

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON PARSHAS ACHREI - 5757

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Ohr Somayach \* TORAH WEEKLY \* Acharei Mos 5757

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Insights

A Damning Silence "After the death of the two sons of Aaron..." (16:1). Someone who hears evil and does not protest or at least show displeasure is, in fact, condoning that which was said. It's as though he spoke the evil himself and therefore deserves the same judgment. When the Bnei Yisrael were traveling in the desert, Moshe and Aaron would lead them, followed by Nadav and Avihu and in turn the rest of the nation. Nadav once said to Avihu: "When will these elderly men pass away so we can have our turn at leadership?" Hashem then said, "We will see who will bury whom," and He allowed them to stumble until they were eventually punished with a Divinely inflicted death. One can understand why Nadav was punished. But what did Avihu do? He merely kept silent. Avihu was punished because he didn't react with the disgust that Nadav's remarks deserved. And thus he was as guilty as if he had said them himself. (Nachal Kadomim)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiro sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Kah Ribon - "G-d, the Master..." We will sing to You songs and praises in Yerushalayim, the city of beauty." vizamrun lach...birushlaym karta d'shufra When the sage Rabbi Yochanan, a man of extraordinary beauty who said of himself that he was the last remnant of the beautiful residents of Yerushalayim, visited his sick colleague Rabbi Elazar, the dark room he lay in was illuminated by the radiance emanating from the skin of the distinguished visitor and Rabbi Elazar burst into tears. Rabbi Yochanan masterfully proved to him that there was no reason to weep over any disappointments he may have experienced in regard to spiritual, material or family achievements but Rabbi Elazar surprised him by explaining that he was weeping at the thought that such extraordinary beauty is destined to wither in the dust. At this both sages wept in unison. (Berachos 5b) Maharsha explains that these sages reflected on the fact that Rabbi Yochanan's eventual passing would mean the climax of the beauty of Jerusalem as reflected in its residents and they wept in anticipation of this next stage of the decline of the Holy City. The restored Yerushalayim will regain all of its beauty in people and everything else, and it is there that we shall sing the songs of praise we now sing at our Shabbos meal.

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[ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Rabbi Frand on Parshas Acharei Mos

The pasuk [verse] says, "You should keep My statutes and My laws, which if a man obeys, ('v'chai bahem') he shall live through them, I am Hashem." [Vayikra 18:5] The Gemara [Talmud] learns from this source that if a person is faced with the choice of committing a sin or being murdered [or alternatively, neglecting a mitzva or being murdered], the halacha requires

B'S'D' the person to commit the aveira [sin] or neglect the mitzva, and not die. However, there are three exceptions: avoda zarah [idol worship], shfichas damim [murder], and giluy arayus [illicit relations]. Barring these three exceptions, the halacha says that one should eat pork, violate the Shabbos, eat bread on Pesach, and do not die. Why? Because we learn from this verse: these are the mitzvos that I gave you, "v'chai bahem," and you should live by them. The Gemara [Sanhedren 74a] interprets this to mean that "you should live by them, and not die by them." A cursory examination of this pasuk would seem to indicate that the Torah is telling us that human life is more precious than keeping the mitzvos. Therefore, if you have a choice between observing Shabbos or staying alive, your life is more valuable than the mitzva. This is a general rule: life is more important than the mitzvos, with just three exceptions. Rav Moshe Feinstein Zt"l, in his sefer [book] "Igros Moshe," says (in the course of answering a query on a different subject) that this common understanding of the pasuk is incorrect. That is not what the pasuk is saying, and this is as basic as a Targum Onkelos. [The Targum Onkelos is a nearly-literal translation to Aramaic of the words in the Torah, with a minimum of interpolated commentary.] The Targum Onkelos translates this verse as: "and you should live through them in the World to Come." In other words, the verse is not telling us to stay alive and neglect the mitzvos, because life is more precious than mitzvos. The pasuk is telling us that the most precious thing in life is keeping mitzvos, because they bring us to olam haba, the World to Come. Therefore, if I have a choice between observing the Shabbos or being murdered, the Torah says, "live!" Why? Not because life, for its own sake, is more precious than G-d's Commandments. Rather, life is precious because you can do those Commandments! Therefore, do work on this Shabbos so you can keep so many more Shabbos in the future. Eat chometz on Pesach. Why? So you can go on and do more mitzvos, and be worthy of life in the world to come. This is an entirely different perspective. Life is not valuable just for the sake of life itself, without a purpose. Life is not valuable simply in order for a person to work, do errands and go to ball games. That is not what makes life worth living! What does make life worth living? "V'chai bahem" - "I'chayei alma" [in the world to come]. This life leads to a goal. The Torah is telling us to violate the Shabbos and to eat chometz [leaven] on Pesach. Why? Because a human life is valuable because it can do so many more mitzvos in this world. Therefore, violate the Shabbos once so that you can observe Shabbos many more times.

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Ohr Somayach \* PARSHA Q&A \* In-Depth Questions on the Parsha and Rashi's commentary. Parshas Acharei Mos This issue is sponsored by Dr. Daniel Farb Los Angeles, California Specializing in the treatment of eye diseases of the elderly. Avi Dobuler - Personal Licensed Tour Guide, Groups - Families - Bar/Bat Mitzvahs - Senior Citizens Tour in Modern Mini-Van or Buses. Tel: 972-2-997-5425 Cellular: 972-50-379073 Fax: 972-2-997-5421

Parsha Questions 1. Why does the Torah emphasize that Parshas Acharei Mos was taught after the death of Aaron's sons? 2. What is the punishment for a Kohen Gadol who inappropriately enters the Kodesh Kodashim? 3. How long did the first Beis Hamikdash exist? 4. What did the Kohen Gadol wear when he entered the Kodesh Kodashim? 5. How many times did the Kohen Gadol change his clothing and immerse in the mikveh on Yom Kippur? 6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the Kiyor (copper laver)? 7. The Kohen Gadol offered a bull Chatas to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it? 8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to Azazel. What is Azazel? 9. Who is included in the "household" of the Kohen Gadol? 10. For what sin does the goat Chatas atone? 11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen

garments worn by the Kohen Gadol? 12. Where were the fats of the Chatas burned? 13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur? 14. From one point in history, installation of the Kohen Gadol through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why? 15. What is the penalty of kares? 16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered? 17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a neveilah), at what point does he contract tumah? 18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the "chukim" of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "chukim"? 19. What is the difference between "mishpat" and "chok"? 20. May a man marry his wife's sister? Bonus QUESTION: Verses 18:1-29, lists the prohibitions against immorality. Why do we read this section during Minchah of Yom Kippur? I Did Not Know That! In preparation for Yom Kippur, a second Kohen was inducted as Kohen Gadol in case the first Kohen Gadol became ineligible. Ramban

Recommended Reading List Ramban 16:21 The Scapegoat 17:2 Meat in the Midbar 17:7 Demons 17:11 Prohibition Against Eating Blood Sefer HaChinuch 184 The Sanctity of the Mishkan 185 Yom Kippur 187 Covering the Blood Sforno 16:30 Repentance 17:7 Demons

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated 1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Kodesh Kodashim except on Yom Kippur. 2. 16:2 - Death. 3. 16:3 - 410 years. 4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary Kohen. 5. 16:4 - Five times. 6. 16:4 - Ten times. 7. 16:6 - The Kohen Gadol. 8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff. 9. 16:11 - All the Kohanim. 10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the Beis Hamikdash in the state of tumah. 11. 16:23 - They must be put into geniza and not be used again. 12. 16:25 - On the outer Mizbe'ach. 13. 16:32 - The Kohen Gadol. 14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of Yoshiahu. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away. 15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened. 16. 17:13 - Non domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds. 17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus. 18. 18:3 - Their social customs. 19. 18:4 - A "mishpat" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "chok" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem. 20. 18:18 - Yes, but not during the lifetime of his wife.

