

פרק א', משנה יז

שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אָמַר. כָּל יְמֵי גְדֻלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים. וְלֹא מִצְאָתִי לְגוֹה טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא
הַמְדַרְשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֵׂה. וְכָל הַמְרָבָה דְּבָרִים, מְבִיא חֲטָא.

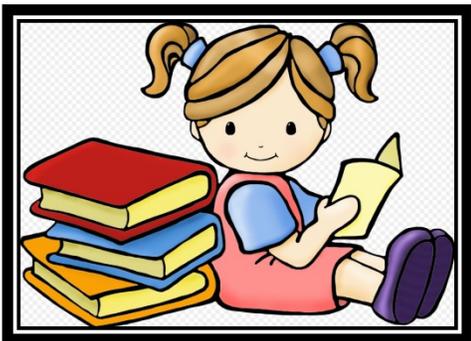
Shimon, his son said, "During all my days growing up among the חכמים, I found nothing better for a person than silence. Also, it's not verbal communication, but a message conveyed through action that is the most effective way of communicating.

Also, excessive speaking leads to error.



The רמב"ם organizes speech into 5 categories:

1. **מצוה בו**: Words that we are commanded to speak, like דברי תורה and תפילה
2. **נזהר ממנו**: Words that are despicable, like לשון הרע, רכילות, שקר, etc. which we are commanded to avoid
3. **נמאס**: Words that are distasteful, though not prohibited, like people "shooting the breeze", talking just for the sake of talking without any real content
4. **אהוב**: Words that are beloved to Hashem, such as those used to uplift and inspire, like telling over a nice story that one heard, or speaking of the good qualities of others - so that others will want to emulate positive behavior and מידות
5. **מותר**: Words that are permitted because they are regarding topics necessary for living, such as food, clothing, business etc. It is perfectly acceptable to speak about these things, yet this is what the Mishna is warning us against speaking too much of:



וְלֹא מִצְאָתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה

Why speak about shopping and menus, when a person can speak words that are מצוה בו and אהוב!?

Yet even when a person is careful to speak mainly in these noble areas, in order for his words to be effective, they must be communicated through his actions – as the Mishna states: וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

Actions speak louder than words!

Also, says the רמב"ם, ideally, one should always try to speak succinctly – use as many words as necessary to get your points across – not more and not less, as the Mishna concludes: מְבִיא חֲטָא. כָּל הַמְרָבָה דְּבָרִים,

Imagine that you meet your best friend after not having seen her in a year! After greeting each other, what are 5 sentences that you would employ to engage her in conversation?