

Minimizing Speech on Shabbath

The Talmud Bavli (Shabbath 113b) states that one's speech on Shabbath should be distinguished from one's speech during the week (שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול). No further explanation of the manner in which one's speech should be distinguished is given.

Rashi interprets the prohibition as discussing commerce. However, the Talmud Yerushalmi prohibits excessive speech on Shabbath even if it is not commerce related.

רבי שמעון בר יוחאי כד הוה חמי לאימיה משתעיא סגין הוה אמר לה אימא שובתא היא (שבת טו: ג עה:)
Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, when he would see his mother speaking much would tell her: "Mother, it is the Sabbath"

Rabbenu Nissim (and other Sages, e.g. Ramban) interprets the passage in the Talmud Bavli explicitly according to the Talmud Yerushalmi prohibiting any excessive speech. It is interesting to note that Rabbenu Tam (Tosafoth ad loc) cites not the passage from the Talmud Yerushalmi but its parallel in Waykra Rabba Leviticus (Behar, parasha 34, #16)

Neither the Talmud Yerushalmi nor (most of) the Sages that refer to it qualify the type of speech that is prohibited. The sense seems to be that speech in general, productive or not is shunned.

However, Rambam (*Zemanim*, Laws of Shabbath 14:4) who does not refer to the Talmud Yerushalmi explicitly but is clearly relying on it understood it to prohibit a very specific form of speech - idle speech. "It is prohibited to be excessive in idle speech, as it says "we-dabber davar - that your speech on the Sabbath should not be like your speech during the week" (ואסור להרבות בשיחה בטלה שנאמר "ודבר דבר" () שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול).

Rambam's ruling is codified by the Shulkhan Arukh (307:1)