

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**T**he story of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon's two eldest sons who died on the day the Sanctuary was dedicated, is one of the most tragic in the Torah. It is referred to on no less than four separate occasions. It turned a day that should have been a national celebration into one of deep grief. Aharon, bereaved, could not speak. A sense of mourning fell over the camp and the people. God had told Moshe that it was dangerous to have the Divine Presence within the camp (Ex. 33:3), but even Moshe could not have guessed that something as serious as this could happen. What did Nadav and Avihu do wrong?

An exceptionally broad range of interpretations have been given by the Sages. Some say that they aspired to lead the people and were impatiently waiting for Moshe and Aharon to die. Others say that their sin was that they never married, considering all women to be unworthy of them. Others attribute their sin to intoxication. Others again say that they did not seek guidance as to what they should do and what they were not permitted to do on this day. Yet another explanation is that they entered the Holy of Holies, which only the High Priest was permitted to do.

The simplest explanation, though, is the one given explicitly in the text. They offered "strange fire that was not commanded." Why should they have done such a thing? And why was it so serious an error?

The explanation that makes most sense psychologically is that they were carried away by the mood of the moment. They acted in a kind of ecstasy. They were caught up by the sheer excitement of the inauguration of the first collective house of worship in the history of Avraham's children. Their behaviour was spontaneous. They wanted to do something extra, uncommanded, to express their religious fervour.

What was wrong with that? Moshe had acted spontaneously when he broke the tablets after the sin of the Golden Calf. Centuries later, David would act spontaneously when he danced as the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. Neither of them was punished for their behaviour, (although Michal did reprimand her husband David after his dance). But what made Nadav and Avihu deserve so severe a punishment?

The difference was that Moshe was a Prophet. David was a King. But Nadav and Avihu were Priests.

Prophets and Kings sometimes act spontaneously, because they both inhabit the world of time. To fulfil their functions, they need a sense of history. They develop an intuitive grasp of time. They understand the mood of the moment, and what it calls for. For them, today is not yesterday, and tomorrow will be different again. That leads them, from time to time, to act spontaneously because that is what the moment requires.

Moshe knew that only something as dramatic as shattering the tablets would bring the people to their senses and convey to them how grave was their sin. David knew that dancing alongside the Ark would express to the people a sense of the significance of what was happening, that Jerusalem was about to become not just the political capital but also the spiritual centre of the nation. These acts of precisely judged spontaneity were essential in shaping the destiny of the people.

But Priests have a different role altogether. They inhabit a world that is timeless, ahistorical, in which nothing significant changes. The daily, weekly and yearly sacrifices were always the same. Every element of the service of the Tabernacle was bound by its own detailed rules, and nothing of significance was left to the discretion of the Priest.

The Priest was the guardian of order. It was his job to maintain boundaries, between sacred and secular, pure and impure, perfect and blemished, permitted and forbidden. His domain was that of the holy, the points at which the infinite and eternal enter the world of the finite and mortal. As God tells Aharon in our parsha: "You must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Lord has imparted to them through Moshe." The key verbs for the Kohen were *lehavdil*, to distinguish, and *lehorot*, to teach. The Kohen made distinctions and taught the people to do likewise.

The priestly vocation was to remind the people that there are limits. There is an order to the universe and we must respect it. Spontaneity has no place in the life of the Priest or the service of the Sanctuary. That is what Nadav and Avihu failed to honour. It might have seemed like a minor transgression but it was in fact a negation of everything the Tabernacle and the Priesthood stood for.

There are limits. That is what the story of Adam

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and Eve in the Garden of Eden is about. Why would God go to the trouble of creating two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, from which human beings are forbidden to eat? Why tell the humans what the trees were and what their fruit could do? Why expose them to temptation? Who would not wish to have knowledge and eternal life if they could acquire them by merely eating a fruit? Why plant these trees in a garden where the humans could not but help see them? Why put Adam and Eve to a test they were unlikely to pass?

To teach them, and us, that even in Eden, Utopia, Paradise, there are limits. There are certain things we can do, and would like to do, that we must not do.

