

# HIS PRIVATE PATH

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*And Aaron the Cohen went up to the Mountain of Hor according to ("Al Pi"- literally by the mouth of) HASHEM and he died there in the fortieth year of the Children of Israel having left the Land Egypt on the first day of the fifth month. (Bamidbar 33:39)*

According to (AL Pi) HASHEM: We learn that he died with a kiss! (Rashi)

What is this "kiss of death" that took Aaron out of the world? Why does it mention here of all places that Aaron was a Cohen? We know that! Why are we told that that his death occurred in the 40th year?

The Talmud (Brochos 8A) tells us there 930 different types of death. The worst is something called "askara" which is defined as a kind of choking while the lightest is "the kiss" of death. The harshest is compared to disentangling wool from thorns, while the easiest, "the kiss" is compared to removing a hair from milk. Since when is the body compared to milk and the soul which is milky white and pure comparable to the body? Hair is reminiscent of the negative inclination and all forms of coarse materialism?" The answer is that the hair is the body and the milk is the soul. For the righteous, death is as void of conflict as removing hair from milk. When the overwhelming presence of The Almighty approaches and then withdraws the righteous one cleaves and is drawn lovingly home. With that kiss the shell is removed like a uniform and the soulful individual finds himself where he had always practiced being, in the presence G-d.

The bad news on the other end of the spectrum is "breaking up is hard to do". The soul which became overly identified with its body now struggles to avoid the inevitable. I once saw on 47th Street that the owner of a delivery van returned to his vehicle only to discover that the Department of Transportation was already towing it away. The poor guy lay on the hood of his car screaming and carrying on until he had to be forcibly removed.

The Prophet Mica makes the following profound and famous statement, "(I) Say to you man what is good and what does-HASHEM expect of you, except that you act justly, love kindness, and walk privately with your G-d!" Giving concrete examples of each the Talmud (Sukkah 49B) explains that "walking privately with G-d" to mean escorting the dead and entering a bride to the chupah! The Alter from Slobodka, Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl. asked, "What walking modestly can there be in going out in the street to collect money for dowering brides or burying the dead? Is there any greater publicity than this? The point is, though, that a person must figure out how to walk modestly

and privately even when he is in the most public eye!"

Sefer Maoros HaGedolim testifies about the Alter himself how hidden was his true greatness from the eyes of others. "Almost nothing is known about him. We know only thorough his work in Torah education, which could not be hidden. He never held any title and he never took credit for any action. Even in Slabodka Yeshiva which he founded, developed, and supported for fifty years, and in which he raised thousands of students he never held a post or a title. He was simply called "The Alter". Out of thousands of letters and documents that came out of the yeshiva over the years, his signature is not to be found. If a historian were to investigate the history of the Slabodka Yeshiva, he would find in its archives no sign that such a person had lived and worked there!"

A local Talmud scholar once told me that the difference between great people and everyone else is that great people are greater in their private life than in their public life. Everyone else is just the opposite.

Therefore, there can be no greater praise for Aaron who was for forty years the Highest Priest- the most public figure that he yielded in the end effortlessly shedding that giant mantle of honor he was privileged to wear in this world and continued forever more on his private path. Text Copyright &copy; 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).