

House of Sages

SILENCE

28TH JUNE, 2026

COME & LEARN

**"The strength of faith is in silence, and
in words that hibernate and wait."**

Abraham Joshua Heschel



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

- When are moments in your life where you've intentionally stayed silent?
- What are some benefits of taking a moment of silence?
- Can you think of any moments in which staying silent would be beneficial?
Why would it be good to be in silence?

SOURCE 1 – LEVITICUS 10:3

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 GOD alien fire—which had not been enjoined upon them.

And fire came forth from GOD and consumed them; thus they died by GOD's will.

Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what GOD meant by saying:

Through those near to Me I show Myself holy,
And gain glory before all the people."

And Aaron was silent.

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ
מִחֲתָתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשִּׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ
קֹטֶרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי הָאֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא
צִוָּה אֹתָם:

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי הוֹתֵנָאֵל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ
לִפְנֵי ה':

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה'
| לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעָם
אֶכְבֹּד וַיִּדָּם אַהֲרֹן:

SOURCE 2 – JOB 2:13

Context: Job's children, wealth, servants, and health are destroyed in a series of sudden calamities allowed by God after Satan challenges Job's loyalty, leading his friends to come to comfort him.

They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. None spoke a word to him for they saw how very great was his suffering.

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אוֹתוֹ לָאָרֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת
לַיְלֹת וַאֲיִן־דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו דְּבַר כִּי רָאוּ כִּי־גָדֹל
הַכָּאֵב מְאֹד:

SOURCE 3 – ECCLESIASTES 3:1 AND 3:7

A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:

...

A time for silence and a time for speaking;

לְכָל זְמַן וְעֵת לְכָל־חֶפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:

...

עֵת לַחֲשׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדַבֵּר:

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SOURCE 4 – 1 KINGS 19:8-15

There he went into a cave, and there he spent the night.

Then the word of GOD came to him: “Why are you here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I am moved by zeal for the ETERNAL, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life.” “Come out,” He called, “and stand on the mountain before GOD.”

And lo, GOD passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by GOD’s power; but GOD was not in the wind. After the wind—an earthquake; but GOD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake—fire; but GOD was not in the fire. And after the fire—a soft murmuring sound.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his mantle about his face and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice addressed him: “Why are you here, Elijah?”

וַיְבֹא־שָׁם אֶל־הַמְעָרָה וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם וְהִנֵּה
דְּבַר־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֵהֵלֶךְ פֹּה אֵלַיָּהוּ׃
וַיֹּאמֶר קֵנָא קִנְאָתִי לָהּ | אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת
כִּי־עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִזְבְּחֹתֶיךָ
הָרָסוּ וְאֶת־נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרְגוּ בַּחֶרֶב וְאֹתִיךָ
אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיִּבְקֶשׁוּ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ׃
וַיֹּאמֶר צֵא וְעַמְדָתָּ בְּהָר׃ לִפְנֵי הוֹהֲנָה
הָעֶבֶר וְרוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה וְחֹזֶק מְפָרֵק הָרִים
וּמִשְׁבֵּר סֻלְעִים לִפְנֵי הָלֵא בְרוּחַ הַזֹּאֲחַר
הָרוּחַ רָעַשׁ לֹא בָרַעַשׁ הָ׃
וְאַחֵר הָרַעַשׁ אֵשׁ לֹא בָאֵשׁ הַזֹּאֲחַר הָאֵשׁ
קוֹל דְּמָמָה דַּקָּה׃
וַיְהִי | כְּשָׁמַע אֵלַיָּהוּ וַיֵּלֶט פָּנָיו בְּאַדְרָתוֹ
וַיֵּצֵא וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח הַמְעָרָה וְהִנֵּה אֱלֹהִים קוֹל
וַיֹּאמֶר מֵהֵלֶךְ פֹּה אֵלַיָּהוּ׃

SOURCE 5 – PIRKEI AVOT 5:7

[There are] seven things [characteristic] in a clod, and seven in a wise man: A wise man does not speak before one who is greater than he in wisdom, And does not break into his fellow’s speech; And is not hasty to answer; He asks what is relevant, and he answers to the point; And he speaks of the first [point] first, and of the last [point] last; And concerning that which he has not heard, he says: I have not heard; And he acknowledges the truth. And the reverse of these [are characteristic] in a clod.

שִׁבְעָה דְּבָרִים בְּגֵלָם וְשִׁבְעָה בְּחָכָם. חָכָם
אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּפָנָיו מִי שֶׁהוּא גָדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ
בְּחָכְמָה וּבִמְנִין, וְאֵינוֹ נִכְנָס לְתוֹךְ דְּבַר־
חֲבֵרוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ נִבְהֵל לְהַשִּׁיב, שׁוֹאֵל כְּעִנְיָן
וּמַשִּׁיב כְּהִלָּכָה, וְאוֹמֵר עַל רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן
וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן, וְעַל מָה שֶׁלֹּא שָׁמַע,
אוֹמֵר לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי, וּמוֹדָה עַל הָאֱמֶת.
וְחִלּוּפֵיהֶן בְּגֵלָם׃

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SOURCE 6 – PIRKEI AVOT 1:17

Shimon, his son, used to say: all my days I grew up among the sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence. Study is not the most important thing, but actions; whoever indulges in too many words brings about sin.

שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּנוֹ אָמַר, כָּל יְמֵי גִדְלָתִי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֲלָא שְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא הַמְדָּרֵשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֲלָא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה. וְכָל הַמְרַבֶּה דְּבָרִים, מְבִיא חֲטָא:

SOURCE 7 – THE SILENT RABBI

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kalisch, "the Silent Rebbe" of Worky (Worka), was born in 1819 to Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak, the founder of the Worky dynasty.

For hours, Rabbi Menachem Mendel sat at the head of the table surrounded by his disciples. The room was heavy with expectation, but the "Silent Rebbe" did not say a word. He simply leaned forward, looked deeply into the eyes of each disciple, and stayed entirely quiet. The disciples began to grow anxious in the heavy stillness, wondering what sin they had committed or what terrible decree was coming that kept their master so quiet. The psychological tension and worry in the room became palpable. Finally, after a long period of intense silence, the Rebbe looked around the room, broke his silence, and addressed their internal anxiety directly:

"Why are you worrying? Do not worry about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Tomorrow may come and you will no longer be here, and you will find that you have spent your time worrying about a world that is not yours. Look at this very moment—we are here, we are together, and everything is exactly as it should be."

SOURCE 8 – RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Published in Conversations in Covenant titled "The Sound of Silence"

From time to time we need to step back from the noise and hubbub of the social world and create in our hearts the stillness of the desert where, within the silence, we can hear the *kol demamah dakah* (soft murmuring sound), the still, small voice of God, telling us we are loved, we are heard, we are embraced by God's everlasting arms, we are not alone.

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