Bonus ANSWER: To teach that even during the holiest day of the year, one must be careful to guard oneself against even the most base abominations. Mayana Shel Torah

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shabbat-zomet@jer1.co.il (Shabbat Newsletter from Machon Zomet)  
Shabbat-B'Shabbat -- Parshat Acharei-Mot No 646: 26 Nissan 5757 (3 May 1997) A CLOSE APPROACH OR A SACRIFICE  
by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

"G-d spoke ... after Aharon's two sons died, when they approached G-d" ["b'korvatam"] [Vayikra 16:1]. According to Ibn Ezra, the word b'korvatam is used as a verb, implying that the reason for the death of Aharon's sons was that they tried to approach too close to holiness. This is also implied by the following passage warning Aharon of mortal danger if he tries to enter the Holy of Holies at any other than the proper time. However, there is another possibility, that the sons died because of the unauthorized sacrifice which they offered. As is written, "Nadav and Avihu died when they brought a strange flame before G-d" [Bamidbar 3:4]. The Midrash describes a disagreement over which interpretation is correct: "When they approached G-d -- They died because of their close approach, and not because of the sacrifice, these are the words of Rabbi Yossi Hagellili. Rabbi Akiva said, they died because of the sacrifice, as is written, 'when they brought a strange

flame.' Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah said, they died both because of their approach and because of the sacrifice." [Torat Kohanim, according to a text quoted by the Gra].

It is the positive aspect which is emphasized in this week's Torah portion, a result of an intense desire to approach the holiness of G-d as closely as possible. This is the basis of an apparent paradox: "Everything receives equal treatment; all achieve the same fate, the righteous and the evil, the good, the pure, and the impure, the one who offers a sacrifice, and the one who does not; the good and the sinner are treated alike" [Kohelet 9:2]. The righteous are the sons of Aharon, about whom is written, 'in peace and in a straight manner' [Malachi 2:5]; the evil ones are the community of Korach, about whom is written, 'remove yourselves from the tents of these evil people' [Bamidbar 16:26]. The latter tried to offer a sacrifice based on controversy and were burned, but when the former tried to offer a sacrifice they were also burned." [Vayikra Rabba 20:1].

This "natural rule," that the righteous and the evil will suffer the same fate, would seem to be perplexing. Is it right that both should be treated in the same way? Is it fair that righteous individuals and nations should be judged strictly according to the law? The pangs of wonder are especially sharp at this time of year, when we are reminded of the nation's holy ones lost in the Holocaust. This feeling is one of the reasons that there is never complete joy in the world. "The Almighty said to the evil people: How can you want to be happy, even when the righteous people are never happy in my world? ... Avraham was not happy in my world, and you want to be joyous ... Yisrael was not happy in my world ... Elisheva Bat Aminadav was not happy even on the day when her family received five honors ... Since her sons were burned, her joy was replaced by mourning." [Vayikra Rabba 20:2].

True joy has been promised only for the future: "Yisrael was not happy in my world. It is not written, 'Yisrael was happy in what He did,' but 'Yisrael WILL BE happy' [Tehillim 149:2]. They will take joy in G-d's deeds in the future. Similarly, it is not written, 'G-d was happy with what he did,' but 'G-d WILL BE happy' [Tehillim 104:3]. G-d will take joy in the accomplishments of the righteous in the days to come." [Ibid].

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Jerusalem Post SHABBAT SHALOM: Passionate moderation  
By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(May 1) "And God spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they came near before the Lord, and died." (Lev. 16:1)

WHICH are worse - sins of passion or sins of apathy? Rabbeinu Zadok HaKohen of Lublin (1822-1900), in his work Pri Zadik, cites a midrash that tells of an individual walking on a road, being tempted by fire to his right and snow to his left. The wise traveler understands that he must remain in the center, avoiding both undue passion (fire) and undue apathy (snow).

But which of the two extremes is more problematic? A sin of apathy - symbolized by snow - could well describe the transgression of the tribal chiefs sent by Moses to spy out the Land of Israel. Although they did not conceal the Land's positive aspects (flowing with milk and honey, and grapes so huge eight men were required to carry each cluster), 10 of the scouts stressed the negative: it held a race of giants who would be impossible to conquer. At the end of the day, it was their (and the nation's) apathy toward the Land which led them to take the path of least resistance and either seek to return to Egypt or remain in the desert.

In contrast to the apathy of the spies, the classic example of a sin of passion may be that of Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons, who died when they brought an unauthorized offering of "strange fire." They are immediately killed by God with a fire from Above.

It seems clear that here is the prototypical "sin of fire," excessive ecstasy which - if not tempered by Divine law - can lead to fanaticism. Nevertheless, I would argue that in the scale of transgression, "sins of fire" are generally more forgivable than "sins of snow." Even if Nadav and Avihu committed a transgression, the following verse records how Moses repeats to Aaron the words of God: "I will be sanctified through them that come near to me, and before all the people will I be glorified" (Lev 10:3).

Moreover, the apathy of the spies leads to tragedies throughout Jewish history, starting with the punishment of the entire generation. But the passion of Nadav and Avihu merely leads to a commandment, which appears several verses after their deaths: "Drink no wine or strong drink ... when you go into the tent of meeting, that you die not."

Finally, two striking features of our portion's opening verse are the absence of the names of Nadav and Avihu. Could the Torah be distinguishing the act from the actors, the crime from its perpetrators? Passion that can lead to fanaticism must be stopped and condemned, but the individuals, whose motives were pure, remain close to the Almighty!

And despite the fact that excessive passion resulted in the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, the service in the Temple goes on. In contrast, when the 10 tribal heads refuse to enter the land, Jewish history comes to a 40-year standstill.

Rabbeinu Zadok goes one step further: Why do people or nations fall prey to disinterested paralysis? For the individual who lacks the ability to succeed, cynical nay-saying can often serve as a protection against failure. Remember how the scouts described the inhabitants of Canaan: "We were in our eyes as grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes" (Num. 13:33).

