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subject: **Rav Frand - First Times Are Special**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1376 – Talking While Washing Your Hands for Netilas Yodayim – Is There a Problem? Good Shabbos!

First Times Are Special

This week's parsha contains the tragic incident of the death of Aharon's two sons during the festive Chanukas Habayis of the Mishkan. They were inaugurating the Mishkan that they built over the past six months or so and the Shechina was about to descend. Unfortunately, Nadav and Avihu brought a "foreign fire" (there is a big machlokes as to exactly what they did wrong) and they died on the spot.

The pasuk says that Moshe called Mishael and Elitzafan, the sons of Uziel, to remove the dead bodies from the Mishkan (Vayikra 10:4). In other words, Moshe called on the living cousins of the deceased, rather than then living brothers (Elazar and Isamar), to remove the dead bodies.

A fascinating Daas Zekeinim M'baalei Hatosfos, citing the halachic Medrash Toras Kohanim, derives from here that, in general, kohanim may not come in contact with the dead. Had they been permitted to do so, we would assume that Elazar and Isamar would be the more natural candidates to remove the dead bodies of their brothers, Nadav and Avihu.

The Daas Zekeinim is astonished at this Toras Kohanim "for we see explicitly elsewhere that a kohen is prohibited from coming in contact with the dead" (Vayikra 21:1). Why, they ask, would this indirect incident be cited as a source for a halacha that we learn elsewhere explicitly?

Furthermore, they ask, Elazar and Isamar were regular kohanim. Why, then, could they not make themselves tameh by removing the bodies of their brothers? A kohen hedyot (regular kohen) is permitted to become tameh for a close relative who dies. It is only the Kohen Gadol who cannot become tameh even for a close relative. Why on earth is the Toras Kohanim saying that the reason why the cousins, rather than the brothers, needed to remove the dead bodies was because a kohen cannot do that?

The Daas Zekeinim M'baalei Hatosfos derive from here a fantastic chiddush that on the day that kohanim do the avodah for the first time, even regular kohanim have the status of a Kohen Gadol and are not permitted to become tameh, even from the dead body of a close relative.

This answers both questions: (This was the first day on the job for Elazar and Isamar. Therefore, they had the status of Kohanim Gedolim, who are not permitted to become tameh even for close relatives.) The Toras Kohanim was not referring to the general prohibition against kohanim becoming tameh. Rather, the Toras Kohanim says "from here we see that a kohen hedyot cannot be metameh l' meisim" – despite the fact that we know this from an explicit pasuk (Vayikra 21:1) – because a kohen hedyot cannot be metameh even for a close relative on the day of his inauguration! That is why they were not permitted to remove their brothers!

Rav Asher Dikker, a Rebbe in Lakewood, sent me an interesting vort from Rav Elyashiv, zt"l. Rav Elyashiv wrote that the reason a kohen has the status of a Kohen Gadol on the day he starts his avoda, and therefore cannot even be metameh l'krovim, is because all beginnings must be perfect. Therefore, on this day that the kohanim were starting their avodah for the first time, they all needed to have the status of Kohanim Gedolim. We want first times to be as perfect as possible. Therefore, we don't want the kohanim to be tameh on that day, even though in the future, it is permitted under those circumstances.

Rav Dikker cites in this connection a famous Pnei Yehoshua in Maseches Shabbos concerning the miracle of Chanukah. What is the miracle of Chanukah? They could not find pure oil to light the Menorah when they wanted to re-inaugurate the Beis Hamikdash after it had been desecrated by the Syrian-Greeks. They found a single pure flask of oil and a miracle happened that it burned for eight days until they could produce new pure oil. Everyone asks a basic question: The halacha is that Tumah hutra b'tzibbur, meaning that when all the kohanim are tameh, the service in the Beis Hamikdash can be done in a state of impurity. Why then were they so concerned about looking for pure oil? The answer is that this was the inaugural day of the Chanukas Hamikdash. At the time of inauguration, we don't rely on leniencies. We don't rely on the principle of Tumah hutra b'tzibbur. Beginnings need to be as perfect as humanly possible. B'dieved practices are not permitted at the time of inaugurations.

