

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd a fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed them [Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aaron], and they died before the Lord... And Aaron was silent" (Lev. 10:2,3)

Many commentaries attempt to explain and even to justify the premature death of these two young priests on the eighth and final day of the festivities celebrating the consecration of the Sanctuary. Was it because they had brought a "strange fire" (esh zarah), which they had not been commanded to bring (Lev 10:1) - an extra, added sacrifice which has the echo of "strange service" (avodah zarah) - idolatry?

Was it because they had entered the Sanctuary in an inebriated state, insinuated by the prohibition which immediately follows this story, "Do not drink intoxicating wine, neither you nor your children with you, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, so that you will not die..." (Lev.10:8, 9)? Was it because they were jealous of the seniority of Moses and Aaron, and were impatient to take leadership of the nation (Midrash Tanhuma, ad loc)? Or was it because they were more righteous and more pure than anyone else - even than Moses and Aaron - and they were therefore chosen to be the most sanctified sacrifice for the dedication of the Sanctuary (Vayikra Rabbah 12: 2 and Rashi on Lev 10:3)? Whichever explanation we offer, none of them seem to justify the enormous tragedy of untimely death of young men, and such suffering of the innocent Aaron at the climax of his week as High Priest dedicating the Sanctuary!

But if the Bible doesn't present us with a satisfying explanation, it does provide us with a dignified response: "Vayidom Aharon" - and Aaron remained silent. This restrained and regal silence of Aaron in the face of inexplicable tragedy has reverberated throughout the generations as a signpost for parents silently weeping at the gravesites of their beloved children.

I was present, as a very young boy, at the first Sabbath circumcision of the Klauzemberger Hassidim in the temporary home they made for themselves in New York - their way-station between the European destruction and the rebirth of their community in Kiryat Sanz, Netanya. The Rebbe intoned the time-honored verse, "Then I passed and I saw that you were rooted in

your blood, and I said to you, 'by your blood shall you live'" (Ezekiel 16:6), as he blessed and named the newly-circumcised child entering the covenant of Abraham.

At the conclusion of his blessing, the Rebbe commented, "I always understood these words from the prophet Ezekiel, 'be'damayikh hayii,' to mean 'by your blood shall you live,' because of the sacrifices the Jews have forced to make for our G-d and our faith, we merit the covenantal gift of eternal life. However, now that we have suffered the unspeakable tragedies of the European conflagration, it seems to me that Ezekiel's 'damayikh' comes not from the Hebrew dam, blood, but rather from the Hebrew dom, silence, as in 'Vayidom Aharon' - and Aaron was silent. It is because we held back from battering the gates of heaven with our cries, because we swallowed our sobs and continued to pray and to learn and to build and to plant, because we utilized our energies not to weep over our past losses but rather to recreate our communities, our synagogues, our study-houses, here in America and, please G-d, soon in Israel, that we continue to live and even to flourish..."

But it took an experience some 54 years later to teach me how truly apt the Rebbe's interpretation actually was. Mordecai and Ann Goodman, beloved congregants and faithful friends, tragically lost their beloved son Yosef, a courageous paratrooper in the Maglan unit of the Israel Defense Forces. I had to find Mordecai and break the terrible news. It was one of the most difficult tasks I have ever done in my life. That evening an army representative came to explain to the family the incredibly brave and selfless way in which the young soldier met his death. Mordecai simply couldn't bring himself to join the family group to listen. He went up to his bedroom. I followed him up; I embraced him, and we sat together in silence. After a while, when I got up to leave for home, Mordecai walked me to his bedroom door. "Rabbi," he said, "when you give your eulogy tomorrow, just don't say 'that is the price for aliyah.' It's not the price we pay; it's the job of aliyah..."

I didn't understand what he meant and all that night I mulled over his words. And then I realized that Aaron did not merely remain silent; "They [Aaron and his remaining sons] did not leave from the door of the Tent of Meeting" (Lev 10:7), they remained in the Sanctuary; they continued to lead the services. Now, I understood Mordecai. To say that such a sacrifice is the price for aliyah would be inappropriate; after all, one

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE
WORLD WIDE WEB AT [HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG](http://AISHDAS.ORG).
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

could think that the price is too high and choose another, cheaper product - to live elsewhere, where there is less danger. A job, a G-d-given task, has to be completed, even if danger is integral to it. And if you are really astute and dedicated, you might even see it as a privilege, despite the risks. For the last 2,000 years, we couldn't do this job, we didn't have the ability to fight back or to train for future battles in a standing army, as Yosef did.

