<u>With the help of God</u>

Dvar Torah for Parshat Shemini

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Shutfim B'karka* 5:2-3

> Moshe said to Aharon, "This is what Hashem told me to say, 'I will be sanctified by My holy ones and I will be honored in the presence of the entire people.'" Aharon was silent (*Leviticus* 10:3).
> Silent from his wailing (*Ramban*) and mourning (*Rashbam*).

Here we come, from Pesach being *peh sach*, a mouth speaking, and the necessity of freeing speech from exile, to the virtues of silence.

On Seder night we are blessed with *mochin* (intellect/consciousness), *mochin d'gadlut* (mature intellect/consciousness) and *mochin d'katnut* (immature intellect/consciousness). This gift is given to us as a hodgepodge. We have everything we need, but unordered.

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. Having so much intellect at our disposal enables us to answer various questions that we may have. Often, however, the answers lead to new, more difficult questions. The answers to *those* questions pose yet even more difficult questions. At a certain point—and the point differs from individual to individual—one passes the boundary between what she can answer and what she cannot. Of what material does one make the wall to reign in the questions? Silence.

A fence for wisdom—silence (Avot 3:13).*

Now, a question arises: Why silence the questions? Why not continuously pursue holy knowledge and awareness? The answer is, "Too much oil extinguishes the lamp"—too much power can cause a short circuit, bringing darkness in its wake. Reb Noson points out that the word *s'yag*, which means wall or fence, is used by the Mishnah to mean "protection" (e.g., "charity protects wealth") because something surrounded by a wall is protected.

The Talmud (*Gittin* 67a) relates:

> Isei ben Yehudah would enumerate the praises of various Sages... Rebbe Akiva was an *otzar bloom* (a storehouse of information). Rashi comments:
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> Rebbe Akiva was like a poor man who took his basket and went to the field. When he found barley, he harvested it and put it in the basket. When he found wheat, he harvested it and put it in the basket. He did the same when he found beans and lentils. When he got home, he sorted everything.
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> Rebbe Akiva learned from his teachers Scripture, *halakhah* (Jewish law), Midrash and *aggadah* (homiletics). He reviewed his lessons till he knew them thoroughly. When he himself had become a Sage, he organized his knowledge into separate subjects....
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> An *otzar bloom* is a warehouse divided into large compartments by **walls and dividers** [emphasis added], so that wheat can be stored in one compartment, barley in another....**

We did and learned a lot at the Seder. Picking up the Kiddush cup, drinking its wine, eating *karpas* and

matzah—all added to our basket of *mochin*. Saying Kiddush, telling the stories of Exile and Exodus and speaking God's praises added considerably more.

That was good enough to get us out of Egypt, but it wasn't good enough to get us the Torah. With all the knowledge and consciousness we had that resulted in leaving exile, we still need time to prepare ourselves to receive the Torah. We need to organize all the *mochin* so that we are more productive. The Omer-Count offers us the perfect opportunity for such organizing. Its seven weeks parallel the seven *sefirot* (Kabbalistic attributes; kindness, restraint, splendor, dominance, empathy, foundation, government); each day of each week likewise corresponds to a particular *sefirah*, allowing for more complete organization.

Hashem gave us the *mochin* and He gave us the opportunity to organize and protect them.

Aharon had serious questions when his two eldest sons died on the day the *Mishkan* (tabernacle) was consecrated. His brother Moshe provided him with *mochin* and Aharon protected it with his silence.

*There are various numberings for the *mishnayot* of Avot. In some, this is 3:17.
**The above Mishnah from Avot was taught by Rebbe Akiva.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!