This, I once heard, is the idea behind the famous statement "Kol hascholosh kashos" (All beginnings are difficult). The reason why all beginnings are difficult is because we need to try to make all beginnings perfect. Beginnings are not intrinsically difficult (as we traditionally understand the statement). Rather, they are difficult because it is necessary to make them as perfect as possible, and that is hard.

The Brisker Rav notes that in Parshas Tetzaveh, by the first time they brought the Korbon Tamid (daily offering), it says "Es hakeves haechad ta'aseh ba'boker v'es hakeves hasheni ta'aseh bein ha'arbaim" (Shemos 29:39), whereas in Parshas Pinchas, by the Korbon Tamid, it says "Es hakeves echad ta'aseh ba'boker v'es hakeves hasheni ta'aseh bein ha'arbaim." Why only in Shemos does it use the prefix "hay" ("the") specifying "es hakeves haechad"?

The halacha is that if, for whatever reason, the morning Korban Tamid was not able to be brought, the afternoon Korban Tamid may still be offered. The only exception to this rule was the first time they were brought. The first time, they need to be paired exactly, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. That is because the first time everything needs to be done precisely correct.

Rav Elyashiv notes that when a Kohen Gadol begins his avodah for the very first time, he brings a Minchas Chinuch – a special flour offering to inaugurate his service in the Beis Hamikdash. In addition, the Kohen Gadol brings a daily mincha. Rav Elyashiv explains that this daily mincha can be understood as a kind of daily Minchas Chinuch – reflecting the idea that each day must be approached with the freshness of a first day. For a Kohen Gadol, each day on the job is like his first day.

Do we remember how it was the first time we did something? Do I remember the first shiur I ever gave? No! Rav Elyashiv says the reason the kohen brings a mincha every day is because every day is like his first day.

The first time a person does something, he tries to do it to perfection. All the I's are dotted and all the T's are crossed. But with most people, when they do a job for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, their attitude changes: I will kvetch. I will get through it. No! The Kohen Gadol cannot be like that. Every day is a new beginning.

If that is the p'shat, we can say a new insight in the famous Rashi in Parshas Be'haloscha (Bamidbar 8:2). Rashi writes on the words "Va'ya'as ken Aharon" (And Aharon did so) "melamed she'lo sheena" (This teaches that he didn't change). Each day was as enthusiastic and fresh and exciting as the previous day – no matter how many years he did this job of lighting the Menorah. That is how each of the activities of the Kohen Gadol need to be.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Shmini is available with a complete catalogue available at Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Support Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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For the week ending 11 April 2026 / 24 Nisan 5786

Taamei Hamitzvos - Non-Kosher Animals

by **Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines**

Mitzvos 73, 153-165, and 470-471; Vayikra Ch. 11.

Rambam observes that, as a general rule, whatever food the Torah forbids is not good for our health (Moreh Nevuchim vol. III §48). This is clear to see regarding the prohibitions against eating carcasses (neveilos) and terminally ill animals (tereifos), since these are commonly plagued with harmful microorganisms. With regard to pork, however, gentiles mock the Jewish people for abstaining from this seemingly healthy and tasty food (Yoma 67b). Hence, the Torah considers the prohibition against eating pork a chok, a decree with no readily apparent reason, which Hashem expects us to observe with unquestioning loyalty (ibid.). There are of course many reasons that are not readily apparent, such as the fact that the pig is a dirty and repulsive animal (Moreh Nevuchim ibid.). The pig is also symbolically repulsive, since it has the external kosher sign of split hooves but does not have the internal kosher sign of chewing its cud, and it thus represents the wicked nation of Edom, who mask inner depravity with a façade of righteousness (see Vayikra Rabbah 13:5).

Radvaz (§185) shares the view that consuming non-kosher food is unhealthy. He supports this view by pointing out that the Torah prohibits the consumption of creeping creatures such as worms and other insects. The fact that these creatures are naturally repulsive to people is a clear sign that they are not healthy, because the body naturally repels anything harmful. Radvaz observed many terrible illnesses among gentiles that he did not encounter among Jews, and he attributed this to the Jewish people's kosher diet.