The classic example is the environment. As Jared Diamond has documented in his books, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, and *Collapse*, almost wherever human beings have set foot, they have left a trail of destruction in their wake. They have farmed lands to exhaustion and hunted animals to extinction. They have done so because they have not had, embedded in their minds and habits, the notion of limits. Hence the concept, key to environmental ethics, of sustainability, meaning limiting your exploitation of the Earth's resources to the point where they can renew themselves. A failure to observe those limits causes human beings to be exiled from their own garden of Eden.

We have been aware of threats to the environment and the dangers of climate change for a long time, certainly since the 1970s. Yet the measures humanity has taken to establish limits to consumption, pollution, the destruction of habitats and the like have, for the most part, been too little, too late. A 2019 BBC survey of moral attitudes in Britain showed that despite the fact that a majority of people felt responsibility for the future of the planet, this had not translated into action. 71 percent of people thought that it is acceptable to drive when it would be just as easy to walk. 65 percent of people thought it acceptable to use disposable cutlery and plates.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/year-of-beliefs-morality-ethics-survey-2019>.

In *The True and Only Heaven*, Christopher Lasch argued that the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment endowed us with the belief that there are no limits, that science and technology will solve every problem they create and the earth will continue indefinitely to yield its bounty. "Progressive optimism rests, at bottom, on a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom, and it cannot survive for very long in a world in which an awareness of those limits has become inescapable."<sup>2</sup> Forget limits and eventually we lose paradise. That is what the story of Adam and Eve warns.

In a remarkable passage in his 1976 book on inflation, *The Reigning Error*, William Rees-Mogg waxed eloquent about the role of Jewish law in securing Jewish survival. It did so by containing the energies of the people – Jews are, he said, "a people of an electric energy, both of personality and of mind." Nuclear energy, he says, is immensely powerful but at the same time needs to be contained. He then says this:

In the same way, the energy of the Jewish people has been enclosed in a different type of container, the law. That has acted as a bottle inside which the spiritual and intellectual energy could be held; only because it could be held has it been possible to make use of it. It has not merely exploded or been dispersed; it has been harnessed as a continuous power ... Contained energy can be a driving force over an indefinite period; uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang.<sup>3</sup> In human nature only disciplined energy is effective.

That was the role of the Kohen, and it is the continuing role of halachah. Both are expressions of limits: rules, laws and distinctions. Without limits, civilisations can be as thrilling and short-lived as fireworks. To survive they need to find a way of containing energy so that it lasts, undiminished. That was the Priest's role and what Nadav and Avihu betrayed by introducing spontaneity where it does not belong. As Rees-Mogg said, "uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang."

I believe that we need to recover a sense of limits because, in our uncontrolled search for ever greater affluence, we are endangering the future of the planet and betraying our responsibility to generations not yet born. There are such things as fruit we should not eat and fire we should not bring. *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2020 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*, WW Norton, 1991, 530.

<sup>3</sup> William Rees-Mogg, *The Reigning Error: The Crisis of World Inflation*, Hamish Hamilton, 1974, 12.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

## Shabbat Shalom

"And it happened on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel" (Leviticus 9:1) One of the most moving rituals of the Jewish week, at the advent of the eighth day, is the havdalah ("separation") ceremony, when we intone a sweet-sad melody to the chant, "Behold, the Lord of my salvation in Whom I trust and thus I do not fear," as we bid a sorrowful farewell to the warm comfort of the fleeting Shabbat amidst wine, spice and fire. Perhaps the feelings we experience as we go through this act of 'separation' (dividing the Sabbath from the rest of the week) require the wine and the sweet-smelling fragrances to refresh and re-invigorate our spirits when we sense the leave-taking of the Sabbath Queen.

As we intone the blessing over the fire—recalling the teaching of our Sages that fire was created by Adam on that first, primordial Saturday night—we customarily look at our fingernails. Why our fingernails?

The most rational explanation is that we can see, in the reflection of the light on one side of our fingers and not on the other, the actual power of light to provide enhanced vision. The early commentator Rabbi Menahem Meiri (citing the Gaonim) suggests that when Adam was first created, his entire body was covered with the same strong substance of the fingernails as a protective coat. Subsequently, when the forbidden fruit of knowledge of good and evil was eaten, this protective coat was removed—with only the finger-nails serving as a reminder of his earlier more protected and invincible state. Since we are about to intone the prayer for the speedy arrival of Elijah the Prophet, herald of redemption, at the end of the havdalah ceremony, we are in effect requesting a return to the more exalted and guarded human estate in Eden.

