiker Rebbe’s son-in-law, in the shul alone, pacing back and forth with a Chumash in his hand. The expression on his face was chilling.

He approached me and pointed to these pesukim from Parshas Nitzovim (Devarim 30:2-5): And you will return unto Hashem and heed his voice... with all your heart and soul. Then Hashem will bring you back from captivity... He will return and gather you in from all the peoples to which Hashem has scattered you... Hashem will bring you back to the land of your forefathers..."

The Rebbe looked at me and asked, "Has the ‘you shall return’ happened? No! It therefore has no connection to this situation.”

With that, the Rebbe turned and left the room.

(Ortach Hachassidim NY, page 377)