

Moshe said to Aharon: Come near to the Altar. (9:7)

Rashi teaches that, at first, Aharon *HaKohen* demurred from offering the sacrifice. He was ashamed to approach the *Mizbayach*, Altar, due to his involvement in the building of the Golden Calf. Moshe *Rabbeinu* said to him, “Why are you ashamed? This is why you have been chosen for the position of leadership in the area of the Priestly service.” The **Arizal** comments that Moshe was intimating to Aharon that his embarrassment and humility were precisely the reasons for Hashem’s choice that Aharon became the *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest. A leader must maintain a strong sense of humility, or he will become carried away by his position and lose sight of the purpose of his leadership. We have frequently noticed this pattern in the secular world. Can we say that it has not crept into the Torah camp? Does it ever happen that an individual has ascended the throne of leadership reluctantly, with a sense of fear and even shame, only to become satiated with the honor, fame, power and attention that accompanies the position? When embarrassment leads to entitlement, it is time to reevaluate his position of leadership.

A leader is a servant of the community and must always accept this role. **Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl**, relates that *Horav Nochum Partzovitz, zl*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Mir, a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar without peer, once spoke in learning with the *Brisker Rav, zl*. As he presented his *chidushim*, novellae, to the *Rav*, his fear was palpable. *Horav Eliezer M. Shach, zl*, was present at the time and perceived *Rav* Nochum’s anxiety. Afterwards, *Rav* Shach asked the *Brisker Rav* why *Rav* Nochum had been so nervous. His *chidushim* were quite impressive. The *Brisker Rav* replied, “On the contrary, it is because he is so nervous that his *chidushim* are so sweet and clear.”

We think that, once one has achieved a position of distinction, he now has license to lord over others. We see from here that it is completely the opposite. The higher one climbs, the farther he is from the ground. At this point, a fall could be devastating. The ability to achieve great heights is the result of an individual’s meticulous care, outstanding humility, and true fear. One who is anxious about achieving a high position will ultimately take great care in maintaining his “balance,” so that he does not slip as a result of flamboyance, arrogance or plain senselessness.

Aharon *HaKohen* carried the *Choshen*, Breast-Plate, representing *Klal Yisrael*, over his heart. *Chazal* teach that his heart was filled with joy over the appointment of his younger brother, Moshe, as *Klal Yisrael*’s leader; such a heart was worthy of bearing the *Choshen*. Aharon merited the High Priesthood specifically because he did not seek it. Greatness comes to those who shun it. Those who run to get a seat on the *mizrach vant*, eastern wall of the *shul*, the place reserved for distinguished personages, do not really belong there. The *mizrach vant* is for those who run – the other way!

Rav Eliyahu Baruch suggests that the principle that Hashem cares most about is he who out of a sense of humility subordinates himself to others – who does not seek the leadership position for personal acclaim and power – is to be derived from the *pasuk* in *Devarim* 7:7. Moshe informs *Klal Yisrael*, “Not because you are more numerous than all the people did Hashem desire and choose

you, for you are the finest of all the peoples.” *Rashi* interprets this to mean that Hashem chose us because we do not arrogate ourselves over others. It is specifically because of our collective humility that Hashem selected us to be His People. Avraham *Avinu*, Moshe and Aharon, are characterized first and foremost by their extreme humility.

Conversely, seeking fame and power, an obsessive desire to lord over others, catalyzed Korach’s descent/downfall. The *Mesillas Yesharim* attributes Korach’s downfall to pursuit of honor, his drive for power. *Kehunah* is a position of service; the *Kohen* serves Hashem as an agent of the people. In order to be an intermediary between the people and Hashem, one must be humble. If he considers himself to be higher than others, he might become unreachable to the point that he is no longer of value to the Jewish community.