Our Biblical portion of Shemini opens, "And it happened on the eighth day." Rashi comments, "the eighth day of the consecration ceremonies of the Sanctuary, the first day of the month of Nissan, the very day on which the Sanctuary was erected." And it was on this very same eighth day—in the midst of the exultant celebration following the descent of a Divinely-sent fire which consumed the offering on the altar as a sign of heavenly acceptance—that Nadav and Avihu were also consumed by a Divine fire! What occasioned such Divine wrath, and what is the significance of the eighth day, which gives the Biblical portion its name?

The "eighth day" is indeed fraught with significance. Let us return to the initial seven days of creation, when the Almighty created the heavens and the earth, and all of their hosts. On the sixth day He created the human being and placed him—Adam together with his wife Eve—in the Garden of Eden. The

first couple sinned by plucking the fruit of Knowledge of Good and Evil from off the tree and eating it, severing good and evil from their Divine source, thereby reducing morality into a subjective experience, relative to the 'flavor of the day.' From that moment in the garden, good and evil were no longer rooted in a Divine objective morality created by G0d; good and evil became whatever the human being believed is good for him/her, and or evil for him/her. That is why our mystical literature refers to Adam's sin as his having "severed the plantings" (kitzetz banetiyot), removing the seed from its source. And so Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden.

Then came the first Sabbath Day, the specific span of time when each individual can find refuge and comfort under the wings of the Divine Presence, the day when the Almighty especially extends His 'arms' to embrace the penitent. Indeed the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah) teaches us that Adam recited the Psalm for the Sabbath Day for the first time, genuinely uplifted by the understanding that there truly existed a road back to Eden and that it was paved with stones of repentance and repair.

And then came the first Saturday night, the beginning of the first eighth day. "This was the first time that darkness began to descend upon the world.... And the Almighty prepared two flint stones for Adam; Adam rubbed them together and there emerged fire." (Bereishit Rabbah 11,2). Hence the first 'eighth' day is parallel to the very first day: on the first day God created light (ohr) for the world, and on the eighth day Adam created light and warmth (eish) for the world.

But it goes much deeper than that. On the seven days of creation, God created a world for the human being to live in; on the eighth day Adam discovered—through fire—how he could repair and improve that world, re-create that world as a true picture of the Divine. If on the primordial seven days of creation, God made a world for humanity, on the eighth day of the consecration of the Sanctuary, the Israelites made a Sacred Space—an improved world—in miniature, in which God could dwell together with humanity: "They shall make for a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst." (Exodus Trumah).

Fire is the human response to God's light. But fire is a double-edged sword; it can strengthen and purify, or it can subvert and petrify; it can bring light and warmth, or it can bring cannon fire and nuclear destruction. The blessing over fire, which attributes fire to its ultimate Divine source, must remind us that we must serve God in accordance with His Divine laws, that we dare not remove our creativity from its Divine direction. To do so would be a repetition of Adam's original sin.

God sent down His Divine light and fire as a sign that He accepted our Sanctuary, the work of human hands—which carried out to perfection the

Divine architectural directions. Then Nadav and Avihu came along with “a strange fire, which they had not been commanded to bring (Lev. 10:1).” Yes, we must use our creativity in the service of God to perfect ourselves and our world—but only in accordance with His will, in accordance with the limits He has placed on Divine Service, so that we never fall into the trap of bringing the strange fires of Moloch (Deut. 18:10) and the immoral wars of Jihad (which also involves the sacrifice of children). Human hands created fire—but human hands must use that fire to recreate and not to destroy. And therefore we look at our fingers as we make the blessing over fire every Saturday night, the beginning of our weekly “eighth day.” We are telling ourselves that everything—the entire future of our lives and our world—lies in our own hands! ©2020 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**he death of the two sons of Aaron remains one of the great mysteries in Torah narrative. The Midrash and the commentators offer various explanations as to the cause of this tragedy. The sons did not want to marry, they had somehow drunk wine and were inebriated, as well as other faults ascribed to them. And since the work of the priests was so holy and delicate, their deaths occurred. However, this is a difficult path to follow in order to explain - if human beings can ever explain - why bad things happen to good people.

