

Do not leave your heads unshorn and do not rend your garments that you not die... And your brethren the entire House of Yisrael shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited. (10:6)

Two reactions, two varied responses to the same occurrence. The *Kohanim* were not to interrupt the joy of their service – despite the tragic passing of two of their own. On the other hand, *Klal Yisrael* must mourn the deaths of two saintly *Kohanim*. The people must mourn; the *Kohanim*, however, must continue their joyful service. Two opposites – how is it possible? If it is a joyful occasion, be joyful. If it is a sad time, be sad. How do we reconcile two contradictory emotional responses to the same occurrence?

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, understands that there are vantage points from which we establish our perspective on what happened to Nadav and Avihu. One point is clear: the action taken against these two righteous sons of Aharon was not the result of *Middas HaDin*, the Attribute of Strict Justice; rather, it was a manifestation of *Kiddush Hashem*, Sanctifying Hashem's Name. Thus, it was absolutely necessary that the *Kohanim* not halt their *avodah*, service – at all. Otherwise, it would be viewed as a desecration of Hashem's Name. The service of the *Kohanim* transcends everything. As agents selected to sanctify Hashem's Name, they must remain *b'simchah*, joyful.

Although the people experienced the joyful inauguration of the *Mishkan*, they were still spectators (not agents) to a tragedy which took the lives of the young giants of Torah who perished. They needed to respect this moment with *aveilus*, mourning, the *sreifah asher saraf Hashem*, “conflagration that Hashem ignited.” Thus, we see that, concerning one experience, there can be two opposing views – and they are both proper and correct. The difference is the perspective based upon the vantage point.

Rav Gamliel notes that this phenomenon occurs in a number of instances. On *Tishah B'Av*, our national day of mourning, we do not recite the *Tachanun* prayer, since the day is referred to as a *mo'ed*, a term reserved for Festivals. Our Sages cite the *Perek*, chapter, in *Tehillim* 79, *Mizmor l'Asaf*, A Song for Asaf, a chapter that addresses the destruction of the Temple and the ensuing *galus*, exile. Why is it referred to as *mizmor*, song? It should be *kinah*, a lamentation. True, explain *Chazal*, it does depict destruction, but, concomitantly, we are happy that Hashem released His wrath primarily on *eitzim v'avanim*, wood and mortar. We were dispersed; a multitude was brutally killed – but *Klal Yisrael* as a nation survives. Amid the celebration of *Pesach* night, commemorating our release from bondage, we eat an egg, a food often eaten following a funeral. One reason for this anomaly: *Pesach Seder* always coincides with the night of the week (that year) of *Tishah B'Av*. Even when we celebrate, we should not lose sight of our tragic past – or what could occur (by G-d's decree) tomorrow.

The *avodah*, manner of service, of a Jew is to follow Hashem's will, to abrogate himself to the Divine mandate and live in accordance with that which Hashem asks of us. When we live in such a manner, giving ourselves over to His care and instruction at all times, then there are no ambiguities, no questions, no challenges. It is the will of Hashem.

A similar idea emanates from a much earlier commentator. The *Rashbam* (in his commentary to the death of Nadav and Avihu 10:3) writes: "As soon as Nadav and Avihu died, Aharon was prepared to mourn them. Moshe *Rabbeinu* immediately instructed him: 'Do not mourn; do not weep; do not interrupt the Divine service.' Hashem has said, *Bikrovai Ekadeish*, 'Through My close ones I will be sanctified.' The *Kohanim* will (be the medium to) sanctify Me among the People, when they see that, despite the tragedy, the service to Hashem continues unabated, for it transcends all. This is giving glory to Hashem – when the people see that Aharon continues his service (despite having every reason to be overwhelmed with grief)."

In his *hesped*, eulogy, on the occasion of the *Sheloshim*, thirty day mourning period, for *Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl*, *Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl*, related that, earlier, *Rav Dessler's Rebbetzin* had passed away on a *Shabbos*. *Rav Elya* came to be *menachem*, comfort him, in his grief. Despite the cloak of sadness that enveloped *Rav Dessler's* home, the *Mashgiach* (of *Ponevez*) seemed to be acting in his usual spiritually-elevated manner as per the holy *Shabbos*. *Rav Dessler* cited the *Rashbam* (mentioned above) to explain why, despite being personally absorbed in mourning over the passing of his life's companion, in addition to the fact that she was the daughter of his illustrious *rebbe* and life's mentor, he understood that *Shabbos* is *Shabbos*, and serving Hashem supersedes all.

Rav Elya wondered how is it possible to serve Hashem with joy (as evidently Aharon did) while he was overwhelmed by grief. He explained that, when one properly fulfills the *mitzvah* of *ahavas* Hashem, loving the Almighty, this love transcends all forms of opposing emotion.

Rosh Hashanah 1930, six weeks following the terrible slaughter which occurred in Yeshivas Chevron on August 18, 1929, the survivors of the Chevron massacre gathered together with their families to *daven* in the general *vaad*, meeting hall, in Yerushalayim.

Those survivors – who had seen friends, family and students slaughtered before their eyes – were themselves physically and emotionally scarred. Their idyllic Torah life had been shattered. The atmosphere in the hall that night was heavy and emotion filled. A pall of pain and anguish permeated the room. Feelings of dejection and despair had overwhelmed many. The venerable *Mashgiach*, *Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zl*, stood up and went over to an unmarried student, *Aryeh Leib Shikovitzky*, and asked him to lead the services.

Aryeh Leib was known for his sweet tenor voice and deep emotion in song. Nonetheless, he was stunned by the *Mashgiach's* request. "*Rebbe*," he began, "I am not married, nor I do I have a beard" (preferable requirements of a *chazzan* for the High Holy Days). The *Mashgiach* repeated his

request, "I want you to lead the services."

Aryeh Leib stepped up to lead the *davening*. With his sweet, melodious voice, he began chanting the preparatory *Rosh Hashanah* tune prior to *Barchu*. The first *bracha* (*Maariv aravim*) was completed, and now the assembly began to recite the *tefillah* of *Ahavas olam*. The *chazzan* began the phrase, *V'ahavascha al tasir mimenu l'olamim*, "And may You never remove Your love from us." Tears choked his throat as he began to quietly weep. Again, Aryeh Leib repeated the words, this time accompanied by a wail. Tears streamed down his face as he repeated the phrase over and over, each time with greater pronouncement and emotion. He was intimating to Hashem: "Everything that happened to us in the recent violence, You brought upon us – with love!"

Like a burst dam, all of the accumulated pain and anguish of those assembled burst, as they all raised their voices and wept, wailing along with the *Chazzan*. *V'ahavascha al tasir mimenu l'olamim*. "We know that You love us. Please, please never remove that love from us – forever!" They had just performed *Tziduk HaDin*, Justified the Heavenly judgment, that had been meted out six weeks earlier. It was an expression of love.

The *tefillah* continued, emotion laden and tear-filled. After the conclusion of the services, the *Mashgiach* went over to Aryeh Leib and said, *Ot dos hab ich gemeint*. "That is what I had in mind!" Concise and incisive.

Supposedly, it was that *Tefillas Maariv* that sparked the turn-around of the *yeshivah*, as it began to rebuild.