

HOLY TO G-D

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

This week's parshah sheet is dedicated in memory of Dov Ber ben Yehudah Aryeh, z"l, who passed away on the 7th of Nissan. Though he was a simple man, he lived a remarkable life, and exuded chayn to all those with whom he came into contact. He was one of the last of his generation, but he has left an indelible mark on the one of that has followed.

FRIDAY NIGHT:

Moshe told Aharon, "That is what G-d told me, that He would be sanctified through those close to Him, that before all the people He would be glorified." (Vayikra 10:3)

Rashi points out back in Parashat Vayakhel (Shemot 38:8), that Moshe had decided to reject the copper mirrors donated by the women for the sake of making the wash basin for the Mishkan. Apparently, these were the same mirrors that the women used back in Egypt to entice their husbands when they came home each day from back-breaking and will-crushing labor. It was their hope to multiply the numbers of the Jewish people just as Pharaoh had sought to reduce them.

It wasn't that Moshe Rabbeinu thought that anyone had acted in an inappropriate manner back in Egypt, rather, even if the intentions of the all the Jews had been for the sake of a mitzvah, nevertheless, the yetzer hara had also been involved, and whenever the yetzer hara is involved, it is next to impossible to act totally L'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven).

G-d set the record straight as only G-d could do, for only He knows what goes on in the hearts of man. Moshe Rabbeinu could assume that everyone had acted for holy reasons, but unable to read every corner of the hearts of his people, he had to act stringently since there was no room for even a little impurity when it came to the Mishkan and its implements. So G-d told him, "Not to worry, Moshe. These mirrors are not only acceptable to Me, they matter more to Me than anything else that was received to build the Mishkan!"

In fact, though the head plate of the Kohen Gadol said, "Holy to G-d", a directive not just to the Kohen Gadol, but to every Jew, the mirrors themselves were already holy. They represented the very goal of every Jew, to use the world in a way that is totally in consonance with the will of G-d, in a way that helps Creation come closer to its ultimate goal of perfection, and to understand why we need

only to turn to another episode in Jewish history, but this time, a much happier one (Moed Katan ga).

It was the year 2928 from Creation, and a great thing had just happened: the Jewish people had put the finishing touches on the first and only real temple to G-d. It was a time for tremendous celebration, for a holy celebration, since it represented a climax in the accomplishments of mankind. Shlomo HaMelech spared no cost to guarantee a siyum fitting such a holy and great occasion.

However, says the Talmud, it happened to be that the time for the celebration occurred just as the Yemai Norayim, the High Holidays, were supposed to begin, and Shlomo HaMelech had called for 14 days of consecutive celebration. The question was, what to do on the 10th of Tishrei, Yom Kippur: observe it as prescribed in the Torah and take a one- day break from the celebration, or override it that year and continue on with the simchah right through Yom Kippur?

The Talmud says that they chose the latter, and in that year, on Yom Kippur, the entire nation celebrated Yom Kippur by not only eating, but by feasting, rather than fasting. Later, they started to worry about their actions being the day that a person is usually cut off from the Jewish people for eating on it. So, a Heavenly Voice came out and said, "The entire generation is going to the World-to-Come!"

Impressive? Normally, if we can just guarantee another year after a day of heavy praying and fasting, we have cause to celebrate. However, the generation of the Bait HaMikdosh did much better than that, by eating! They guaranteed themselves their portions in the World-to-Come! What did they do so right that year that transformed their Yom Kippur of eating into much more than our Yom Kippur of fasting?

SHABBAT DAY:

Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aaron, took their incense pans and put fire and incense in them, and offered an unauthorized fire before G-d, which He did not command them to do. (Vayikra 10:1)

Let's answer that question by asking another one. Let's say that you were allowed to eat on Yom Kippur one year, perhaps for health reasons, but only just so much. Would you be careful to eat just the right amount, or would you think to yourself, "Look, if I am already allowed to eat on Yom Kippur, what difference does it make if I eat a bit more, or a bit better?" The answer is, that it makes all the difference in this world, and perhaps the next one as well. For, should you knowingly eat more on Yom Kippur than you are allowed to eat, the surplus would constitute eating on Yom Kippur without permission, and the punishment for which is excision. That is why people who must eat on Yom Kippur actually make a point of using pre-measured cups to make sure that whatever they eat on Yom Kippur remains in the category of that which is permissible.