A year later, shortly before Israel's Memorial Day for its Fallen Soldiers, I learned that my interpretation of Mordecai's words was correct. He and Ann came to see me with a difficult question. "Yehuda, our next son in line, is being inducted into the IDF. He wants to enter Maglan, Yosef's unit. It requires our signature - and we don't want to sign. But he very much wants to go..." I took a deep breath, and responded that we cannot make moral decisions for our children; we must let them take their own decisions, even if it causes us much pain. Ann and Mordecai both wept, and left my house. I ran after them. "I believe in what I told you," I said. "But I want you to know that if I had to decide whether or not to sign the permission document for my own son; I cannot tell you what I would do..."

After the Memorial Day ceremony, Mordecai escorted me to his home, where there was a pizza and ice cream party for all of Maglan to welcome Yehuda into their unit. "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din," I said to Mordecai. "Our children are better than both of us," he answered me.

"I say to you, "be'damayikh shall you live, be'damayikh shall you live." By your silence and by your sacrifice, by your resignation and by your commitment, with tears and with pride, with tragedy and with privilege. Aaron never left the Sanctuary - and neither did Mordecai and Ann. With such parents and children, we in Israel will not only survive, we will prevail! © 2010 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The great seven day ceremony of the dedication of the Mishkan has passed. Now, on the eighth day, the actual service and public purpose and use of

the Mishkan is to begin. But this day will be marred by the tragedy of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aharon.

The eighth day represents the difficulties of life that always follow great and exalting moments and events. The Psalmist asks "Who can climb the mountain of G-d?" That itself is a difficult task. But then David raises an even more difficult task: "And who can maintain their place on his holy place?"

After the triumph and euphoria of climbing the mountain, of dedicating the Mishkan, of the marriage ceremony and of the birth date of the child, then the real work of maintaining that exalted feeling begins. It is not coincidental that the circumcision day of a Jewish boy is on the eighth day of his life. The eighth day represents the beginning of the struggles and difficulties, even of the tragedies as we see in this week's parsha. This is what life has in store for every human being.

Those of us who remember the great days in our Jewish national lives - 1948 and the declaration of the state and 1967, the reunification of Jerusalem - know how difficult it is to retain that optimism and faith after long decades of strife, turmoil, disappointment, mistakes and enmity. Yet the key to our survival and success lies in our ability to somehow do so. It is the eighth day that is the true test of human and Jewish mettle.

The Torah also informs us in this week's parsha that G-d, so to speak, prefers to use holy and faithful people as examples to others of the problems caused by improper behavior. Aharon's sons are seen, in Jewish tradition, as being righteous, dedicated people. Yet it is their deviation, no matter how well intentioned and innovative as it was, from what they had been commanded to do that led to their tragic demise.

The rituals and traditions are not to be tinkered with according to personal ideas, wishes and whims. And, if this is true, as it is for every individual Jew no matter his or her position in life, how much more so is it true for people who are priests in the Temple/Mishkan, leaders of religion and purported role models to the young and the general community at large.

The closer one gets, so to speak, to spirituality and Torah greatness, the greater the responsibility for discipline and probity in obedience to the Torah's commandments and values. Deviations and mistakes at that exalted stage of achievement can, as we see in this week's parsha, prove to be lethal.

The rabbis warned wise men, scholars and leaders about speech that is not carefully thought out or actions that are impulsive. The effect upon others can be devastating and negative. The countermeasure of G-d, so to speak, to prevent this is frightening as the parsha teaches us. We should always be mindful of the eighth day, as reflected in the daily incidents that make up our lives. © 2010 *Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on*

Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshepis

Survivors of the Shoah encounter the experience through what can be called "pure memory." Their relationship to the event is direct, with very little intervening. As we move further away from the Shoah, and we who were not there seek to remember, symbols may be required to help us. It is in this realm that Shoah memory faces its greatest threat and its greatest challenge.

In Judaism, the symbols used in ritual to evoke memory tend to be simple. The paradigmatic memory for Jews is the Exodus from Egypt. The two major symbols of that event—the matzah used on the festival of Passover and the booths built for the holiday of Sukkot—share the element of simplicity. Matzah is a humble food, a mere flat bread that does not rise. The sukkah, too, is a modest symbol, nothing more than a humble shelter.