This connection between apathy and low self-image is hinted at in a verse of the song, "Woman of Valor" sung at the Sabbath table. How are we to understand the verse: "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet" (Proverbs 31:21)? If we consider "snow" as a metaphor for apathy, then the verse is telling us that she is not afraid that her household will suffer from apathy, because she imbues in them deep feelings of self-worth. If you wish your children to emerge as kings, then bring them up like princes!

Now, if too much "fire" leads to death, then it might be better to choose "snow," and do away with the priestly garments which are liable to produce exaggerated emotions.

After the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, one might speculate that if the "voltage" in the holy Temple is so high, the danger was not worth the risk. Maybe Aaron even blamed himself for the deaths because of his involvement at the debacle of the Golden Calf. At that time, most of the Israelites went off-course with passion, and now his own sons went too far with their own passion.

From this perspective, it is interesting to note that after the reference to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, our Torah portion continues with a description of the special garments Aaron must wear. "He must put on a sanctified white linen tunic, and have linen pants on his body. He must also gird himself with a linen sash, and bind his head with a linen turban. These are the sacred vestments" (Lev. 16:4).

Why wasn't he told this back in the portion of Shmini? The Torah concludes that despite its risks, the sanctuary's ritual and priestly garb are necessary components in the legitimate self-pride of a sovereign nation with a mission to present ethical monotheism to the world. However, the dangers inherent in excessive pride must be recognized and tempered.

If we return to our midrash about the individual who must walk in the middle of the road, we realize that this wasn't the path of least resistance; it was rather the Golden Mean of Maimonides, the road of peace as demarcated by our holy Torah, whose "tree of life is in the center of the garden."

The traveler through life must zealously guard against either extreme, yet remain passionate in his moderation.

Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Riskin, dean of the Ohr Tora institutions, is chief rabbi of Efrat.

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[rmk@torah.org](mailto:rmk@torah.org) (Mordechai Kamenetzky) [drasha@torah.org](mailto:drasha@torah.org) DRASHA PARSHAS ACHAREI-MOS -- HOME RULE Volume 3 Issue 31 5/2/97

We have discussed the concept of chukim on numerous occasions in these transmissions. Chukim are laws that have no rational explanation. They are directives from the Almighty, and their observance is testimony to our constant and unconditional commitment to His every desire. That is why it is difficult to understand the juxtaposition of two verses mentioning chukim. "Do not perform the practices of Egypt where you have dwelled or the practices of Canaan where you are going and in their chukim (decrees) do not follow. (However,) My laws and chukim (decrees) you shall follow" (Leviticus 18:3-4). Chukim are hard enough to follow as Jews. So why would anyone follow irrational and unexplainable customs and decrees that are meted by gentiles? Jews who find themselves driven by rationale and reasoning often scoff at the complexities of decrees that transcend the human mind surely would not fall prey as to follow blindly the strange whims of idol-worshippers or cults. Or would they?

As a student in the Philadelphia Yeshiva, I heard a story that was probably as apocryphal as it was amusing: An eighteen-year old student was travelling by train from Philadelphia to Harrisburg. The young man sported a beard, wore a long dark coat and a large wide-brimmed black hat. After placing his bags over his seat, he sat down next to a well-groomed businessman who looked at him scornfully. For the first twenty minutes of the trip, the secular gentleman kept eyeing the student as if he wanted to tell him something. Then he could no longer contain himself. With passion in his voice the man began to shout, "You know I'm sick and tired of Jews who think they are still in the Middle Ages! You are a disgrace! I'm Jewish, too. I even speak Yiddish. But do I wear a black coat? Do I let my beard grow? Must I wear an oversized hat? No! Why do you wear those clothes? Why do you wear that beard? Why do you need that hat? It's time you woke up and joined the modern world - the world of America!" The startled student looked at his accuser quizzically. In a perfect Pennsylvania accent, he began to speak. "Jewish?" he queried. "Excuse me, sir, I'm Amish, and I'm on my way back home from a visit with relatives in Philadelphia. I am sorry if I offended you with my style of dress, but this is part of our heritage and culture. It was passed to us from our families in Europe to our families here in Lancaster. I am sorry if I have offended you." The businessman's face turned ashen. "I'm awfully sorry," he whimpered, "I truly did not mean what I said. In fact, I think it is wonderful that you maintain your heritage, culture, and tradition with such enthusiasm. It shows courage, fortitude, and commitment. Please forgive me. I was truly insensitive. Suddenly a wide smile broke across the young man's face. In perfect Yiddish he asked the reeling businessman one simple question. "For the gentile it's wonderful but for the Jew it's a disgrace?"

Sadly, mitzvos that are difficult to understand often discourage Jews who have not encountered a total Torah-experience. Those mitzvos become the scapegoat for their lack of adherence of even simple and very understandable commands. Yet, many of those same intellectuals struggle to understand the culture, customs, and unexplainable rituals of both the societies they live in and, in many instances distant cultures. While the misplaced sensitivity is undoubtedly due to the inherent sensitivities that Jews have for all humans, there must be a balance. I have met scholars who studied the anthropologic and sociological nuances of Zulu tribes but never delved more than

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Talmud-Torah level study of their own heritage. One can study the sartorial Chukim with awe and admiration if they sit on top of a gentile's head, yet he would never give thought to that anomaly were it protecting a skull adorned with a beard and payos. Thousands of unaffiliated college youth would buy tapes of monotonous Gregorian chants, but shudder when approached to enter the halls of a Yeshiva just to hear the melodious sound of "vas zugt Rava, vas zugt Abaye? (What do the Talmudic scholars say?)" The Torah tells us to stay clear of the actions of the Egyptians no-matter how politically correct that may be. There are no better chukim to try to understand than those that come from your very own home.

Dedicatib by Ira and Giselle Beer in memory of Harry and Tillie Beer Zvi Mendel ben Pinchos & Chaya Tova bas Eliyahu  
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weekly-halacha@torah.org Parshas Achrei Mos-Hilchos Yichud:Rulings of HaRav Feinstein By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Any man shall not approach his close relative to uncover shame... (Lev. 18:6)

#### HILCHOS YICHUD: RULINGS OF HARAV M. FEINSTEIN

This verse is cited by most of the early authorities as the Biblical source for the halachos of yichud, the prohibition against a man being alone in a secluded place with a woman. The laws of yichud are complex and detailed and the opinions of the poskim are diverse and contradictory. This discussion will focus exclusively on the rulings of Harav Moshe Feinstein, one of the greatest halachic authorities of our generation. Dissenting opinions appear in the footnotes. A final rulings will depend on the specific circumstances of each situation and the individual rav's decision according to the facts presented to him.