Likewise was it for the people of Shlomo HaMelech's siyum. The only "heter" to eat on Yom Kippur that year was for the sake of the Bait HaMikdosh; any selfish eating on that day was tantamount to eating on Yom Kippur for the wrong reasons, bringing with it the punishment for doing so. However,

who can be so sincere, especially when it comes to a feast, even on Yom Kippur, as careful as they tried to be? They doubted themselves, and therefore worried about the excess eating, that is, any pleasure they may have derived above and beyond what they enjoyed in celebration of the completion of the House of G-d.

That is why it took a Heavenly Voice to proclaim otherwise. Not only can we not read the hearts of others, we can't even fully read our own hearts, only G-d can do that. So, G-d told them that year, "Not to worry, My loyal children! Everyone not only ate for the right reasons on Yom Kippur, your eating even rectified the world beyond your own lives, for it constituted a true "achilah sh'b'kedushah" (a eating for holy purposes) and a rectification of the Aitz HaDa'at Tov v'Rah.

In fact, explains the Pri Tzaddik, that is the whole purpose of Yom Kippur in the first place. When Adam HaRishon ate from the Aitz HaDa'at without G-d's permission, it was an unholy eating. Had he only waited until Shabbat to eat, which he could have done with G-d's blessing, explained the Arizal, his eating would have been totally L'Shem Shamayim, and it would have completed the rectification of Creation. It would have been the first act of Yemot HaMoshiach.

However, we know what really happened, and the rest is history, our history, a history about trying to get back to the level of achilah sh'b'kedushah. That means partaking and enjoying this world in a totally unselfish way. It does not mean not enjoying this world, but enjoying it in a way to which G-d can attach His stamp of approval, as He did to the eating on Yom Kippur at the siyum of the Bait HaMikdosh, during which the fear of erring was great enough to make the people of that time eat completely L'Shem Shamayim.

And what about the mirrors of the Jewish women in Egypt? Given that it was a time that no one in their right mind would want to bring children into the world, just to hand them over to Pharaoh to have them killed shortly after their birth, the only reason to do so would be because that was what G-d wanted them to do, in spite of the disastrous situation, just as we did again during Roman times, and later during the Holocaust. Anti-Semites come and go, but the Jewish people must go on, without a break. Thus, the actions of the women could only be for Heavenly reasons, making the mirrors "kodesh L'Hashem" (holy to G-d). This was something Moshe could not have known, and therefore G-d had to confirm it for him.

Thus, the mirrors represented the very purpose of the Mishkan, and the complete opposite of the golden calf: an achilah sh'b'kedushah, something that we must all endeavor to do, but something that only G-d can confirm, which brings us to the tragic episode of Nadav and Avihu, and their strange, unauthorized fire.

SEUDAT SHLISHIT:

A fire went out from before G-d and burned them up, and they died before G-d. (Vayikra 10:2)

Anyone who might have been there at the inauguration of the Mishkan, who happened to see Nadav

and Avihu do that which resulted in their untimely deaths at the end of the celebration, would have been in awe, at least up until the bolts came out of the Holy and Holies and burned their souls out from within them. They would have seen two sons of the Kohen Gadol passionately run to bring fire to the altar in an effort to devote themselves to the service of G-d, and would have been impressed.

However, once those two sons of one of the greatest men the Jewish people have ever known were killed by G-d Himself, there was reason to consider otherwise. However great they were, and they were indeed great, nevertheless, there was something wrong in what they did, and G-d made that known. And, it was serious enough to put an abrupt halt to the inauguration ceremony of the Mishkan. It was an *achilah sh'lo b'kedushah*, meaning that it did not fit into the plan of G-d, just like Adam's eating from the *Aitz HaDa'at Tov v'Rah*, which also began with the best of intentions.

The Arizal reveals that the death of Nadav and Avihu was also a punishment for Aharon HaKohen for his involvement in the sin of the golden calf, which is amazing since everything he did was for all the right reasons. And he did do everything to try and stop it. Nevertheless, G-d was prepared to take all four of Aharon's sons for his "sin", and He would have had Moshe Rabbeinu not prayed on his behalf to mitigate the punishment.

It is not coincidental that the golden calf represented unbridled passion, a "strange fire". Perhaps, just as the gold and silver to build the Mishkan was meant to be a *tikun* for the gold and silver that was used to build the calf, the unbridled passion of Nadav and Avihu was meant as a *tikun* for the unbridled passion of those who served the golden calf. Perhaps it was meant to be an *achilah sh'b'kedushah*, but that fell short, which may be acceptable in every day life, but not when it comes to the Mishkan. It was like when Shimon and Levi took revenge against the people of S'dom for the violation of Dinah. Being the sons of Ya'akov, we can assume that they had the best of intentions when they carried out their deed. And, had Ya'akov not criticized them for it while on his deathbed, we might have believed that they acted heroically.