Perhaps the rabbis understood that if symbols are associated with wealth and power rather than remaining simple tools to promote memory, there is a danger that they can become identified, and even replace, the actual event or object they had been summoned to represent. Maimonides notes that idolatry began when good people created images as a way through which finite human beings could connect with the infinite G-d; the images served as a kind of bridge. However, people soon mistakenly saw the images as G-d Himself. In the process, they forgot what the image had been originally created to symbolize, thereby perverting faith, as the idol itself became in their minds the divine.

When it comes to Shoah memory, the emphasis most recently has been on two symbols representing wealth and power: Holocaust asset restitution and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. These two have, in a sense, become the contemporary images created to connect to the tragedy of the Six Million. A very palpable danger exists that they will, like idols, become objects of worship themselves, while the pure memory of the event that they had been created to invoke will be lost.

Recouping stolen assets can, of course, be a positive symbol of the Shoah, as it notifies the world that justice demands that the guilty pay. If, however, financial restitution becomes an end unto itself, if it is conflated with the injustice that it was meant to symbolize, the Shoah may be remembered for stolen money rather than for stolen souls. Shoah memory would thereby be falsified and demeaned.

Similarly, the Holocaust Museum as a symbol of the Six Million could be, and in many ways has been, a positive force; millions of visitors have come through its portals to learn about the Shoah. Yet if the museum

becomes an end unto itself as it is engulfed in Washington politics, turf battles and power plays, it could critically compromise and distort Shoah memory.

Indeed, the real danger is that if we allow restitution and the museum to evolve into ends unto themselves, Shoah memory will be desecrated. These important contemporary undertakings can come to replace the Six Million rather than serve as the path to remembering them. Taken to the extreme, they, like any other symbol, can become a form of idolatry.

The Shoah, like the Exodus, requires a pure spiritual ritual experience in order to be authentically remembered. Today more than ever we need to strive to achieve untainted memory without ostentation and without politics. As with the Exodus, the only way the Shoah will be remembered is through ritual—through a participatory service like the Passover seder in which all present re-experience the event. Nothing in Jewish history has ever been remembered in the absence of ritual.

That ritual must be simple, uncontaminated by wealth and power, humble and self-effacing. Just as the matzah and the sukkah have served over the generations to symbolize the redemption from Egypt in all its immediacy, so too the rituals that we must devise to remember the Shoah must remain as close to the truth for generations to come as the "pure memory" today of the remaining survivors. © 2010 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI SHMUEL GOLDIN

Context & Questions

In the shadow of Nadav and Avihu's tragic death, G-d turns to their father, Aharon, and commands: "Do not drink wine or intoxicating beverage, you and your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, and you will not die; this is an eternal decree for your generations. In order to distinguish between the sacred and the profane and between the impure and the pure, and to teach the children of Israel all of the statutes that G-d has spoken to them through Moshe."

While the text seems to clearly prohibit the consumption of any alcoholic beverage during the Kohen's fulfillment of his functions as priest and educator, the Talmud, after extensive debate, limits the full biblical prohibition to the ingestion of "intoxicating amounts" of wine. In further discussion, many halachists delineate additional, less severe penalties both for the consumption of other intoxicating beverages and for smaller amounts of wine. Finally, most scholars extend the requirement of sobriety during the teaching and application of the law to all teachers and not only to the Kohanim.

Moving beyond the technical aspects of the law, numerous commentaries focus on its potential

motivation. The Torah's concern, they say, centers on the debilitating effects of alcohol. An individual who is inebriated to any degree will neither be able to properly execute the Sanctuary service nor appropriately engage in halachic discussion and decision making. The Torah therefore prohibits the consumption of wine as a safeguard against possible intoxication.

Questions:

Why are these commandments necessary?

Given the intricate detail of the Sanctuary service; given the clear re-peated divine warnings concerning the potential consequences of error in that service; given the overwhelming specter of Nadav and Avihu's death as an apparent result of ritual deviation; given the fact that proper halachic decisions clearly require one's full faculties; why would anyone assume that these functions could be performed in a state of intoxication? Why must the Torah state the obvious?

To go one step further, if the Torah's fundamental concern is potential error in the Sanctuary service or in halachic deliberation, why frame the prohibition as a ban upon alcoholic beverages? Why not simply reiterate a general warning that these disciplines must be approached with awe, reverence and caution?

Finally, if this law is based on the potentially debilitating effects of alcohol, why is a difference drawn in the Talmud between wine and other intoxicating beverages? Shouldn't all substances that could potentially lead to inebriation be equally prohibited?

