

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Talk is cheap - or is it? Speech as a lesson within the Summer Parshas including Parsha Balaak

Talk is cheap. Or is it?

From Miriam getting leprosy, to the spies, to the maklokes that Korach began, to the complaining about the lack of water and Moshe's hitting the rock, and now this week, to Balaam's use of speech that he wanted to curse but instead blessed the Jewish people, we see the role of speech.

The Second Temple was destroyed because of lashon hara, hateful talk, that stemmed from people disparaging each other, hating each other for no good reason. In any generation when the Temple is not rebuilt, it is as if we are the ones who destroyed it. How are we doing with our speech?

The Chofetz Chaim in the first third of the 1900's began awakening us to the laws of speaking about our fellow Jew. What is so special about speaking after all?

We have a breath from Hashem, and we exhale when we speak. With our very soul, with every word we are influencing the spiritual realms, either in a constructive or a destructive way. What are we giving voice to and when we feel upset, do we have a choice?

We all know we have a choice in theory, but do we take the time to learn to develop the ability to exercise choice? Why is taking that time a good idea?

There is something very special about speech that has not been instilled within us.

In "A Beginning with no End" by Rabbi Pinchos Winston, (p. 98-99) Rabbi Winston discusses the distress the Jewish people felt regarding the manna and its result – that on Friday they collected two portions, one for Shabbos. Rabbi Winston shares that the circumstances were such that something crucial did not become instilled in the Jewish People:

"There was a secret to transforming the manna: the three words, Lekovod Shabbos Kodesh – for the honor of Shabbos - were to be said just prior to collecting the single omer. Had the Jewish people prior to picking up the manna uttered this simple declaration, designating the dally portion to be in honor of the upcoming Shabbos, it would have doubled before their very eyes. THAT experience would have definitely brought much greater joy than just collecting two portions, for it would have elevated the Jewish people out of the realm of physicality and into the realm of the supernatural. They would have accomplished a physical task (creating food for Shabbos) through a spiritual means (speech). Rising above nature is what it means to be a descendant of Avraham and therefore part of the Jewish nation.A miracle brought about through verbalizing one's will has more significance than one brought about through action. Had the Jewish people brought about the miracle verbally, they would have witnessed the realization of this potential within themselves. It would have instilled them with a belief in their spiritual capabilities, and inspired them to be close with Gd.However, when the Jewish people physically collected the double portion, it left them mired in the physical reality. The potential to bring about miracles though a spiritual ability remained only a theory for them, and affected the way they perceived reality, and how to interact with it. It left them psychologically dependent upon physical action to accomplish physical results...and since the whole episode was dependent upon whether or not Moshe told them what to say before collecting the manna for Shabbos, he was held accountable for what was not achieved. "

Moshe had a second chance to instill this in the Jewish people – had he spoken to the designated rock and produced water, the Jewish people would have seen that speech is a way to affect the physical world.

The Chofetz Chaim teaches us the spiritual reality of our words. Nevertheless, do we have a sense of every word as something we are creating or do we think that talk is cheap?

Rebbetzin Heller in her current series on Ahavas Yisrael www.torahcalls.com/ explains that our negative speech stems from our failing in our battle to bring into the world the Chariot of kedusha that Yehezkeil saw in his vision. Rebbetzin Heller said

"Yehezkeil had a vision, a chariot, that the Malbim explains -he chariot takes the rider where he wants to be. We are limited and subjective and we are intended to bring light to a dark place. He saw animals, forces that bring Hashem to this world, lion, ox, eagle and human. These forces represent the Avos. Avraham – lion, Yitzhak-ox, Yaakov is the human and the eagle is Dovid. You have to see the world through the eyes of these people. Avraham when he took in the angels he called them his masters – he saw Hashem in those people. Yitzchak looked at people by seeing their blockage and in seeing this in the other person he saw his own lapse - he was a spiritual warrior and he did battle and won. Yaakov looked at his 12 sons who were each so different, so many different middos and each had different bracha. Dovid Hamelech, the core of Moshiach, he is the eagle who could rise above the avoda of this world to see why we are here, to get above the situation...

Rebbetzin Heller continues with "Do battle against cruelty and untruth. Yaakov saw the emes; there is something to be blessed. If you look at what can't be blessed you are doing the opposite. If you get stuck in subjectivity you are stuck in the impure chariot, forces that conceal rather than reveal Hashem. The source of the impure chariot is very high, as high as the pure chariot. The war is a very deep war, deep spiritual forces. Now that you recognize this, the more you try to judge others favorably the more you change your own middos, it isn't about the other person, it is about us" Class 2. For more information about Rebbetzin Heller's workshop visit www.torahcalls.com/

The place that our speech comes from is very deep within us. But the work is there. We can grow in our understanding of what speech is in potential.

If we understood that our free will can be used to choose to give to the spiritual realms words that build and elevate physical reality, would we choose it?

Rabbi Nivin in his Three Weeks Drasha explains that spiritually, being without the Bais Hamikdosh places us in a constricted space that starves our soul to death, a place where we cannot be anything but spiritually crippled because we cannot receive what came into the Bais Hamikdosh, a place that gave us emunah and vitality. Rabbi Moshe Weinberger speaks about the cycle of receiving, influencing, and giving, and shares that in order to become a giver, sometimes we have to stop receiving. This is the pattern of children receiving from parents and then growing up and giving to others.

Our emunah that we received from the Bais Hamikdosh is now for us to construct. Where can we receive from Hashem? In our very souls, in the vessel that we build within our hearts out of the pain and suffering that we experience. THAT Bais Hamikdosh is one that He can fill based on our individual effort to receive. And when we receive, may we hover over our negative feelings like eagles and use free will to give to Hashem a great delicacy – words and actions that emulate Him, that give voice and expression to the chariot of kedusha.

May we see ourselves as chariots to bring Hashem's attributes of mercy into the world every moment, thereby directing our actions and speech toward building spiritual realms and may we be zocheh to see the Moshiach speedily.