

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Pesachim 93-99

Week of 28 Cheshvan - 4 Kislev 5759 / 17 - 23 November 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Mysterious Apostate

The Korban Pesach cannot be eaten, says the Torah, by one who is not circumcised, nor by one whose actions are alienated from his Father in Heaven.

“The uncircumcised one,” explains Rashi, refers not to a Jew who rejects the commandment of circumcision; rather, it refers to one who justifiably fears circumcision because his brothers died as a result of circumcision. Although his caution is correct, the Torah excludes him from partaking of the Pesach sacrifice, reserving it for those who have the covenant with Hashem inscribed in their flesh.

But how do we understand the exclusion of the apostate? As a Jew, he is obligated like all Jews to eat the *korban Pesach*. If we cannot interpret his exclusion as an exemption from this obligation, how are we to understand the Torah prohibition on his eating of this sacrifice?

Tosefos (*Pesachim 120a*) provides a fascinating resolution to this problem. This command refers to one who was an apostate at the time of the slaughtering of the *korban Pesach* and therefore refused to subscribe to any company formed for offering a sacrifice. He repented his sin before nightfall and wishes to take part in the mitzvah of eating of the sacrifice. Although he is now a fully observant Jew, he is denied the opportunity to eat from this offering because he was not a member of a company offering the sacrifice.

Both of these Jews excluded from eating the *korban Pesach* are required to eat the *matza* and *maror* which accompany it. The Torah finds it necessary to use special language in both cases to indicate their inclusion in this mitzvah. Had only an uncircumcised one been included in the eating of *matza* and *maror*, we might have reasoned that this was so because he had always been observant, which is not true of the apostate. On the other hand, had the inclusion been mentioned only in regard to the repentant apostate we might have reasoned that this was because there was nothing unbecoming about his body, which is not true of the uncircumcised one whose physical state is considered a blemish. The Torah therefore tells us that while neither of them may eat from the *korban Pesach*, both of them must eat the *matza* and *maror*.

Pesachim 96a

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Blessed Silence?

Silence is good for the wise, say our Sages, and even more so for the fools, as King Solomon observes in Proverbs: “Even a fool who remains silent shall be thought of as wise.” (*Mishei 17:28*)

This tribute to silence seems to echo the words of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel (*Mesechta Avos 1:17*) who declared: “I have grown up all my life among the wise and I have found nothing as beneficial for a person as silence.”

But what sort of silence is being advocated?

The case cited in our section of *gemara* is the avoidance of superfluous verbiage which can create problems, such as the example cited regarding statements made by the members of a company whose animal designated as a *korban Pesach* went astray. Rabbi Shimon, on the other hand, refers to the long suffering silence of the person who does not respond to insults hurled at him.

This positive dimension of silence is in accordance with the traditional text of the *mishna* in *Avos* cited by Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura. The Tiferes Yisrael cites a different text which he interprets as a condemnation of silence: “I have found nothing beneficial for a person from silence.” Silence here, he explains, refers to the Torah student who fails to express himself when seated before his teacher. Not only will his silence create the impression of his being either too stupid to say anything or too arrogant to bother commenting, but it will also impede his learning. This is so because only through his questions and his teacher’s answers can the subject matter be properly clarified. Learning aloud is also an aid to memory. The *gemara* (*Eruvin 54a*) points out that when one studies Torah in silence he faces the danger of quickly forgetting what he has learned.

Pesachim 99a

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