

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
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Torah Wellsprings

Vayechi

Kedushas Beis Medrash

Chazal (*Brachos* 8.) teach us, "If someone lives in a city with a beis medrash and doesn't go daven there, is considered a bad neighbor. Additionally, this causes *galus* (exile) for himself and his children."¹

What did he do wrong? Why is he punished so severely? It seems that the issue is that he davens without a minyan. The Tzlach (דרוש כ"ג לשבת שובה), however, clarifies that the Gemara also refers to one who organizes a minyan at home. He can recite *kedushah*, *borchu*, *kaddish*, and daven with a *minyan*.

Nevertheless, he is called a bad neighbor, because his home doesn't compare to the *kedushah* of a beis medrash. As it states (*Yechezkel* 11:16) וַאֲהִי לָהֶם לְמִקְדָּשׁ, מעט the beis medrash is a miniature Beis HaMikdash.

The Tzlach writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu dwells in the beis medrash. When a person enters a beis medrash, the *yetzer hara* leaves his heart, and it is as if he is in Eretz Yisrael. His *tefillos* go straight up to heaven because the *sar* (*malach* of *chutz l'aretz*) doesn't have control over the air of a beis knesses. When one davens at home, he misses out on all these benefits."¹

1. The Torah commands us (*Vayikra* 19:30) וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי תִירָאוּ, to be afraid of the Beis HaMikdash. Chazal (*Yevamos* 6.) explain that we aren't afraid of the Beis HaMikdash, but of Hashem's *Shechinah* that resides in it. Today, this halachah applies to the beis medrash. Hashem rests His Presence in them, and we must conduct ourselves in a beis medrash with fear and awe of Hashem.

It is very important to daven in a beis medrash, but it comes with responsibility. We are standing before Hashem, and therefore we must be extremely careful not to talk during davening. As the Tzlach writes, "Speaking during the tefillah banishes Hashem from His abode... אין לך מורד במלכו של עולם בהיכלו ולפניו, there is no greater rebellion against the King of the world because the rebellion is right before Him, in His sanctuary. He is contaminating the holy air of the beis medrash. כי בזה הוא כמעמיד צלם בהיכל, it is as

if he is placing an idol in the *heichal*," r'l.²

The Vavei Ha'Amudim (ch.10) writes, "When you sit in the beis knesses, man or woman, you mustn't speak during the *tefillah* and *kriyas haTorah*... How long will we suffer from this sin?! Speaking during *tefillah* has become permissible to some. Woe to them. Woe to their *neshamos*. How will their *tefillos* ascend when they are sullied with this excretion? ואין קטיגר נעשה סניגר, a *tefillah* that highlights our sins (as it is mixed with people

At the peak of the fright of the corona virus, many of us were banished from the beis medrash, and when we returned, we made *kabbalos* not to speak there. Let's refresh that resolve and be cautious with the *kedushah* of the beis medrash.

2. The Chida (quoted in *Kaf HaChaim*, 151:8) states that if one can't control himself and speaks during the *tefillah* it is better that he davens at home, by himself, so he won't desecrate the holiness of the beis medrash.

The *Zohar* (ויקהל ר"ה) writes that speaking in beis medrash on Shabbos is a graver sin. The *Kaf HaChaim* (151:8) explains that this is because Hashem's presence in the beis medrash is more on Shabbos than on the weekdays, and therefore the sin of speaking and banishing the *Shechinah* is a much more severe sin on Shabbos.

speaking) can't be our advocate to bestow goodness on us. Therefore, it is proper that in every shul there should be people appointed to rebuke people harshly to stop speaking. They should embarrass them in public. This will reveal Hashem's honor to the world. Everyone will see and learn to be cautious. They will close their mouths and refrain from idle talk in the beis knesses."

The father of the Shlah Hakadosh, in his *sefer* יש פרק אזהרת התפילה) נוהלין, writes (אות י"ב): "I swear, from all *aveiros*, I don't know of any *aveirah* so severe. Because what does the speaker gain? All other *aveiros*, such as theft, forbidden foods,

and the like, have gains. The *yetzer hara* causes him to sin because the person desires pleasure. But the *yetzer hara* isn't so strong when it comes to [speaking during the *tefillah* because there is no pleasure, so why are people so lenient]? Another problem with this *aveirah* is that one can't transgress it alone. He commits this *aveirah* with another person. So, he is חוטא ומחטיא, he is sinning, and causing others to sin. The *aveiros* of others are on his hands. The worst part, in my opinion, is that it is a public *chilul Hashem*, as it occurs before all the congregants. And all this is at a time when he should be praising Hashem!"³

3. The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* was very strict that there should be no speaking in the *tefillah* in his beis medrash. Once, two *bachurim* were speaking, and he immediately sent them out of the beis medrash. He told them that they can't return for two weeks. One of the *bachurim* said, "I know I was wrong for speaking..." The Beis Yisrael told him that he can return to the beis medrash immediately. The other one said, "I wasn't speaking. It is just that he asked me something, and I answered..." The Gerer Rebbe told him that now he can't return to the beis medrash for six weeks.

Breaching the Walls of the *Beis Medrash*

If you saw someone swinging a heavy hammer on the walls of the beis medrash, would you be silent, or would you shout, "What are you doing? You're destroying the beis medrash!"

