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## 48 Ways - 028 Silence and Speech In Learning Torah

### ***“One Who Makes A Fence For His Words” - Silence***

We are near the day of the giving of the Torah. The *Mishnah* lists 48 ways of how the Torah is acquired. One of the ways is “One who makes a fence for his words”.

*Rashi* explains that this refers to a Torah student who brings proof to the words of his *rebbe* (Torah teacher), which helps others fulfill the words of their teacher.

An additional explanation of “one who makes a fence for his words” is, as the Sages state, “A fence for wisdom, is silence.” According to this explanation, the words of the holy Torah themselves are already a “fence” to the words of the Torah, by placing boundaries and definitions on matters. The concept of silence personifies this concept, for silence places a boundary on one’s speech.

Thus, part of acquiring the Torah is through silence. Besides for speaking the words of Torah, which is a *mitzvah* of “*And you shall speak in it*”, there is also an opposite concept, of knowing when to be silent in the words of Torah. In order to properly speak the words of Torah, one must also be able to do the opposite of speaking, which is silence.

#### *Impaired Silence*

There is impaired silence, and there is holy silence.

The Creation consists of four types of creations – the still objects [i.e. rocks], the growing organisms [plants], the live creatures [i.e. animals], and social beings [people].

When one falls from the level of “social being”, he is on the level of an animal. As the verse says, “*They were comparable to animals.*” Although animals can also produce various forms of speech, and the Sages state that it is possible to decipher the chirping of the birds, this is not the same level of speech of man. However, it is some degree of speech.

Even worse than the level of an animal is when person falls to the level of being like a mere growing organism, for it is written “*Man is like the tree of a field*”, and it is explained that man can fall to the level of existence of being like a mere tree. The Sages state that there is a “language of the trees”, so a tree has some level of speech.

But the worst level of existence is when man falls to the level of the still creations [i.e. rocks] which are not capable of any level of speech. Man can talk, animals and plants have some level of speech,

but the still creations have no speech at all, so it is the lowest level of existence.

When one sleeps, it is a sixtieth of death, and one of the reasons is because a person does not talk while he is asleep, so it resembles death. Speech is a sign of life, whereas silence represents death. The kind of silence which represents death is the impaired level of silence, which is when one is silent when he should have spoken instead.

### *Holy Silence - Thinking of Words of Torah*

In contrast to this, the holy silence that is necessary in order to acquire Torah is represented by the silencing of Creation, when Hashem said, "Enough" and He stopped the Creation. Hashem used the Ten Expressions to create the world, and then silenced the Creation. Shabbos is also a time when Hashem silences the Creation. That is the depth of why we are silent from mundane talk on Shabbos, and this is also the same depth of why "everyone agrees that on Shabbos the Torah was given", because on Shabbos there were no more expressions to create the world, so it is a time of silence which is fitting for the Torah to be given.

Where do we find the holy kind of silence by the giving of the Torah? The Sages state that the entire Creation was silent by the giving of the Torah. The Gemara also says that when Moshe ascended to Heaven, "Why are You giving the Torah through me?" Hashem said to Moshe, "Be quiet! This is what has risen in My thoughts." We see from this that there is a connection between the giving of the Torah and silence. Hashem wanted the Torah to be given through Moshe, and He also wanted it to be preceded with this silence.

From the fact that Hashem said, "Be quiet, this is what has risen in My thoughts", we see that silence is associated with thought. This is the root of holy silence which is needed to acquire Torah. As discussed in *halachah*, there is an argument if one fulfills the *mitzvah* of Torah study only through speech, or if one also fulfills Torah study just through thinking about words of Torah. In actuality, when learning Torah, one needs to alternate back and forth between these two modes - speech of Torah, and thoughts of Torah, which is a "silence" from speaking of Torah.

One needs to think about the words of Torah he is learning, then to speak of it, and then return to thinking of it, in a cycle. When one thinks Torah thoughts, he is being silent from speech, but this is not impaired silence, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it is a silence which raises a person from the level of speech to the level of thought.

This is the depth of understanding the words of Torah, and this is the same depth of how silence is necessary to acquire the words of Torah. When one combines speech of Torah together with thoughts of Torah, this is the depth of what Torah study is about.

### *The Connection To The Level of Torah Before Creation*

When one has these two aspects together, speech of Torah and thoughts of Torah, he is connected to the point that was before the Ten Expressions, which was before the Creation. Before the Creation, there was a level of "Torah which preceded the world." One connects to that level of Torah through the power of holy silence.

The Sages state that "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world". Thus, the Torah preceded the world. Through speech, we connect to the Torah that is after the creation of the world. Through silence, we connect to the point of before Creation [and to the level of Torah that was before Creation].

When one has the combination of speech of Torah and silence (thinking) of Torah, this is the depth of

connecting to the Torah. Through silence (thinking) and speech of Torah together, this is where one finds *d'veykus* (attachment) to the Torah and to Hashem; to the revealed level of Torah as it is on this world, and to level of Torah before Creation. Therein is the deep revelation of “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one” - in the actual sense.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/48-ways-028-silence-and-speech-learning-torah>