



SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

I was in Glasgow this past Shabbos visiting my son and his lovely family. As the city's Rov, my boy (KIH the grandfather of over a minyon) has a lot going on over Shabbos and I always kvell whilst watching how his community puts him through his paces. As a visiting elder statesman, I never tire of shmoozing with the Scottish olam, they are so warm and open. This Shabbos was no different and amongst other things, I fell into a moving discussion with a professional lady who is living with an elderly mother who is suffering from dementia. "My mom has lived in the house around the corner for over forty years, yet she keeps pleading with me to take her home. I have undertaken different ways of trying to decipher where home is to her mind. I showed her pictures of all the places she lived in, even as a child, 'no darling, I want to be at home!' Rabbi what can I do? I fear she is being tortured by this mysterious sense of homelessness and I can't find a key to free her of this particular sad pain." I softly asked if her father is still alive, 'no he passed away three years ago'... 'well allow me to offer my own observation. She is missing her husband, that one soul who shared her everything. With him she was at home in a way that no one else can understand. I then shared my own personal experience. I was married for very close to fifty-five years. My Rebbetzin A'H and I shared things in such a deep way, that much was subconscious. Have you noticed that a married couple can sit in one room, in silence, yet be attached within that bond that needs no words? To we mere mortals, this is the home that abides in our heart.' As I spoke, I felt tears welling in my eyes, the woman also was visibly moved, and perhaps this new understanding of what is home to a bereaved soul will help her in her noble support of her mom.

We live in a noisy and often self-obsessed world. People ramble along with plastic *shtoppers* in their ears, listening to whatever it takes to absent themselves from those around them. If that doesn't work, well they can always fall back on reading their palms, sorry, I mean those little screens on their phones, engrossed in an almost zombie state. Chassunas crash your ear drums with sounds and music that can be heard miles away. So yes, silence is a little appreciated zone but when it is missing beyond repair, one's heart is wounded.

Shavous celebrates the momentous moment when The Eibishter

בס"ד



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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
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חיה שרה בת הרב שלמה
יחיאל רובין ז"ל



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reached down from the Heavens and gave us that most cherished of gifts, His Torah.

Shemos Rabbah (29:9) tells us “When Hashem gave the Jewish people the Torah at Har Sinai, the entire world became silent. The wind stopped blowing, no animals made a sound, and every human being stopped speaking.”

Why? Was The Eibishter afraid the Jews would not be able to hear His voice? Surely He could have caused His voice to resonate over all of the natural sounds of the world, and would that not have made the greatest impression of all? Hashem silenced the noise so we could hear the voice within ourselves – the voice that longed for a spiritual connection, the voice that longed for His Torah. The silence of the entire creation at that most pivotal of times teaches us that the majesty and holiness of the Torah is beyond any noise, it is the emanation that our heart weeps for in that place beyond words, one’s soul.

As a young bochur I had the merit to celebrate Shavous in the shadow of that enormous Tzadik the Bobover Rebbe Harav Shlomo Zt”l. We were living then in Crown Heights, and Bobov was still in its first spurt of growth after the holocaust. We davened in a reconverted car garage that was behind the two buildings that then housed the mosdos and home of the Rebbe. The days before Shavous were hectic yet alive with the spiritual energy that the Rav created with his every word and action. Shavous at night, after the tisch and dancing, which was led by the Rov’s astounding vibrancy, we would all sit down to recite tikun Leil Shavous, a unique compendium of every section of Torah learning.

As the sun peeked out over the Brooklyn sky, we all went to catch a bit of sleep. Soon we mere mortals would straggle back in, suddenly a hush would reign as The Rav with his majestic energy would stride in. I was a bochur in my teens, American born and bred, I was meant to be used to all sorts of wonderful sights and sounds, yet all the splash that Golus America could conjure up would never match the site of this tzadik as he approached the amud. His face was illuminated with the fire of love for Hashem and His nation, there was no masking the emes in his eyes, nor the bond he had with each of us. The davening would commence, the Rov’s voice fresh and clear. We sang old wondrous songs from another world, the Rav leading the Hallel till our feet were softly dancing in place. The Torah was brought out, the anticipation was palatable. Then, just as all were fervently awaiting the Rov’s recital of the wondrous words of the akdomus piyut, a silence ascended. After all the days and nights, the prayers, the self-analysis, the moment had arrived, The Rav stood in his crowned talis, his silver beard glistening, his eyes closed so as to see another higher place, then the silence embraced us and the Rebbe’s voice cried out, “Akdamus Milin”, which is said before the Torah reading on the first day of Shavous, celebrating the enduring covenant between a majestic Eibishter and a devout people.

The tears of longing attachment followed, we all cried out the words together, the poem of the national love for our Torah... said here in Brooklyn, as it had in Poland, in Russia in all the Golus stops along the way.

I still feel the silent wonder of those moments in my heart. The Rebbe brought out our love for Hashem and it pierced through this youngster with tongs of connection that hold me till today.

Silence between Hashem and His people, Silence gifted to stumbling humans who share a soul, Silence the unspoken words of each of our hearts, it is the cords of healing, the certainty of Hashem’s nearness.

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