

## Nadav and Avihu died before Hashem. (3:4)

*Va'yamas* is singular, meaning, "and **he** died." Concerning the **deaths** of Nadav and Avihu, the Torah should have written *va'yamusu*, "and **they** died." *K'motzei Shalal Rav* cites the *Zohar Ha'kadosh* that teaches that Nadav and Avihu died a purely *physical* death. Their *spiritual* selves did not perish, but lived on. The *Zohar* supports this hypothesis with an anomaly in the text concerning Pinchas. The Torah states (*Shemos* 6:25) that Elazar *HaKohen* took a wife from the daughters of Putiel and Pinchas was born to them. The verse continues with the words, *eileh roshei avos ha'Leviim*, "These were the heads/leaders of the fathers of the *Leviim*." The word *eileh*, these, is plural and written with regard to a single person – Pinchas. Why does the Torah use a word which implies a plurality if, in fact, it is speaking about one individual? The *Zohar* infers that Nadav and Avihu's *neshamos* were *nisgalgel*, transmigrated, into Pinchas. Therefore, Pinchas – the single person – is actually the embodiment of two people – Nadav and Avihu.

The *Zohar* continues that for this reason in delineating Pinchas' pedigree, the Torah writes, "Pinchas *ben* Elazar *ben* Aharon *HaKohen*." Why is it necessary to mention Pinchas' grandfather, Aharon? Indeed, when the Torah mentions Elazar *HaKohen*, it does not find it necessary to call attention to his father Aharon. Why is it different concerning Pinchas? Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai explains that in fact, Nadav and Avihu – although two separate people – had together *nisgalgeled* into Pinchas. By detailing Pinchas' ancestry back to Aharon, the Torah is implying that Pinchas had a very distinct relationship with his grandfather. In fact, he was his spiritual father!

Rabbi Elazar *ben* Shimon asked his father why two people were *nisgalgel* into one person. It is not as if there was a shortage of people into whom the *neshamos* could be placed. Rabbi Shimon explained that Nadav and Avihu represented two halves of a human body, since neither of them had married. Consequently, they were designated as *plag gufa*, "half a body." **Together**, they equaled one body, which allowed **both** of their *neshamos* to transmigrate into Pinchas.

In summation, the Torah text uses the plural regarding Pinchas, since he was the recipient of two *neshamos*. On the other hand, the deaths of Nadav and Avihu is written in the singular, since together they were one.

Let us reflect on the implications of the *Zohar Ha'kadosh's chiddush*, novel idea. Pinchas serves as the paradigm of the true religious zealot – the *kan'ei l'shem Shomayim*, who acts to protect the glory and sanctity of Heaven. Nothing stands in his way when he sees Hashem's Name being dragged in the gutter, utterly humiliated and degraded by those whose purported goal in life is to undermine the sanctity of Judaism. Where did he get this sense of sincere religious outrage? What were the origins of Pinchas' moral indignation with those who defile Judaism? He was one person amongst an entire nation who had the courage, resolution and fortitude to stand up to the *Nasi*, Prince, of the Tribe of Shimon and slay him and his paramour during their blatant act of moral desecration. Everyone else stood numb, dumbfounded, as they watched Pinchas act definitively, without fear of reprisal or public condemnation.

The answer is that Pinchas' drive and passion originated from his being the recipient of not one, but two holy *neshamos* – Nadav's and Avihu's – individuals whom Moshe *Rabbeinu* eulogized as the *b'krovai ekadash*, "Through My close ones I will be sanctified." They were Hashem's "close ones"! This is the first prerequisite for achieving *kana'us* – being close to Hashem – both in experience and in emotion.

In order to take righteous umbrage on behalf of Hashem's Name, one must feel such a sense of closeness with the Almighty that he is one with Him. This feeling must be controlled or it can lead to disaster – as it did with Nadav and Avihu. Out of an overriding sense of love for Hashem, and a compelling passion to serve Him, they crossed the line by not waiting for the Almighty's command. This created an *eish zarah*, "strange fire." Without Hashem's express directive, the most committed act of observance becomes "strange." A Jew lives by obedience. This means he acts in accordance with Hashem's dictate – and never acts without direction from Above.

Prior to Pinchas' act of zealousness, he presented himself before his Rebbe Moshe and asked, "Did the *Rebbe* not teach that *Ha'boel aramis kanai'm pogim bo*, 'One who cohabits with a gentile – zealous ones may strike him down'?" Moshe agreed, instructing Pinchas to avenge Hashem's honor. By asking, Pinchas rectified the one error exhibited by Nadav and Avihu, which on their unprecedented sublime plateau, cost them their mortal lives.

In conclusion: A *kana'ie* has to achieve a spiritual plateau relative to that of Nadav and Avihu, a consummate devotion to Hashem and an unwavering sense of obedience to His word. Nadav and Avihu equals Pinchas, who due to his act of zealousness was granted the Covenant of Peace.