

# Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Shemini/Parah

20 Adar 2, 5774/March 22, 2014

Vol. 5 Num. 28

Sponsored by the families of Irwin, Jim and David Diamond  
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לזכר נשמת אבינו מורינו ר' משה בן דוד שלמה ז"ל

## Silent Lessons

Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

Silence is a virtue praised by our rabbis. In Pirkei Avot, silence is linked to wisdom on two occasions (1:17 and 3:17): "All my days I grew up among the sages, and I found nothing better for oneself than silence," and, "A protective fence for wisdom is silence." Silence allows one to hear what others have to say. Learning from others provides a broader understanding of any given situation and provides multiple perspectives on an issue. This contributes to a deeper and richer understanding, and ultimately greater wisdom.

But silence also indicates acceptance of a matter. Especially upon receiving bad news, silence might signify complete devotion and subservience to G-d by not even complaining at that most difficult time. In our parshah, Aharon's silent response to the death of his beloved sons, Nadav and Avihu, is a prime example of accepting G-d's word without any complaint.

"Aharon was silent." (Vayikra 10:3) The Torah explicitly mentions that Aharon was quiet. Usually, we can infer a person's silence when the Torah omits that person's reaction to a matter. For example, since the Torah makes no mention of Avraham complaining about his command to bind Yitzchak on the altar, we can infer that he did not protest the command showing his incredible faith in G-d. Why in this case, does the Torah make a point of telling us that "Aharon was silent?" Could we not have inferred Aharon's silence if the Torah had merely omitted any mention of Aharon's response?

The Mishkan's inauguration, during which Nadav and Avihu died, is understood by many sages a sign that G-d had forgiven the Jewish people for worshipping the Golden Calf. Rashi (Vayikra 9:2) notes that this is the reason G-d commanded the first sacrifice offered in the Mishkan be a calf. Considering Aharon's involvement building the calf, he may have been elated at being chosen to perform the service marking the atonement for that sin. [For another view, see Sifra Shemini 1:8.] Certainly, G-d had forgiven him for his actions if he was to take part in the daily Mishkan service. But the joy was short-lived, as a heavenly fire consumed Nadav and Avihu after they offered a "foreign fire" to G-d. Aharon might have viewed this as a rejection of himself, as his own sons were killed on what should have been a celebratory day. One can only imagine the personal pain Aharon was feeling at that moment. Yet, Aharon remains silent. In an incredible display of faith, restraint and self-control he does not take out his anger on, or even question, G-d. He sees a greater picture and recognizes that man cannot possibly understand G-d's way.

Aharon's silence also gives a blueprint for consoling a fellow man. Ramban (Vayikra 10:3) explains that Aharon cried when he heard the news. However, he fell silent after Moshe consoled him. How was Aharon able to be consoled at that time? What words did Moshe recite that could possibly heal the loss of two children?

Moshe, quoting G-d, says, "I will be sanctified through those closest to Me, and I will be honoured before the entire

nation." (Vayikra 10:3) Moshe consoled Aharon by emphasizing the amazing life that Nadav and Avihu had lived, and by describing the legacy they would leave with the Jewish people. Nadav and Avihu were considered among those closest to G-d, and therefore they must have lived truly productive and righteous lives. Perhaps, as Moshe suggests, Hashem only punished Nadav and Avihu because they were so great. They were held to a higher standard than the rest of the people, and therefore they were killed for their sin. Furthermore, Moshe declares that even their deaths will cause the Jewish people to improve their ways. Once the Jews remember G-d's punishment for those closest to Him, they will assume that their own punishment for error will be even worse, and they will improve their ways. (Rashi 10:3) In truth, for most people these words would not provide consolation so soon after a loss, but they nevertheless serve as a model to help comfort mourners, speaking of the greatness and impact of the person who has passed on.

"A time to be silent and a time to speak." (Kohelet 3:7) May we take advantage of our times of silence to increase our wisdom, and to demonstrate our complete devotion to G-d.

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**Who is the prophet of our haftorah?**

Yechezkel, son of Buzi, was a priest who was exiled from Israel before the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. Some suggest that “Buzi” is actually Yirmiyahu. His book begins in Babylon, although the first half of the book (until Chapter 24) records rebukes he had issued before the destruction of the Beit haMikdash, against the sins and corruption of the Jewish nation.

