

And Aharon was silent. (10:3)

Aharon *HaKohen* sustained a Heavenly blow on what should have been the happiest day of his life. Experiencing such extreme tragedy on a day that should have engendered extreme joy would have destroyed not only a lesser person, but most people. Not Aharon, about whom the Torah writes, “And Aharon was silent.” As the various commentators explain, *Va’yidom* is much more than silence: it is numbness; no movement; no expression; like an inanimate stone. Aharon stood there without reacting whatsoever. Aharon was mute, like an insentient object that does not react to external stimuli.

Perhaps there is a deeper meaning to *va’yidom*. Clearly, it goes beyond silence, which means that the rest of the body might react. The mouth, which is the seat of vocal expression, however, remains silent. Aharon went beyond this point. He was unreactive, totally unresponsive. What about within Aharon's psyche? Did he experience turmoil within? Was he about to implode, rather than explode? No – *va’yidom* informs us that, throughout his entire being, Aharon remained inanimate, accepting Hashem's decree with equanimity: no questions; no complaints; no expression.

While Aharon *HaKohen's* reaction is beyond us, as observant Jews who aspire to a greater and closer relationship with Hashem, we wonder how he did it. How does one exhibit such extraordinary self-control that it does not even appear that one is controlling himself? According to the commentators, *va’yidom Aharon* means that he acted as if nothing had occurred! The simple, and probably most logical, explanation is that Aharon was on a spiritual plateau so much higher than we are, that he perceived things differently. He neither saw loss, nor did he sense tragedy with the same feeling that we would experience it. Nonetheless, I have always grappled with this, until I recently came across a short vignette concerning **Horav Shimon Schwab, zl**, which illuminated an entirely new perspective on what we would refer to as a numbing experience.

In the beginning of the summer of 1975, *Rav* Shimon Schwab's brother, Reb Chaim Tzvi (Herman), was returning to the airport following an enjoyable visit with his brother in Washington Heights. As he was entering the airport, he experienced a sudden fatal heart attack. *Rav* Schwab was called, and he rushed to the emergency room of Jamaica hospital. He approached the body of his brother which was covered with a white sheet. Ashen faced and visibly shaken, but not uttering a sound, the *Rav* walked over to the lifeless corpse of his brother, uncovered his face, took one last look and said, “When *Hashem Yisborach* speaks, we must remain silent!”

This sentence speaks volumes as it addresses every saddening experience, every tragedy, the most unspeakable horrors – they are all expressions from Hashem. The Almighty has spoken. If we believe that what occurs is Hashem's directive – and, as *frum*, observant, Torah Jews, this is what we believe – then Hashem has spoken. We must remain silent in the presence of Hashem's speech. One does not reply to G-d. One does not question G-d. We stand in silence, for He has spoken. This is perhaps to what Moshe *Rabbeinu* was alluding when he said to Aharon, *Hu asher*

debar Hashem, “It is as if Hashem spoke”; *Va’yidom Aharon*, “And Aharon was silent.” The Almighty has spoken. We are to do nothing else but remain silent.