

## "A fire came forth from Hashem and consumed them... and Aharon was silent... And your brethren the entire House of Yisrael shall bewail the fire which Hashem burnt." (10:2,3,6)

The sudden death of such holy people as Aharon *Ha'Kohen's* two sons on the most auspicious day after the liberation from Egypt is probably the most tragic scene recorded in the *Torah*. It is especially important to note Aharon's reaction to the tragic death of his sons, as well as the manner in which *Klal Yisrael* was told to mourn the sudden demise of these two righteous people.

In telling us that Aharon remained silent, the *Torah* uses the word *oshu* rather than *ahrjhu* which is a more appropriate word for describing silence. The **Chofetz Chaim** explains that even when a person is silent, his facial features and expression display his true feelings. An inanimate object, however, is expressionless. Aharon *Ha'Kohen* was *oshu*, he was like a *onus*, an inanimate object, a stone, showing no external expression whatsoever. He was so devoted to Hashem and so willing to accept Hashem's decree with love that he showed no outward emotion of any kind.

Hashem's command that all of *Klal Yisrael* should grieve the death of Nadav and *Avihu* is noteworthy. Why do we not find similar instructions regarding the death of other leaders, such as Moshe and Aharon? In fact this is the only time that *Klal Yisrael* is enjoined to grieve the loss of two great leaders! In his *hesped*, eulogy, for a brilliant young *yeshivah* student who had passed away in the bloom of his youth, **Horav Yehudah Leib Fine, zl**, addressed the obvious question. How could such a tragedy befall a young man with such remarkable potential? His passing was not merely a personal tragedy; the entire *Klal Yisrael* was not able to benefit from his amazing scholarship and leadership capability! In fact, does the *Torah* not say that when we are besieging a city, we are not permitted to cut down its fruit trees, since a tree is similar to a human being? A young man who is devoted to *Torah* study is surely compared to a tree laden with fruit. During his lifetime, the fruit will benefit the entire *Klal*. How could such a calamity be "permitted" to occur?

*Horav Fine* cited the *Talmud Bava Kama 91b*. In this regard the *Talmud* states that in the event that wood is more valuable for building purposes, etc, than the fruit is, it is permissible to cut down the tree. Accordingly, if we would have properly appreciated the value of this young scholar's "fruit," his remarkable *Torah* potential, then his death would have been unwarranted. We, however, did not acknowledge and appreciate the deceased in his lifetime. Therefore, we had a role in his early demise.

The scholarship and devotion to *mitzvos* of the *ben Torah* are of inestimable value to a community. When the community, however, does not cherish and hold the *ben Torah* in the highest esteem, then they are to blame for his loss to the world. "We now understand," concluded *Horav Fine*, "why the *Torah* emphasizes the need for a communal outpouring of grief over the death of Nadav and *Avihu*. They were taken from us as one chops down a fruit laden tree in full bloom. If the wood is of greater value than the fruit, if the fruit has no great value to us, it can be cut down. Likewise, *Klal*

*Yisrael* did not appreciate the immeasurable benefit it reaped from Nadav and Avihu. Since the members of the *klal* played a role in causing the premature demise of these *tzaddikim*, they were enjoined to mourn their deaths."

**Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl**, questions the need to be told to weep for *Bnei Aharon*. Such a tragedy should inspire one to tears by the mere mention of it. What type of cold, insensitive person must be "enjoined" to grieve over the death of two brilliant *tzaddikim* who perished on what should have been the most joyous day for *Klal Yisrael*. The answer can be found in the text. *Bnei Yisrael* were told to cry for the "*fire which Hashem burnt.*" It was imperative that the people realize the source of this tragedy. It was not just any fire - it was the fire which Hashem burnt. *Klal Yisrael* should not make the error of attributing this fire to chance -- or deeming it to be just another accident. Everything comes from Hashem. To ignore the source of the tragedy is in itself a great tragedy.