

There is no greater pain of loss than living to witness the death of one's child. In the case of Aaron, the High Priest and brother of Moses, it was not only the loss of two of his four sons but the manner in which they died. . . sat the hand of God.

*"Now Aaron's sons, Nadav 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 God had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the Lord and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the Lord." (Lev. 10:1-2)*

For a father to witness the death of his sons in this manner is cruel enough, but the immediate comment of his brother Moses adds fuel to this terrible fire:

*"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.'" (Lev. 10:3)*

And what is the reported response of Aaron to this awful calamity? *"And Aaron was silent."* (Lev. 10:3). The *Eitz Hayim Chumash* commentary writes, "The traditional interpretation has it that Aaron accepted God's harsh judgment and did not cry out or complain at his painful loss." However, the commentary continues by noting, "The Torah usually does not call attention to someone's not speaking. What, then is the unusual significance of Aaron's silence? That he accepted God's decree without protest? That his anguish was too great for him to put into words? That he was tempted to burst out in anger at the unfairness of what had happened to his family but was able to restrain himself? Perhaps the text is suggesting that there are more possibilities-and more power-in silence than in any words."

Some of the most challenging moments in life bring out the worst in one's character and personality. Uncontrolled anger can be disastrous physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Close relationships can be torn asunder by unfiltered words of emotional distress. There are moments when the best response to the worst possible news is thoughtful silence. Often one's pain and anguish is more poignantly expressed by saying nothing; allowing the moment to speak for itself.

Such is the case with Aaron. One can only imagine the level of anger he amassed toward his God and his brother. Aaron's silence would sear the memory of that moment into the hearts and minds of the Israelite nation for generations to come.

*Who is mighty? One who can control his passions.*

-Ethics Of Our Ancestors 4:1

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. . . A time to speak and a time to keep silent.*

-Ecclesiastes 3: 1&7

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