Some of the commentators see this as retribution to Aaron himself for his role in allowing the Golden Calf to be created, and to have caused the Jewish people to be seen in such a hideous fashion immediately after receiving the Torah. The problem with this explanation is, naturally, that we learn that the sins of the father are not to be visited upon the children nor the sins of the children to be visited upon their parents. Because of these difficulties, no matter what type of explanation we wish to explore, it seems to me that the response of Aaron to this tragedy is really the only response that human beings can make. That response was silence.

Aaron does not say anything, and in that silence, there is an acceptance of the fact that the judgment of heaven is always inscrutable to humans. Despite our best efforts and the wisdom of our commentaries, many times in life, the question remains stronger than any potential answer that can be offered. And this itself draws the line between the Creator and the created, between heaven and earth.

We would naturally like to be able to understand everything. The basic hubris of human beings is that we can figure everything out for ourselves. You will notice that this is always a trait that exists within young children, who want to do everything

on their own, and who think that they are capable. This human trait has a positive side to it because it allows us to be creative and inventive, to attempt new things, and to gain new insights into life. However, it also has drawbacks. We eventually bump up against the wall of ideas that we do not understand, which, to our mind, is irrational and even unjustified. We are, therefore, left in confusion and disappointment. The only solution is silence and acceptance, and, so to speak, the ability to move on even if we do not understand the events themselves.

I think that this will be the type of response that is necessary when the current coronavirus pandemic finally departs. There will be many who will assign reasons and causes for its occurrence. However, whatever reasons and whatever ideas are assigned, will eventually be found wanting on the scale of human judgment and rational understanding. We will have to accept it for what it is and attempt to move on. Just as Aaron did, we will move forward and accept the judgment of heaven and renew ourselves in the service of God and of Israel. We must look forward to better times and to productive achievements. I hope that this will occur quickly, peacefully, and with goodness. In any event, let us pray for better times and the ability to be silent when noisy explanations do not really help.

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#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

### **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**T**he Torah in this week's Parsha mandates that for animals to be kosher they must possess two characteristics-cloven hooves and chew the cud. (Leviticus 11:3) In contemporary times there is much ado about the impact of food on physical health. My doctors keep telling me for example, to keep the fat and cholesterol down. Is it possible that food could similarly impact on one's spiritual well-being? This in fact is the position of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his explanation of kashrut (the dietary laws).

The characteristics of kosher animals point to their being more passive in nature. In Hirsch's words: "If we look at the signs for clean animals they appear plant-like. As they chew the cud, the food consumed passes through two stomachs, is driven up the gullet again and chewed for the second time. Thus, these animals spend a great deal of time in the absorption of food. The cloven hooves of the permitted animals also seem to have been created more for the mere purpose of standing than for being used as weapons or tools."

The same is true concerning fish. To be kosher, fish must have fins and scales. (Leviticus 11:9) Not coincidentally, fish that have these characteristics are by and large more peaceful in nature. The more

aggressive fish fall into the category of the prohibited. Moreover, birds of prey are by and large enjoined. The rule holds fast. The more aggressive animals and fowl are prohibited. The more passive are permitted.

Of course, not everyone who consumes kosher food leads lives of inner peace. There are troubled people who eat kosher, just as there are fine people who do not eat kosher. Nonetheless, the ritual of kashrut may help us become more conscious of our responsibilities to live ethical lives.

The balance between outer action and inner feelings is especially discernible in the laws of forbidden and permitted animals. Note, that chewing the cud is an internal characteristic as it deals with the inner digestive system. In contrast, cloven hooves are an external characteristic. One merely has to look at an animal's foot to detect whether this criteria has been met. Perhaps, just perhaps this teaches that to be kosher one's behavior must not only be correct, but inwardly pure.