Approaches

A review of the Torah's outline for Jewish society, from both a historical and a legal perspective, reveals a fascinating tension and interplay between inherited and earned roles and rights.

A. An astute observation made by a museum guide during one of my first trips to Israel can help us frame an answer to these questions.

"You can deduce," he said, "common practice within a society from the legal edicts enacted by its government."

"Centuries from now," he continued to explain, "when the ruins of this museum are excavated, archaeologists will not find signs in the rubble stating 'No bicycle riding.' Since it is not current common practice in our day to ride bicycles through museums, legal postings prohibiting such behavior are not necessary and will not be part of the archaeological record.

"Excavators will, however, find 'No smoking' signs. This discovery will lead them to correctly surmise that smoking was likely to occur in public buildings during the twentieth to twenty-first centuries and that the administrators of this museum moved to prevent such activity."

B. This comment may well shed light on the Torah's concern for the sobriety of the Kohanim. G-d finds it necessary to prohibit the consumption of wine

during ritual and intellectual religious activity in response to "common practice" of the time.

The use of alcohol and other psychoactive drugs was an integral component of the religious rites of many ancient cultures. Rather than viewing inebriation and similar "escapist" behaviors as impediments to spiritual search, these societies considered the use of psychoactive substances an essential prerequisite of that very search.

Archaeological evidence, in fact, traces the use of psychoactive drugs in every age and on every continent from prehistoric times to the present. In modern times, the term entheogen (meaning literally "generating the divine within") has been coined to refer to vision-producing drugs taken to bring on a spiritual experience. The use of such substances, many have believed across the ages, enables man to loosen the shackles of his earthly existence and truly encounter the Divine.

In direct opposition to this approach, normative Judaism preaches an "earthly" encounter with our Creator. As we have consistently seen (see Shmot: Shmot 3, Approaches D, E; Yitro 2, Approaches C, D), one of the Torah's primary messages is that G-d is to be found and experienced in this world, with our feet firmly planted on the ground. The Sforno maintains that Moshe, our greatest prophet, achieved his greatness specifically because of his ability to relate to G-d without relinquishing his physical senses.

The ban on alcoholic consumption in specific settings, therefore, does not emerge solely from apprehension over alcohol's potentially debilitating effects. A much more fundamental philosophical issue is reflected in this prohibition.

G-d's message to His people is once again clear: I am not to be found in the mists at the summit of Sinai. I am not to be encountered in esoteric visions or "out of body" experiences. You are to find Me in your world through performance of My mitzvot, through the sober study, application and living of My law.

C. We can now also understand, as well, the distinction made in the law between wine and other intoxicating substances. Wine, even more than other psychoactive materials, has long occupied a particular place in religious ritual. This fact is evidenced at both extremes within Jewish law. On the one hand, because of the unique status of wine in pagan culture, the Torah mandates the prohibition of yayin nesech (wine that has been used for idolatrous purposes and is, therefore, prohibited to all Jews at all times). On the other hand, wine, in moderation, finds its positive place within Jewish practice, used to mark special occasions and events.

Had the Torah's only concern been for potential error on the part of the Kohanim, all intoxicating beverages would have been treated equally. By singling wine out for special attention, however, the Torah communicates that there is more to this prohibition

than meets the eye. Wine used properly and in moderation, the Torah teaches, like all of G-d's physical creations, enhances our appreciation of the Divine. When used to escape reality, however, all psychoactive substances undermine our spiritual search, which is predicated on creating a union in our lives between heaven and earth. *Excerpted from Unlocking the Torah Text-Vayikra by Rabbi Shmuel Goldin © 2010 Rabbi S. Goldin and ou.org*

RABBI YISROEL PESACH FEINHANDLER

Beloved Companions

After Aharon's sons died] then Moshe said to Aharon: This is that which the L-rd spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aharon held his peace. (VAYIKRA 10:3)

In the Zichron Moshe section of Jerusalem there was a modest wedding hall by the name of Tiras Chen. It belonged to a Mr. Menachem Grossman, who was a student in his younger years of Yeshivas Raddin and Kaminetz. He was a very pleasant person who maintained extraordinary self-control. The following are examples of his exemplary behavior. At the time when he operated this wedding hall many Jews in Jerusalem were lacking the basic means to support themselves. Then it came time for them to marry off a son or daughter they faced severe financial difficulties. When one of these people married off a child in Tiras Chen and did not pay his debt, Mr. Grossman would try to avoid encountering them on the street lest he make them feel embarrassed for defaulting. If he saw he was going towards such a person he would make a point of crossing to the other side of the road.

