

You Don't Say!

"Good Shabbos my good friend Yossele! It's great to see you!"

"Good Shabbos Shmuelke! Seeing you is always a pleasure. Where are you headed this beautiful Shabbos evening?"

"To the Rebbe's tisch."

"I am going also. Come let's walk together."

The two Chassidim walk down the streets toward the shul. As they turn the corner, two young men approach them.

"Excuse me, we are new in town. We want to go to a Chassidic Rebbe's tisch. Do you know of one nearby?"

"Yes, of course. We are going ourselves. Please join us."

The four men walk up the steps and open the doors into the shul. They are treated to a splendid sight. In the center of the room is a long table, covered with a white silken tablecloth. Seated at the end is the Rebbe, dressed in royal clothes to honor the Shabbos. In front of him, the table is set with the finest tableware. The rest of the room is filled with benches packed with Chassidim. All have come to enjoy the holy atmosphere of the Rebbe's Shabbos Tisch. A sumptuous Shabbos meal awaits them. The Rebbe makes his blessings, eats, and the food is distributed to everyone. The two guests sit shoulder to shoulder with the Chassidim. They are overwhelmed by the holiness of the moment.

"This tisch is simply beautiful."

"Boruch Hashem."

"Thank you so much for bringing us here. May I ask you something?"

"Yes, please."

"When does the Rebbe say a Devar Torah?"

"If I tell you, it will spoil the experience. Wait and see. You won't regret it."

And so they waited, and waited, and waited. The Chassidim sat and watched the Rebbe. They sang Shabbos songs. Finally, they made their blessings after eating, bid the Rebbe a "Good Shabbos," and began to leave. The young men turned to their hosts.

"The Rebbe didn't speak."

"That is correct."

"I thought that one of the main reasons that the Chassidim come to the tisch is to hear the Rebbe's Divrei Torah."

"True."

"Was the Rebbe feeling well?"

"Fine."

"Then why didn't he speak?"

"Our Rebbe never speaks at the tisch."

The young men are astounded.

"The Rebbe never speaks at the tisch? Then why do the Chassidim come?"

"They don't come to hear what the Rebbe says. They come to hear what the Rebbe does not say."

What did the Rebbe hope to convey to his Chassidim by sitting silent at the tisch? One possibility is that a holy person can inspire others with just his presence. He does not need to say a word. Another is that we need not feel uncomfortable with silence. When one feels an obligation to talk, he can end up saying many things that are unnecessary and even forbidden. Be relaxed about keeping quiet. Perhaps he wanted to make an

even stronger point. Would anyone ever suspect the Rebbe of saying anything improper? Of course not! Even so, he kept quiet. How much more so, should we guard our speech.

This week's parasha brings a recounting of the *chet ha'meraglim* (sin of the spies). This disaster was caused by *loshon hora*. Hashem had promised the Jewish people a miraculous conquest of Eretz Yisrael. The spies spoke *loshon hora* against The Almighty Himself, claiming that the residents of the Holy Land were too powerful to defeat. This sin caused the entire generation to die in the desert, never entering the Promised Land. The night the spies returned was Tisha B'Av. "That night you cried for nothing. Therefore, it will be a night of crying throughout the generations" (gemora Taanis 29a).

We are still crying over all of the destructions. Will it ever end? Yes. It is within our power to end this *golus* (exile) and bring Mashiach. Which power do we have? The power of speech.

*Kinderlach . . .
Watch what you don't say. Who knows what you don't say? Hashem. He knows that you were tempted to spread some juicy gossip. Or that you really wanted to put somebody down. But you didn't! You were a hero! You held yourself back from *loshon hora*. Hashem will reward you greatly for that. Count your words like precious gems. Don't spend even one more than you have to. You have the power. The power to bring Moshiach. The power of speech. You don't say!*



The Roots of Destruction

How can I alone bear your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?" (Devarim 1:12). This verse begins with the word "eicha". The Medrash Rabba (Eicha 1:1) points out the two other verses in Tanach that begin with the same word. "How the faithful city (Yerushalayim) has become unfaithful! She had been full of justice and righteousness, but now murderers... Your princes

are rebellious and associates of thieves; each of them loves bribery and pursues payments. They do not render justice to the orphan; the grievance of the widow does not come to them." (Yishaya 1:21-23). The Novi Yishaya admonishes the Jewish people for their corruption. He warns them to search their ways and do *teshuva*. Finally, -- years later, Yirmiyahu HaNovi sees Yerushalayim conquered and destroyed. He writes Megillas Eicha - lamentations over this tragedy. "Alas she sits in solitude! The city that was great with people has become like a widow..." (Eicha 1:1). What is the connection between these three verses?

The Kesav Sofer has a compelling explanation which teaches us an important lesson for Tisha B'Av. What was the state of Klal Yisrael in the times of Yishaya? Corruption was rampant. People stole from each other, and cheated widows and orphans. They were not even afraid of justice, relying on bribery to save them from punishment. Yishaya asks, "Eicha?" (How can it be) that Klal Yisrael has fallen to such a low level? The answer is that the roots are in the previous "eicha". Moshe Rabbeinu asks, "How can I alone bear your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?" There were too many disputes for him to handle alone. Therefore, he had to appoint judges to handle the burden of cases. This situation would be good for the corrupt ones. They could now go to a judge who did not know them and bribe him, something they could never do with Moshe Rabbeinu. And so, criminals persisted, unjudged, unpunished. However The Almighty is the Ultimate Judge. If there is no justice in the earthly court, He convicts the guilty in His Heavenly Court. Therefore the destruction came, and Yirmiyahu said, "eicha".

Rashi expands on this idea, pointing out other faults of the Jewish people. They were rebellious - criticizing Moshe Rabbeinu, and complainers - creating problems even when everything was good. These are the seeds of the destruction that we mourn. These are the problems that have caused us so much suffering.

*Kinderlach . . .
Why suffer, when you can do something about it? Instead of creating disputes, let us create peace. Mevater (give in) and come to an agreement. The argument will stop before it starts. Instead of criticizing people, encourage them. You can surely find something good to say to them. How can you even think about complaining? Just look at all the good that Hashem has done for you! May we merit to see these days of mourning become days of rejoicing and simcha!*

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Hashem tell Moshe Rabbeinu not to fear Og Melech HaBashan? (Rashi 3:2)
- How do we see Hashem's might in conquering Sichon and Og? (3:5)
- Who inherited the lands of Sichon and Og? (3:14-17)
- Were the Bnei Yisrael allowed to start a war with Ammon and Moav? Were they allowed to frighten them? Why? (2:9 and Rashi, 2:19)
- What happened during the war with Og? Who knew about it and what was the result? (2:25 and Rashi)