**WITH WHOM IS YICHUD FORBIDDEN?** Unless they are married, a man may not be alone with any woman, and a woman may not be alone with any man, with the following exceptions: 1. His mother and grandmother; her father and grandfather. 2. His daughter and granddaughter; her son and grandson. 3. His sister; her brother. Brother and sister may not live together in the same house for a period of time which exceeds the normal stay of a house guest. They should also not be left together unchaperoned when their parents are away for an extended period of time(1). 4. His father's sister and his mother's sister(2). They may not live together in the same house for a period of time which exceeds the normal stay of a house guest. 5. His adopted daughter; her adopted son. This is permitted only as long as both adoptive parents are alive and married to each other(3). (Example: An adoptive father may not be secluded with his adopted daughter after his wife passes away, or if he divorces his wife.) 5. Yichud with a daughter-in-law or a mother-in law is strictly forbidden(4).

**AT WHAT AGE DOES THE PROHIBITION OF YICHUD BEGIN AND END?** A man over thirteen is prohibited to be alone with a girl over three. Under extenuating circumstances, it is permitted to be alone with a girl till the age of seven(5). A woman over twelve may not be alone with a boy over nine. In certain circumstances it is permitted for a woman to be alone with an old man who is bedridden(6). A rav must be consulted.

**LENIENCIES OF YICHUD** Under certain conditions, the prohibition of yichud may be circumvented. These conditions include: If her husband [or his wife] is in town; if the door is open; if more than one man is present; if more than two women are present; if a child or another chaperon is present. Each one of these conditions has its own sets of rules, so they must be

explained individually. An important note: The halachos described below apply to yichud with a G-d fearing, observant Jew. When the man with whom the yichud will occur is a non-Jew or a secular Jew [referred to in halachah by the Hebrew term parutz], some of the halachos change. A rav should be consulted.

**IF THE HUSBAND IS IN TOWN:** "In town" means he is \*able\* to come home at any time he chooses(7). Even if he works on the other side of town, as long as he makes his own hours [like a salesman does], it is considered as if he is "in town". If, however, he works fixed hours and cannot leave his workplace whenever he wants, it is considered as if he! is "out of town"(8). When the husband is "in town", the fear of his appearing suddenly is a deterrent to engaging in illicit behavior. But the wife only fears her husband's sudden appearance in a place where he is likely to find her (e.g., her home; her office). If, however, she secludes herself in a place where her husband will not easily find her, yichud is forbidden even if her husband is "in town"(9). Her husband presence "in town" does not set aside the prohibition of yichud if a close, long-standing friendship exists between the man and the woman(10). Although a husband's presence "in town" alleviates the prohibition of yichud for his wife, the reverse is not true. A wife "in town" [but not in the house or in the immediate vicinity] does not mitigate her husband's yichud prohibition(11).

**IF THE DOOR IS OPEN:** The door does not need to be actually open to permit yichud. Even if the door is closed but not locked, or even if it is locked but there is a reasonable possibility that people may knock on the door [or ring the bell] and expect to be answered, yichud is permitted(12).

Even if the door is locked but the window shades or drapes are open and there is a clear view into the room, yichud is permitted(13). When driving on an open highway, one should not be alone with a woman in a car. Under extenuating circumstances, one may be lenient, even at night and even with a non-Jewish driver(14). It is proper to be stringent and not rely on the "open door" leniency if a close, long-standing friendship exists between the man and the woman(15).

**IF MORE THAN ONE MAN IS PRESENT:** Yichud is permitted with two or more men during the day time and evening hours, and with three or more men during nighttime sleeping hours(16).

**IF MORE THAN TWO WOMEN ARE PRESENT:** The rishonim argue whether(17) yichud is permitted when more than two women are present. Rashi, quoted by Rama, holds that when three(18) women are present yichud is permitted(19). Rambam, quoted by Shulchan Aruch, holds that the presence of a greater number of women does not alleviate the prohibition of yichud. The basic halachah follows the view of the Rambam(20). Consequently, a man may not be alone even with a hundred women(21).

**IF A CHILD CHAPERON IS PRESENT:** During daytime and evening hours, yichud is permitted if a child is also present. During nighttime sleeping hours, two children are required. There are conflicting opinions(22) as to the minimum and maximum ages for the child as regards to this halacha. Harav Feinstein is quoted(23) as ruling that either a boy or a girl chaperone must be at least seven years old. Once a boy or a girl reaches Bar/Bas Mitzvah, they are no longer considered children(24).

**GENERAL RULES:** A man is permitted(25) to be secluded with a woman in the presence of the man's grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter or sister(26) [of any age over seven]. During nighttime sleeping hours, an additional chaperon is required. Two sisters cannot serve as chaperons for each other(27). Thus yichud with two sisters is forbidden. A man and a woman may remain alone in a home where the parents of one of them are sleeping(28). During regular office hours, a woman may be alone with her doctor. After regular office hours, her husband or a child must accompany her(29). Yichud is prohibited even for a very short time, as long as the possibility exists that it may last for a longer time(30). Being together in an elevator, though, is not forbidden because of yichud(31). Yichud is prohibited even if the man and the woman are in two separate rooms in the same house and each one can lock his/her door from the inside(32).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Igros Moshe EH 4:64-3. While all poskim agree that one may not "live" with his sister, there are different opinions as to what "live" means. Some (Imrei Yosher 2:43) hold that less than thirty days is permitted, while others (Shevet Hale! vi 5:201-2) hold no more than three days is permitted. According to Harav Feinstein's ruling quoted above, it all depends on the length of stay of a typical house guest. Thus a sister who is visiting from a distant city may stay longer than a sister visiting from a nearby area, just as a guest from afar stays longer than a guest from nearby.

