

"Ascend to this Mount of Avarim ... and die on the mountain ... and be gathered to your people just as Aharon your brother died on Har Ha'Har." (32:49,50)

Rashi responds to the obvious question: How can a man be commanded to die ? Does one pass from this world of his own free-will ? He explains that Hashem commanded Moshe to prepare for a serene death like that of his brother, Aharon. Preceding his demise, Aharon was privileged to observe his son Elazar assume the mantle of *Kehunah Gedolah*, garbed in the sacred priestly vestments. Aharon was subsequently instructed to lay down, stretch out his hands and feet and close first his eyes and then his mouth. As he lay there calm and serene, at peace with himself and the world, his spirit left his body. Upon witnessing this remarkable experience, Moshe exclaimed, "Happy is one who dies such a death!"

Indeed, Aharon's death was a unique one which anyone would undoubtedly envy. We suggest, however, that another aspect of the manner of his passing is enviable. The concept of death conjures within us a feeling of fear and uncertainty. Death is final; it frequently comes when it is least anticipated. It puts a halt to whatever an individual is doing, whether or not he has reached his goal.

People fear death for many reasons. One primary reason is probably the overriding source of man's fear of death: the thought that he must leave this world before he has completed the task he has set out to accomplish. One makes plans or sets goals, only to be removed from this world before he can see his hopes achieve fruition. This is our fear! We raise our own children with the desire that our hopes and aspirations for their future success will be realized. Suddenly, we are "notified" that we might not see our dreams fulfilled. This is the anxiety that grips each one of us when we are confronted with our own mortality. It is not only the dread of the unknown path upon which we are about to embark that concerns us. It is primarily the fear of the unknown which we are leaving in this world. Will our children survive physically as well as spiritually ? Have we inspired our families well, so that our legacy will endure ?

When one sees that his life has been one of achievement, one that has inspired others, he feels good. His existence on this world has been one of accomplishment. He knows from whence he comes. He returns to his Maker with a sense of serenity, fully aware of the *nachas* he has reaped from his investment. He does not concern himself with regard to that which he leaves unfinished. He goes with dignity, prepared to stand before Hashem with pride in a life of achievement. When a man sees his children following a path of tradition which has been tread upon for generations, when he sees them continuing to be a source of *nachas* to the Creator, when he sees love, respect and harmony among his children, he has a sense of satisfaction which transcends his greatest anxiety about the unknown. In summation, the fear of death -- the anxiety surrounding "Where am I going?" is mitigated by the secure knowledge of "What I am leaving behind."

Aharon *Ha'Kohen* was privy to the ultimate *nachas*, his son carrying on the mantle of his priesthood. He could sense the future waiting for his descendants. He realized that his own conviction and commitment to *Torah* and *mitzvos* was not dying with him, but would serve as an inspiration to future generations. Consequently, he was prepared to lay down, close his eyes, and return his soul to its Maker. Is it any wonder that Moshe *Rabbeinu* yearned for such an end to his own glorious life ?