Even when a person had not yet paid for a previous wedding, and would come again to order the wedding hall for another child, he would pretend that the person had no debt. He did not vaguely hint to them about the money owed by saying something like, "We will let bygones be bygones, but this time..." Additionally, a remarkable story is told about Mr. Grossman. Once, an honorable friend of his was fired from his job at an institution because of a change in administration. The friend did not receive the compensation he deserved from the institution, and Mr. Grossman advised him how to go about getting it. The matter eventually came up in beis din, and there was a need for someone to testify if this friend was really in financial need. Mr. Grossman testified that it was clear to him beyond doubt that his friend was in such a situation. When asked by the beis din how he knew that this was true, he replied, "A few years ago my friend married off his daughter in my wedding hall. We had agreed upon a price. He has paid only a fraction of his debt. Can you possibly believe that such an honorable man, who I see so often, would not pay his debt if he had the means?" The beis din accepted his

reasoning. Even though his friend received the compensation from the institution through the help of Mr. Grossman, he did not pay his debt to him. When Mr. Grossman was asked if he considered this ingratitude, he said, "On the contrary, his not paying me just shows how difficult his situation must be. He probably has many creditors that are pressuring him. Why should I add to his painful situation?"

It was not because Mr. Grossman was wealthy that he refrained from pressing the people who owed him money. He was himself in debt all his life. In fact, he eventually had to sell the wedding hall to pay off his debts. He told his family, "Do not think that I have gotten into this situation because I have not collected my debts.-What I was doing fulfilled the Torah's command, 'You shall not be to him as an aggressive lender of money' (Shemos 22:24) [which refers to the prohibition against pressuring a person to pay his debt when you know that he does not have the ability to repay it]. The Torah's principal, 'Her [Torah's] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' (Mishlei 3:17) applies equally to this mitzvah. It is impossible that I was harmed because I kept what the Torah had told us to do." (K'TZES HA-SHEMESH BI-GVURASO, p. 228)

Mr. Grossman restrained himself and was willing to suffer hardship in order to avoid making another person feel uncomfortable. His actions are valuable lessons to us. Through them we can get some idea to what extent we should be prepared to go in order to preserve marital peace. Restraint in the form of remaining silent can prevent many unnecessary crises from arising in marriage. Because Aharon kept silent when his two children died in the Ohel Moed he received a reward. As it is written, "And Aharon was silent." (Vayikra 10:3) His reward was that G-d spoke directly to him, as it is written, "And G-d spoke to Aharon." (Vayikra 10:8)

"The commands of G-d are straight, they make the heart rejoice." (Tehillim 19:9) This verse refers to Aharon, whose heart was sad because of his sons' deaths. However, once G-d spoke to him, he was full of joy. Rabbi Chizkya learned, "The words of Torah become a crown for the head, as it is written, "For they are a charming ornament for your head." (Mishlei 1:9) A necklace for your neck, as it is written, "And necklaces for your neck." (ibid) A remedy for the heart, as it is written, "The commands of G-d are straight, they make the heart rejoice." (Tehillim 19:9) A remedy for the eye, as it is written, "The command of G-d is Clear, enlightening the eyes." (ibid) A cup of elixir for the intestines, as it is written, "It will be a remedy for the intestines." (Mishlei 3:8) From where do we know that the Torah is a remedy for all a person's 248 limbs? It is written, "They are life for those that find them, and for his flesh a cure. (Mishlei 4:22)" (YALKUT 528, par. Yayin)

Why should Aharon receive a reward for his silence at the time of his sadness? How was his reward proportional to his efforts? How did Aharon find so much consolation when G-d spoke directly to him that he actually became joyful? Why is Torah compared to the different jewelry and ornaments that a woman wears?

When a person encounters a tragedy or difficulty in his life and is able to accept it without complaint, this shows his strong belief in G-d. Such a person recognizes that G-d plans everything in the world, and nothing happens against His will. G-d knows what is right for us, so one should graciously accept His will as being for the best even if the consequences may seem bitter or unjust from our limited human perspective. If one does so, he shows that he has internalized this faith.

When G-d speaks directly to someone, it demonstrates that person's high spiritual level. G-d singles out a person to receive prophecy when that person's righteous actions have won G-d's special attention. This communication is an appropriate response to the righteous person's deeds. Since one has chosen to cling to G-d and totally accept his sovereignty, G-d wants to encourage this behavior. And therefore openly shows His loyal servant that he has found-favor in G-d's eyes.

