

"And Nadav and Avihu died before Hashem when they offered a strange fire ... and they had no children." (3:4)

The *Midrash* states that had Nadav and Avihu taken wives and had children, they would not have died. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that innocent children have the need to receive proper guidance from their parents. It would, therefore, have been in the children's merit that Hashem would have granted the parents life. *Chazal*, however, state other reasons for Nadav and Avihu's tragic deaths. Two reasons which are emphasized are: Nadav and Avihu's entrance into the *Mikdash* after having drunk wine; and their inappropriate rendering of a *halachic* decision in the presence of Moshe, their *rebbe*. These latter two reasons do not seem to coincide with the above stated *Midrash*!

The *Chasam Sofer* suggests that, indeed, the reasons can be reconciled. In fact, Nadav and Avihu's lack of sensitivity in showing proper reverence to the *Mikdash* and to their *rebbe* was a direct result of not having had children. In order for one to become sensitive to a specific orientation, he needs to experience it. One does not truly grasp the essence of respect for one's father and *rebbe* until he himself fathers children or teaches them. Only then can he comprehend the importance of proper esteem for a parent and mentor. A parent's reaction to his child's lack of respect delivers a message in terms of the parent's own self-evaluation. Nadav and Avihu had not yet been availed the opportunity to learn first-hand the significance of respect. Consequently, this inexperience led to their own insensitivity towards Hashem and Moshe.

Heightened sensitivity regarding one's children can sometimes have a negative effect. Some parents delude themselves by attempting to relive their own lives via their children. Negative feelings and experiences one has had as a youth can have a traumatic influence. This effect can be transferred to children via the parents' demands of them. Parents have an awesome responsibility in raising children. They must inculcate positive feeling and aspirations into their children, while allowing them to mature unencumbered by the parents' own inadequacies and negative self-images.