Other commentators explain that non-kosher animals are unhealthy for the soul. The Sages similarly explain that consuming impure foods creates a blockage in the heart that hinders it from perceiving spiritual matters (see

Yoma 39a). Following this view, Ramban explains that predatory birds are not kosher because cruelty is in their blood, and eating them instills cruelty within a person. We may add that the very commandment to refrain from eating such animals brings to our attention that Hashem finds aggression and cruelty unacceptable. Along these lines, Rabbeinu Menachem HaBavli suggests that having scales is a sign of kosher fish because it shows that they are preyed upon and require armor, which means that they are not predators (cited in Otzar HaMidrashim, Taryag HaMitzvos). According to this approach, presumably, non-kosher foods are primarily harmful to those who possess more refined and therefore more delicate souls.

Of the various non-kosher creatures, the Torah places the most emphasis on creeping creatures such as insects, repeating some of the prohibitions several times. In one place, the Torah adds, "for I am Hashem, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God, and you shall be holy, for I am holy" (Vayikra 11:45). The Gemara (Bava Metzia 61b) interprets this verse to mean that this Mitzvah alone to abstain from eating creeping creatures would have been enough to justify the entire Exodus, since they are so repulsive. The verse cited by the Gemara says, "for I am Hashem, Who brought you up from Egypt" instead of the usual terminology "took you out of Egypt" to allude to the spiritual elevation that results from abstaining from eating such creatures.

It emerges that one of the main reasons for the prohibition against eating creeping creatures is that they are repulsive. We may tentatively suggest that this is another reason for the prohibitions against eating other non-kosher creatures. Even gentiles eat mostly kosher animals, such as cows, sheep, and chickens, and are repulsed by the thought of eating horses, donkeys, and crows. Although gentiles eat many animals we do not eat, kosher animals are generally considered the most suited for consumption.

Abarbanel links the distinction between kosher and non-kosher animals to their diets. Non-kosher animals consume the meat, bones, and blood of other animals, which endows them with a savage, hot-blooded nature. Since their food is not always common, their flesh is often gaunt and not nutritious. Kosher animals, on the other hand, are herbivores and possess a nature as calm and humble as the grass that they eat. Their food is available on the ground wherever they turn, and they therefore tend to be fat and nutritious. Kosher animals chew their cud because they are incapable of breaking apart bones with their teeth, and cannot even digest grass without first softening it in their stomachs. Their split hooves are a sign of their passivity, because all predators have closed hooves with claws, which they use to attack and rip apart their prey. Abarbanel concludes that this is a general rule that has exceptions, such as the swine and the camel. These animals possess bad character traits and an impure nature, as indicated by the fact that they do not have both kosher signs.

RAV SCHACHTER ON THE PARSHA Part 2

Insights and Commentary Based on the Shiurim of Rav Hershel Schachter

Adapted by Dr. Allan Weissman <https://a.co/d/2aj0sJs>

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Parshas Shemini

Simanei Taharah

Rav Hershel Schachter

The Gemara in Bechoros (6a-6b) records a Beraisa that discusses the case of an animal of one species that, as a result of a mutation, bears an offspring resembling another species. We follow the opinion of the Chachamim that "a camel that was born from a cow"—that is, an offspring resembling a non-kosher animal born from a kosher animal—is kosher, even though it is missing the simanei taharah (the characteristics of a kosher animal) of mafreses parsah (split hooves) and ma'alas geirah (chewing its cud). Apparently, we view the simanim as necessary only to be kovei'a the min (species) as a min kasher. In other words, the recognition of simanim is critical in a particular animal only if we were to be presented with a species that is not yet identified as a kosher species. In a situation in which the

animal is definitely the product of a recognized min tahor, it is kosher even without those simanim.