How did Aharon at the time of his grief find so much consolation when G-d spoke directly to him, that he actually became joyful? The answer is that sorrow comes to a person when he feels that he has lost something precious. He feels a void in his life where there was previously something substantial and important, and often he is perplexed as to why this happened to him. Such a person experiences bewilderment and pain. However, despite his loss, Aharon suddenly felt spiritually uplifted) since G-d was speaking directly to him. He realized that the reason he had merited this experience was because he had quietly accepted the deaths of his sons. He understood now that their deaths had not been in vain. This event had elevated him to a plateau he had never reached before. He was no longer pained, since it was now clear to him that through his loss he had also gained something unutterably precious. Why is the Torah compared to the different jewelry and ornaments that a woman wears? Even an attractive woman lacks something if she does not have the right jewelry to enhance her beauty. The same is true in regard to Torah, which can be considered an adornment of the soul. Even though someone may have a sharp mind and a warm heart, if he lacks Torah, the person lacks something essential. He does not know precisely what to do with the strengths to be found in his mind and heart. But once he learns Torah this becomes clear to him. He will come to understand how he can utilize his capabilities to the utmost. The Torah enhances his inner talents, just as jewelry enhances a woman's

beauty. How do the words of Torah cure a person's body? Even though the Torah is spiritual, it has a direct affect on our bodies. Our Sages tell us that there are 248 positive commandments and 356 negative ones. Our bodies also have 248 limbs and 356 tendons, which our Sages teach us correspond respectively to the positive and the negative commandments. They explain that keeping the mitzvos of the Torah can Positively effect our bodies, since they' parallel each of our physical components. (Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Kedoshim 6) Keep Quiet and Keep Out of Trouble Aaron's silence is an example we should use in our marriages. Many times a person has something unpleasant to say to one's spouse; but it is always much wiser not to say it. We see what a great reward Aaron received for his silence, and we too will be rewarded abundantly if we are able to restrains ourselves appropriately. It is fairly common to be annoyed by something your spouse does or says. A man may become annoyed if his dinner is not ready on time, or if he has to wait for his wife when they have to go somewhere, or if she forgets to do the errands that he asks her to do. A woman may become annoyed when her husband does not help her at home, does not show her any attention and just reads the newspaper or involves himself in some other entertainment, or if he leaves a mess behind him.

When a person is annoyed, the common reaction is to let his spouse have a peace of his mind. But before doing this, consider if there is any long-term profit to be gained from an outburst of anger. It may help you let off some steam, but it is likely will also harm the relationship between you and you, spouse. If you see that you are unable to change the situation, then why talk about it? Instead, perhaps write it down somewhere, and when you are less angry, speak to your spouse calmly and constructively so as to try to find a solution together, Keeping silent when you are angry is an excellent policy to follow, since it will stop you from saying things that you will later regret. Never criticize your spouse about something beyond his or her control. For instance, never make critical remarks about your spouse's accent, looks, learning capabilities, or talents.

These are things that most people cannot improve, so there is absolutely no point in talking about something that will only upset your spouse and serve no positive end. Accept these as things you were destined by G-d to live with whether you like them or not.

Learning to be silent when appropriate in marriage is one of the most valuable lessons that a person can learn. By keeping quiet you keep yourself out of trouble, away from aggravation, and out of arguments. The saying, "silence is golden" certainly applies to marriage. The wrong words said at the wrong time can destroy your marriage. Therefore think a thousand times before you say anything that might hurt your spouse. Aharon's silence brought him to a point of

spiritual elevation that he had never before experienced. In marriage too, keeping silent when we cannot change the situation or when speaking is likely to hurt your spouse's feelings, may also enable us to reach new spiritual heights that we have never known before. © 2000 Rabbi Y.P. Feinhandler & shemayisroel.com

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Moshe and Aharon came into the Tent of Meeting (the Mishkan), and came out, and they blessed the nation, and G-d's honor appeared to the whole nation" (Vayikra 9:23). Why did Moshe and Aharon go back into the Mishkan? The "Parshanim," the commentators that explain the text in the most simple, straightforward, manner (in this case, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and others), tell us that they went back in to the Mishkan to ask G-d to send His heavenly fire to consume the offerings put on the altar that day.