2 Igros Moshe EH 4:64-1. Not all poskim agree with this leniency. 3 Igros Moshe EH 4:64-2. Almost all other poskim disagree and hold that yichud is not permitted with adopted children. See Halachah Discussion Vayigash 5755 for elaboration. 4 Igros Moshe EH 4:63; 64-1. This is the opinion of most poskim. There is a minority view (Rashash Kiddushin 81b; Salmas Yosef 34) that allows yichud with these relatives. 5 Oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Children in Halachah pg. 40) based on the rationale presented in Igros Moshe EH 4:65-12, where, in the final analysis, Harav Feinstein is hesitant to permit this. He writes, however, that he would not object to those who are lenient. 6 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-10. See also Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-22. 7 A husband who is jailed, is not considered "in town" - Igros Moshe EH 4:65-7. 8 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-7. Other poskim rule that as long as he is in town, even if he is presently unable to come, it is still considered as if he is in town. See Halachah Discussion - Parshas Vayeshev 5755 for elaboration. 9 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-21. In addition, some poskim hold that a husband "in town" only serves as a deterrent when the wife is meeting the man without the husband's knowledge. If, however, they are meeting with his permission [either in his home or in his] then the wife will not be as deterred by her husband being in town (see Binat Adam 126:27 for an elaborate explanation). Other poskim (Chida, Chazon Ish) do not agree with this stringency. Igros Moshe rules that while it is appropriate to be stringent, under extenuating circumstances one can be lenient. 10 EH 22:8. See Igros Moshe YD 2:35. 11 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-6. Other poskim are more lenient. See Halachah Discussion Parshas Vayeshev for elaboration. 12 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-4. Harav Feinstein's ruling here is extremely lenient and it goes against the view of all other poskim. While many poskim are of the opinion that an unlocked door is considered an "open door", or even that a locked door is considered an "open door" when someone with a key may come in at any time, no other poskim allow yichud behind locked doors just because someone who may knock on the door and expects to be acknowledged may come. Oholei Yeshurun pg. 14 quotes Harav Feinstein as ruling that this leniency can only be relied upon under extenuating circumstances. 13 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-2. 14 Igros Moshe YD 2:82; EH 4:65-3. Many other poskim are lenient about yichud in a car at all times - see Dvar Halacha 15:1 quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Shevet Halevi 5:202-1. See Otzar Haposkim EH 22:35-8 for more opinions. 15 Igros Moshe EH 4:60; 4:65-9, based on Beis Shmuel and Chelkas Mechokek EH 22:13, unlike the Taz 22:5 who is lenient. 16 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-15, based on Rama EH 22:5. Most poskim agree with this. 17 Rashi Kiddushin 81b, quoted in Rama EH 22:5. 18 During nighttime sleeping hours, some poskim hold that Rashi requires a minimum of four women. Under extenuating circumstances, three women are sufficient [even according to Rashi's view]- Igros Moshe EH 4:65-20. 19 An exception to this leniency is when the man and women involved are business associates or the man's job is such that he must deal directly with these women, e.g., a salesman of women's clothing. 20 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-14. Mharsha"m 3:152 also rules like the Rambam. Divrei Malkiel 4:102 rules in accordance with Rashi's view. Shevet Halevi 3:183 is lenient only under extenuating circumstances. 21 Ramban and Ran Niddah 5a. 22 See Dvar Halachah pg. 50-52 for all of the views - some allow yichud in the presence of a girl over age three and a boy over age five or six. 23 Children in Halachah pg. 46-47; Oholei Yeshurun pg. 17. 24 Other poskim hold that once they reach age nine they are no longer considered children. See also Igros Moshe OC 1:26 where he quotes, without dissent, the view of the Bach that nine is the maximum age to being a chaperon. It seems correct, therefore, that the maximum age of Bar/Bas Mitzvah should be relied upon only under

extenuating circumstances. 25 Some poskim do not agree with this leniency, but many others do. 26 Igros Moshe EH 2:15; 4:65-8. Possibly, his father's or mother's sister are also considered chaperons. [Igros Moshe EH 4:64-3 seems, without explanation, to permit yichud with a woman and her daughter or granddaughter. If this is truly Harav Feinstein's view [it may very well be that this is a printing error], it is contrary to the view of all other poskim and is against the basic principals of hilchos yichud. This ruling should not be relied upon without further investigation.] 27 Igros Moshe EH 4:64-3. 28 Oral ruling by Harav Feinstein quoted in Oholei Yeshurun pg. 7. 29 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-1. Many poskim agree with this, while others are more stringent. 30 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-16. See also Minchas Shlomo 91. 31 Igros Moshe EH 4:65-22. Most poskim agree with this leniency. 32 Igros Moshe EH 4:65:19. Other poskim are lenient in this case, see Chazon Ish 34:2 and Salmas Chaim 151.

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<http://194.90.124.37/parsha/peninim/index.htm> Peninim on the Torah\_on the Weekly Torah Portion by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum  
And his cupped handful of finely ground incense-spices. (16:12)

The Kohen Gadol is finally prepared to appear before Hashem to implore His atonement on behalf of Klal Yisrael. He has said his Vidui and slaughtered his personal Korban Chatas. He is now ready to offer the Ketores, incense, in the Kodosh Ha'kodoshim. The Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies once a year, on Yom Kippur. The first service he performs, the first request he makes of the Al-mighty, is to seek atonement for the sin of lashon hora, speaking gossip and slander.

The Ketores serves as the vehicle for this request. How does the offering of the finely ground incense-spices symbolize lashon hora? Harav David Feinstein, Shlita, offers an insightful explanation. He quotes Rashi, who, in citing the interpretation of Chazal, questions the need for emphasizing that the incense-spices were finely ground. Ketores was brought every day in the Bais Ha'mikdash, and it was finely ground. Why should it be different on Yom Kippur? Chazal conclude that while it is mandatory to finely grind the spices during the year, on Yom Kippur it is essential that they be exceptionally fine. Consequently, the spices are ground again on the day before Yom Kippur.

Ketores was offered twice daily, in the morning and in the afternoon. These offerings served to atone for the sin of lashon hora. The recurrence of this sin is noted by the twice daily offering of Ketores. On Yom Kippur, something more than the average Ketores was needed. On this day, when Klal Yisrael must receive atonement for all sins, it was essential that focus be brought on the form of lashon hora that is the most subtle and most common--avak lashon hora, dust of lashon hora. This "innocuous" form of lashon hora is like fine dust, very elusive, at times even sophisticated and well-meaning, but lashon hora no less. It affects the majority of people. Thus, Klal Yisrael must atone for it on the day when everyone stands in prayer begging for forgiveness.

Avak lashon hora is the source of most sin. Many sins begin with a simple derogatory remark about someone which becomes magnified over time. This "humble" beginning can lead to the most unspeakable forms of behavior. It is, therefore, especially appropriate that we grind up the incense a second time, so that we make it as fine as possible, symbolizing the "fine

dust" of lashon hora.

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KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)  
INTRODUCTION TO PARASHAT HASHAVUA

by Zvi Shimon  
[FROM] PARASHAT SHEMINI  
Playing with Fire

In this week's sedra, parashat Shemini, we read about the culmination of the consecration of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. It is the apex of a very lengthy section in the Torah which commences in parashat Teruma (Exodus, chapter 25) and spans over twenty chapters. The people of Israel have given their generous contributions for the construction of the Mishkan. The craftsmen have labored arduously applying their skills and with utter devotion. The kohanim (priests) have studied all the laws relating to the sacrifices and have completed their ordination period remaining at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days. Our parasha opens on the eighth day, the day which has been so eagerly anticipated, the day that God will appear before the people and dwell in the Mishkan:

Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well being. Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces. (Leviticus 9:22-24)

God accepts the sacrifices of the people and an awesome fire descends from the heavens consuming the offerings on the altar. The people are ecstatic and shout with joy. However, the joy and exhilaration are short-lived. Bliss turns to sorrow as the event is marred by a horrible tragedy:

Now Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the Lord an alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the Lord and consumed them; thus they died before the Lord. (10:1,2)

According to the Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, France, 1080-1160), the same divine fire which consumes the offerings on the altar, expressing God's satisfaction with his people and arousing their delight, also consumes Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu. What was the sin of Nadav and Avihu that brought upon them such a horrible punishment? Why was God so angry at them?

