

"And the anger of Hashem was kindled against Moshe and He said, 'Is there not Aharon, your brother, the Levi? I know that he can surely speak' ...and he went and he met him at the mountain of G-d, and he kissed him." (4:14,27)

The *Torah* relates that when Moshe refused to go to Pharaoh, Hashem became angry and told Moshe that his brother Aharon would be the spokesman instead of him. Describing Hashem's anger, the *Torah* uses the phrase, *et rihu*, which, according to *Chazal*, reflects a high degree of anger. It indicates that Hashem intends to punish the offender with *midaas ha'din*, the attribute of Divine justice, devoid of any *rachamim*, mercy. If this was the case, what was Moshe's punishment? There does not seem to be any major punishment meted out to Moshe as a result of his resistance to go to Egypt. *R' Yosi* responds that indeed there was a punishment, which is implied by the words "*Aharon, your brother, the Levi.*" Originally, it had been intended for Moshe to be the *Kohen* and Aharon to be the *Levi*. With Moshe's refusal, however, the tables were turned, and Aharon became the *Kohen*.

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., offers a novel interpretation of this punishment and its present day ramifications. When Aharon met Moshe in the desert, the *Torah* states that they kissed one another. Regarding this, the *Midrash* comments, "Righteous and truth meet, charity and justice kiss each other." Moshe stands as the paradigm of *emes*, truth, while Aharon is the exemplar of *shalom*, peace. The *Torah* teaches us that the meeting of these brothers reflects two human characteristics which complement one another. One who achieves the epitome of human relationship has been able to meld together the two qualities of peace and truth.

Regrettably, peace and truth are not always compatible. When one is faced with either compromising peace or making concessions in the area of integrity and justice, truth must prevail. If one is confronted with a situation in which he must either offend his friend or offend Hashem by transgressing His laws, truth dominates. In any event, a true friend understands that *Torah* observance takes priority. One who does not respect another Jew's moral principles is so involved in himself that he probably is not much of a friend.

The notion that *emes*, truth, takes priority is implied by the fact that *emes* is represented by the *Kohen* and *shalom* by the *Levi*. In truth, the purpose of *shalom* is to serve and to enhance truth just as the *Levi* serves the *Kohen*. Originally, Aharon, the *rodef shalom*, who was constantly in pursuit of peace among his fellow man, was destined to be the *Levi*. Moshe, on the other hand, who was the designated representative of the mantle of *emes*, was to be the *Kohen*. It was Hashem's "*charon af*," full measure of anger, that caused Him to reverse their positions, so that Aharon became the *Kohen*. Suddenly, *shalom* was given access to rule over *emes*, a circumstance which was to have tragic consequences. This predicament resulted in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon's desire to maintain harmony among *Klal Yisrael*, coupled with his position of

Kehunah leadership, set the tone for the building of the Golden Calf. At such a time Moshe's leadership capabilities and his intractable devotion to *emes* would have contained those rebels who sought to undermine the *Torah* values of our people.