Rashi brings two approaches as to why Moshe and Aharon went back into the Mishkan, both straight from Toras Kohanim, with the second being very similar to Ibn Ezra's approach. However, there are two differences. First of all, rather than the prayer being for the heavenly fire to descend, Chazal cut straight to the chase, and focus on the value of having the heavenly fire descending: "Since Aharon saw that all of the offerings had been brought and [yet] the Divine Presence had not descended for Israel," Moshe and Aharon went back into the Mishkan "and asked for mercy, and the Divine Presence descended for Israel." It wasn't a fireworks show they wanted, but a sign that the nation had been forgiven for the golden calf, which would culminate in G-d's Divine Presence filling the Mishkan and resting on the Nation of Israel.

The second difference between Rashi's second approach and that of the "Parshanim" involves the context of this prayer. Aharon was "pained" when G-d's Divine Presence did not descend, "and he said" (quoting Rashi/Toras Kohanim again), "I know that G-d was angry with me" (for his part in the making of the golden calf), "and it is because of me that the Divine Presence did not descend for Israel." He (Aharon) said to Moshe, 'Moshe, my brother, this is what you did to me, for I was brought into this and I was embarrassed.' It was after this conversation that "Moshe immediately entered with him (Aharon)" into the Mishkan to ask for mercy. Targum Yonasan also explains the context in this manner, but without Aharon accusing Moshe of being the cause of his embarrassment.

Rabbi Yitzchok D. Frankel, the Rav of Agudath Israel of the Five Towns in Cedarhurst, N.Y., was gracious enough to share with me his as-yet unpublished third volume of "Machat Shel Yad." (If anyone would like to partner with Rabbi Frankel in the publication of this volume, please contact me at RabbiDMK@yahoo.com, and I will put them in contact

with Rabbi Frankel.) Rabbi Frankel discusses Aharon's accusation that it was Moshe who caused his embarrassment when the Divine Presence did not descend despite Aharon having done everything he was commanded to do. Why was this Moshe's fault? Was Aharon suggesting that Moshe had put him up to something that G-d hadn't directly commanded? Could it be that Aharon was making a similar accusation to what Korach and his followers would suggest a few months later, that G-d hadn't really chosen Aharon to be the Kohain Gadol, that Moshe was guilty of nepotism, appointing his own brother to the position? How could Aharon suggest such a thing, not only because it had been clearly demonstrated that Moshe was only relaying G-d's commandments, but because no one had a clearer "inside" picture" than Aharon that Moshe only did exactly what he was commanded? Rabbi Frankel (in the version I was privy to see, at least) left this question unanswered, ending the piece by saying, "Tzarich Iyun" (this issue needs to be looked into further). With his permission, I would like to discuss it further. Hopefully, at the end of this further discussion, an answer will emerge.

Before looking into what Aharon was accusing Moshe of, let's compare the circumstances of Korach's accusation with those of Aharon's. Aharon had done everything Moshe said G-d had commanded, but nothing had happened, while Korach made his accusation after the Divine Presence had already descended. In fact, Korach's accusation included "all of the nation being holy" (Bamidbar 16:3) and not needing a Kohain Gadol to do the service for them. Therefore, even if it was the same accusation, since Aharon's came after experiencing spiritual failure, it cannot be compared with Korach's selfish attempt to grab some glory for himself. [It is possible that, as part of his accusation, Korach pointed to the deaths of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu and claimed that they died as a punishment for Aharon taking a role he was not supposed to have. This would explain why Moshe countered by challenging Korach and his followers to also take fire-pans and offer incense upon them, to see if they fared any better than Nadav and Avihu had.] Still, it is hard to fathom that Aharon had any doubt as to whether his being Kohain Gadol was G-d's idea or Moshe's.

Even if Aharon was absolutely certain that G-d told Moshe to make him the Kohain Gadol, it is theoretically possible that he doubted whether Moshe had accurately relayed the procedure to be followed for the Divine Presence to descend. If Aharon thought that Moshe gave him the wrong instructions for doing the service, it would be Moshe's fault when the Divine presence didn't descend after Aharon had done everything Moshe told him to do. And, in fact, when the offerings brought on the "eighth day" are described, they are not taught in the usual format of "and G-d commanded Moshe." Instead, Moshe tells Aharon (and

his sons and the elders) what to do, and claims that "this is the thing that G-d has commanded you should do, and [then] G-d's honor will appear to you" (Vayikra 9:6). However, this is not the only time that the Torah does not relate G-d's command to Moshe, relying on Moshe's saying it over instead (see Ramban on 9:2). It would be difficult to suggest that Aharon had any doubts about the accuracy of the instructions Moshe gave either.