The requirement of fins and scales for kosher fish is similar. As the Gemara in Avodah Zarah (39a) teaches, a fish that does not presently have fins and scales, but is destined to grow them when it develops to maturity, is kosher even before the simanim develop. Clearly, it is not the checking for the presence of simanim that is matir (permits) the consumption of the fish; rather, the simanim are used to be kovei'a a certain species of fish as being kosher.

The Darchei Teshuvah (Yoreh De'ah 79:1, 83:1) elaborates on this idea in reference to the Sefer HaChinuch's contention (mitzvah 153; see Minchas Chinuch) that there is an obligatory mitzvas asheh of bedikas simanim. The Chinuch writes that if one consumed an animal based on only one of the two simanei taharah, he has failed to fulfill the mitzvah of bedikas simanim, even if the animal did, in fact, possess the second siman. The Darchei Teshuvah explains that the mitzvah that the Chinuch describes only applies to a fish that is not recognized as belonging to a min tahor. Before one partakes of a fish of an unidentified species, there is a mitzvah to check for its simanim, but this does not apply to a fish known to belong to a kosher species. Similarly, a shochet may perform shechitah on an animal without first checking its simanei taharah, as long as he recognizes the animal as belonging to a kosher species.

Some authorities disputed the permissibility of canned tuna fish based on the requirement of bedikas simanim. They argued that since in the factory in Puerto Rico only non-Jewish workers check each fish, we lack the matir of bedikah. However, this argument is incorrect. As we have seen, bedikas simanim is necessary only to establish a particular species as a min tahor. Once a species is recognized to be a min tahor, a fish from that species is permissible, even without examination of its simanim (see Ginas Egoz, p. 61).

The Beraisa in Bechoros also discusses the opposite case—that of an offspring resembling a kosher animal that was born from a non-kosher animal. We derive that this animal is forbidden for consumption from the passuk, “אך את זה לא תאכלו ממעלי הגרה וממפריסי הפרסה” — “But this you shall not eat from among those that chew their cud and that have split hooves” (Vayikra 11:4). Applying an additional level of interpretation to this passuk, Chazal understand that there may exist an animal that chews its cud and that has split hooves, but which is forbidden nonetheless.

It is unclear, however, whether such an animal, which possesses simanei taharah but which was born from a non-kosher animal, is treated like its mother in all areas of Halachah. The Pischei Teshuvah (Yoreh De'ah 79:2) quotes the Yad Eliyahu (siman 2), who deliberates the question of whether the animal is considered a beheimah teme'ah, like its mother, or whether the gezeiras hakasuv merely forbids it for achilah, but it is treated as a beheimah tehorah in other contexts by virtue of its simanei taharah.

On the one hand, as we have seen, the purpose of checking for simanei taharah is merely to be kovei'a whether a min is kosher or not. Thus, in this case, it may be argued that the presence of simanei taharah in the animal is inconsequential, since we know based on its mother that it certainly belongs to a min tamei.

Alternatively, the Yad Eliyahu suggests that perhaps there are two ways in which an animal can attain kosher status—either by belonging to a min beheimah tehorah or by possessing simanei taharah. In other words, simanim may confer the status of beheimah tehorah on an animal, even if the animal is not a member of a kosher species. Such an animal is certainly assur b'achilah, as the Beraisa teaches, but this may be due to an extraneous consideration—the fact that the animal was produced by a non-kosher animal. The Gemara in Chullin (64b) derives from the phrase “וְיֵאֵת בַּת הַיַּעֲנָב” — “and the daughter of the ostrich” (Vayikra 11:16), that the egg of a non-kosher bird is prohibited. This serves as the source for the general principle that היוצא מן האסור אסור — the product of that which is forbidden is forbidden. Accordingly, just as milk or eggs that are produced by a min tamei are forbidden, the offspring of a non-kosher animal is no different.

There are a number of practical ramifications that result from labeling an animal with simanei taharah born from a non-kosher animal as essentially a min tahor that is assur b'achilah due to היוצא מן האסור אסור.

