

WHEN ONE MAY TALK IN OUR SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue is considered a **מקדש מעט** - a miniature version of G-d's house. **הלכה** (Jewish law) requires that the synagogue be treated with great respect, and clearly elaborates what constitutes proper synagogue conduct, including when and how one may talk there. The **גמרא מס' מגילה** lists numerous activities which may not be done in a *shul*, including behaving in a light-headed manner and spending purposeless time there, as well as engaging in idle conversation.

IN GENERAL, ONE SHOULD AVOID ALL BUT NECESSARY TALKING IN SHUL. The **משנה ברורה** goes to great lengths to emphasize the severity of the sin of talking in *shul*, considering it an act of belittling the honor of **הקב"ה** by sinning in His holy place, and noting that it will likely cause other people to talk and lead to **לשון הרע** and arguments and the like. He thus concludes that one should speak only words of **תפילה** and **תורה** in a *shul*.

HOW SHOULD ONE CONDUCT HIMSELF IN THE SYNAGOGUE? The **ספר אורח חיים** notes that one should learn, in this regard, from the behavior of non-Jews who stay completely silent when in their houses of worship. *Davening* in an undertone to encourage proper **כבוד** is certainly permissible, although one should be careful not to disturb those around him or her. One should thus answer **אמן** to all **ברכות** and respond to **ברכו**, **קדיש** and **קדיש קדוש**, provided one is at a point in the *davening* where one may do so.

WHEN IS ONE ALLOWED TO TALK IN OUR SHUL? The rabbi is available with information regarding the specific provisions of Jewish law, in this and other matters. Although it is not recommended, if one must talk, one should leave the sanctuary in order to do so.

WHAT SHOULD ONE DO IF SPOKEN TO WHEN TALKING IS NOT ALLOWED? It is suggested that the response be to move one's finger back and forth near the top lines on this page. Or, one might put his/her finger to one's lips and smile. Help maintain the proper respect that both the synagogue and the *davening* deserve.

Written by Rabbi Michael Taubes

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