

THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMAL!

The following story that never happened (parable) is adapted from the story that appears in the book, "Hapeh Kodesh Kodoshim" by Rav Shalom Shvartz of Modiin Ilit. (pg 57) Please share it with your children.

The administration of the local zoo had an urgent meeting in which they tried to come up with ideas to boost the number of visitors that had recently reached an all-time low. After much deliberation they came up with an exciting idea. Indeed this idea proved itself to be successful and after a short while the number of regular visitors to the zoo increased significantly.

The idea was to open a unique and original presentation theater in the zoo. To this effect a large room was built. Especially comfortable chairs were placed across this small theatre like room and video screens were placed on all sides. Air conditioning for the winter and heating for the summer was built in along with many other special features to make this room comfortable for and attractive to all.

During zoo hours there would be live presentations about the various animals in the zoo, accompanied by special effects through the help of the numerous screens throughout the room, making it all seem very real and lifelike.

These presentations were so successful that many of the visitors preferred to be in the theater rather than seeing the animals live.

From time to time new material would be introduced into the program making the presentations even more exciting and attractive.

More and more visitors came until after a short while the theater building had to be enlarged to accommodate the amount of visitors. It was not long before visitors were frequenting the zoo from all over the world.

At this point the manager of the zoo decided that the time was ripe for his new special idea. He announced a special program that would be shown only for fathers and heads of institutions.

While the families were walking through and enjoying the zoo many many fathers and heads of institutions made their way to the expanded theater to witness the presentation

that would change their lives and their family's lives forever.

The lecturer greeted the visitors and after a brief overview of the animals in the zoo announced, "Today's special presentation is about a very dangerous animal perhaps the most dangerous of them all. Let me explain", he said. "Every animal in our zoo is provided with a private den in which he can retire to and be left alone should he please. At the same time he has a large open space with grass and hills in front of his den in which he can roam around freely should he wish to do that. All the areas are fenced in with barbed wire and wired with electric currents to provide electric shocks. In addition there is a large trench filled with water before the fence. All this makes it impossible for the animal to escape. The safety of our visitors is our first priority", the lecturer stressed.

"However the animal we are speaking about is extremely dangerous. The only option to keep people safe from him is to keep him closed in his den the entire time.

There are two walls surrounding his den. One of sharp stones, and another additional very high wall.

Hashem, in his loving kindness, created this animal to be very weak and soft. It does not even have the ability to stand up-it just remains lying down the entire time.

Hashem also gave it the ability to fold itself up and to become smaller. In this state it is protected and cannot hurt others.

We have not yet touched upon the main problem though.

When people walk through the zoo they can immediately discern between the harmless animals and the dangerous ones. No sane person will come too close to the lion or tiger. But the big wonder is that this animal appears to be innocent and harmless. That is what makes it even more dangerous."

The lecturer paused to give people a chance to respond.

"Tell us where he is located so that we can see him for ourselves" many people called out.

"Please understand, replied the lecturer, in the past when we tried letting him out of his den he was able to hurt visitors that were standing even far away.

The safety of our visitors is our first priority. This prevents us from letting this animal be shown live.

But we can show him to you on the screens in front of us", concluded the presenter.

One father called out, "Even though you say you have this animal under control, from your description it would appear to be very, very, dangerous. How do you have a right to hold such an animal in the zoo? Do you have the proper permissions from the authorities to do so? Is this legal? Is this safe? I am going to place a complaint with the police."

Another visitor called out, "If this animal is so dangerous that it can't even be shown why is it being kept at the zoo altogether?"

Yet another one shouted, "Tell me in which area of the zoo this animal is held so that I can immediately notify my family and tell them to move far away from there."

Instead of addressing the now restless audience the lecturer pressed a button and suddenly a blurry image appeared on the screens surrounding the audience. It was a picture of an animal's den from very far. With the special effects available the lecturer brought the picture closer and closer little by little. Finally it was very clear to all. The cheeks, the row of sharp stony teeth, and hiding behind them, lying down, the weak, innocent looking tongue. Your tongue!

Peh Tahor Discussion

Please ask your children the following questions. Please give them ample time to offer their suggestions and please value everything they say, even if it's wrong. The very discussion of these matters is beneficial for your children.

1. Do you agree that the tongue is as dangerous as it sounds in the story or do you feel this is an exaggeration. Why? Can you give any examples to support your view? (After listening to ALL your children you can cite the verse that says "Death and Life are in the hands of the tongue". The instances in which we see the actual fulfillment of this verse constantly are too numerous to cite here.)
2. There is one point in this story that is only partially correct. What is it? (The tongue is only dangerous when used for bad. That was the lesson of this story. But it has an enormous tafkid (mission) to speak good. Consequently keeping it in its den is only true with regards to sur meira-not speaking bad. But with regards to speaking good, the tongue should come out of its resting place and be used abundantly).
3. What are some good things that I can say with my tongue. (Words of Torah, Tefilla, and Brachos)
4. Are there any words of kindness that I can use my tongue for? (Compliments, Greetings, Blessings, Appreciation, Encouragement, Making others happy, Expressing belief in others, Expressing love, warmth and friendship, and more.)
5. What are some examples of compliments that I can say? (Let your children come up with their own ideas)

THE PAIN OF OTHERS IS MY PAIN!

A few days before Pesach the Kloisenberger Rebbe, ztz'l, called the Shefa Chaim after the sefer he authored, was hospitalized with a serious virus. On erev Pesach the doctors examined him and decided that he has to stay in the hospital for seder night and due to the seriousness of his condition, no one can stay with him, even close family members. Upon hearing this the Shefa Chaim broke out crying, still he accepted the doctor's verdict.

On 25 Nisan he was permitted to leave the hospital and come home. His close attendant Rav Yosef Binyamin Williger, accompanied him as he was released and came back home. While Rav Yosef was in the room the Rebbe opened up and explained why he cried.

"From when I was born I can honestly say that here has not been one tzara (woe, trouble, misfortune) that he has not been through. But I never cried or paid attention to my troubles. I was always concerned that someone may think that I may have even a one in a million bit of complaint against Hakadosh Baruch Hu, chas veshalom. I accepted everything with love.

But when they told me that I will have to remain in the hospital for the Leil Haseder, I cried. Because I saw the pain on the face of my wife and children, the pain of not being able to be together for the seder.

It was the pain of their pain that brought me to cry.

When Rav Williger (who passed away just a few weeks ago) would tell this story he would note that the rebbe was orphaned at a young age. He went through the holocaust as well, during which he lost his first wife and 11 children. But he never cried. He only cried, when others were suffering and he felt their pain along with them!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!