Whether these rationales are satisfactory or not, the prohibited foods teach us discipline. They remind us that in the end, G-d is the arbiter of right and wrong. Notwithstanding, the kashrut laws carry powerful ethical lessons-lessons that can help ennoble and sanctify our lives. ©2011 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

#### DR. ARNOLD LUSTIGER

### Vort from the Rav

**"D**o not leave your heads unshorn, and do not rend your garments" (Lev. 10:6). Moses enjoined Aaron and his two surviving sons from mourning for Nadav and Avihu. The inalienable right to which every parent is entitled of mourning the death of a child was denied to Aaron and his sons. Why? Because the priests constituted a community of the anointed who were consecrated exclusively to the service of the Lord.

The commitment or consecration of a priest to G-d is ultimate, all-demanding, and all-inclusive. G-d lays unrestricted claim not to a part but to the whole of the human personality. Existence in toto, in its external and inward manifestations, is consecrated to G-d. Aaron belonged to no one, not even to himself: only to G-d. He was not even free to give himself over to the grief precipitated by the loss of his two sons; he had no private world of his own. Even the heart of Aaron was divine property.

What does all this mean in psychological terms? G-d wanted Aaron to disown the strongest emotion in man -- the love for a child. Is it possible? As far as modern man is concerned I would not dare answer. With respect to Biblical man, we read that Aaron acted in accord with the divine instruction: Aaron

withdrew from himself; he withdrew from being a father. This movement of recoil is tantamount to self-denial.

Not only Aaron, but the entire covenantal community, was summoned by G-d into His service. Once man enters the service of G-d, be it as high-priest or as an ordinary humble person, his commitment is not partial; it is total. He is subject to the divine call for total inner withdrawal. Here the Halacha intervenes frequently in the most intimate and personal phases of our lives, and makes demands upon us which often impress the uninitiated as overly rigid and formal.

Let us take an example. We all know the law that a festival suspends the mourning for one of the seven intimate relatives. If one began to observe the shiva period a short time before the holiday was ushered in, the commencement of the latter cancels the shiva.

Mourning in Halacha consists of far more than the performance of external ritual or ceremony. It is an inner experience of black despair, of complete existential failure, of the absurdity of being. It is a grisly experience which overwhelms man, shatters his faith and exposes his I-awareness as a delusion. Similarly, the precept of rejoicing on a holiday includes not only ceremonial actions, but a genuine experience of joy as well. When the Torah decreed, and you shalt rejoice in your feast, it referred not to merrymaking and entertaining, to artificial gaiety or some sort of shallow hilarity, but to an all-penetrating depth-experience of spiritual joy, serenity and peace of mind deriving from faith and the awareness of G-d's presence.

Now let us visualize the following concrete situation. The mourner, who has buried a beloved wife or mother, returns home from the graveyard where he has left part of himself, where he has witnessed the mockery of human existence. He is in a mood to question the validity of our entire axiological universe. The house is empty, dreary, every piece of furniture reminds the mourner of the beloved person he has buried. Every corner is full of memories.

Yet the Halacha addresses itself to the lonely mourner, whispering to him: "Rise from your mourning; cast the ashes from your head; change your clothes; light the festive candles; recite over a cup of wine the Kiddush extolling the Lord for giving us festivals of gladness and sacred seasons of joy; pronounce the blessing of Blessed art Thou... who has kept us in life and has preserved us and has enabled us to reach this season; join the jubilating community and celebrate the holiday as if nothing had transpired, as if the beloved person over whose death you grieve were with you." The Halacha, which at times can be very tender, understanding and accommodating, may on other occasions act like a disciplinarian demanding obedience. The Halacha suggests to man, broken in body and spirit, carrying the burden of an absurd existence, that he change his mood, that he cast off his

grief and choose joy.

Let us repeat the question: Is such a metamorphosis of the state of mind of an individual possible? Can one make the leap from utter bleak desolation and hopelessness into joyous trust? Can one replace the experience of monstrosity with the feeling of highest meaningfulness? I have no right to judge. However, I know of people who attempted to perform this greatest of all miracles. (Catharsis, pp. 47-49) © 2015 Dr. A. Lustiger & Torah Musings

### HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

## Bais Hamussar

**T**he splitting of the sea was arguably the most overt miracle in all of world history. Nevertheless, just before this miraculous event, Hashem caused a strong wind to shift the sea's waters all night long to veil the greatness of the miracle. Certainly the wind did not cause the sea to split and the waters to stand straight like walls.

So what was the purpose behind the faade of the hurricane-like winds?

