

“And there came forth a fire from before Hashem and devoured them (Nadav and Avihu).” (10:2)

The *Midrash* explains that the death penalty had previously been decreed against Nadav and Avihu at the time of *Matan Torah*. At that time, Nadav and Avihu, together with the elders, ascended *Har Sinai* to receive the revelation of the *Shechinah*. Upon experiencing this unique revelation, however, they derived personal pleasure from it and did not respond with proper reverence. They were all judged to be guilty by Hashem. Hashem refrained from meting out their punishment immediately. One reason suggested is that Hashem bestows prophecy only on one who is happy and at peace. Had a national tragedy such as the death of Nadav and Avihu occurred prior to *Matan Torah*, the Jews would have been incapable of experiencing *Matan Torah* in the appropriate manner which they did. Therefore, Hashem postponed their deaths until a later date.

We may question this. Why did Hashem mar the inauguration of the *Mishkan*? Is there not also a requirement for joy during this auspicious occasion? What difference is there between *Matan Torah* and *Chanukas HaMishkan*, when the *Shechinah* came to repose amidst *Klal Yisrael*? *Horav Y. Feigelshtok, Shlita*, responds that in order for *Matan Torah* to have occurred, the quintessence of joy must have pervaded, untainted by even the slightest blemish of sadness. *Torah* study is the most sublime endeavor. Through *Torah* study, the Jew has the privilege to indulge in Hashem's greatest gift, the lifeblood of our people, the *Torah*. One who studies *Torah* with the appropriate attitude transcends pain, suffering, and frustration. His total immersion in *Torah* study liberates him from the vicissitudes of life and adds to his enduring happiness.