

And you, bring near to yourself Aharon, your brother...to minister to Me. (28:1)

The *Yalkut* (*Shemos* 247) makes the following somewhat cryptic statement: “Bring **near** to yourself Aharon, your brother.” This is to what the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* 65:5, “Praises to the one whom You **choose**/(select) and draw near,” is alluding: Praised is one whom Hashem selects, even though He has not brought him near; and fortunate is he whom Hashem has brought near, even though He has not chosen him. Who was chosen? Avraham *Avinu*, as it is written in *Nechemiah* 9:7, “You selected Avraham.” However, Hashem did not bring Avraham near. The Patriarch did so on his own. Yaakov *Avinu* was chosen by Hashem, as it is written in *Yeshayah* 44:1 – “And *Yisrael*, whom I have chosen.” Yaakov also was not brought close by Hashem. He did so on his own through his consummate devotion to Torah study, as it says, “But Yaakov was a wholesome man abiding in tents.” Moshe *Rabbeinu* was selected by Hashem, as it says in *Tehillim* 106:23, “Had not Moshe, His chosen one.” As we know, Moshe brought himself near to Hashem. David *Ha’melech* was chosen by Hashem, as it is written in *Tehillim* 78:70, “And He chose David, His servant.” David brought himself near, as he says in *Tehillim* 119:63, “I am a friend to all who fear You.” The *Midrash* concludes: “Fortunate are those whom were chosen by Hashem, although He did not bring them near.”

There were also those whom Hashem brought near, although He did not choose them. They are Yisro and Rachav. Aharon *HaKohen* is doubly praised, for he was chosen, as it says in *Shmuel* I 2:28, “And I chose him (Aharon) from among all the tribes of *Yisrael* to be a *Kohen* to Me.” And he was brought **near**, as well. This is why David *Ha’melech* praises those who have achieved closeness and selection.

The question which presents itself after reading the above *Yalkut* is: What is the meaning of Hashem’s not bringing Avraham, Yaakov, Moshe and David close to Him? If He did not bring them near, how were they worthy of being chosen? *Horav Eliezer Kohn, zl*, explains that all four underwent great trials administered by Hashem. They emerged triumphant, thereby earning their closeness with Hashem. It is due to these *nisyonos* that they were chosen by Hashem. The lesson to be derived from here is powerful. One who is not prepared to undergo *nisyonos*, trials for Hashem, cannot expect to be selected by Hashem. This is demonstrated by the fact that, although Yisro and Rachav were brought close – they were not among the “chosen” ones, the select few, with whom Hashem has a unique relationship.

One might think that this exalted status is contingent upon pedigree, special Divine intervention, or the execution of some special *mitzvah*. *Chazal* teach us that it is all up to the individual. Is he prepared to undergo *nisyonos*, trials for Hashem, or does his commitment have limitations? We ask Hashem for *siyata d’Shmaya*, Heavenly assistance, to grow in Torah, to earn a livelihood, and for a host of other spiritual and not so spiritual benefits. Are we prepared to forego some of the benefits and luxuries to serve Hashem amid *nisayon*? Are we willing to live a life of *nisayon*? True, we pray

to Hashem that He remove *nisyonos* from our life, but that is because we fear failure. We are afraid that we will not emerge triumphant. If Hashem does test us, however, it is because He **knows** that we are capable of succeeding.

What about Aharon? He did not come forward on his own. Moshe was instructed to bring Aharon close. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that some people are different. Aharon *HaKohen* possessed the ability to overcome his natural character traits, so that he was capable of totally changing them. Our natural tendency is toward envy. Yet, Aharon expunged any sort of envy from himself and deferred his leadership position over the Jewish People. Not only did he accept his younger brother Moshe as *Klal Yisrael's* leader, but he did so joyfully.

Last, Rav Kohn observes the methods employed by Yaakov *Avinu* and David *Ha'melech*, to bring themselves closer to Hashem. Yaakov did it through diligent Torah study – with no interruption whatsoever. He lived in the tents of Torah. They were his home. David used the vehicle of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. He sought friendship only with those who were

G-d-fearing, for whom nary a moment elapsed in which they did not think of Hashem. These were individuals who lived the maxim of *shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*, "I place Hashem before me always." Torah study and relationships with G-d-fearing Jews are the keys. I would add sincerity, but I think that is a given.