Rav Wolbe cites the Sefer HaChinuch who writes (Mitzvah 132) that Hashem really endeavors to conceal all miracles. Hashem packages the miracle in the wrapping paper of nature so that the miracle arrives in this world b'tzenius -- in an inconspicuous manner. Hashem runs the world in a way that we must find Him hiding behind the veil of nature. Therefore, every miracle must leave us with a choice: Either to recognize that Hashem was behind the wondrous occurrence or to ignore the writing on the wall and claim that it was all a quirk of nature. Hence, Hashem made the wind blow all night so those who don't believe in miracles would be able to attribute the event to a tsunami.

Miracles happen all the time. Not just small ones -- like the money you received from a first cousin just in time to pay your mortgage -- but even really big ones.

The Chovos HaLevovos says that the greatness of the miracle of the survival of the Jewish People throughout the ages rivals the miracles that occurred during the exodus from Mitzrayim! We simply have to pull away the curtain to reveal Hashem and stop attributing the miracles to a million and one remote possibilities. Clean your glasses and begin counting the miracles!

### Sefiras Ha'Omer

The forty-nine days of Sefiras Ha'Omer are days laden with opportunity. It was during these days that Bnei Yisrael rose from the lowest levels of spirituality and reached the loftiest levels -- climaxing with Kabbalas HaTorah, and each year one can tap into this spiritual wellspring. Conversely, the inauspiciousness of these days also seems quite evident since it was during this exact period of time that

the twenty-four thousand disciples of Rebbi Akiva died. So, are these days auspicious or inauspicious?

Rav Wolbe (AleI Shur vol. II p. 396) explains that indeed both are true. Chazal tell us (Avos 6:2) "One who toils in Torah becomes elevated." If one's Torah study only produces a sharper mind and great knowledge but does not generate character improvement, then his Torah study is grossly lacking. The elevation produced through Torah is evident in the refinement and nobility of those who toil in its study.

The twenty-four thousand disciples died because "they did not honor one another."

Giving honor is the attribute which expresses the refinement of an individual. One who is not inclined to honor other people demonstrates that despite his Torah knowledge he has not become elevated. When Hashem revealed Himself on the night of the redemption from Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael experienced a tremendous, albeit fleeting, elevation.

The following day Bnei Yisrael reverted back to their previous lowly state, and the days of the Omer were given to them to try to regain the awesome spiritual level which they had experienced. Thus, this time is opportune for achieving true elevation, and the disciples of Reb Akiva who lacked this critical aspect of spiritual elevation were punished specifically during this time period.

These are days that contain within them a generous dose of Heavenly assistance to elevate oneself and refine his character. If Hashem is offering us His hand, how could we ignore it? ©2020 Rav S. Wolbe zt"l and torah.org

### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Tziduk Hadin

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**O**n the day following the holiday of Pesach (Isru chag) we do not recite the prayer of Tachnun (in fact this applies to the entire month of Nissan). We also don't recite the Tziduk Hadin in memory of the deceased. However in the Encyclopedia Talmudit it is written that "Tziduk Hadin after the deceased is recited together but not in a eulogizing format". Thus there are two ways of reciting the "Tziduk Hadin"; either one person saying it and then everyone repeats it (which is not permitted) or when everyone recites it together which is permissible.

It would seem that as the generations passed, people were unaware of these two ways of reciting this prayer. Therefore in the Sefer Haigur and the Beit Yosef it states that "It is the custom to recite it while alone and not in public". This is the reason we do not say the prayer of "Zidkatcha Tzedek" at Mincha on Shabbat during the entire month of Nissan for this is in essence the "Tziduk Hadin" for our teacher Moshe who died on Shabbat at Mincha time. Since reciting "Zidkatcha Tzedek" is in essence Tziduk Hadin, we

refrain from saying it in public.

In our portion the two sons of Aharon died and the reaction of Aharon was silence (Vayidom Aharon). Perhaps the "Tziduk Hadin" was accomplished during that silence and perhaps the silence was generated because it was the month of Nissan. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

### SHLOMO KATZ

## Hama'ayan

This week's Parashah opens with the dedication of the Mishkan. We read (9:7), "Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the Mizbei'ach / Altar and perform the service...' Rashi z"l writes: "Aharon was ashamed to approach. Moshe said to him, 'Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen!'" R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270; Spain and Eretz Yisrael) elaborates: "Aharon was sanctified to Hashem. He had no sins on his conscience except for making the Golden Calf, but that sin was always at the forefront of his thoughts. Moshe therefore told him, 'Have some pride and do not be so humble, for Hashem has already forgiven you'."