And what would you say if you see someone ignite a fire in the beis medrash? You would shout, "Stop, you are burning down the beis medrash, *r'l!*"

This is how we should view those who speak during tefillah. Many batei midrashim burned down due to talking during the *tefillah*. As the Eliyahu Rabba (124:12) writes, *אוי להם שמשׂיחין בעת התפילה כי ראינו כמה בתי כנסיות נחרבו בשביל עוון זה*, "Woe to those who speak during the *tefillah*. We saw many

batei knesses destroyed because of this sin."

ב' ניסן תשכ"ו, there was a fire in New Square, in the beis medrash of Reb Yaakov Yosef of Skver *zt'l*. (He was *niftar* on the same date, two years later, *ב' ניסן תשכ"ח*). The Skverer Rebbe's custom was to daven in his own room, which was connected to the beis medrash. The only room that wasn't ruined in the fire was the Rebbe's room. The door to this room leading from the beis medrash turned black, but the interior of the door, which faced the Rebbe's room, wasn't affected by the fire.

Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan *zt'l* spoke contacted the Skverer Rebbe that very day to console him for his terrible loss. During the conversation, the Boyaner Rebbe asked whether the

When one knows he did something wrong, he can correct his ways. But as long as one excuses his speaking, he won't stop.

Rebbe's room also burned down. The Skverer Rebbe said that this room was saved, and he explained that this is obvious because "No one ever spoke there during *tefillah*.

Even if the beis medrash doesn't burn down, *r'l*, this doesn't mean the beis medrash is standing. A beis medrash can be ruined in a spiritual sense.

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* vol.2 p.309:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu compassionately left us with a *מקדש מעט*, a miniature Beis HaMikdash. They are the batei medrash and batei knesses. If we treat them with holiness, they will be transplanted in the future to Eretz Yisrael (see *Megillah* 29.). Even now, they have the *kedushah* of Eretz Yisrael, and the *tefillos* go up to the gates of heaven. However, *chas v'shalom*, if we act disrespectfully in the batei medrashim and speak idly there, the air of this speech is *tamei*, and the *sar* (*malach*) of *chutz l'aretz*

dresses himself in this impure air. This *sar* becomes the leader of the beis medrash. He captures the *tefillos* that are said there and sends them to the *היצוניים*, *tumah*. It is like worshipping *avodah zarah*..."

The beis medrash is standing, the walls are all intact, but it isn't the beis medrash that we would want to daven in.

Punishment

During a plague, the *malach hamaves* stores his weapons in the most unusual place. He keeps his deadly weapons in the beis medrash.

As the Gemara (*Bava Kama* 60:) states, *דבר בעיר אל יכנס יחיד לבית הכנסת שמלאך המות מפקיד שם כליו*, "If there's a plague in the city, do not go to the beis knesses alone, because the angel of death stores his weapons there." Why does the *malach hamaves* store his weapons specifically in a beis medrash?

The Derech Moshe answers that the word דבר, plague, come from דיבור, speech, from people speaking in the beis medrash. דבר and דיבור are similar words because the *malach* hamaves gets his weapons to create a plague from the speaking that takes place in the beis medrash, *r'l*.

Shulchan Aruch (124:7) writes לא ישיח שיחת חלין בשעה ששליח צבור חוזר התפילה ואם שח הוא חוטא וגדול עונו מנשוא וגוערים בו "Don't speak idle talk when the *shaliach tzibur* is saying

chazaras hashatz. If someone speaks, his sin is great, and people should shout at him." People asked Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* whether we should also shout at an elderly person who speaks during the *tefillah*.

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "If you see an elderly person stand up to murder someone, will you also ask whether you should shout and stop him?" Speaking during *tefillah* causes death, *r'l*.⁴

4. Some say that keeping silent in the *tefillah* is a גזירה שאין רוב הציבור יכולין לעמוד בה, a decree that most people can not adhere to. It is almost impossible to remain silent. When I hear people say this, I respond, "Aren't the troubles, hardships, and illnesses that come from this *aveirah* גזירה שאין רוב הציבור יכולין לעמוד בה, decrees that most people cannot endure? So, although it is hard to refrain from speaking in the *tefillah*, we must be strong to keep this halachah.

The Gemara (*Succah* 51:) describes the enormous beis medrash in Alexandria. The Gemara says, ולא היו יושבין מעורבין אלא זהבין בפני עצמן וכסף, בפני עצמן ונפחין בפני עצמן וטרסיים בפני עצמן וגרדיים בפני עצמן וכשעני נכנס שם היה מכיר "They didn't sit wherever they wanted; the goldsmiths sat in their own section, the silversmiths in their own section, the blacksmiths in their own section, the coppersmiths in their section, and the weavers in their section. When a poor man entered, he went to the section of his

Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) calls the sin of speaking in davening, גדול עונו מנשוא, "His sin is too heavy to carry." This same expression (גדול עונו מנשוא) is written when Kayin killed Hevel. So, there seems to be an association between murder and speaking during the *tefillah*. As we explained, speaking in the *beis medrash* enables the *malach hamaves* to do his work, to bring on a plague.

There was once a terrible epidemic in the city of Ostroh *r'l*, and everyone gathered in the city's main *beis medrash* for a day of fasting, introspection, and *tefillah*. The *rav* stood in front of the community and proclaimed, "This

epidemic came to us because of our sins – but we don't know which sin. If someone knows of a sin taking place in this city, either by an individual or by the public, please come forward to tell me and the *beis din*, as we have to figure out which *aveirah* is causing the plague."

Two people thought they might know who was causing the plague. There was a person who used to daven with them every day, and for some time, he had stopped attending *beis medrash*. There were also other behaviors that aroused their suspicions and they decided to trail him to see where he goes and what he does.

expertise and he and his family had *parnassah*."

