



You Shall fear My Temple
Parshas Behar-Bechukosei

The Lelov *Beis Midrash* (study hall) was packed, yet during the Torah reading not a sound could be heard, for the Rebbe, Rabbi Shimon Nosan Netah, was very strict about not having any talking during prayers. Once I saw the Rebbe himself hanging up the "No Talking" signs in the *Beis Midrash*. I couldn't believe my eyes, and tried to replace him in the task, when he refused, I asked him why he insisted in doing it himself. He responded by telling me that he wanted the youth to know that talking during prayers disturbed him so much, it was like cutting into his flesh.

Rabbi Shimon Nosan Netah explained the severity of the matter by referring to the words of our Sages: "He who speaks between donning one *Tefilin*, phylactery (the arm), and the other (head) has committed a transgression¹ and returns home under the regulations of war".² This teaching relates to an exemption from a Torah mandated war for a soldier who is considered a sinner - for a sinner has no merit to protect him during the war. The type of "sin" the Talmud describes is if he speaks between donning one *Tefilin* and the other!

The Rebbe learned an important point here. He who speaks between donning one *Tefilin* and the other states he is not standing before G-d while in prayer, and therefore he has committed a transgression and returns home. When one battles his negative inclination (*yetzer hara*) he must be very careful, as we know that "And if the Holy One, blessed be He, will not help him, he will be unable to prevail over him."³ If he ignores G-d, who can guarantee that G-d will be at his side when he battles his negative inclination?

This idea is mentioned in the Zohar⁴: "He who speaks of profane matters in the synagogue; woe to him for he demonstrates division, woe to him for he has no part in the G-d of Israel, for he shows there is no G-d, and G-d is not present, and he does not fear him."

The Rebbe would quote the righteous: "G-d will do battle for you and you will remain silent."⁵ If you are silent during prayers, G-d will wage war for you against the negative inclination."

In our weekly parsha we read: "You shall keep My Shabbos and fear My Sanctuary. I am the Lord."⁶ Our Sages learn

from the proximity of Shabbos and the sanctuary that one fears not the sanctuary but He who has commanded its construction, and similarly one fears not the Shabbos but He who has commanded to observe it.

Rabbi Chaim of Chernowitz, in his book on the Shabbos, explained the extent one should fear sanctity. "And fear My Sanctuary - when you become true fearers of the sanctity you will be rendered powerless to even speak - as a result of the fear."

When we saw the Rebbe in the *Beis Midrash* during prayer that is precisely what we witnessed. He would not speak because of the fear, yet he would not remain silent when someone desecrated the sanctity. His aid, Rabbi Simchah Krakowsky, tells that when the Rebbe lived in the US, before he came to Israel, he was poverty stricken. The Rebbe's neighbor would sustain him. Once, the Rebbe noticed that neighbor talking during prayers. The Rebbe pleasantly asked him to stop. The situation repeated itself, and the Rebbe asked him to leave the room. He did, and stopped supporting the Rebbe. Many years later he contacted the Rebbe and asked for help, and was willing to make a donation. The Rebbe refused the money, stating he did not regret what he did many years before. The Rebbe personally suffered from such conduct.

The many guests were not aware of the severity of the place they had entered. The Rebbe appointed special people to go around and silence anyone who spoke during prayers. Suddenly someone talking during the Torah reading was heard. The Rebbe appeared near him, and everyone silenced him. The Rebbe was enraged by the fact that someone dare speak during prayers. At the conclusion of the prayers the Rebbe told those in charge of the silence that if anyone speaks during the prayers he is to be removed from the room. "Take a stick and get him out."

Once the Viznitzer Rebbe lamented about the loss of youngsters in his community, and asked the Lelover Rebbe what to do. The Rebbe initially did not respond, but then explained that all the calamities were a result of talking during prayers, and by doing so they have created a barrier between themselves and G-d which prevented the ascension of their prayers to the Heavens. However, the Rebbe added, if they refrain from talking during prayers – no harm will come to them, and they will live a long and healthy life.

¹ Upon the arm and the forehead. It is forbidden to speak between the putting on of the two.

² Tractate Sotah 44b.

³ Tractate Baba Batrah 75a.

⁴ Trumah 33.

⁵ Shmot 14:14.

⁶ Vayikra 26:2.