

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah tells us in this week's parsha Vayikra *"And He [Hashem] called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying..."* (Vayikra - Leviticus 1:1) This verse seems to be repetitive. The beginning of the verse says *"And He [Hashem] called to Moshe..."* and the end of the verse states *"saying."* Therefore, the last word in the verse *"saying"* seems to be extra. We know that nothing in the Torah is extra, thus, the Sages learn out a spiritually fulfilling lesson from the this verse. The Talmud (Yoma 4b) explains that the word *"saying"* denotes: *"What I am about to say, you may say to others."* Therefore, we learn that a person has no right to repeat what someone tells him unless that person gives him explicit permission to do so. (Love Your Neighbor, parshas Vayikra p.216 Reb Zelig Pliskin)

The Talmud relates that a certain student revealed a secret that was twenty-two years old. Rabbi Ami expelled him from the Bais Hamedrash (study hall) saying *"this person is a revealer of secrets."* (Ibid. citing Sanhedrin 31a) A person should be careful not to disclose his own secrets to others. Before someone reveals a secret, he is the secret's master. But once a person reveals his secret, the secret is his master, for he lives in fear that it will become known to others. (Ibid. Citing Menoras Hamaor 2:4) A wise man once joked: *"I can keep a secret, but the people I tell cannot."* (Rabbi Avrohom Braun – Monsey, New York)

During World War II, the United States Navy instructed its sailors to be very careful not to speak about their ship's destination. At the time, enemy spies were not uncommon in America. If the information fell into the wrong hands, it could spell disaster for the ship. Therefore, in order to impress upon the sailors the importance of keeping quiet, the Navy coined the phrase *"Loose Lips Sink Ships."* We should remember this example when we are tempted to reveal another's private information.

Almost every relationship we have in life depends on the ability to trust that information we share will be kept confidential. It is simply impossible to maintain a friendship or a business relationship without confidentiality. People who are in the position to hear sensitive personal information, such as lawyers, doctors, accountants and shadchanim (matchmakers) have a professional obligation to maintain confidentiality. These people's careers depend fully on confidentiality. Who would go to an accountant who talked about people's finances? The more sensitive the information involved, the better the person must be at keeping their mouth tightly sealed.

The following amazing story shows the importance of keeping secrets: Among the most gentle and caring charities in Jewish neighborhoods today are the Tomchei Shabbos-type of organizations, which provide needy families with food every Shabbos. Every week, with remarkable efficiency, a group of volunteers picks up Shabbos staples, such as grape juice, challah, fish, chicken, and cake from wholesalers who provide their food free or at cost. Another group of volunteers converges on the building where the provisions are stored. They package the food in cartons, depending on the size of the families. On Wednesday or Thursday, a third set of volunteers delivers the packages to the needy families.

Rarely do any of the volunteers know the identity of the recipients of these Tomchei Shabbos packages. Sometimes, the cartons are left at the front door of the recipient so that there is no face-to-face contact between the volunteer and a family member. In some cities, volunteers are permitted to deliver only to a part of town where they do not reside, so they will not recognize the address or the dweller. Maintaining the dignity of the needy is uppermost in any Tomchei Shabbos volunteer's mind.

In London, Reb Yoel Becker was in charge of fundraising for his local Tomchei Shabbos operation. Two nights a week he visited potential donors. One night he was at the home of Reb Zev Kringold who was known in the past for his charitable donations to other charities. After some small talk, Reb Yoel came to the point. *"I am sure you know about Tomchei Shabbos,"* he said to Reb Zev. *"We are in desperate need of funds and we need your help."*

The prospective donor Reb Zev answered: *"I will give you 100 pounds (the equivalent, at the time, to \$180) on the condition that you tell me who receives the food packages."*

The Tomchei Shabbos volunteer Reb Yoel was surprised. *"Reb Zev, you know I can't do that,"* he said. *"We never reveal the names of people getting packages. It is strictly confidential."* "Look," said Reb Zev, *"it is important to me to know that I am helping a specific individual. It makes me feel that I am truly relieving the burden of a fellow Jew."* Seeing that the volunteer Reb Yoel was not moved by his plea, the prospective donor Reb Zev said, *"I will double my donation. I'll even give you 400 pounds!"*

"I'm sorry," said Reb Yoel the volunteer. *"I won't do it. I have never revealed a name and I won't do it now."* "Look," said Reb Zev, getting exasperated. *"Make this one time an exception [and reveal the information to me] and I'll give you 1,000 pounds! I want to feel connected with the poor family and this way I will."*

The volunteer Reb Yoel realized it was hopeless. *"Reb Zev,"* he said, *"[even] if you gave me 5,000 pounds, I wouldn't reveal who is getting your package or any other package. It's our policy and we will never change it as long as I am in charge."* Suddenly, Reb Zev put his hands to his face and wept. *"Reb Yoel, please put me on your list,"* he sobbed. *"People don't realize that I no longer have the money I once had. My family and I are destitute. I am out of work and struggling every day. I was only testing you. I was ashamed to call you to be put on the Tomchei Shabbos list because I feared that others would find out I was getting packages. I was trying to see if there was any way under any circumstances that you would reveal your recipients - but now that I see that you wouldn't. Please make sure that I am on your list."* (Echoes of the Maggid, p.55 Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn)

By keeping private information private, we keep friends. Almost all of our relationships in life depend on trust. Whenever we are tempted to reveal another's private information, we should remember *"Loose Lips Sink Ships,"* and the potential damage and embarrassment we can cause. Let us be inspired by this week's lesson to rededicate ourselves to a policy of confidentiality with our friends and business associates. If we are trustworthy, people will run to us to be our friends and to associate with us in business. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**