The *Pardas Yosef* (מלואים והערות לפרשת וירא) states another reason each profession had their specific section. Chazal (*Tanchuma Bereishis* 8) tell us that כל אומן שונא בני אומנתו, "Every professional hates the people of his profession" (because they are competitors). They were placed together with people of their same trade, as it is likely that they don't like each other, and they won't speak with one another during the *tefillah*.

At midnight, they saw him leave his home carrying a lantern. They followed him and watched him leave the city and into the thick forest.

They didn't follow him further, and the next day, they reported to the rav what they saw.

The rav said, "Tonight, when you see him leaving for the forest, call me. The three of us will follow him. We are doing this to benefit the entire city, to find out who is committing the serious aveiros that brought on the epidemic. Don't be afraid."

That night, the two men and the rav followed him into the forest. They could see the man they were following because he held a lantern, but he couldn't see them. They saw him sit down in the forest and heard him recite *Tikun Chatzos* accompanied with bitter tears and anguish. They heard another voice, crying and wailing together

with him, but they didn't see anyone besides him.

Upon completing the *Tikun Chatzos*, as the man began heading out of the forest, the rav revealed himself. The rav said, "We followed you in an attempt to figure out who is sinning in our city, but now we know you are a true tzaddik. Please forgive us for suspecting you, and please tell us, who is the second voice we heard? Who cried along with you in the forest?"

The man replied, "Every night at midnight, I cry over the Churban Beis HaMikdash, and Heaven gave me a gift: Yirmiyahu HaNavi comes to say *Tikkun Chatzos* together with me."

The rav told him, "Please ask Yirmiyahu why we are suffering from this terrible epidemic."

The man replied, "I will ask Yirmiyahu HaNavi, and tomorrow morning, I

will come to the beis medrash for Shacharis, and I will tell you what Yirmiyahu HaNavi answered."

The rav returned to the city and announced that everyone should come for Shacharis the following day, to hear the cause of the epidemic.

A large crowd came for Shacharis. It was time to daven, but the hidden tzaddik wasn't there yet. The rav said that they should begin davening. Soon afterward, the tzaddik arrived donned in his tallis and tefillin, and his face shone with a very saintly appearance. Everyone got scared afraid, and some people fainted.

After Shacharis, in front of the congregation, the rav asked the hidden tzaddik why his presence caused

so much fear. The tzaddik replied that it's because he wears tefillin. As Chazal (Brachos 6.) say, wearing tefillin causes people to be afraid.⁵

The rav asked, "We all wear tefillin, and yet it doesn't cast fear."

The tzaddik replied, "I don't speak idle talk when I wear tefillin. I am cautious with its holiness, therefore my tefillin have this *segulah* that it casts a holy fear on all."

The tzaddik added, "Idle talk is also the root of the epidemic. Yirmiyahu HaNavi told me that people speak during the tefillah, which arose Hashem's anger. I stopped coming to this beis medrash long ago because I couldn't take all the talking."

5. As it states (Devarim 28:10) ויראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך, 'Everyone will see that Hashem's name is upon you and they will be afraid of you.'"

The community accepted upon themselves not to speak in the beis medrash during tefillah, and the plague stopped immediately.

They wrote this story on a plaque on one of the walls of the beis medrash, so that it should never be forgotten. When visitors came to the beis medrash and weren't aware of how strict they were about not speaking during the tefillah, congregants would bring them over to the plaque and have them read it. They did that without saying a word, and the newcomers learned to be silent during the tefillah.

The Debretziner Rav *zt'l* (באר משה ח"י סימן ק"ח) writes, "I will tell you an incredible story that I witnessed. My knees shiver from fear when I remind myself of this story. Once, my father (Reb Avraham, *hy'd zt'l*) gave a *drashah* on Shabbos, and he repeated from the Remak that שיבה is *roshei teivos* שתיקה יפה בשעת התפילה. He explains

that when someone is silent during the tefillah and answers *amen* and *amen yehei shmei raba*, he will merit to live long.

"My father added, מכלל הן, אתה שומע לאו, which mean that since being silent during the tefillah results in a long life, we also know that speaking during the tefillah causes people to die early, *r'l*. My father implied this, but he didn't want to say it out clearly.

"The next morning, there was a tumult in the beis medrash. People were gathered around a man who heard my father's *drashah* the previous day, and he was repeating a dream he had. In his dream, he saw himself standing before the heavenly court, and the court ruled that he was guilty of speaking during tefillah, and as a punishment, he would be taken from the world. He pleaded before the court, 'I'm young. Why should I be punished so harshly?' The court explained that

this is the punishment for speaking idle talk in the beis medrash and not answering *amen yehei shmei raba*. He told the court, 'I shouldn't be punished for this because I didn't know how severe the *aveirah* is.'

"One of the *malachim* of the beis din replied, angrily, 'You can't claim you didn't know the severity. You were at the rav's *drashah* yesterday, and you heard in the name of the Remak that שיבה (old age) stands for שתיקה יפה בשעת התפילה, and the rav hinted that if one

speaks, it will be the opposite.'

"The man pleaded, 'Allow me to live, and I will tell everyone from the *kehillah* what happened to me. I will warn them to be cautious.' The court accepted his petition, and he was permitted to live."

The Debretziner Rav concludes, "Everyone present in the beis medrash was overtaken with fear of Hashem." They learned the severity of speaking during tefillah.⁶

6. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119:) states, "Whoever answers *amen yehei shmei raba* with all his strength, this tears up his *gzar din*." This means, if the court in heaven ruled that he must go through some form of hardship, *r'l*, the decree is annulled and ripped up in the merit of reciting *amen yehei shmei raba*. The Gemara adds, "Even if he has the *aveirah* of *avodah zarah*, saying *amen yehei shmei raba* will atone."