The Korbon Aharon (a commentary on Toras Kohanim) suggests that Aharon was afraid to bring the offerings, afraid that his involvement in the golden calf disqualified him from being part of the process that caused the Divine Presence to descend for Israel. Moshe persuaded him to do it ("and Moshe said to Aharon, 'approach the altar,' 9:7), so Aharon was blaming Moshe for convincing him to overcome his fear and bring the offerings. While this does not even approach the problems involved with suggesting that Aharon doubted that G-d had chosen him to be the Kohain Gadol, or doubting whether Moshe got the instructions right, it still seems difficult to suggest that Moshe wasn't following G-d's commandments about who should be the one to bring the offerings. It might be possible for G-d to have left it up to Moshe as to whom should bring these offerings, with Moshe convincing Aharon to do them and then Aharon blaming Moshe for doing so when the desired result did not occur, but as we shall see, here too Moshe was following G-d's commandment when he told Aharon to bring these offerings.

My first thought (after seeing Rabbi Frankel's question) was that Aharon was referring to the conversation Moshe had with G-d at the burning bush. Because Moshe tried to get out of becoming the leader to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt, G-d took away his role of being the Kohain Gadol and gave it to Aharon instead (see Rashi on Shemos 4:14). Had Moshe not been reluctant to become the leader, he would have been the Kohain Gadol, not Aharon. It is therefore possible that this is what Aharon was referring to when he blamed Moshe for his embarrassment. Aharon was telling Moshe that had he (Moshe) been the Kohain Gadol, these offerings would have been accepted; now that the role was thrust upon him (Aharon) instead, they weren't. Although this might be true, I think there's more to the story.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 11:6) tells us that for seven days (at the burning bush) G-d was trying to convince Moshe to take the nation out of Egypt, and wouldn't take "no" for an answer. G-d paid Moshe back when the Mishkan was constructed, as for all seven days of its initiation (the "seven days of the Milu'im") Moshe was the Kohain Gadol, and he thought that this role would continue to be his. Finally, on the last of the seven days of the Milu'im, G-d informed Moshe that it wouldn't be his, but Aharon's, and that on the eighth day Aharon would take over the role of Kohain Gadol.

Had this been when Moshe was informed that Aharon was going to be the Kohain Gadol (as a straight reading of the Midrash implies), then it was on that day that G-d told Moshe that his reluctance to accept His mission as leader cost him the role he thought he had. It was then that Aharon was told that he would be the Kohain Gadol instead (and why, and would make sense that on his first day on the job, when he thought he had failed, he blamed Moshe for putting him into this position. However, it is quite clear from the commandment that Aharon wear the clothing of the Kohain Gadol (see Shemos 29:5) that his being chosen to be the Kohain Gadol was communicated to Moshe months earlier. Instead, the Midrash must mean that Moshe thought that he wouldn't relinquish his role as Kohain Gadol until after the Divine Presence had descended (see Matnos Kehunah); it was only on the last day of the Milu'im that Moshe was told that Aharon would bring the offerings that would cause the Divine Presence to descend. The Torah may not tell us about this conversation in order to avoid embarrassing Moshe, and relies on Moshe telling Aharon what G-d commanded instead. However, after Aharon follows the instructions he knows came directly from G-d, he blames Moshe for being reluctant to become the leader, thus causing him (Aharon) to have to be the one to bring these offerings. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

The main story of this week's Parsha, Shemini, is about the death of Aaron's two sons after they tried to bring an offering they were not supposed to bring. The Torah attests to the fact that Aaron was quiet about his sons' deaths, and didn't complain or question G-d (10:3). Rashi explains that his reward was that G-d spoke to him directly. Why was that his reward, and why do we need to know what Aaron's reward was?

As the Lekach Tov explains, Rashi is telling us more than just about the reward Aaron received. It's been well documented that G-d doesn't speak to anyone that's sad. What that tells us is that not only was Aaron quiet, but that he wasn't even sad about his sons dying, and never doubted G-d's decision to take them away. It is a spiritual level we should all strive for. If we only think of our physical lives, then in a sense we're dying with every second that brings us closer to it. But as Ramban explains, if we understand that there's more to life than our time on earth, we'll realize that this world is only the beginning and that death is not the end. With that in mind, we will understand that there's less to be sad about, and we can live our lives embracing that physical "goal line". The Parsha (and Aaron) is teaching us that when we embrace death, we can enjoy living! © 2003 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