#### The Sin

The verse states that Nadav and Avihu offered before the Lord an 'Eish Zara asher lo tziva otam,' an alien fire which God had not instructed them to offer. The commentators disagree as to the interpretation of this verse. The Bekhor Shor (Rabbi Yoseph Ben Yitzchak Bekhor Shor, France, twelfth-century) and the Chizkuni (Rabbi Chizkiya ben Manoach, France, mid-thirteenth century) interpret the clause 'asher lo tziva otam' as a prohibition. God explicitly forbade them to offer this offering. The clause 'asher lo tziva otam' should not be understood as stating that God had not instructed them to offer but rather should be understood as 'asher tziva otam lo,' stating that God explicitly forbade them from offering their sacrifice. What is your opinion of this interpretation? (take a few moments to reflect).

There are two advantages to this interpretation. The first advantage is textual since the Torah describes the offering as "alien fire," God obviously didn't command them to offer it. This is the reason why it is referred to as an alien fire. Rather, the Torah informs us that God also prohibited the offering. The second advantage of this interpretation relates to the content of the narrative. It is much easier to understand the harsh punishment as retribution for the disobeying of God than for the offering of a sacrifice which was not commanded. However, there are certain obvious difficulties with this interpretation. First, if this interpretation is correct, then the phrasing of the clause is odd. A clearer formulation would have been 'asher tziva otam LO,' Which God commanded not [to offer]. A second

difficulty with the interpretation is that it portrays Nadav and Avihu as people who are rebellious to the extent of disobeying an explicit command of God. This is difficult especially in light of their background and function as priests.

The majority of the commentators interpret the clause as in our translation, "an alien fire which God had not instructed them to offer." Their sin was not of disobeying God but rather offering an "alien fire" which was not commanded of them. What was this alien fire which ignited God's wrath?

Rabbi Hirsch (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany, 1808-1888) offers the following explanation: "The offering itself appears in every way illegal. The censers as well as the fire and the incense were all against the law. All the utensils must belong to the congregation and be holy. By giving his offering over into a national vessel of the Sanctuary, the bringer, together with his offering, enters within the framework of the national sanctuary of the Torah, and thereby gives himself up to all its demands, to the exclusion of any decisions made according to his own ideas. But the censers of Nadav and Avihu were each his own; they approach God, not with the vessels of the Sanctuary, but with their own, without self-renunciation. They put a fire in the censer, more precisely an alien fire, from their own hearths, as Rabbi Akiva explains - not fire from the altar. And finally, the incense itself. Incense was the one sacrificial substance, which neither from the community nor from the individual was allowed to be brought. The bringing of incense was to remain restricted exclusively to that which was prescribed for the community daily and for the high priest on Yom Kippur."

Nadav and Avihu desecrated the Mishkan by using their own private utensils and by bringing an alien fire, not fire from the altar but from a normal fireplace. Their sin was in performing tasks of a holy nature with the improper tools. The Rashbam takes a different approach: "Even before the heavenly fire had descended they [Nadav and Avihu] had already taken their censers to burn incense on the altar of gold since the incense offered in the morning precedes the offering of animal sacrifices (see Exodus 30:7); and they put in [the censers] an alien fire which Moses had not commanded on THIS DAY. Though on other days it is written "And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar" (1:7), on this day Moses did not desire that they bring a man-made fire since they were anticipating the descent of a heavenly fire; therefore the bringing of a different fire was not desired in order that God's name should be sanctified and that all would know that the fire came from the heavens" In contrast to Rabbi Hirsch who interprets an alien fire as an unholy fire originating not from the altar but from an unholy source, the Rashbam posits that the fire was indeed taken from the altar. It was foreign not because of its source but rather because of its timing. On the day that God was to appear through a heavenly fire before the whole congregation, man-made fire was undesirable. It would only limit the extent of the miracle. Nadav and Avihu's sin was not the desecration of the Mishkan but rather the detrimental interference in the miraculous events of the day. [The assumption of the Rashbam is that Nadav and Avihu acted before the descent of the heavenly fire and were burned by it. The Rashbam does not explain why the Torah recounts the narrative of Nadav and Avihu only after the heavenly fire. The apparent reason is to separate the awesome and glorious appearance of God in the Mishkan and the tragic death of Nadav and Avihu. Although they occurred simultaneously, the Torah separates them so as not to detract from God's momentous appearance.]

Our sages in Vayikra Rabba (A compilation of homiletical interpretations of our sages) offer several explanations of the sin of Nadav and Avihu. We will cite two of them: Bar Kappara in the name of Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar said: Aaron's sons died... for drawing near [to the holy place] since they entered into the innermost precincts of the sanctuary, [and] for offering since they offered a sacrifice which they had not been commanded to offer. It is not only as intimated by our verse that Nadav and Avihu sinned in offering an "alien fire." They also sinned by trespassing into sections of the Mishkan which they should have not entered. What is the textual source for this explanation? In the

continuation of the book of Leviticus the deaths of Nadav and Avihu are mentioned: "The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord" (16:1). Here there is no mention of the sinful offering, only of a prohibited "closeness" to God's presence, to the holy of holies in the Mishkan. Even without the forbidden offering, Nadav and Avihu would still have received the punishment of death simply for entering sections of the Mishkan which were forbidden.

#### The Cause

So far we have dealt with the essence of the sin of Nadav and Avihu. We will now turn our attention to their motive, the cause which led them to perpetrate the sin. Where did they go wrong? What caused men of such stature to fall to their doom?

The Sifra ("Tannaitic halakhic midrash on Leviticus") offers the following explanation: "And Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu each took his censer"- "They, in their joy, since they saw a new fire [the heavenly fire], they came to add love to love"

Nadav and Avihu were so overjoyed by God's acceptance of the sacrifices that they decided to add another offering. Their enthusiasm and excitement led them to instinctively perform deeds without contemplating their desirability and taking the proper precautions. The awesome love of God that Nadav and Avihu possessed overshadowed their fear of God. This imbalance, the overflowing of love unchecked by the restraining influence of the fear of God, led to the sin of Nadav and Avihu. In contrast to the ecstatic frenzied states characteristic of modes of worship in Eastern religions, the worship of God, as prescribed by the Torah, warns against a loss of control. Love must always be accompanied by the fear of God. It is the combination of the two which creates the desirable state of mind necessary for a close relationship with God.

Rabbi Hirsch offers an alternative explanation: More than anything else the Word of God stresses that God had not commanded them. Even if the various phases of the offering had not themselves been wrong, as we have seen that they were, the fact that it was not a "bidden" one would have sufficed to make it a forbidden one. No place is allowed in the whole service of the offerings of the Sanctuary of the Torah for subjectively doing just what you think right. Even the free-will offerings have to be kept meticulously within the limits of the forms and kinds prescribed for them. For the proximity of and getting near to God, which is the purpose of every offering, is only to be found by the way of obedience, by compliance with God's Will and subordination to it. This is one of the points in which Judaism and Paganism go in diametrically opposite directions. The Pagan brings his offering in an attempt to make the god subservient to his wishes. The Jew, with his offering, wishes to place himself in the service of God; by his offering he wishes to make himself subservient to the wishes of his God. So that all offerings are formulae of the demands of God, which the bringer, by his offering, undertakes to make the normal routine for his future life. So that self-devised offerings would be a killing of just those very truths which our offerings are meant to impress upon the bringers, would be placing a pedestal on which to glorify one's own ideas, where a throne was meant to be built for obedience, and obedience only. We can understand that the death of the priestly youths, and their death in the first moment of the consecration of the Sanctuary of God, is the most solemn warning for all future priests of this Sanctuary; it excludes from the precincts of the Sanctuary of God - which was to be nothing else but the Sanctuary of His Torah - every expression of caprice, and every subjective idea of what is right and becoming! Not by fresh inventions even of God-serving novices, but by carrying out that which is ordained by God has the Jewish priest to establish the authenticity of his activities."

