

This week Aaron and his son's are completing their week of ordination as the first priests for the escaped slaves wandering the desert.

On the 8th day of their ordination Aaron's sons take the initiative and offer a personal incense offering to Hashem.

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי-אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶמֶתָּהּ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָּהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them.

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the LORD.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הֲוֵא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה | לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָעָם אֶכָּבֵד וַיִּדָּם אַהֲרֹן:

Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, And gain glory before all the people." And Aaron was silent.

Aaron was silent in the wake of his son's deaths. He did not say anything in response to Moshe's justification. He did not cry out to G-d in pain.

We do not know why he chose silence. However, the Midrash teaches that it was not a silent burning anger - rather it was a silence of peaceful wisdom. The Sifra comments that Aaron's wisdom is reflected in the works of David and Solomon.

על ידי דוד הוא אומר (תהלים לז, ז), "דום לה' והתחולל לו", ועל ידי שלמה הוא אומר (קהלת ג, ז) "עת לחשות . ועת לדבר" – עתים לכל; עתים שאדם שותק, עתים שאדם מדבר.

As expressed by David (Tehillim 37:7): "Be silent in the L-rd, and hope to Him." And, as expressed by Solomon (Koheleth 3:7): "a time to be silent and a time to speak." There are times for all (things). There are times when a man remains silent, and there are times when a man speaks.

Similarly, Shirat HaYam which we just read at the end of Pesach is structured as a poem in a sefer Torah. There are large gaps between the verses indicating the song and poetry of the text. R Soloveitchik comments on the presentation of Shirat HaYam and focuses on these large gaps in between the words. He highlights that at times of great joy we may break into song, laughter or even tears. We may also be rendered speechless by our emotion. He suggests that these large gaps between the words are a visual representation of the people's experience of being overwhelmed by awe and joy that they were rendered fully dumbstruck. They were both incapable of articulating their happiness and gratitude but also words were inadequate to express the heights of their experience.

So too in our lives there are times of great joy and times of immense pain. Through some of these experiences we will find ourselves rendered mute. We will perhaps not be capable of articulating our experience. May we be blessed to learn the wisdom to sit in the silence and simply feel our emotions without the limits of language.

כן יהי רצון

Shabbat shalom