The following *mashal* will help us understand the greatness of answering *amen yehei shmei raba*:

A king sent a message to a certain city that he will come visit their city on this-and-this date. The people of the city prepared for the king's arrival. As the day came nearer, the excitement and the preparations mounted.

The date arrived; the king was riding in his chariot through the

Benefits of Being Silent during Tefillah

During the years ת"ח ות"ט terrible massacres befell the European Jewish communities. The Tosfos Yom Tov *zt'l*, who lived

during this time, proclaimed that the massacres were a punishment from Hashem because people spoke during the tefillah. The Tosfos Yom Tov composed the following tefillah, to be

city streets. The residents of this city lined the streets on both sides, and as the king drove by, they shouted enthusiastically, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" But on one street, something terrible happened. After the shouts, "Long live the king!" dirt and stones were thrown towards the king.

The police found the culprits. They were two youths.

In court, the prosecutor elaborated on the terrible deed these youths committed, how they disgraced the king at a time when they should have honored him.

The defense responded, "When everyone was shouting 'Long live the king,' these youths shouted along, exuberantly. There are witnesses who can testify to this. This means the youths respect the king, and they want to honor him. It is obvious that throwing stones was just mischievous behaviors, befitting young children. They didn't realize just how disrespectful they were being."

With these words, the youth's deeds were seen in a much better light.

The *nimshal* is, when we do *aveiros, r'l*, the prosecuting *malachim* speak out against us. They declare that justice must be meted out because we disgraced the king. But if we say *amen yehei shmei raba* with all our strength and *kavanah*, this reveals that our primary desire is to increase Hashem's honor. If at times we sin, it isn't intentional. It isn't a sign of rebellion. This is how saying *amen yehei shmei raba* protects us and atones our sins.

said after קריאת התורה, to encourage people to refrain from speaking during davening (some communities still say it): מי שברך אבותינו אברהם: יצחק ויעקב משה ואהרן דוד ושלמה הוא יברך את כל מי ששומר פיו ולשונו שלא לדבר בעת התפילה וקריאת התורה. הקב"ה ישמרהו מכל צרה וצוקה ומכל נגע ומחלה ויחולו עליו כל הברכות הכתובות בספר תורת משה רבינו ובכל ספרי הנביאים והכתובים ויזכה לראות בנים חיים וקיימים ויגדלם לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים ויעבוד את ה' אלקינו תמיד באמת ונתתם אמון ונאמר "The One Who blessed our forefathers: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe and Aharon, Dovid and Shlomo, He should bless all those who refrain from speaking during the tefillah and *kriyas haTorah*. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu protect him from all troubles, hardships, and illnesses. All the *brachos* written in *Chumash* and Tanach should be upon him. He will merit having healthy children and raise them to Torah, chuppah, and good deeds. He will always serve Hashem with truth, amen."

A man complained to his rebbe that he tried everything: *segulos*, *tefillos*, and *hishtadlus* by doctors to bear children, but so far, there wasn't any hope on the horizon.

His rebbe replied, "I understand that you came to me because you think I can help you. I'm sorry. I can't help you. However, there is a rebbe who can. Are you willing to go to him?"

"Of course," the man replied.

"But I'm warning you," the Rebbe said, "This rebbe will ask something very hard from you. If you pass the test, you will receive his blessings for children."

The man replied, "I'm willing to do anything to bear a child. Who is this great rebbe?"

"I'm referring to the Tosfos Yom Tov. If you receive his blessings, you will bear children. But the Tosfos Yom Tov grants his

blessings only to those who don't speak during davening. And as he writes in his tefillah: ויזכה לראות בנים חיים וקיימים ויגדלם לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים, "He will merit healthy children and to raise them to Torah, chuppah, and good deeds."

The man wanted the Tosfos Yom Tov's *brachah*, so he stopped speaking during the tefillah. A year later, he bore twins. He said, "I saw many doctors and endured excruciating treatments, but the hardest remedy of all was the Tosfos Yom Tov's. I was so accustomed to speaking in the tefillah, and it was very hard for me to stop." But he remained firm in his resolve and was blessed with children, as the Tosfos Yom Tov promised.

A beis medrash opened in Williamsburg for *yungerleit* who are careful not to speak during davening. Unfortunately, one of their friends became very ill, *r'l*, so his friends from this minyan made a

kabbalah to refrain from talking during davening, regardless of whether they daven in their beis medrash or elsewhere, and they "donated" the merit of this *kabbalah* to their friend's *refuah sheleimah*.

Rosh Hashanah, one person from this minyan was davening in another beis medrash, and a friend came over to him and asked him a question. He signaled that he couldn't reply because he didn't speak by davening. The man replied, degradingly, "Oh, you are from those people..."

The *kabbalah* brought results. After forty days, the friend recovered from his illness.

And there was an added benefit. The *yungerman* who was humiliated and shamed on Rosh Hashanah had his personal *yeshuah* too. During the forty days of the *kabbalah*, his wife was diagnosed with "the illness." Their rebbe advised

them to get a second opinion from a doctor that the rebbe recommended. That doctor's diagnosis was the same. All specialists agreed that she required emergency surgery.

A couple of days afterward, she was brought to the operating room.

