

Confronting the Silence

by Mike Harris

Some short weeks ago I urged that you find an English translation of the Yiddish story "Bontsha the Silent." At the time I had no intention of influencing your reaction to the author's end of the story. But thank you, I take it as a compliment [whether it is so or not] that I disturbed someone's complacency. In the story of Bontsha's silence, heaven is awarded to the character and the character declines all the glories of heaven and humbly asks for a hot bun with his coffee every morning. In so doing he tells his Maker that there is a miscarriage of justice. Evil was trying to get into heaven through a back door.

So with the foregoing introduction out of the way, I will try to address today's assignment. "Silence" is a force! It condones an action, regardless whether right or wrong, and in the case in point a misunderstanding has taken place. The character's silence leaving no record of right or wrong; his soul comes to heaven unblemished. It never happened before. When the soul stands before the court the prosecuting Angel says, "As this soul was silent I too will be silent," and Bontsha enters heaven.

His silence condoned evil actions, unjust and unmitigated events of the worst kind, signaling that evil actions unless addressed are ignored.

Eventually a voice starting as a whisper begins to swell and it grows into a roar and at great cost disrupts the placid flow of life and a correction takes place. Witness the memorial national cemetery at Arlington or at Fort Logan how many raised their voices and gave their lives to stop corruption and evil. There is no hiding place. In the end it must be faced and overcome or a world of chaos will engulf the planet.

Our creating memorial cemeteries and granite memorials is our acknowledgment of their cry of "No! Not Here! Not Now! Not Ever!" In Philadelphia the "We The People Memorial" to the founding of this nation, the federal papers and documents, the Constitution itself proclaiming, "With Liberty and Justice for All" has for almost three hundred years been a clarion call to the world. "NO! NOT HERE! NOT NOW! NOT EVER!" Because of this the not silent have come here, or have found the courage to implement and copy what we have shown can be done when silence is accosted. All those at Arlington, Fort Logan all those whose names are inscribed in granite decided that silence was the coward's way to avoid confrontation and action.

In the end somewhere a voice is raised and a whisper becomes a roar and silence slinks away until complacency forgets that action is necessary if freedom is to survive.