



Parshat HaShavuah

SHEMINI

שמיני

APR 21, 2012

כ"ט ניסן תשע"ב

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
7:29
S"Z Kriat Shema
10:05

Sunset
7:47

Motzei
Shabbat
8:24



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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ANSWERING THE CALL

SHIMMIE KAMINETSKY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As this week's parsha begins, Moshe dedicates the Mishkan by calling to Aharon, his sons, and the elders of Israel and instructing Aharon, to "take a calf as a sin offering" (9:2,4). Only three psukim later, Moshe tells Aharon, "Draw close to the altar and offer your sin offering... and atone for yourself and for your people" (9:7).

The words, "*Krav el hamizbeach*," "Draw close to the altar," lead many commentators to infer that for some reason Moshe needs to urge Aharon to draw close to the mizbeach because Aharon seemed hesitant to do so. Our commentators point out that Aharon is both embarrassed and afraid to "draw close" because when Moshe states, "Take a calf as a sin offering," Aharon sees a vision of a different calf that he had been involved with once before. He is reminded of the Egel Hazahav, the Golden Calf, that the Jewish people worshiped prior to Moshe's descent from Har Sinai. Rashi explains that Moshe encourages Aharon not to be fearful or ashamed of his past mistakes because, "*Lekach nivcharta*," "For this you were chosen."

What exactly does Moshe mean when he expresses that "for this" Aharon was chosen?

Perhaps it is this innate sensitivity and humility that Aharon displays in remembering his past mistakes that make him befitting and worthy of being the Kohen Gadol. Aharon's feeling of inadequacy, as a result of his past wrongdoings, shows how truly humble he is, a critical trait of a Jewish leader. It is for this reason that some suggest Moshe says the words "for this you have been chosen;" he is referring to the qualities of modesty that Aharon possesses that make him a worthy choice.

The Imrei Emes, quoting Rav Chaim Vital, offers an alternative explanation. He asserts that one of our missions in life is to amend certain negative attributes or character traits. Often times, we encounter resistance, challenges, and difficulties when approaching this task.

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A DIVINE KISS **LEAH AVNI ('14)**

In this week's parsha we read that Aharon and his sons, Nadav and Avihu, finish the seven day inauguration of the Mishkan and begin their jobs as kohanim.

Soon after Moshe and Aharon go into the Mishkan and bring a sacrifice which is immediately consumed by a heavenly fire.

In the midst of the jubilation, Nadav and Avihu also offer a sacrifice, but theirs is called a "strange fire before Hashem," which He does not command them to do. Following their offering, Hashem kills them.

So the question we must ask is— why are Nadad and Avihu killed for bringing a korban to Hashem?

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar writes in his commentary that their deaths are from a Divine "kiss," a kind of "kiss" Hashem would give a perfectly righteous man. Although they understand that there would be a consequence to their actions, Nadav and Avihu do not hesitate from drawing closer to Hashem.

Rabbi Attar explains that every soul is like a fire that wishes to ascend, but it is bound to its wick. Nadav and Avihu die because their souls leave the physical world in order to be closer to Hashem, like a fire that is no longer attached to its source— its wick.

In order to prevent this from happening again, Hashem made our souls have a greater longing to be in this world, so that we can reach our true spiritual potential without the fear of coming too close to Hashem too soon. Although strengthening our connection to Hashem is now more difficult, we can still finally reach our ultimate connection. We should still strive to be like Nadav and Avihu, so that we can continue to spread Hashem's light to the world around us.

HUMBLE YOURSELF **ALANA REICHENBERG ('13)**

In this week's parsha, Moshe incorrectly assumes that Aharon makes a mistake regarding one of the korbanot and therefore reprimands him. Aharon then explains to Moshe why his offering was in fact offered correctly. Afterwards, the Torah states "And Moshe heard and it was good in his eyes" (10:20).

What life lesson can we learn from Moshe's reaction?

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin explains that we often realize that we make a mistake and become wary. Rather than facing the reality that we are wrong, we try to shield our own disappointment by criticizing the other party.

For example, when a student fails a test, he may often blame the teacher for his failure, claiming that the test was too difficult. However, he must accept the truth—that perhaps he did not dedicate enough time to studying.

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Reichenberg continued

It is only when we are conscious of our errors and are willing to admit to them that we will be able to approach every situation in a more suitable and mature fashion. We should be truthful rather than defensive when realizing and admitting our mistakes.

Furthermore, the Seforno explains that when Moshe hears Aharon's rationalization as to why he is correct, he feels pure happiness. He is euphoric that Aharon has not made a mistake. Just like Moshe values truth, intelligence, and honesty, we too should search for the truth in situations in which we are incorrect.