While the operation was underway, the husband went to a room where he could daven privately. He said, "Ribono Shel Olam, You know how hard it was for me to keep quiet during the tefillah for forty days, and You know the great humiliation I suffered on Rosh Hashanah for being silent. Please give my wife a *refuah sheleimah*, and I will continue to be silent in beis medrash for a half year."

The operation was supposed to take an hour and a half, but it took forty-

five minutes longer. The chief doctor surgeon explained that they could not find the tumor they had previously detected of the M.R.I. The operation took longer than expected because they were looking for something that wasn't there! (There was something minor, which wasn't dangerous and life-threatening, which they removed.)

Her life was saved in the merit of her husband's not speaking during the tefillah. Because just as speaking during the tefillah causes the worst troubles, refraining from speaking brings on the greatest blessings and *yeshuos*. As tzaddikim said, שתיקה יפה, בשעת התפילה, "it is good to be silent during the tefillah" is *roshei teivos* שיבה, old age. Refraining from speaking brings life, old age, health, and many blessings.⁷

7. It states (*Shemos* 14:14) ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תחרישון.

Rebbe Meir of Premishlan said, ה' ילחם לכם, Hashem will grant you

The Greatness of Tefillah when you don't Speak

The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) teaches, עשרה ניסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש... מעולם... לא נצחו הרוח באת עמוד העשן, "Ten miracles happened to our forefathers in the Beis HaMikdash... [One of the miracles is]: Winds never dispersed the pillar of smoke [that ascended from the *korbanos*]." This means that the smoke of the *korbanos* rose straight up, like a column, and was not dispersed by the wind.

The *Avodas Yisrael* explains, "There's a Beis HaMikdash in heaven, which is directly above the

Beis HaMikdash that was in this world. The smoke of the *korbanos* of the Beis HaMikdash below rose to heaven and reached the Beis HaMikdash above. This created a *nachas ruach* to Hashem and brought down bounty to all worlds. However, if a wind dispersed the pillar of smoke, it wouldn't reach the Beis HaMikdash above.

"A beis medrash is a miniature Beis HaMikdash (see *Megillah* 29.). Therefore, each Beis medrash certainly has its counterpart in heaven. The tefillos of the beis medrash below go up and enter the Beis medrash in heaven. Therefore, we

parnassah (וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּן, and your part is to plow, *parnassah* hints to bread, *parnassah*)

The *pasuk* is teaching us a lesson in *emunah*. We think we earn *parnassah* with our hard work, but it isn't so. The Torah clarifies ה' ילחם לכם, *parnassah* comes from Hashem. Our part is to merely to do *hishtadlus*.

Perhaps we can also explain: ה' ילחם לכם, Hashem will give you *parnassah*, וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּן, if you will be silent during the tefillos. Because if you don't speak during the tefillah, your tefillos will go up to Hashem and your requests for *parnassah* will be granted.

must be cautious not to speak during the tefillah even just a few words. We should only say the words of the tefillah [so the pillar of tefillah can ascend and enter the corresponding beis medrash in heaven and not be dispersed by our talking].

"When one speaks idle talk during the tefillah, it can be compared to someone who turns to his friend while during a conversation with the king. He says, 'My master, my king, I can't speak to you now. I have something more important to take care of.' This banishes the *Shechinah*, r'l from the Beis medrash. Another problem is that other people are davening in the Beis medrash together with him, and it is possible that their tefillos won't be answered, all because of his speaking, *chas veshalom*."

The Baal HaTanya (*Igeres Hakodesh* ch.24) writes, "Chazal say, אל יעשה אדם עצמו רשע שעה אחת לפני המקום.⁸ The שעה אחת hints to the hour that we gather in Beis medrash to daven before Hashem. This is the time that Hashem desires and chooses, more than the rest of the day. It is an *eis ratzon*, auspicious time before Hashem. At this time Hashem reveals His presence in the Beis medrash, which is a miniature Beis HaMikdash, and we can meet with the *Shechinah*... Who is en clothed in the words of tefillah. His *Shechinah* becomes revealed to each individual according to his intelligence and *shoresh neshamah*... And those who search and yearn for Hashem find Him. But if at this time you will speak [during the tefillah], you are demonstrating that you aren't interested in seeing

8. Literally, this means that one shouldn't do *aveiros* and be a *rasha* in Hashem's eyes, even for a short moment.

Hashem's presence which is being revealed at this time. You are showing that you don't want to think about the beauty and majesty of the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who reveals Himself at this time to those who desire to see His honor and greatness..."

The Tanya gives a *mashal* to describe the disgrace one causes when he speaks during tefillah:

"The Kingship of heaven resembles the kingships of the kings below (מלכותא דרקי' (כעין מלכותא דארעא). It is the ways of kings to dwell, concealed, in their innermost room, with many guards posted at the doors. People must wait their turn to speak to the king, and sometimes it can take days or even years. They anticipate this time to greet the king and behold the beauty of his glorious kingship. However, there are times when the king comes out to the people, and then everyone can see

his glory. It's announced throughout the kingdom that all can gather before the king to behold the splendor of his majesty.

"Just think about how disgusting and foolish it would be if someone stands before the king, and then, instead of looking at him, he looks at other things, and is occupied with his own needs! Everyone will look down at him. In addition, he disgraces the king by demonstrating how uninterested he is in him. For his disrespect, he deserves the death penalty"

So too, it is foolish when one doesn't daven with *kavanah*. During the tefillah, Hashem is permitting us to observe a glimpse of His beautiful grandeur, and it is a disgrace if we don't care to take advantage of this time. It is far worse if we speak at this time.

