

After the death of Aharon's two sons. (16:1)

The *Midrash* states four reasons for the untimely, tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Among these is the idea that, *Lo natlu eitzah, zeh mi'zeh*, "They did not take counsel one from another." *Ish machtaso*, "Each man his firepan" (*Vayikra* 10:1) intimates that each one acted on his own without consulting the other. It was as if each one were to say, "I know what to do; I have no reason to mull it over with anyone else." **Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl**, posits that this is how we should understand the failing of Rabbi Akiva's disciples, who also died untimely deaths. Those were the greatest scholars of their generation, twenty-four thousand devoted students of the generation's pre-eminent Torah sage. Yet, there was something about their behavior that was left wanting. Clearly, whatever sin is attributed to them is only on a relative basis, consistent with their sublime level of Torah erudition and spirituality.

Chazal say, *Lo nohagu kavod zeh ba'zeh*, "They did not practice/they were not accustomed to giving honor one to another." Perhaps each one held himself in such esteem that he did not feel beholden to anyone else. After all, who could advise him? Who could teach him? In *Pirkei Avos* 4:15, *Chazal* say, *Yehi kavod chaveircha k'mora rabbach*, "The honor of your friend should be tantamount to the fear that you have for your *rebbe*." It should not be beneath you to consult your contemporary.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that this is not the correct approach. From the very beginning of Creation, Hashem established a guideline of, *Lo tov hayos ha'adam levado*, "It is not good for man to be alone." While Judaism views this as the imperative for marriage, *Rashi* adds a penetrating insight into *levado*, "alone," explaining why it is so vital: "That they should not claim *shtei reshuyos b'olam*, there are two authorities; Hashem is unique in the higher realms, and (He) has no mate; and this one (Adam) is unique in the lower realms, and he (also) has no mate." Indeed, even when He created primordial Man, Hashem "consulted" with His Holy Tribunal. *Rashi* explains that the Torah is teaching us proper conduct and the enviable trait of humility. Thus, the Greater One (in this case, Hashem) should consult and receive permission from the lesser one. This is Hashem's *middah*, and one must try to emulate the Almighty, because this is Divine Will. *Chazal* teach (*Berachos* 27b) that when the sages requested Rabbi Elazar *ben* Azariah to accept the *Nesius*, governing position, he replied, "I will consult the members of my household." He consulted his wife. One who is "alone", in the sense that he does not seek advice and deliberate with another individual, whom he respects, cannot achieve true success.

Rav Bakst feels this is the underlying reason that *chassan domeh l'melech*, "a groom is compared to a king." The word *melech/maloch* means to rule, to govern, with the noun translated as king. The word *melech* may also be derived from *mamlich*, to consult. A king consults his inner circle of advisors, his cabinet. One who marries is no longer alone. He is like a king who is always conferring with his advisors. As a married man, he now has a life's companion with whom he takes counsel. Those who take action, who move forward without deliberating with others, will not achieve enduring success. One must act like a monarch, who has a circle of confidants with whom

he deliberates. There is one catch: One must be astute in selecting an advisor who will be his friend, who will tell him the truth, regardless of how “brutal” it might seem at first. One who tells us what we want to hear is a poor advisor and even worse friend.