However, what Ya'akov revealed, what perhaps even they themselves had known, that in spite of their drive to implement justice for justice's sake, their pure drive to serve Truth was intermingled with their own personal anger, and when it comes to zealousness on behalf of G-d, there is no room for error, not even a little bit. It must be completely *L'Shem Shamayim*.

The Talmud gives us reason to suspect Nadav and Avihu of being less than perfect in their intentions. First, as Rashi explains at the end of Parashat Mishpatim, when the Shechinah came down over Mt. Sinai, Nadav and Avihu looked at that which was forbidden for them to see. Earlier, while grazing Yitro's flocks, Moshe came across the burning bush, and he fell on his face to avoid seeing that which was forbidden to him. And yet, Nadav and Avihu presumed they could look at the Shechinah.

Furthermore, says the Talmud, when they would walk behind Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen, their uncle and their own father, they would ask one another, "When will these two elders pass on so we can lead the nation?" No matter how one tries to explain these words in line with good

intentions, the bottom line is that someone with the purest of intentions would never ask such a question. Thus, G-d's answer to them was, "We will see who will bury whom!"

You can fool some of the people a lot of the time, and you can fool yourself some of the time, but you can't fool G-d any of the time.

MELAVE MALKAH:

I am G-d; I called you for righteousness and I will strengthen your hand; and I formed you, and I made you for a people's covenant, for a light to nations. (Yeshayahu 42:6)

We are all actors. Most of us are concerned about how we appear in the eyes of others, and sometimes even when we think we are being sincere, we are play-acting a bit. As the head plate of the Kohen Gadol reminded us, the goal is to get to a point of complete sincerity by doing everything L'Shem Shamayim.

However, it is much easier said than done, but the important thing to remember is to try and be as honest with yourself and others as possible. The other important thing to remember is, that it also depends upon what you are doing, since there are some places that G-d expects more sincerity than in others. Obviously the greater a role one plays in leading the Jewish people, and as a result of which he finds himself more in the public eye, the greater the need will be for him to be L'Shem Shamayim. This is why, and very often is the case, the people who are best suited for roles of leadership are the ones who flee from them, and not because of laziness, but out of fear of abusing their position in the slightest way, or out of fear of any honor they might receive as a result of their prominence. The incredible amount of corruption that is endemic to just about every government in the world today is the result of the many that are in office to satisfy some personal agenda, even if they claim to be there on behalf of the people.

It is incredible how many people are in government for selfish reasons, and how they hide the fact by claiming to be there for the people. The incredible part is that the people know this and simply accept it, in exchange for the chance that their candidate just might help them fulfill their wishes. Bill Clinton was impeached for his terrible wrongdoings, but he remained in office and then left it with prominence because the people who voted him in forgave him on the basis that the economy still served their interests.

That is no tikun for the Aitz HaDa'at Tov v'Rah; it is far from an achilah sh'b'kedushah, not that G-d expects that from anyone who doesn't even know that Torah is true, or what an achilah s'b'kedushah even is. However, it is the job of the Torah Jew to teach his people, and the job of the Jewish people to teach the world. This is the underlying mission behind the idea of being a "light unto nations", to show the world what to be passionate about, how and why.

Well, the world is a long way from that point, because the Jewish people are a long way from that point. We've lost the Bait HaMikdosh, so we lost the Kohen Gadol, and therefore, we also lost the

Tzitz and its message of "Kodesh L'Hashem". As a result, we have lost our way, and the amount of holiness involved in the pleasure that we get from this world is, in many cases, dubious. When was the last time you even heard the expression, "achilah sh'b'kedushah", if ever at all?

Hence, every year it's back to flour and water for seven days. Then we count the omer and work on our Middot, our negative character traits, as we move in the direction of Kabbalat HaTorah. As the Ba'al HaTurim said, "Torah is only for those who eat manna", because the manna was 100 percent pure, there was no waste product whatsoever, the symbol of what we're supposed to be like as well.

Like Nadav and Avihu, we are running towards the service of G-d, hopefully with passion. We extracted the chometz from our bread, symbolic of the need to do so from ourselves, to purify our passion, so that by the time we get to Shavuot, there is no longer any trace of any kind of "unauthorized fire". Yom Kippur purified the intentions of the people of Shlomo HaMelech's generation, and the deadly situation did it to the Jews in Egypt.

Between Pesach and Shavuot, hard work and sincerity can be enough for us to do it to ourselves.

Have a great Shabbat,
PW

Text

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! www.thirtysix.org