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) writes: It is true that our Sages have taught (Avot, Ch.4), "Be very, very humble!" We see here, however, that there is a limit to humility. When humility impedes a person's service of Hashem, it is no longer appropriate. The first key to serving Hashem is to recognize one's worth and importance. This is stated expressly in the work Sha'arei Ha'avodah which is attributed to Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (Spain; died 1263): "The first step is for the person who is serving [Hashem] to know his own worth, to recognize his elevated level and the elevated levels of his forefathers, and their greatness and importance to the Creator and his affection for them. A person should then always strive and strengthen himself to live up to that level and to always act accordingly. If, G-d forbid, a person does not recognize his level and that of his ancestors, he can easily go in the ways of lawless people." (Shiurei Chumash)

"Moshe said, 'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.'" (9:6)

The Midrash Torat Kohanim interprets: "Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, 'Remove that certain Yetzer Ha'ra from your hearts and be unified in your desire to serve G-d. Just as He is One, so your service should be uniquely for Him. If you do this, then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.'" [Until here from the Midrash]

What is "that certain Yetzer Ha'ra"? R' Yitzchak Hershkowitz shlita (Israel) explains, citing several Chassidic works: When Bnei Yisrael heard that Hashem would reveal Himself to them on that day (i.e.,

the day of the dedication of the Mishkan), their hearts burned with impatient anticipation. That was the Yetzer Ha'ra to which Moshe referred, for it meant that their service of Hashem was motivated by a desire to attain lofty spiritual levels, not a desire to simply do G-d's will. Moshe said, "If you want the glory of Hashem to appear to you, then you must serve G-d only because, 'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do.'" (Ha'mal'ach p.86)

A related thought: R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (the Bnei Yissaschar; died 1841) writes about the commandment not to ascend to the Mizbei'ach / altar on steps: In my opinion, this Mitzvah hints that a person should not seek lofty spiritual levels such as Ruach Ha'kodesh or the revelation of Eliyahu Ha'navi. If he is honored by Heaven with such attainments, he should thank Hashem, for He is good. However, one's only intention should be to serve Hashem out of love and awe, and with simplicity, as a son serves his father and mother. If, G-d forbid, a person thinks he is worthy of lofty levels, his "account book" will be opened in Heaven, and his shame will be revealed. Therefore, a person should be content to do what he is commanded. (Derech Pikudecha: Mitzvat Lo Ta'aseh 41:11)

"This may you eat from everything that is in the water: everything that has fins and scales in the water, in the seas, and in the streams, those may you eat." (11:9)

The Gemara (Chullin 66b) states: All species that have scales also have fins [and are kosher], but there are species that have fins and do not have scales [and are not kosher]. If so, why doesn't the Torah just say that a fish is kosher if it has scales? [The Gemara answers, quoting a verse in Yeshayah (42:21):] "So that the Torah be made great and glorious." [Until here from the Gemara]

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) ask: How does it make the Torah "great and glorious" to say something that seems to be completely unnecessary [i.e., that kosher fish have fins]?

He explains: The Torah is more than a practical how-to guide for performing Mitzvot. Were it only that, it would have sufficed for the Torah to say that a fish is kosher if it has scales [since such a fish necessarily has fins also]. However, the Torah is teaching us an additional truth--that a fish is kosher because it has fins and scales. Fins and scales are not merely signs that the fish is kosher; rather, for reasons that only Hashem knows, fins and scales are what make a fish kosher. The Torah is made "great and glorious" each time it teaches us an additional secret of Hashem's creation, even if that information has no practical consequence. (Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah, Introduction p.15)

R' Yehonatan Eybėschutz z"l (Central Europe;

1690-1764) writes: When the Gemara states, "All species that have scales also have fins," it actually means, "Most species that have scales also have fins." Indeed, throughout nature, laws have exceptions, as naturalists have testified. The Torah and Mitzvot are meant to address the predominant circumstances that exist--for example, that most species that have scales also have fins, and the fact that there are a relatively few species that are exceptions does not contradict the words of our Sages. (Kraiti U'plaiti 83:3)