After G-d’s decision to destroy the Beit haMikdash, Yechezkel turns to the surrounding nations and prophesies their own destruction as a punishment for the suffering they have inflicted upon the Jewish nation. Then, from Chapter 33 to the end, Yechezkel focuses mainly on consolation for the devastated Jews, predicting their redemption and salvation.

**What is the connection between Parshat Parah and our haftorah?**

The special maftir of Parshat Parah, taken from Bamidbar 19, details the process of purification for a Jew who has encountered death, such as by touching a corpse, sharing a room with a corpse, or touching certain materials which had previously touched a corpse. This is read before the month of Nisan in order to remind us to purify ourselves for the Korban Pesach.

Our haftorah speaks of purification as well, but in a spiritual sense. The Jews are accused of defiling the land of Israel

with their sins; Yechezkel identifies particular crimes of harming other people and worshipping idols. (Yechezkel 36:17-18) In response, G-d evicted our ancestors from the land, but G-d has found that the presence of His people among the nations is itself a desecration of His Name. (36:19-20) To right this wrong, G-d will purify the Jews from their sins, aid them in their repentance, and return them to the land of Israel. (36:25-28)

The connection between Parshat Parah and our haftorah extends beyond the broad theme of purification, though, to its actual mechanism. Ritual purification involves the sprinkling of special water upon the impure subject (Bamidbar 19:17-19), and the spiritual purification of our haftorah is also expressed in terms of sprinkling water, “And I will sprinkle upon you pure water, and you will be purified; from all of your impurities, and all of your idols, I will purify you.” (Yechezkel 36:25)

The water which provides spiritual purification may be assumed to be metaphorical, but it is worth noting that some of our prophecies speak of a purifying spring emerging from the future Beit haMikdash. See, for example, Zecharah 13:1 and Yoel 4:18, as well as Yechezkel’s own words at the start of Chapter 47.

**Human sheep?**

At the end of our haftorah (36:38), Yechezkel describes the transformation of the Jews into *tzon adam*, flocks of human sheep. The prophets often compared our ancestors to beasts; see Yeshayah 1:3 and Hosheia 10:11, for example. This can be a negative comparison, describing a lack of intelligence or highlighting our rebelliousness, but it can also indicate naïve innocence. Just as G-d told the prophet Yonah (Yonah 4:11) that the city of Nineveh deserved another chance not only because of its human population but also because of its “great many beasts”, so Yechezkel says that G-d will have mercy upon the Jews and will look upon them as innocent. Despite this positive view of Yechezkel’s comparison of Jews and sheep, we might prefer a blessing he offered in an earlier chapter: “And you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are human beings. I am HaShem your G-d; this is the word of G-d.” (Yechezkel 34:31)

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**613 Mitzvot: #364****Viduy and Repentance**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

We have already learned (mitzvah #121) that one who commits certain biblical sins must bring a korban to the Beit haMikdash as part of his atonement process. However, a ritual korban alone is insufficient; mitzvah 364 instructs us that we must also perform *viduy*, verbally acknowledging the sin.

Viduy is not limited to a korban circumstance; any attempt to atone for a sin requires that we perform *viduy*. The relationship between *viduy* and *teshuvah* [repentance] is unclear, though:

- The Torah (Bamidbar 5:7) states, “They shall acknowledge their sins,” which sounds like *viduy* is a mitzvah: one who sins must declare it before G-d, and by doing so one has completed a mitzvah. There is no mitzvah of *teshuvah*; repentance may be admirable, but the only mitzvah is that one admit the sin to G-d.
- From an apparently different perspective, Rambam (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 1:1*) writes, “For all of the Torah’s mitzvot, whether commandment or prohibition, if one transgresses a single one, intentionally or accidentally, when he repents and returns from his sin he is obligated to acknowledge before G-d.” Rambam’s words sound as though a person who wishes to repent must perform *viduy*,

but that neither *teshuvah* nor *viduy* is obligatory. Just as one may go his entire life without performing *shechitah*, but should he wish to perform *shechitah* then he must do it in a particular way, so one may choose not to perform *teshuvah*, but should he wish to repent, *viduy* is how he would do it.

- And yet, Rambam introduces his *Hilchot Teshuvah* (Laws of Repentance) by writing, “There is one mitzvah, for the sinner to return from his sin before G-d, and admit his sin.” This indicates that there is a mitzvah of *teshuvah*, which includes *viduy*!

