

Moshe said to Aharon: Of this did Hashem speak, saying, “I will be sanctified through those who are close to Me, and I will be honored before the entire people;” and Aharon fell silent. (10:3)

The last two words of the above *pasuk*, *Va'yidom Aharon*, “And Aharon fell silent,” are, to me, among the most frightening – yet awe-inspiring – words in the Torah. The ability to transcend emotion, to experience tragedy on what should have been the happiest and most spiritually-elevating day of Aharon’s life, is truly inspirational. Aharon *HaKohen* had worked his entire life to achieve this moment, to be crowned as the *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest. His response to the mind-numbing tragedy was the true indication of his worthiness of this exalted position. How are we to come to terms with Aharon’s reaction, and in what way can we, to some degree, aspire to such a level of total acquiescence to Hashem’s decree?

Horav Yitzchak HersHKowitz, Shlita, relates the story of a *Kollel yungerman*, fellow, in *Eretz Yisrael*, who was struck by tragedy. His three-year-old daughter, a beautiful, sweet and charming young child, suddenly fell gravely ill. He and his wife went from doctor to doctor, hospital to hospital, taking every treatment from the conventional to the clinical trials. He was torn between hope and doubt, frustration and fear. Every improvement brought aspiration for a bright future; every setback drove home the frightening reality that his daughter was seriously ill, and they were just playing the time game, pushing off the inevitable. Sadly, his worst fears were realized when, shortly before her fourth birthday, her pure soul left this world.

During the *shivah*, seven-day mourning period, he was visited by many friends and sympathizers who attempted to console him. The father was strong, a *ben Torah*, who believed that we are not privy to the Almighty’s ways; our function is to accept, despite our lack of comprehension. We realize that there is a greater picture, and we are all part of a Divine Plan. There is an answer to that difficult question: “Why?” but it is beyond our ability to grasp. The father related to one of his close friends the highs and lows of his daughter’s illness, describing the faith that carried them through the tragic ordeal, but it had not been easy. Indeed, there was one time following a very negative diagnosis that he was about to throw in the proverbial towel. He no longer could handle it. He was beyond faith. He was standing at the threshold of anger.

“I left the hospital in a state of desperation. I was miserable. My little girl, the light of my life, was on the verge of death. The doctors could do no more. As I walked down the street, a man stopped me and inquired concerning my condition. Apparently, the grave situation was written all over my face. Amid various degrees of weeping, I related my story and the travail that my family and I had been experiencing these past few months. The man listened, then said, ‘Let me share with you a story that recently took place. Perhaps, it will be a source of inspiration and heartening to reinforce you with fortitude to go on.’

“One of the contemporary outreach persons, an individual of incredible virtue and piety, truly righteous in all aspects of his personality, had a serious personal problem. The man who had successfully altered the spiritual lives of thousands was undergoing a situation at home that was literally destroying his family. One of his sons had begun to weave to the left and was continuing to do so at a very rapid rate. His religious observance was already a thing of the past. Whatever his father promised him was to no avail. He could care less. Once the *frumkeit*, religious observance, was gone, drugs entered the picture. Soon, there was very little left to discern this boy from the non-observant, depressed thugs on the street. The father never gave up. After all, he was his son, and one never gives up on a child.

“This *tzaddik* was aware of a certain *yichud* quoted by the *Arizal* which the famed *Kabbalist* claimed was effective in helping a person to find his way back to religious observance. (A *yichud* is a *Kabbalistic* term describing the unification of supernal elements in – and by – one’s mystical devotions in prayer and/or *mitzvah* observance. It is not for everyone, since not everyone is on the *madreigah*, spiritual level, to achieve such devotion.) This specific *yichud* was derived from the **Alshich HaKadosh**, whose son had apostatized himself, and eventually returned to the faith as a result of this *yichud*.

“The *tzaddik* began to pray fervently, with purity of heart and deep devotion. He prayed that his son embrace the Torah which had once been so much a part of his life. He prayed so hard and long that the page of his *Siddur* where the *brachah* of *Hashiveinu Avinu I’Sorasecha*, “Return us, Our Father, to Your Torah,” which is recited in *Shemoneh Esrai* thrice daily, was saturated, became darkened from his tears. Hashem listened and the *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination, which had devastated him, was banished, and the boy returned to Torah. He did not just simply return, but rather, returned with a vehemence, with an excitement and enthusiasm which was unprecedented and unparalleled. He himself became a *tzaddik*, righteous and pious in his every demeanor. He met a lovely, young, like-minded woman, and his father gave his blessing to their union. The young couple moved to Tzefas and set up their home there.

“Hashem blessed the young couple with two healthy children. Life was idyllic. The young man spent his day devoted to Torah study. He would study until the wee hours of the morning until he was literally exhausted, then go to sleep. Then tragedy struck their home. His wife was pregnant with their third child, and there were issues throughout the pregnancy. At first, they thought nothing of it. After all, not all pregnancies are a walk in the park. When she was rushed into premature birth at the very beginning of her ninth month, their anxiety began in earnest.

“Their worst fears were realized when his wife delivered a child that was clinging to life. It was touch-and-go for the first few days, until the seventh day when the child returned its pure soul to Heaven. The parents were heartbroken. They had prayed so hard. They did everything right, but apparently, it had not been enough. Their little boy had succumbed.

“The *halachah* is clear that, regardless of a male infant’s age and how long he was alive, once the

child is born he must have a *Bris Milah*, circumcision, prior to burial, in order for his *neshamah*, soul, to rise up during *Techiyas Ha'Meisiem*, the Resurrection of the Dead. A *mohel*, ritual circumciser, was summoned to the cemetery, where he was asked to do the honors. The *mohel* circumcised the dead infant, then turned to the father, and said, 'Your son must be given a name. What name do you want to give him?'

"Filled with emotion, the young father bent down and, with tears welling up in his eyes, looked down at his infant's body, thought for a moment, and said, *Ratzon Hashem*. The will of G-d. 'This is the name that I want my son to have. This name implies accepting *yissurim*, troubles, and pain with love. I do not begin to understand Hashem's ways – but, if this is the will of Hashem – I accept it wholeheartedly. This is why my son is named *Ratzon Hashem*.'

"The gentleman concluded his story and looked at me. 'Now you understand how a Jew confronts challenge and adversity. We believe it is all the *ratzon Hashem*. The will of G-d.'"