The Baal HaTanya adds that even if one doesn't have *kavanah*, he should not allow others to know

that. He must stand in shul as though he is davening with *kavanah*, because it is a disgrace to the King when one publicly shows disregard to the King.

The Tanya writes:

"It states (*Mishlei* 3:35), כסילים מרים קלון, 'the fools bring on disgrace.' The *pasuk* is telling us that even if someone is a כסיל, a fool, he shouldn't מרים קלון, show his disgrace to everyone. Chazal say that when one davens, it should be כאילו עומד לפני המלך, *as if* he is standing before the king. This means he should at least show as if he is standing before the King. It should appear that way to others, when they look at how he acts during the tefilla. If one doesn't even pretend, he is *chayav misah*. The *Zohar* writes about him that he is acting disgraceful and that he doesn't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael *r'l*."

The Tanya concludes with some practical rules:

"Therefore, as a *shaliach* of Chazal, I make a *gezeira* that no one should speak דברים בטלים from the moment the chazan begins the tefillah until after the final Kaddish. This is for Shacharis, Minchah, and Maariv. Someone who transgresses this directive on purpose should sit on the ground and ask three people to be מתיר נידוי, to free him from the heavenly ban that he was placed into, and this will cure him."

Setting an Example

The Rambam (*Deios* 6:1) states, "It is the way of man to think and to act as his friends do. Therefore, one must become close to tzaddikim, and always be among wise scholars so he can learn from their ways. As Shlomo HaMelech says (*Mishlei* 13:20), הולך את חכמים יחכם, 'Go with the wise and you will become wise. Those who befriend fools will do bad.' Therefore, if he lives in a country where people don't follow

the right way, he should go to a country where there are tzaddikim who act properly. And if all countries (that he knows of) are acting sinfully, as it is in our time, he should live by himself, alone..."

People learn from others. Regarding our subject, the Derech Moshe writes that if you are cautious and you don't speak during the tefillah, this influences others to be careful as well. But if they see you talking during the tefillah, they learn to do the same.

A father told his child, "Tonight is your bar mitzvah, so now it's about time that you be cautious with tefillah. You must come on time and daven with *kavanah*. Never speak during the tefillah."

That night, in shul, the father began talking to a friend during davening. The bar mitzvah *bachur* turned to his father and

asked, "Father, when will it be your bar mitzvah?"

When trying to teach another yid to be quiet during davening, one must first train himself to do so. It is the most effective tool.

Benefits of Tefillah *b'Tzibur*

It states in this week's *parashah* (Bereishis 49:1) ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו "Yaakov gathered his children, and told them, 'Gather...'"

The *Zohar* (Bereishis p.234.) explains that Yaakov told them to gather and to daven with a minyan.

The *Zohar* quotes the *pasuk* (Tehillim 102:18), ולא בזה את תפלתם, "Hashem doesn't disgrace their *tefillos*," and explains that this is written in plural form (תפלתם) to imply that Hashem never despises the *tefillos* of a minyan. The beginning of the *pasuk* states פנה אל תפילת, הערער, "Turn to the prayers of the loner." This part of the *pasuk* refers to someone

davening alone, by himself. The *Zohar* explains that when one davens by himself, Hashem turns to check him and examines his tefillah, to see whether he deserves to be answered. When a person davens with a minyan, the tefillah goes up to heaven together with the minyan. But when one davens alone, he and his tefillah must be worthy of being accepted. Therefore, it is far wiser to daven with a minyan.

The *Zohar* reads the *passuk* as follows, פנה אל תפלת, הערער, Hashem turns to

study the person and the *tefillah* of the person who davens by himself. ולא בזה את, תפלתם, but those who daven with a minyan Hashem never disgraces their *tefillas*.

That is why Yaakov Avinu told his children, האספו, gather and daven with a minyan. That is how your *tefillas* will be answered.⁹

In *Pirkei Avos* (2:18) it states, ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך, Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explains that the Mishnah is urging us to daven with a minyan, because if you daven alone, your deeds

9. The Beis Ahron *zy'a* said, "I'm convinced that *tefillah betzibur* helps for all matters, just like the prayer of a *tzaddik hador*."

When someone calls you on your phone, you look at the caller ID to see who is calling. If you aren't interested in speaking to that person at the moment, you might decide to ignore the call.

So what does a determined caller do? He calls from an anonymous number. In this way, his call will most probably get answered.

When a person davens by himself, it's possible that his *tefillah* won't be accepted in *shomayim*. It's coming from a 'number' that heaven may choose to ignore. But when one davens with a minyan, it's similar to an "anonymous number" and his *tefillah* will be answered together with the *tefillas* of the rest of the congregation.

will be scrutinized (as the *Zohar* teaches) and you might be deemed a *rasha*, *chalilah*.

Thus, the Mishnah is read as follows: אל תהי רשע, don't risk being deemed and called a *rasha* בפני עצמך, by davening alone. Rather, choose to daven with a minyan.¹⁰

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8.) also proves from several pesukim the importance of davening with a minyan.

It states (*Tehillim* 69:14) ואני, תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון. Dovid HaMelech requests that his tefillos be said at an *eis ratzon*, a special time when Hashem desires to hear our tefillos.

When is that special time?

The Gemara (*ibid.*) says that it's when a minyan davens together. This creates an עת רצון.

The Gemara adds that this is implied in the *pasuk* (*Iyov* 36), הן א"ל כביר ולא ימאס, "Hashem is never disgusted from a *tefillah* of the public."