R' Yaakov Zvi Mecklenburg z"l (1785-1865; rabbi of Koenigsberg, Germany) adds: The Gemara (Eruvin 29a) states expressly, "We do not learn Halachot from generalities, even when a Mishnah says, 'All... except...'" One might think that since the Mishnah says, "Except...", it is identifying all exceptions, and the statement, "All... except...", should be taken literally; however, the Gemara teaches that that is not a proper way to interpret the words of our Sages. [Rather, we must rely on the classical commentaries to help us understand our Sages' words.] (Ha'ketav Ve'ha'kabbalah)

### Pirkei Avot

"Shammai says: 'Make your Torah study a fixed practice. Say little and do much, and receive everyone with a cheerful face'." (Chapter 1)

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821) explains: Review your studies, and don't say that you are bored by them, just as a storekeeper doesn't get bored of sitting in his store day-after-day. Say, "Little!" -- i.e., what I have learned already is very little. If you adopt that attitude, then you will "do much." Moreover, this attitude will cause you to greet every person pleasantly, for you will assume that he has learned more Torah than you have. (Ruach Chaim) ©2020 S. Katz & torah.org

### RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

## Migdal Ohr

**F**rom the door of the Tent of Meeting you shall not go lest you die, for the anointing oil of the L-rd is upon you..."(Vayikra 10:7) On the day they were inaugurated as Kohanim, two sons of Aharon offered a sacrifice unbidden and they were immediately struck down by a heavenly fire.

Moshe told the remaining sons, Elazar and Itamar, that they were to remain in the Mishkan and not attend to their brothers' funerals. Since they were anointed with the special anointing oil of Hashem, they were to remain pure and inside. Though they were not Kohanim Gedolim for whom this is the rule, says the since they were anointed for Hashem's honor and to defile themselves would degrade that honor, they had to act like the Kohain Gadol in that aspect.

The Chizkuni comments that we learn from the fact that Moshe told Mishael and Eltzafan (Aharon's nephews) to take out the bodies that Kohanim are not

allowed to become defiled for dead people. However, he asks that we know the regular Kohanim WERE allowed to become impure for their seven closest relatives. Why then were Elazar and Itamar not permitted to defile themselves here? He explains that we learn from here that even a regular Kohain is not allowed to become impure to a corpse if it is the day he has first been anointed as a Kohain. On that day, even they have the rules that apply to the Kohain Gadol. Hold that thought.

When the Jews stood at the Reed Sea, they saw a wall of water ahead of them and the Egyptians behind them. Moshe cried out to Hashem and prayed for Him to save them. Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to me? Speak firmly to the Children of Israel and let them travel onward!"

Hashem was telling Moshe that there's a time to pray and a time to take action. The Jews had to move forward and enter the Sea if they wanted to be saved. They had to have faith but not do what their faith would typically command. In this situation a different behavior was required. On Achron shel Pesach, we read about the various practices for each festival and its unique observances.

The common thread among all of these is that we are called upon to do what the moment requires. When a Kohain was inaugurated, that was his day to focus on maintaining his purity, even though his relative had passed away. When the Jews needed to be saved, davening (even with a Minyan!) was not the answer, and taking a lulav and Esrog on Pesach is meaningless.

This lesson, so apropos for what we've been going through the past month, including not going to funerals or davening in a shul, is that we must ask ourselves at each moment, "Why has Hashem brought me here and what is He asking of me at this moment?" Then we need to do it, and leave the rest in His hands.

*R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z"l had a dream one night. He dreamed that if he bought a specific lottery number, it would win. When he awoke, he thought about buying the ticket.*

*"I have one lira to spend," he thought. "I can either use it to buy food for today, or I can buy the lottery ticket. Hashem gives me my parnasa every day. I must only use the money for today, and tomorrow He will provide again."*

*Sure enough, the number he dreamed of won. Someone asked him if he felt bad about not buying the ticket. "Of course not," he replied. "I did what the Torah tells me I was supposed to do with my money. I am happy I did the right thing and have no regrets."*

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