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, in his *Al haTeshuvah*, suggested that the central mitzvah is *teshuvah*, as presented by Rambam in his introduction to *Hilchot Teshuvah*. However, *teshuvah* is not free-form; the mechanism of *teshuvah* is the declaration of *viduy*, admitting one’s sin. This is what Rambam referred to when he wrote, “when he repents and returns from his sin, he is obligated to acknowledge before G-d.” And so the biblical verse cited above instructs us, “they shall acknowledge their sins” as part of fulfilling the mitzvah of returning to G-d.

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## Biography

### Rashba

Rabbi Adam Frieberg

Based on an article by Russell Levy

Born in 1235 in Barcelona, Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (Rashba) was one of the primary students of both Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) and Rabbeinu Yonah. In his younger years, Rashba was a merchant, but he ultimately left business for the rabbinate. As Rabbi of the main synagogue in Barcelona, Rashba led Spanish Jewry for more than 50 years. Rashba was well versed in Roman law, Spanish common law, and economics; this enabled him to lead the Jewish communities of the Spanish provinces and to serve as their representative to the greater Spanish community. As a prominent leader of the Jewish people, Rashba successfully defended the community in theological debates with Christians (Shut HaRashba 4:187).

Rashba wrote prolifically; more than 3000 of his teshuvot are still extant. He received requests for halachic guidance from all over the Jewish world. This is likely due in part to the geographic centrality of Barcelona, relative to major Jewish centres of the time - Portugal, France, Germany, Turkey, North Africa, Italy, and Israel. Also, Barcelona was itself a prominent Jewish community.

Rashba also wrote halachic tracts; two of his most famous are *Torat haBayit* and *Avodat HaKodesh*. *Torat haBayit* has been preserved in two versions, one long and the other short, both of which are usually printed together.

The turn of the Jewish millennium in 5000 (1240) created much messianic fervor in the Jewish community. Rashba ensured the unity of the Jewish community by combating false messiahs, most prominently Nissim ben Avraham and Avraham Abulafia when they appeared in the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (ibid. 1:548).

Rashba vigorously defended Rambam against his detractors, but he disagreed with Rambam's approach to general philosophy and the philosophy of Judaism. Indeed, Rashba, as part of the Beit Din in Barcelona, forbade those under thirty from learning secular philosophy and the sciences.

Rashba passed away at the age of 75, in 1310. Among Rashba's works are his novellae on the Talmud, *Torat HaBayit*, *Avodat HaKodesh* and *Sha'ar HaMayim*. His most renowned students were Rabbi Aharon haLevi (Ra'ah), Rabbi Yom Tov al-Asvilli (Ritva) and Rabbeinu Bechayye.

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## Torah and Translation

### A Berachah after Karpas?

Responsa of Rashba 1:241

Translated by Rabbi Adam Frieberg

ומה ששאלת בטבול ראשון שעשו כדי שישאלו התינוקות מהו לברך אחריו אם אכל כזית? ואמרת שראית בזה חולקין.

תשובה כל שאכל כזית ירק על כרחנו צריך לברך אחריו. שאין ברכת המזון פוטר מה שאוכל קודם הסעודה ואינו מסייע בסעודה כלל. והרי זה כדברים הבאים לאחר הסעודה שלא מחמת הסעודה שטעונין ברכה לפנייהם ולאחריהם.

ומכל מקום אינו ראוי לברך אחריו מיד עד שיאכל מרור, שאילו בירך על הירקות אחריהם נמצא שיצטרך לברך על המרור "בורא פרי האדמה" ו"לאכול מרור" כדרך שהוא מברך על המצה שתיים. ואין ברכת הלחם פוטר את המרור, אף על פי שקראוהו פרפרת הפת, שאין הפת פוטר את הפרפרת אלא הפרפרת שהיא באה ללפת את הפת שאז פטורה מפני שהיא טפלה לפת, אבל החזרת שאינה באה מחמת הפת אין הפת פוטרתה.

ולאחר המרור מברך ברכה שלאחריו ופוטר אותו ואת הירק שאכל בטבול ראשון.

ודברים אלו דברים עתיקים הם לפי דעתי וכן נהגתי והנהגתי. ואין זה מקום אריכות.

Regarding your question about the first dipping, that is done in order to encourage the children to ask: should one recite a closing blessing if one consumes an olive-sized amount? And you mentioned that you had seen dissenting opinions on this matter.