First, shechitah of an animal prevents it from conveying the tum'ah associated with a neveilah only if the animal is a min tahor; shechitah has no relevance to an animal that is deemed a beheimah teme'ah. Furthermore, the Rambam maintains (Hilchos Ma'achalos Assuros 3:6), against the view of Tosfos (Chullin 64a), that consuming a היוצא מן האסור is not prohibited as a lo sa'aseh, but only as an issur aseh, and therefore does not carry the penalty of malkos.

In addition, the status of cheilev (forbidden fats) applies only to a beheimah tehorah, not to a beheimah teme'ah (Chullin 117a). Thus, the permissibility of conducting business with cheilev would be extended to the cheilev of this animal only if it is considered a min tahor (Shach, Yoreh De'ah 64:2). Similarly, the issur of eiver min hachai (consuming the limb of a living animal), which is forbidden to a non-Jew as well, applies only to a min tahor (see Shach, Yoreh De'ah 62:3).

Although the Yad Eliyahu feels that we should be machmir on this question, since it remains a sfei'a d'oraisa, he concludes that it is more compelling to argue that this animal is not classified as a full-fledged beheimah teme'ah. In Hilchos Sefer Torah (Yoreh De'ah 271:2), the Pischei Teshuvah again quotes the Yad Eliyahu, this time in reference to whether one may use the hide of a “tahor” animal born from a tamei animal for the klaf of a sefer Torah, tefillin, or mezuzos.

The Gemara in Shabbos (28b) cites the passuk regarding tefillin, “למען תהיה” — “so that the Torah of Hashem will be in your mouth” (Shemos 13:9), which is interpreted as teaching that the material on which tefillin are written must be מן המותר בפוך — from a species of animal that may be eaten. Likewise, with regard to the retzu'os, the Gemara teaches that only עור בהמה טהורה is fit for the service of Shamayim.

The Noda B'Yehudah (Mahadura Kamma, Orach Chaim 1, quoted by Sha'arei Teshuvah 32:27) writes that one should be stringent not to use black paint that contains etzem hapil (ground elephant tusk) for tefillin, since the requirement of מן המותר בפוך may apply even to something used to color tefillin.

The Gemara in Shabbos (108a) teaches that one may write tefillin on the hides of neveilos or tereifos of kosher animals. Clearly, then, מן המותר בפוך refers not to specific animals that may be eaten, but to the entire min that may be eaten.

Likewise, the reason that the hide of a non-kosher animal may not be used for tefillin is that it is from a min tamei, not because it is assur b'achilah. In fact, the hide itself, because it is inedible, is not prohibited mid'oraisa; the issur achilah pertains only to the meat of an animal (Rambam, Hilchos Ma'achalos Assuros 4:18).

Since the principle of מן המותר בפוך requires only that the hide be taken from a min tahor, it should follow that the hide of a “tahor” animal born from a tamei animal is not excluded from use for tefillin. It may be argued that this animal is a min tahor by virtue of its simanei taharah; using its hide therefore would not constitute a violation of מן המותר בפוך, despite the fact that it remains prohibited to eat as a היוצא מן האסור.

from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig rabbizweig@torah.org

date: Apr 6, 2026, 11:23 PM

Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - **Wearing The Same Robe**

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

Mon, Apr 6, 11:23 PM

Parshas Shemini

Wearing The Same Robe

“Do not drink intoxicating wine...” (10:9)

The Talmud compares the prohibition for a Kohein to perform the Priestly service after having imbibed wine to the prohibition for a judge or scholar to drink wine before rendering a legal decision.[1] What is the reason for the prohibition? If we are concerned that the judge might be inebriated, which

could affect his decision, there would be no need to state that he should not drink prior to ruling, for it is obvious that a person should not render legal decisions while drunk. Furthermore, the prohibition placed upon the Kohein invalidates the service irrespective of whether or not it was performed correctly.[2] How does the law restricting the judge parallel the prohibition placed upon the Kohein if our concern for the judge is that his judgment will be impaired?

There are opinions that the prohibition applies only to drinking wine.[3] If the concern is a lack of sobriety, why should there be a distinction between wine and any other alcoholic beverage?