Nadav and Avihu had misunderstood their task as kohanim. They were searching for self-expression and an outlet for their creativity. As a result Nadav and Avihu became absorbed in their own ideas, as they attempted to create novel forms of worship. They did not understand that the Mishkan was not a place for individual creative expression. It is God, and only God, who determines the framework for His worship. The Torah describes in great detail all the laws of the sacrificial worship. Any

straying from these laws is a desecration of the Mishkan, and an undesirable and alien form of worship.

Our sages offer another explanation for Nadav and Avihu's downfall: "And Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu each took his censer"(10:1)- "Aaron's sons"-[teaches us that] they did not seek advice from Aaron, "Nadav and Avihu"- [teaches us that] they did not seek advice from Moses, "each took his censer" [teaches us that] they did not seek advice from one another" (Sifra, Acharei Mot 1)

Our sages infer from scripture that Nadav and Avihu acted independently without asking anyone with regard to the desirability of their actions. The last two textual inferences are clear. Moses' name does not appear in the verse since he was not approached by Nadav and Avihu. Likewise, scripture emphasizes that Nadav and Avihu each acted independent of the other, each taking his own censer. However the first inference is obscure. How do our sages infer from the clause "And Aaron's sons" that Aaron was not consulted? The fact that Aaron's name appears in the verse would seem to imply the opposite, that he was involved in their deed! The Netziv (Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, Lithuania, 1817-1893) explains that the source for the inference is the order of the verse. When the Torah states people's parentage it usually does so after giving the name of the individual. Here the order is the opposite. The Torah does not state 'Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons' but rather "And Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu." The change in order teaches us that although Aaron was their father he did not influence them and was not involved in their misdeed. The appearance of Aaron at the beginning of the verse teaches that his influence was only in the past but not in the present behavior of his sons.

According to this explanation of our sages, Nadav and Avihu downfall stemmed from over-confidence. They did not deem it necessary to seek advice from their elders and teachers. Furthermore, they acted without hearing a second opinion, and they did not even discuss their plan amongst themselves! This hyper-individualism and rashness brought about their tragic end.

Shadal's (Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzatto, Italy, 1800-1865) understanding of the cause of Nadav and Avihu's sin is even more critical: "They sinned due to haughtiness. They were not satisfied with being helpers of their father as is written: "Aaron's sons passed the blood to him" (9:12). They wanted to show that they too were the priests of God like their father, and since Moses had not assigned them any independent function, they chose a lucrative one and presented an alien offering." (compare to the explanation in the Midrash Hagadol.) It was their hunger for prominence and prestige which led them to sin. They held very important positions but were unhappy so long as they didn't enjoy a dominant role. Therefore, they independently tried to take on more central functions and they used the Mishkan as a locus for their growth in power and political advancement. This desecration of their spiritual position and its usage for self-aggrandizement was what led to their ultimate failure and consequently a harsh punishment was incurred.

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, France, 1040-1105), citing our sages, offers a completely different explanation of the cause of Nadav and Avihu's sin:

"Rabbi Yishmael said: They died because they entered the Sanctuary intoxicated by wine. You may know that this is so, because after their death he admonished those who survived that they should not enter when intoxicated by wine" Nadav and Avihu sinned because they were drunk and consequently, they were not careful in the performance of their duties. Entrance into the sanctuary demands utmost seriousness and reverence. It is no place for flippancy and frivolity. Nadav and Avihu entered the sanctuary in an improper state of mind which led to an improper form of worship. Rabbi Yishmael learns this from the fact that immediately after the death of Nadav and Avihu God speaks to Aaron saying: "And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages, for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean." (Leviticus 10:8-10)

Whichever explanation of the cause of Nadav and Avihu's we

adopt, the punishment appears extremely harsh. The severity of God's reaction is undoubtedly a consequence of the location of the sin and the identity of the sinners. The Netziv comments on the clause: "and they died BEFORE GOD" (10:2), that it comes to explain why Nadav and Avihu were punished so severely. Since they were before God, in his sanctuary, he dealt with them in the most stringent manner and without mercy. Proximity to holiness demands utmost care. Sin in the sanctuary is magnified and becomes all the more severe. However it is not only the location but also the identity of the sinners which incurred such a harsh reaction. This is perhaps the meaning behind Moses' words to Aaron following his sons' death: "This is what the Lord meant when He said, Through THOSE NEAR TO ME I show myself holy..." (10:3). Rabbi Hirsch comments on this verse:

The more anybody stands in front of the people as a leader and teacher in their relation to God, the less does God overlook his mistakes.... Had Aaron's sons not been so close to God, pardon might have perhaps been granted to them, and the tragic fate which God so immediately dealt them would not have been such a weighty warning to the people. In sharpest contrast to the modern point of view which regards spiritual and intellectual greatness as a free pass for moral laxness, and grants men of intellect a greater consideration in lapses against God's laws of morality, the Jewish point of view raises the strictness of the demands for morality with each higher degree of intellectuality." God is most exacting with those who are closest to him. The assumption of leadership positions, especially in the religious domain, demands exemplary moral behavior. The potential and the responsibility for sanctifying God's name when in a position of leadership is all the greater. Likewise the punishment incurred for, God forbid, desecrating His name is much more severe. No Biblical narrative illustrates this idea more powerfully than the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu.

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The Weekly Internet P A R A S H A - P A G E by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem Founder of the Dafyomi Advancement Forum Email kornfeld@jencom.com

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Leah bas Michal Mordechai, mother of Mr. Avi Berger (Kew Gardens Hills, N.Y.). Her Yahrzeit is 27 Nisan.