Answer: Whoever eats an olive-sized amount of vegetable must recite a closing blessing. Birkat HaMazon does not exempt food eaten before the meal, which does not assist the meal at all. It is comparable to food that is eaten after the meal, that is not really part of the meal, which needs a blessing both before and afterward.

However, it would not be appropriate to say a closing blessing [on karpas] immediately, before eating the maror. If one were to recite a closing blessing on the vegetables, he would find himself needing to recite a blessing of *borei pri ha'adamah* and *le'echol maror* [before eating maror], just like one recites two berachot before eating matzah. The blessing on the bread [matzah] would not remove the obligation to recite a blessing on the maror, despite the fact that [maror] is considered a condiment for the bread [matzah], for bread [matzah] only exempts condiments that adorn the bread. Those are exempt because they are subsidiary to the bread. The lettuce, which is not eaten with the bread [matzah], is not exempted by the [blessing on the] bread [matzah].

After eating the maror, we recite a closing blessing for it, and this is also for the vegetable which we ate in the first dipping.

These matters are very old, in my opinion, and this is how I have acted and how I have encouraged others to act. And this is not the forum for verbosity.

*23 Adar II is Tuesday*

On March 5, 1975, at 11 PM, eight Palestinian Arab terrorists landed on the beach in Tel Aviv. Their initial plan was to capture a youth club and the opera house, but because of their inability to determine their location, the terrorists defaulted to the only illuminated building on the street: the Savoy Hotel.

During the capture of the hotel, three people were killed and three more escaped, but the majority of guests and staff were taken hostage. The terrorists tried to continue their raid, taking hostages with them, but they were stopped while exiting. Moshe Deutschmann, a Golani soldier on leave, ran toward the hotel after hearing gunfire; he was hit, and died later of his wounds. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Distinguished Service.

Security forces rushed in, and the terrorists retreated to the hotel. They detonated an explosive charge which collapsed

part of the building, and they threatened that if Israel did not release twenty Palestinian prisoners within four hours, the hostages would be executed. Negotiations with the terrorists began, mediated by one of the hostages, Kochava Levy, who could speak Arabic. During the negotiations, Levy provided the security forces detailed information on the militants.

Early in the morning, Israeli special unit *Sayeret Matkal* stormed the hotel. Eight hostages were killed and seven released; seven terrorists were killed, and one was captured. He was sentenced to death, but this decision was overturned later. The surviving terrorist was released in 1995, as part of the Jibril prisoner exchange deal. The remains of the other terrorists were released in 2012 as a "good will gesture".

The brave acts of citizens like Deutschmann and Levy, risking themselves while facing possible death, are our best weapon and defense against our enemies.

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**Highlights for March 22 – March 28 / 20 Adar 2 - 26 Adar 2**

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>SHABBAT MAR 22</b>				
<b>Before minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
<b>After minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah 38b Bishul Akum	BAYT	
<b>SUNDAY MAR. 23</b>				
<b>9:15 AM</b>	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	<b>With light breakfast</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	R' Baruch Weintraub	Questions in Contemporary Israel: Women in the IDF On-line shiur in Hebrew: <a href="http://www.torontotorah.com/online">http://www.torontotorah.com/online</a>		
<b>MONDAY MAR. 24</b>				
<b>8:00 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Halachah: Judaism and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	Shaarei Shomayim	<b>With CME credit</b> <b>Laypeople welcome</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	Josh Gutenberg R' Mordechai Torczyner	Parshah <i>not this week</i>	Shaarei Shomayim	<b>Community</b> <b>Beit Midrash Night</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	Rav Shlomo Gemara	Prophets of Israel: Yoel	Bnai Torah	
<b>TUESDAY MAR. 25</b>				
<b>12:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Living Midrash	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>8:30 PM</b>	Adam Frieberg	Cooking on Shabbat	Shaarei Tefillah	
<b>WED. MAR. 26</b>				
<b>1:00 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	101 Tangreen Circle	<b>For women only</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Business Ethics: Lending	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Community</b> <b>Beit Midrash Night</b>
<b>9:00 PM</b>	R' Yehoshua Weber	Responsa: Kol Isha		
<b>THU. MAR. 27</b>				
<b>8:50 AM</b>	R' Aaron Greenberg	Laws of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>University students</b>
<b>FRI. MAR. 28</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Bishul Akum: Applications	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced shiur</b>

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