The service of the Kohein requires an awareness that he is standing before the King. The concern is not that he will be inebriated, rather that, due to wine consumption, he will lose some of the awareness which is required of him when serving his King. Therefore, even if the Kohein successfully performs the service it is disqualified due to his faulty mindset while performing it. Wine is the beverage of royalty and one who consumes it loses the ability to behave in a completely subservient manner.[4] Therefore, particularly wine impedes a person's ability to perform the Priestly service. The Talmud teaches that when rendering a legal decision the Beis Din is visited by the Divine Presence.[5] The judge is not the creator or source of the law, only its dispenser. He is the conduit for the Divine will. The Talmud is teaching us that when a judge renders a decision, he is also performing a Divine service. Much like the Kohein, he must be keenly aware that he stands before the King. It is therefore prohibited for him to consume wine; although it might not impair his judgment, it will impede upon his awareness of performing a Divine service.

1.Kerisos 13 2.Yad. Hil.Bias Mikdash 1:1 3.Ibid 1:3 4.Bereishis 49:11 5.Berachos 6a Too Close For Comfort "It was on the eighth day..." (9:1) The Talmud teaches that when a portion of the Torah is introduced with the term "vayihi" – "and it was", it is a precursor to tragic events.[1] Parshas Shemini describes the events that unfolded on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the eighth day of the inauguration service. The portion is introduced with "vayihi", denoting that it was a tragic day. The completion of the Mishkan brought Hashem the same joy as the creation of the world.[2] This day was also a great day for celebration for Bnei Yisroel for it represented the restoration of the relationship between themselves and Hashem, which had been damaged by the sin of the Golden Calf. Hashem's resting His presence within the midst of Bnei Yisroel was received with jubilation and rejoicing.[3] Therefore, asks the Talmud, how could we define this day as tragic? The Talmud answers that it was tragic because of the deaths of the two sons of Aharon which occurred on this day.[4] If a person suffers the loss of a parent on his wedding day, the day is not entirely a tragedy. The loss does not preclude the wedding from being a joyous occasion. The Halacha requires a person who receives a great inheritance on the day that he suffers a loss to recite a blessing for his loss and a blessing for his windfall.[5] It is possible for a person to departmentalize his emotions. Why does the Torah begin the inauguration day with the expression "Vayihi bayom hashmini" – "And it was on the eighth day", thereby defining the entire day as a tragedy? Since part of the day was a source of celebration why should the entire day be viewed as tragic? In Parshas Mishpotim Rashi notes that the elders of Bnei Yisroel, including Nadav and Avihu, sinned grievously by indulging in food and drink while gazing at the vision that was present at the Sinaitic revelation. Not wanting to mar the joyous atmosphere of Bnei Yisroel's receiving the Torah, Hashem deferred the punishment of Nadav and Avihu to a later date.[6] Since Nadav and Avihu's punishment was meted out at the inauguration of the Tabernacle, it can be ascertained that their actions on this occasion were a culmination of their actions at Sinai. What is the connection between the transgression which occurred at the inauguration of the Tabernacle and the transgression which occurred at the Sinaitic revelation? The reason for celebration was itself the source of the tragedy. If Nadav and Avihu had died in an unrelated incident, then the celebration and the tragedy could be separated. Nadav and Avihu's deaths must have been an outgrowth of the day's celebration, thereby defining the

entire day as tragic. The familiarity and closeness that is created between two parties in a relationship is fraught with great danger. Intimacy often results in the loss of respect for one another. The distance that exists at the inception of a relationship creates a certain level of respect. As that distance is removed and the parties become comfortable with one another, the respect diminishes. The level of respect shown during courtship is usually much greater than that during marriage. The intimacy of the relationship sometimes sows the seeds for disrespect. Hashem's descending upon Bnei Yisroel created an unparalleled level of intimacy between the two parties. While Hashem's presence was at a distance there existed awe and respect for Him. Once He descended, this intimacy created the possibility for the boundaries of respect to be breached. The deaths of Nadav and Avihu were a result of the very intimacy that was being celebrated. The closeness that they felt to Hashem allowed them to act inappropriately and their deaths served as a warning to Bnei Yisroel not to make the same mistake. Respect must remain to maintain the integrity of the relationship. This was not the first time Bnei Yisroel fell prey to this mistake. At the Sinaitic revelation the same scenario occurred. The Elders indulged in food and drink while gazing at the Divine Vision that was present. Hashem waited until the inauguration of the Mishkan, where this indiscretion was repeated, before meting out the appropriate punishment. 1.1.Megillah 10b 2.Ibid 3.Rashi Shemos 31:18 and Seforno 26:9 4.Megillah ibid 5.Shulchan Aruch Orech Chaim 223:1 6.Shemos 24:11

