

“And your brethren the entire house of Yisrael shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited.” (10:6)

The Rambam in Hilchos Aveilus 13:10 writes, “One does not weep for the deceased more than three days. But for a Torah scholar, it depends upon their level of wisdom.” Nevertheless, one does not weep more than thirty days. There are clearly defined parameters for the length of time one may express emotional grief upon the death of another Jew. Yet, the Torah does not seem to place a time limit concerning the weeping for Aharon’s sons. When Moshe Rabbeinu – the quintessential leader and rebbe of Klal Yisrael – died, Klal Yisrael was instructed to mourn for thirty days. For Nadav and Avihu, Aharon’s two sons who died tragically, the Torah does not seem to have mandated a limit for the mourning period. Why?

Horav Nachum Percowiz, z.l., in his eulogy for his father-in-law, the venerable Rosh HaYeshiva of Mir Yerushalayim, Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, z.l., distinguishes two types of weeping: weeping as a sign of mourning, a component to the aveilus experience; and weeping throughout the generations, bechayah-l’doros, as an educational, inspirational experience for the “Sreifah asher soraf Hashem,” conflagration that Hashem ignited. When Divine Justice is manifest, Hashem’s Name is magnified and becomes more awe-inspiring. His Name becomes sanctified when people take to heart the punishment incurred by a tzaddik for his slightest infraction.

There is no time limit to Kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem’s Name. When Moshe passed away at the end of a long, fruitful life, it was a great loss. Klal Yisrael wept and mourned for thirty days, an appropriate time for feeling the loss of such a great leader. They were not commanded to cry. They cried because they felt the void; they sensed the loss. When Nadav and Avihu died tragically, it was like a fire from Hashem; it was an expression of Divine justice which stimulates reflection and cogitation. Thus, Klal Yisrael could come to grips with the experience and the profound, enduring message it was conveying. This cogent experience should evoke an emotional awakening for all times.