

The Dee

Pirkei Avot Project

שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר, כָּל יְמֵי גְדֻלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא הַמְדָּרֵשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשָׂה. וְכָל הַמְרַבֶּה דְבָרִים, מְבִיא חֵטָא:

Shimon, his son, used to say: all my days I grew up among the sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence. Study is not the most important thing, but actions; whoever indulges in too many words brings about sin.

Much of my professional life has involved some form of public communication, whether writing, speaking, or interviewing. There is a safety in having a script, or having editors who provide an opportunity to review or rethink my words. But in my daily life, things can be more complex.

Recently, after a night of socialising at a school event, I came home with the unpleasant feeling of having talked excessively. I felt embarrassed at some of the statements I had made, regretful at some of the anecdotes I had told. I began to reevaluate why I had shared what I shared. There was the desire to connect, which is normal and healthy, but I noticed that after a certain point in the conversation, I spoke almost on autopilot, saying phrases or opinions that no longer truly reflected my feelings, but were a little stale, slightly expired. Did I love the sound of my voice so much that I had to trot out these obsolete opinions?

Shimon (his son) says he has found nothing better for the body than silence; Rashi teaches that one who remains silent at least has the chance of appearing to be intelligent - if one is quick to respond to people rather than silently hearing them out, he is bound to speak foolishly.

Speech is an incredible gift. It can be used to validate, to connect, to express, to teach, to reveal beauty or truth or call out injustice. But like anything powerful, it also contains destructive power, either to others or to ourselves, or both. Knowing when to share and when to sit back and listen is a skill that benefits everyone.

Discussion Points:

What are benefits of silence and how may it be useful to be alone with your thoughts?
Have I have ever caused upset by excessive speech?
How can I balance speaking vs listening going forward?

Idea by Rivki Silver

לעילוי נשמת:

לאה בת רפאל הכהן וציפורה

מאיה אסתר בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

רינה מרים בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה



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