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Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum

ירשת שמיני תשפ"ו Shemini Parshas

ידם אהרן

And Aharon was silent. (10:3)

On what should have been the most exalted and auspicious day of Aharon HaKohen's life—the inauguration of the Mishkan with Aharon as the Kohen Gadol, alongside his sons who would serve as Kohanim—he was stunned by the sudden (what appeared to be) inexplicable and devastating loss of his two sons. They did not just die. They were struck by a Heavenly conflagration which burned from within, leaving their bodies intact. The Torah describes Aharon's heroic response: no response, Va'yidom Aharon; "And Aharon was silent (actually mute)."

Prior to attempting to explain Aharon's response and from where he took the extraordinary fortitude to remain mute in the face of tragedy, we first take note of a significant nuance in the text. The Torah does not say dom Aharon, that Aharon was silent, but rather, va'yidom—a verb form that subtly focuses on the future, implying continuity, an unfolding silence. Aharon's silence was not a one-time expression to tragedy; rather, it was a conscious, enduring stance which imbued generations of Jews throughout the millennia with the ability to confront tragedy with emunah, restraint and dignity. All future generations were infused with Aharon's silent strength and stoicism. He taught us how to grieve—without rebellion, and how to accept the most bitter decree with quiet nobility.

Having said this, we now must ask: From where did Aharon derive such strength? From where did he garner the spiritual fortitude to remain mute in the face of such overwhelming tragedy? How can we learn from him? How can we, who are far removed from his spiritual stature, derive a lesson to enable us to confront challenge and even tragedy?

Perhaps the following story might lend some insight from which we may glean a deeper understanding of Aharon HaKohen. A terrible tragedy occurred in Yerushalayim when a bomb went off on a bus, taking the life of the son of one of Yerushalayim's most illustrious Torah scholars. The tragedy was overwhelming; the grief was debilitating as the family sat dumbstruck in deep shock, attempting to make sense of what had happened.

One walked into the shivah house to the sounds of the bitter weeping of the family members.

In walked Horav Nota Tzeinvirth, zl, a well-known Yerushalmi tzadik, a Boyaner chasid. He immediately sat down next to the father of the deceased. When he came in, the other members of the family moved closer to hear what he would say. He turned to the father and said, “I have a halachic query to share with you. What would happen if Avraham Avinu had, in fact, slaughtered Yitzchak Avinu? Would he have had to sit shivah, observe seven days of mourning, for him?”

The father replied, “It makes sense that he would have kept all the rituals connected with mourning.”

Rav Nota interjected, “Do you know why? Because if he would not have sat shivah (because this was a Heavenly-mandated decree to sacrifice Yitzchak), it would appear as if we sit shivah only when Hashem does not want a person to die. This is categorically impossible, because if Hashem does not want a person to die, he will not die. Apparently, the obligation to sit shivah applies even when Hashem wants a person to die.

“I am alluding to a powerful principle which you must accept: If your son was killed, it is because this was the ratzon, will, of Hashem. He also wants you to mourn, because that is part of the process. However, He does not want you to mourn excessively. This, too, is the ratzon Hashem.”

The family understood the message: Everything that occurs is the will of G-d. We must accept it as such.

Having said this, let us now return to Aharon and attempt to understand his superhuman response to the enormous tragedy of losing his two sons. We are taught that Aharon accepted the ratzon Hashem, the will of the Almighty. Ordinarily, we perceive existence as comprising three distinct entities: Hashem, His will, and man. Man has desires; Hashem has a will. We often experience life as a tension between the two.