#### PARASHAT ACHAREI MOT 5757 GETTING SATAN'S GOAT

From the People of Israel [Aharon] shall take two male goats for a sin offering.... Aharon shall place lots on the two goats: one lot shall be drawn for Hashem and one lot shall be drawn for Azazel.... The goat upon which the lot for Azazel was drawn shall stand alive before Hashem for him to confess over it and to send it to the Azazel [cliff], towards the Desert. (Vayikra 16:5,8,10)

On Yom Kippur, the Jews would offer a "bribe" to the Satan so that he should not prevent their offerings to Hashem from being accepted, as the verse says, "One lot shall be drawn for Hashem and one lot shall be drawn \*for Azazel\* [i.e., the Satan]." (Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer, ch. 46) This is the meaning of the Midrash (quoted above): In ancient times, idolaters worshipped the angels. They would bring offerings to the angels, which the angels would accept... The Torah entirely forbids accepting any angel as a godly being or serving one in any way. However, Hashem commanded that on Yom Kippur we send a goat to the desert, meaning, to the angelic power which is appointed over places of desolation. We offer a goat because among the beasts, the goat is associated with this power of desolation and barrenness, which is the source of all bloodshed and wars.... It is not intended, G-d forbid, that the "scapegoat" be accepted as an \*offering\* from us to that angel. Rather, we are offering the scapegoat to the Satan because G-d commanded us to do so (i.e., and not because we chose on our own to serve the Satan in this manner). This can be compared to a person who prepared a large meal for a great officer. The officer asked the host to give a nice portion to one of his servants as well. The host is not offering a portion to the servant of his own initiative; he is simply honoring the officer's wish. It is the officer -- the servant's master -- who is actually offering the portion to

his servant through the host, in order that his servant, too, should enjoy the meal and should speak well of the host. (Ramban, Vayikra 16:8) The scapegoat which is hurled to its death from atop a high cliff on Yom Kippur stands at the head of an esoteric and mysterious rite. According to the Ramban, we are in a sense "throwing a bone to the dog" to keep it from barking. Hashem ordered us to offer this goat to the prosecuting angel so that he should not speak up against the Jews on the Day of Judgment. Such an explanation certainly leaves much to be explained. Is not the Satan one of Hashem's angels? Angels do not have free will, they must perform the will of Hashem. If Hashem does not want the Satan to prosecute, then he should not; if He does want him to, then he should -- what does it accomplish to offer it a goat? Besides, what does it help to keep the Satan quiet? Since Hashem still knows all the sins of which the Jews are guilty, why should he no longer take those sins into account when judging the people? Undoubtedly, a fuller understanding of this enigmatic subject must be left to the realm of the Kabbalists. Let us try, however, to understand at least an inkling of this mystery, based on the less covert Midrashic and Talmudic sources.

II Rashi tells us (Shmot 31:11) that it was on the tenth day of the month of Tishrei that Hashem forgave the Jewish people for the terrible sin of worshipping the Golden Calf. Hashem would have destroyed the entire nation, had not Moshe Rabbeinu interceded and begged for their forgiveness.

It took 120 days until Hashem forgave them completely. The date of their forgiveness was designated to be Yom Kippur, a Day of Atonement for all future generations.

As Rashi tells us, however (Shmot 32:34), Hashem told the nation that their sin was not entirely forgotten. True, they were not to be punished for it at the moment, but "every future punishment to come upon the Nation of Israel will include some measure of punishment for the Sin of the Golden Calf along with it." This may be understood in the following manner: Had the Jews had not sinned through the Golden Calf, neither they nor any of their descendants would ever have sinned. After receiving the Torah and perceiving Hashem's Presence more clearly than any prophet, they could not possibly have sinned. As the Gemara tells us (Avodah Zarah 5a), had the Jews not sinned with the Golden Calf, they would have lived forever. They would have been returned to a state in which there was no place for death or sin, just as the world was meant to be when Hashem created Adam. After the nation sinned, it became possible for them -- and for us, their descendants -- to stray from the path of Hashem and sin. For this reason, every misdeed since the time of the Sin of the Golden Calf contains an element of that early sin, since, in a sense, it is that sin which brought about all the later sins.

Rashi tells us that after Hashem forgave the people for their sin on the tenth day of the month of Tishrei, he designated that day to be a day of forgiveness for all of Israel throughout the generations (Rashi, Devarim 9:18). On that date each year, Hashem once again forgives the Sin of the Calf. By doing so, He automatically commits Himself to forgiving \*all\* the sins we have done. If no punishment is dealt which does not contain an element of punishment for that sin, then the inverse corollary is that if the Sin of the Calf is forgiven, there is no place for punishment for all other sins, which are simply offshoots of that original sin.

III How does Hashem forgive the Sin of the Golden Calf on Yom Kippur each year? He does so through the sending of the goat to Azazel, as the verse says explicitly (Vayikra 16:22). How does that work? The Ramban explains (Shmot 32:1) why Aharon chose to specifically make a Golden \*Calf\* when the people sought a replacement for Moshe (who they thought would never return from Mt. Sinai). Moshe Rabbeinu's assignment was to lead the Jews through the desert until they arrived at the land of Israel. His replacement would have to be able to complete this task. The form of an ox which appears on the left side of the Divine Chariot of Hashem (see Parasha Page for Bamidbar 5756) represents the powers with which Hashem administers destruction and desolation -- the powers appropriate to the task of guiding a nation through the desolation of the Wilderness, the Ramban explains. The ox of the Chariot -- and consequently the Golden Calf -- thus represents the same concept that the goat represents among the animals of the wild: the forces of destruction and barrenness. This may be the meaning of our "sending the scapegoat to the Satan." On Yom Kippur,



Hashem commands us to do an act which, if not commanded by Him, would undoubtedly be a grave act of idol worship: making an offering to the force that Hashem uses to control barrenness and desolation. In this case, though, because Hashem did, in fact, command us to do so, we are simply performing His will, like the host who sends a portion to the servant in the Ramban's metaphor. By performing this commandment, we somewhat lessen the severity of the sin that involved a very similar act: the Sin of the Golden Calf. That sin involved offering sacrifices to the power which Hashem uses for controlling desolation, but \*without\* Hashem Himself telling us to do so. On Yom Kippur, Hashem is commanding us to perform exactly the same act, demonstrating that such an act can indeed be done to \*serve\* Hashem, under the proper circumstances. (In the language of the Gemara, this is known as "Hutar Michlalo" -- Yoma 81a etc. A prohibited act which is "Hutar Michlalo" is deemed less severe than one which is prohibited without exception. Another example found in the Gemara of such a concept is the fact that although a Kohen must perform the sacrificial service with his right hand, according to some authorities if he uses his left hand the service is still valid and need not be repeated. The reason for this is that Hashem did command that \*one\* particular service is to be done with the left hand. Because of this, any other service which is done with the left is acceptable, post facto -- Menachot 6b)

IV We can understand now what it means that the prosecuting angel is silenced on Yom Kippur through the rite of the scapegoat. Certainly, it is our own sins which arouse prosecution Above. On Yom Kippur, however, the very act of sending the goat to the Satan "silences him," i.e., it causes the severity of our sins to be diminished. This is what the Midrash means when it says that we are "quieting the prosecuting angel." By performing this service, we are appealing to Hashem to grant us forgiveness for the Sin of the Golden Calf, which, after having been "reduced" in this manner, is fit to be forgiven. Once Hashem forgives us for the Sin of the Calf, there is no more need for punishment for the rest of our sins which, as we explained (section II), are all offshoots of that early sin. May Hashem help us to use all of our powers for serving Him wholeheartedly, and may He grant us insight into his timeless teachings. Shema Yisrael Torah Network  
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