The Gemara adds that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Whoever studies Torah, performs deeds of kindness, and davens with the *tzibur* I consider it as though he redeemed Me and my children from *galus*..." As it states (*Tehillim* 55:19), פדה בשלום, the redemption will

10. The beginning of this Mishnah states, הוי זהיר בקריאת שמע ובתפילה, "Be careful with Shema and with *tefillah*, don't daven by rote, and don't be a *rasha* for yourself..." Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* teaches that just as the beginning of the Mishnah is about *tefillah*, it stands to reason that the end of the Mishnah, ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך, "Don't be a *rasha* for yourself..." is also referring to *tefillah*. Therefore, Reb Chaim Volozhiner explains that the Mishnah is warning people they shouldn't daven alone without minyan, so they won't be judged a *rasha*, *chalilah*.

occur, כי ברבים היו עמדי, because I davened with a *tzibbur*.

In contrast, the Gemara says, not davening with a minyan lengthens the *galus*. The Gemara writes, "Whoever has a beis knesses in his city and doesn't daven there, he is a bad neighbor... He brings exile for himself and his children..."

Davening with a minyan is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. As the Meor V'shemesh (*Mishpatim*) writes, אם מתפלל עם הציבור יהיה מובטח שפרנסתו תהיה מזומנת לו בכל יום ברווחה וברכה תהיה מצויה במעשי ידיו "If a person davenes with a *tzibbur*, he is guaranteed that his *parnassah* will be prepared for him each day, and in abundance. There will be a blessing in everything he does."

He proves this from the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 23:25), ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מימך. The *pasuk* begins in plural form, ועבדתם, and ends in

singular וברך, to imply that if one davenes with a minyan (which is called עבודה ועבדתם - שבלב - his *parnassah* will be blessed and successful.

It states in last week's *parashah* (*Bereishis* 42:3). וירדו אהי יוסף עשרה לשבור בר "Yosef's brothers – ten of them – went down [to Mitzrayim] to buy grain..."

The commentaries ask why the Torah specifies that they were ten. (Rashi asks this question because one can count on his own and realize that they were ten brothers going down to Mitzrayim.)

The Divrei Yisrael of Moditz *zy'a* says that they were cautious to travel with a group of ten people so that they could daven with a minyan. The purpose of their trip was to bring *parnassah* for their family, and they understood that success in this venture was dependent on their caution to daven with a minyan.¹¹

11. The first word of the *pasuk* is וירדו. The Divrei Yisrael teaches

We've learned several reasons for why a person should daven with a minyan:

(1) It creates an *eis ratzon* for his tefillos to be answered.

(2) Hashem is never disgusted with the tefillos of a *tzibbur*.

(3) When one davens alone, his deeds are scrutinized, and he might be deemed a *rasha*. Therefore, one should daven with a minyan to avoid this.

(4) *Tefillah b'tzibbur* brings redemption.

(5) *Tefillah b'tzibbur* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

Rebbe Moshe Lelover

On Friday is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Moshe of Lelov *zt'l* (*niftar* on the 13th of Teves, 5611). Therefore, we take

this opportunity to discuss the exceptional ways and qualities of this great *tzaddik*.

Rebbe Moshe was the son of the first Lelover Rebbe, Rebbe Dovid, and the son-in-law of the Yid HaKodesh of Peshischa.

Before he was engaged for marriage, both sets of parents, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov and the Yid HaKodesh of Pshischa, discussed the conditions for the marriage. They agreed on all points, except for one. Rebbe Dovid of Lelov wanted his son to marry his wife with a silver ring, and the Yid HaKadosh insisted that the ring must be gold. They never resolved this disagreement, but since they agreed on all the other conditions, the *shidduch* was finalized.

At the chuppah, the Yid Hakadosh saw the *chosson*

that this also alludes to *tefillah* because one who davens at the *amud* is called in Chazal *יורד לפני התיבה*, to go down before the *amud*."

holding a silver ring, and he announced, "Without a gold ring, there won't be a *chasunah*."

A tumult arose, and the crowd stood there, waiting for the issue to be resolved.

One simple person asked his wife if she was willing to part from her gold ring. She agreed, and they sold it to the *chosson*, Reb Moshe, and the *chasunah* was able to go on.

The simple couple who sold their gold ring was childless for many years. That year they had a son.

Chassidim say that Rebbe Dovid of Lelov and the Yid HaKodesh of Peshischa debated over the gold or silver ring, in order to grant this couple the opportunity to do this great

mitzvah and merit salvation.

Towards the end of his life, Rebbe Moshe traveled to Eretz Yisrael because he said that if he davens at the Kosel HaMaravi, he could bring Moshiach.

Before he began his journey, he went to *gezeigen* (take leave) from several *tzaddikim*. When he came to Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zy'a*, the Ruzhiner Rebbe said, "Wait for me, and I will go with you."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover pointed to his white beard, implying that he was getting older and couldn't wait any longer.¹²

Rebbe Moshe planned to travel to Eretz Yisrael with a *minyán* of his followers, and he saved up

12. The Rebbe of Ruzhin said that if the Yidden in Poland were wise, they wouldn't permit Rebbe Moshe of Lelov to leave them. He found this hinted at in the Mishnah *Shabbos*, אין פולין לאור הניר, "the Polish Yidden aren't wise. They had one brilliant light, and they let him leave."

money to pay for the voyage for all ten men.

However, whenever Rebbe Moshe saved up enough money, he ended up giving it away to some important *tzedakah*. Then he would start saving up money for the trip once again.