STICKING TO THE RULES

KELLEY TRIPP ('13)

Parshat Shemini begins with the discussion of the korbanot— with the details of the sacrifices that are to be offered in the Mishkan. Yet, in perek yud, the parsha shifts to tell a seemingly strange story. In a rather succinct fashion, we are told of the death of Aharon's sons occurring when they bring a "strange fire" into the Mishkan, followed by Aharon's simple response to the tragedy. What is the basis and meaning of this anecdote?

My grandfather, Rabbi Shomam, explains that until perek yud, everything the Torah discusses about building the Mishkan and bringing korbanot is concluded with the reminder, "*Ka'asher tzivah Hashem*"— "As Hashem commanded." The Torah is telling us that everything has to be completed according to the direction of Hashem; Hashem's instructions guide each action. Moreover, Hashem commands, "*Asu li mikdash*"— "Make for Me a sanctuary." Therefore, the Mishkan is Hashem's home and in it we must act "*ka'asher tzivah Hashem*."

Prior to this, Hashem tells the sons of Aharon the rules regarding the bringing of spices as a sacrifice. However, they ultimately break these rules. The Torah does not specifically state what the sin of Aharon's sons was. Perhaps the sons of Aharon were being overly zealous, trying to do something beyond what Hashem had outlined. They brought their own korban into the Mishkan, deciding to act on their own volition. Thus, despite their possibly pure motive, the sons of Aharon failed to recognize the importance of following Hashem's instructions and consequently they act with misplaced enthusiasm. With a rush of eagerness, Nadav and Avihu failed to follow specifically what Hashem told them to do.

In response, Hashem tells Moshe, in a statement which he then repeats to Aharon, that "*bekrovai ekadesh*"— Hashem will only accept and sanctify those who act in the way He commands; it is those who come close to Hashem that Hashem will draw towards Him. In addition, Aharon's response to the tragedy of his sons lacks a cry or protest because he understands that what his sons did was truly wrong. Because Aharon recognizes the improper behavior of his sons, his silence represents the understanding that we need to follow "*ka'asher tzivah Hashem*," as it is the only way to truly honor Him.

In essence, to grow closer to Hashem, we must not use our imagination; rather, we must follow what Hashem has clearly dictated as His rules and guidelines. Our enthusiasm should fuel our actions to do Hashem's mitzvot, rather than trying to imagine what we think Hashem wants from us.



THE END IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

JESSICA WOLFF ('12)

Bnei Yisrael have been working hard in order to finally consecrate the Mishkan. This is a long awaited occasion that ends an extended period of hard work. However, in this week's parsha, we encounter a great tragedy: Aharon's eldest sons Nadav and Avihu are killed. In the middle of one of the most important days for the Jewish people, why do Aharon's sons behave so irresponsibly? The mefarshim give different answers; some say they are killed because they act in an arrogant manner and are anxious to replace Moshe and Aharon.

Another opinion is that during this time, the Jews are extremely busy building the Mishkan and appreciate the fact that they are taking part in a once in a lifetime project. All of the Jewish people are excited and the atmosphere is exhilarating. But the thrill is now coming to an end because Bnei Yisrael are about to reenter their "regular" life with the completion of their mission. They are now going to begin the mundane maintenance of the daily worship. The problem with Aharon's sons is that they fail to make that transition. They continue with the same attitude of excitement after the building of the Mishkan is complete.

Many times in life it is essential for us to take on projects such as creating a family, a new business, or doing anything special. And there is always a danger in the transition from making to using, from founding to maintaining, from learning to living the things that we learn. This mentality of change is where the sons of Aharon, with all of their good intentions, fail. We are challenged daily to transition and infuse the new into our daily lives, and may we all be successful in embracing it.

Shimmie Kaminetsky continued

The Torah is teaching us that rather than backing down before these obstacles and excusing ourselves by saying, "This is just not for me," we need to view these "bumps along the road" as ultimately providing us with the potential for growth and greatness. The tougher the challenges with which we are confronted, the more Hashem expects growth from us.

Aharon perceives that due to his past, he is not fit to perform this service. Moshe reminds him that it is specifically due to his past that he is the optimal person for the job.

Each of us encounter challenges in our lives whether they be in areas of service to Hashem or other areas of life. Let us follow the message that Moshe communicates to Aharon through his statement, "For this WE have been chosen." Let us view our personal challenges as opportunities to foster future growth and greatness.

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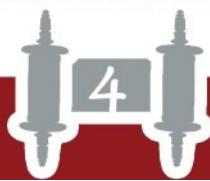
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