Jewish Tribune – Bo

**The Power of Silence**

They say that silence is golden, except when you have children, in which case it becomes suspicious!

But silence is certainly powerful and that is borne out in this week’s parsha. Our parsha tells us that when the Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim, the dogs did not bark. The Mechilta writes that for all generations, dogs receive a reward for this. They are given the meat of an animal rendered treife, that the owner cannot eat and this teaches us that HKBH does not withhold reward for any creature.

But didn’t the frogs in last week’s parsha to do so much more?

They swarmed into every nook and cranny of every Egyptian home and even jumped into hot ovens, literally killing themselves in order to do the will of their Creator!

And the dogs merely didn’t bark! Why reward dogs for all time and not frogs?

Rav Osher Arielli offers a wonderful answer. Sometimes, showing restraint and not speaking is even more impressive than jumping into a hot oven.

We all know how tempting it is to respond or have the last word. Overcoming that temptation needs enormous self-restraint.

The Gemoro is Gittin (36b) says that **הנעלבין ואינן עולבים**, those who are insulted and do not retaliate, **שומעין חרפתן ואין משיבין**, they receive embarrassment and do not respond, are compared to the mighty sun. The Meiri explains that when the moon complained to Hashem that two luminaries cannot both serve, HKBH reduced the size of the moon. The sun was the one that remained the same size as it said nothing and did not respond. It was attacked, yet controlled itself and kept quiet.

The Gemoro in Bava Kama (92b) says: “If your friend calls you a donkey, take a saddle off (a donkey and put it) on your back”. Again, it is the Meiri on this Gemoro who reiterates the above advice and points out not only should one not respond, but one should do anything to defuse the situation; just politely smile and move on.

There are many anecdotes that bear this out. My favourite is the couple who go to their Rebbe for help with their frayed sholom bayis. The Rebbe patiently listens to the husband and wife and then takes out a bottle of magic sholom bayis water. He instructs them that if things become tense at home and they feel their blood pressure rising and are about to shout, they should quickly take a gulp of the sholom bayis water and keep it in their mouth for as long as they can. He assured them that it is a tried and tested segulah for sholom bayis.

The couple listened to their Rebbe and it worked. As if by magic, their sholom bayis improved and the house remained calm and peaceful.

The Rebbe knew the power of silence and of not responding and ramping up the decibel levels. We know this too. Even the dogs in Mitzrayim did.

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