



## STANDING BEFORE THE KING

### Standing before HaShem

A righteous Yid once stopped by the roadside to daven. A powerful minister came riding by and greeted him, but he did not reply. The minister waited for him to finish and then screamed: "Good-for-nothing that you are! Doesn't it say in your Torah that you should guard your life? So why didn't you return my greeting? I could have chopped off your head with my sword!"

The Yid replied with a question, "If you were standing in front of a king, and your friend passed by and greeted you, would you return the greeting?"

"Of course not!" said the minister.

The Yid continued, "And if you did return the greeting to your friend, what would the king have done to you?"

"He would have chopped off my head!" said the minister.

The Yid concluded, "How much more so does this apply to the King of Kings, Who is eternal!"

The minister was appeased and the Yid continued his journey in peace.

(ברכות לב ע"ב)

In a letter to his chassidim, the Alter Rebbe explains why *davening* is likened to standing before a king. If a person standing before a mortal king busies himself with his own matters, he is publicly displaying his foolishness. Moreover, by publicly insulting the king he is forfeiting his life. But what if a person lacks the sensitivity to appreciate the awesome privilege of beholding the king in all his glory? He, too, should at least conduct himself with respect when in the royal presence. How much more so does this apply to the eternal King.

(אגה"ק סי' כד)

One must give close attention to the responses to *Kaddish*, for its holiness is even greater than that of *Kedusha*. Even during *Shemoneh Esreh* one should pause and listen to *Kaddish* [until the end of the sentence, "Yehei shmei rabba..."]. Those who speak during *Kaddish* should be admonished, even if there is a *minyan* present

without them.

During *chazoras hashatz* one should concentrate and listen to the *brachos* of the *chazzan*. It is forbidden to talk, recite *Tehillim* or learn, even if one answers *Amen*. Those who do otherwise should be admonished.

If someone engages in mundane conversation during *chazoras hashatz*, his transgression is too great to bear, for by speaking while the congregation is involved in praising *HaShem*, he is showing that he has no connection to Him.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' נו"א וס"ד, סי' קד"ה, סי' קכד"ו וס"ו)

In order to ensure silence during *davening*, the Alter Rebbe enacted a decree that no idle talk should be spoken from the moment the *sheliach tzibbur* begins until the end of the last *Kaddish*. This applies during *Shacharis*, *Mincha* and *Maariv*.

(אגה"ק סי' כד)

### Showing Reverence

The *Zohar* writes that by speaking during *davening* one implies that he does not believe *HaShem* is in *shul*, for if he did, he surely would not talk.

The *Smak* says that we ought to deduce a *kal vachomer* from the way idolaters conduct themselves in their places of worship: throughout their prayers, they stand in silence. How much more so does this apply to us, who stand in the presence of *HaShem*.

(זהר תרומה קלא ע"ב, סמ"ק מצוה יא, ועד"ז בס' חסידים אות יח)

When Satan complains that Yidden commit *aveiros*, *HaShem* rejoins that if the *goyim* had accepted the Torah, they would have been far worse. However, when Satan argues that Yidden converse during *davening*, this response does not apply.

A hint for this can be found in the *possuk*, "*HaShem yilacheim lachem v'atem tacharishun*." The *psht*, of course, is that "*HaShem* will fight your battle, and you shall remain silent." In addition, on the level of *derush*, that *possuk* is hinting that *HaShem* will protect us – on

condition that we remain silent and refrain from idle talk during *davening*...

(דרך משה, רב ייב בקו"י מורא מקדש)

The two *tzaddikim* – Reb Yaakov Yosef ("Reb Yeivi") of Ostroho and Reb Pinchas of Koretz – couldn't agree: What was the issue that needed the most urgent attention? Reb Yaakov Yosef held that it was the habit of idle conversation during *davening*, so he would go around and constantly arouse people to refrain from talking in *shul*. Reb Pinchas held that the most widespread problem was the lack of *tznius*, and he focused his efforts on correcting that.

One day, while they were debating this question, each trying to convince the other that he was right, they finally agreed that they would open a *Chumash* at random, and the first *possuk* to catch their eye would indicate who was right.

They opened a *Chumash Bereishis*, and immediately saw the words of Shimon and Levi concerning Dina: "Should he deal with our sister so grossly?!"

A victory for Reb Pinchas!

"Wait," said Reb Yaakov Yosef. "Let us look at the explanation written in *Targum Yonasan*." Sure enough, there it is written: "It is not proper that it be talked about in the *shuls* that... idolaters defiled the daughter of Yaakov Avinu..."

(סיפורי חסידים זיו"ן תורה ע' 521)

Sometime around the year תש"ה, the Rebbe entered the *shul* at 770, stood at the *bima*, and announced that he had just come from speaking with his father-in-law, the Friediker Rebbe, who had asked him to convey the following message: "My father (the Rebbe Rashab) was with me and asked, 'How does it come to pass that in your *beis midrash* people talk during *kerias haTorah*?' "

(קדושת הדיבור ח"ג ע' 921)

### CONSIDER THIS!

Why shouldn't one talk during *davening*: for the sake of others, for himself or for *HaShem*?