Once, a wealthy woman came to Rebbe Moshe of Lelov, and asked for a *brachah* for children. Rebbe Moshe told her that if she gave him a certain amount of money (the amount he needed for the trip), she would have a child. She was prepared to give the money (because she was barren and yearned to bear children), but Rebbe Moshe Lelover told her that she must first ask her husband for permission.

Her husband was a chassid of "The Gitte Yid" of Neustadt, and he asked the Gitte Yid whether he should give this amount of money. His Rebbe encouraged him to do so. He said, "If Rebbe Moshe

guarantees a child, you can rely on that."

But there was a caveat. The Gitte Yid of Neustadt advised them, "Before giving all this money, ask Rebbe Moshe Lelover to guarantee you that the child will live long because according to the rules of nature, it is impossible for you and your wife to bear a child. Often, a child born through a miracle doesn't live long. Therefore, I suggest that you ask him to promise that the child you bear will live long."

When the parents stated the condition before Rebbe Moshe of Lelov, he replied, "The years of your child's life will be as many as the days I live in Eretz Yisrael."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover lived in Eretz Yisrael 74 days, and the couple had a child who lived 74 years.

When Rebbe Moshe Lelover was on the boat, he repeatedly said, יום לשנה יום, "a day for a year," and

it is explained that he was saying he would live in Eretz Yisrael for 74 days, as he was 74 years old.

His voyage to Eretz Yisrael wasn't uneventful. A hole on the ship allowed water to enter its interior. Panic and pandemonium broke out among the passengers. Rebbe Moshe placed a cloth over the hole, which miraculously stopped the influx of water.¹³

Mid-voyage, the ship docked at a deserted island. Everyone got off the boat, including the Rebbe with his *gabai*.

Eventually, the sailors blew their horns, calling all passengers back on board. Everyone returned, except for the Rebbe's *gabai*. The

ship departed, and the *gabai* was left behind! The following Friday night, before saying Kiddush, Rebbe Moshe announced, "I will not make Kiddush, until the *gabai* arrives." Immediately they heard a loud bang, and the *gabai* entered.

The *gabai* told them, "I was captured by the *other side* (*sheidim*/demons). I heard them say, 'The old tzaddik says that he won't make Kiddush until his *gabai* comes, but he can't do anything. The *gabai* is with us.' Then, the leader of the *sheidim* came and said, 'This isn't a joke. If the old tzaddik said that that he isn't saying Kiddush until the *gabai* comes, we must obey,' and they sent me here."¹⁴

13. This cloth is still extant, and is used as a *deck tichel* [veil] for the *kallahs* of Rebbe Moshe's descendants.

14. This remarkable story has a sequel, which took place about a hundred years later.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a* lived in Germany before

The ship docked in the north of Eretz Yisrael. Rebbe Moshe Lelover visited the tzaddikim living in Tzfas and Teveria, and he also visited the holy *kivrei tzaddikim* in Meron,

Tzfas, and other locations. He explained that once he reaches Yerushalayim, he will never leave her.

When he arrived in the Old City of Yerushalayim,

World War II. It was dangerous for a Yid to be seen outdoors in those times. Nevertheless, on Friday afternoon, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai left his house to go to the *mikvah*. (He knew that there was danger involved, but his ancestor, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov taught that a Yid should have *mesirus nefesh* to go to *mikvah*.) He passed a group of German youths. They grabbed Rebbe Moshe Mordechai and began to beat him. Just then a chassid, Reb Avraham Frankel *z'l*, passed by. Reb Avraham Frankel was a strong man, and he easily saved my grandfather from the youths. Soon the police arrived and arrested Reb Avraham Frankel, claiming that he was fighting with German citizens!

Later that night, before making Kiddush, Reb Moshe Mordechai told the story that happened to his grandfather, Rebbe Moshe of Lelov, that Rebbe Moshe Lelover said that he won't make Kiddush until his *gabai* returns, and suddenly the *gabai* returned. When Reb Moshe Mordechai completed telling the story, Reb Avraham Frankel walked in.

(There is a concept that when one repeats the story of a miracle that occurred, this causes the miracle to happen again. Therefore, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai repeated the miraculous story how the *gabai* was saved, so this would also draw down a miracle for Reb Avraham Frankel.)

Rebbe Avraham Frankel said that in the police headquarters an interrogator asked him why he was arrested. Reb Avraham replied that he didn't commit any crime. He only protected a Yid who was being harassed and beaten by a gang. The interrogator believed him, and let him free. It was miraculous!

he became ill. His children debated whether they should bring him to the Kosel HaMaaravi and concluded that they should since his main reason for coming to Eretz Yisrael was to go to the Kosel, as he said that would bring Moshiach.

On the way to the Kosel, Arabs threw rocks at them, and it was impossible to get to the Kosel. Shortly afterward he was *niftar*.

He said that the day of his *yahrtzeit* is *mesugal* for rain, and it is unnecessary to proclaim a fast day for rain before his *yahrtzeit* passes. Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, kept this counsel. He wouldn't decree a fast day for rain until the 13th of Teves passed.

He also said that those who will do something in honor of his *yahrtzeit* (a meal, a *lechayim*, lighting a candle, learning Mishnayos, etc.) would merit salvation for whatever they need.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) says, דגמירי דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, "We have a tradition that Heaven gives and doesn't take away."

When someone told Rebbe Moshe Lelover that sometimes he earns *parnassah*, but then he loses it, he advised him to learn Gemara, because דגמירי גמורא then דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, heaven will give him *parnassah*, and won't take it away.

May his merit protect us, amen.