

"At the entrance of the Ohel Moed you shall dwell day and night for a seven-day period." (8:35)

The *Midrash Tanchuma* states that the restrictions imposed upon Aharon and his sons in the course of their consecrations were indeed similar to the ritual restrictions for mourners. Moshe told Aharon and his sons, "Observe seven days of mourning even before you need to, and thereby protect Hashem's charge. For in the same way, Hashem observed seven days of mourning prior to bringing the flood." This statement refers to Hashem's waiting seven days before bringing the flood waters. The *kohanim* were adjured to observe the period of sadness before the tragic event that would take the lives of Nadav and Avihu. They were observing a period of mourning without knowing for what or for whom they were undertaking this ritual.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, z.l., notes the powerful message conveyed by this *Midrash*. Life is a melange of sadness and joy. Heretofore, we had been under the impression that these two disparate emotions were discernable. According to the *Midrash*, however, it is clear that one may not even know whether he is celebrating or mourning! Aharon and his four sons were being inaugurated amidst pomp and royalty, in preparation for their initiation into the *kehunah*. They were told to "sit" for seven days before they received the eternal crown of priesthood. One would surely think that these days would have been days of joy and anticipation for that great moment of coronation. But, unfortunately, we later become aware that these days were also days of mourning for Nadav and Avihu, who would tragically die on the day of their coronation. *Horav Sorotzkin* states that the dual significance of this period lends new perspective to the words in *Koheles 9:12*: "A person does not know his time." Not only does a person not know when his time will come, but he does not even truly understand the real nature of the moment he is now experiencing. He knows not if it is "a time for weeping" or "a time for laughter." The lesson is simple: we go through life's situations completely unaware of their underlying meaning and message. To understand their essence is impossible; however, to ignore their significance is irresponsible.