## STANDING BEFORE THE KING (2)

### Ensuring Respect

In the *shul* of the *Sfas Emes* of Ger, there were two daily *minyanim* for *Shacharis*, one after the other. While the second *minyan* began to *daven*, the *mispa'elim* from the first would stay to talk. When word of this reached the *Sfas Emes*, he rescheduled the *minyanim* so that the first group would finish socializing before the second *minyan* began...

(שיח שרפי קודש ח"ב ע' לב)

Young children should be trained to stand in *shul* with reverence and awe. Those children who run around in *shul* should not be brought at all.

And if someone converses about worldly matters in *shul*, it would be better that he not come at all, because he is sinning and also causing others to sin.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' ככד ס"י, פתח עינים להחיד"ג)

The Rebbe once said: "If a person chooses to talk during *davening*, that is his business. Let him go into another room and observe his '*minhag*' of talking during *davening*. But why should I be forced to *daven* in a *minyan* in which there is talking?!"

On another occasion the Rebbe said that it was not the children that needed to be silenced, but the adults. "A child knows that he comes to *shul* to *daven* to *HaShem*, and if he did not see adults talking there, he would not learn to do the same..."

(תשורה סיום הרמב"ם כפ"ח תשנ"ו, התועודיות תשמ"ג ח"ב ע' 1131)

In the summer of 1823, the community of Paritch asked the Mitteler Rebbe to visit them for a few weeks during the upcoming winter, as was the custom. He replied by letter that although he was not in perfect health, he would fulfill their request, on condition that they resolve an issue about which he was extremely bitter – talking in *shul*. In his letter, he recalled the numerous warnings given by his father, the Alter Rebbe, but unfortunately had gone unheeded.

He then wrote: "Therefore let it be known in my name, in every town and *minyan*, that they should make a firm resolve, enforced by a vow, not to speak during *davening*, from the moment that the *sheliach tzibbur* stands before the

*amud*. They should also appoint a trustworthy supervisor who will favor no one, and who will be willing to disgrace any person who violates the vow. This will literally revive me from the intense pain that this matter is causing me."

The Mitteler Rebbe then went on to explain how, in his view, the many tragedies that had befallen the Yidden during that time resulted from the habit of conversing in *shul*. He added that due to the talking, even the *tefilos* of the other *mispa'elim* in that *shul* are not accepted Above. He concluded that he was waiting for the townsmen of Paritch to notify him that they had begun to implement the above-mentioned proposals, and then he would visit them.

(אג"ק אדהאמ"צ ח"א ע' רעא)

The Rebbe once related that at one time he had challenged the *rov* of a certain *shul* in which people would walk around before *davening* was over, disturbing those who were still *davening*.

To this the *rov* replied: "Is that the only problem that we have?!"

The Rebbe was not impressed, and made it clear that the matter must be resolved.

(שיח"ק תשמ"א ח"א ע' 463)

Some people, who would prefer not to converse in *shul*, feel intimidated by others who might mock their "excessive holiness." So they respond to the talkers, until they too become insensitive to small talk in *shul*. Now, how would the same people react if they were threatened by a robber or a murderer, *r"l*? They would raise a commotion, regardless of embarrassment. So here, too, without being bashful, they should state, "Sorry, I don't speak during *davening*."

(פלא יועץ ערך ביהכ"נ)

### Powerful Effect

Eliyahu HaNavi was once seen together with 4000 laden camels. When he was asked what they were loaded with, he replied, "With fury and wrath."

"Why?" the people questioned.

"To wreak fury and wrath upon those who converse between *Amen*, *yehei shmei rabba* and *yisbareich*."

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' נו ס"ז)

It is related that a certain Yid dreamt of his deceased friend, whose face appeared to be jaundiced. He asked him why he was being punished so, and he answered, "Because I used to talk when the *sheliach tzibbur* was saying *Kaddish* and did not listen."

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' רסח ס"ז)

After the widespread massacres during the years 1648-1649, when tens of thousands of Yidden across Poland and the Ukraine were killed, the author of *Tosafos Yom-Tov* fasted and *davened* so that he be told why this had occurred. In a dream it was revealed to him that it was due to idle conversation during *davening*, for this deleted the letter *י* from the word *דבור* (*dibbur* – "speech"), leaving *דבר* (*dever* – "plague"). The *Tosafos Yom-Tov* then composed a special *Mi SheBeirach* to be recited every *Shabbos* for all those who refrain from talking during *davening*, blessing them with health, with all the *brachos* listed in the *Tanach*, and plentiful *nachas* from their children.

(שי למורא ע' כה)

In the late 1970s, when a number of tragedies occurred in Crown Heights, many residents were left wondering what lesson they should take to heart. When Reb Yitzchok Ushpal, the head of the Chevrach Kaddisha at the time, asked the Rebbe what in particular should be changed, the Rebbe told him that the issue that needed correcting was the talking in *shul* during *davening*.

(מפי הרחשד"ב ליפסקר – גבאי חברה קדישא)

The *Zohar* teaches that one of the last obstacles delaying the *Geula* is conversation in *shul*, for this banishes the *Shechina*. By keeping a *shul* quiet, we invite the *Shechina* and hasten the coming of *Moshiach*.

(אגה"ק סי' כג)

### CONSIDER THIS!

- Why should one disgrace those talking during *davening*? Is that the way to influence another person?!
- Would all these tragedies that occurred as a result of talking during *davening* have happened if people had not *davened* at all?