Not so with Aharon. Aharon did not view himself as a separate entity standing opposite the Divine will; rather, he saw himself as at one with the Divine Will. His personal identity was so completely aligned with the ratzon Hashem that, when that will changed, Aharon changed. He had no inner conflict, no clash between “what I want” and “what Hashem wants,” because Aharon had no independent will of his own. His entire essence was an extension of the Divine will. Thus, when Hashem decreed a reality that shattered the human heart, Aharon did not need to suppress emotion or conquer resentment. He had nothing to conquer. His silence was not forced; it was natural. His will had already been surrendered, long before tragedy struck.

This is the legacy of vayidom Aharon—not silence born of numbness or speechlessness to a mind-numbing tragedy; rather, it was silence that resulted from a deep unity between man and Hashem—a total abnegation of self in order to align with the will of Hashem.

Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, was no stranger to adversity and suffering. During his lifetime, he buried children, lived in abject poverty in which the only thing palpable in his house was hunger. His body was weakened by illness, and his life was marked by quiet suffering. Yet, he never once uttered a word of complaint. He did not merely endure his suffering; he accepted it. When asked how he was able to sustain so much loss, Rav Aryeh remarked with utter simplicity, “If Hashem gave this to me, then obviously He feels I am able to carry the load.” This was Rav Aryeh’s mission statement of emunah. He saw pain not as Hashem abandoning him, but rather as Divine trust and confidence in his ability to succeed.

יִדָּם אֲהָרֹן

And Aharon was silent. (10:3)

The Torah praises Aharon HaKohen’s silence in the face of tragedy. What distinguishes silence from speech? Should Aharon not have eulogized his two sons for all the exemplary qualities they possessed? Should he not have wept copious tears over the terrible personal and communal loss of two such shining stars?

Horav Aviezer Piltz, shlita, explains that when Moshe Rabbeinu said, “B’kerovai Ekadesh v’al pnei kol ha’am Eichabed,” Moshe responded, “I

knew that the Mishkan would be sanctified through someone within whom G-d’s glory reposes, but I thought it would be one of us. Now I know that they were greater than we are.”

When Aharon became aware of his sons’ extraordinary spiritual stature, he realized that any verbal expression on his part would barely scratch the surface. Speech has limits. Words are confined by syntax and vocabulary. Silence, however, has no boundaries. It allows the mind to expand and grasp what words cannot.

Silence, by its very nature, has neither structure nor limitation. It allows for the loss to be felt from all perspectives. The most powerful hesped may, in fact, be the one not delivered.

Chanah, mother of Shmuel HaNavi, prayed silently—her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Horav Nachman Breslover explains that her tefillah came from such depth that sound would have diminished it. A silent cry can break barriers that sound cannot penetrate.

וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תִצְאוּ כֵּן תִּמְתּוּ

Do not leave the entrance of the Ohel Moed, lest you die. (10:7)

The Rambam (Hilchos Bi’as Mikdash 2:5) writes that a Kohen who leaves the Bais HaMikdash during the Avodah may be liable for death. One should not abandon the sacred service in a rushed or distracted manner.

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, applies this practically. How often do we rush through tefillah because of an appointment? In doing so, we subtly indicate that our engagement with Hashem is secondary. Even during bentching, when the phone rings, we feel pressured to hurry. We interrupt our connection with Hashem for what seems urgent—but is it truly more important?

A Rav once delayed his flight rather than rush Shemoneh Esrei. He missed his plane, yet everything ultimately worked out. The message was clear: doing what Hashem wants is what matters.

Throughout Jewish history, the title HaKadosh was reserved for those whose holiness was palpable—individuals like the Ohr HaChaim, the Shlah, and the Baal Shem Tov.

Horav Moshe Alshich, known as the Alshich HaKadosh, was one such figure. His teachings reflected profound spiritual depth. Stories are told of his influence—even appearing in dreams to save lives—and of the Arizal witnessing truths revealed through his Torah.