

## Now these are the chronicles of Terach, Terach begot Avram, Nachor and Haran...Haran died in the lifetime of Terach his father. (11:27,28)

The *Torah* traces the genealogy of Avraham *Avinu*. It records the names of his two brothers, Nachor and Haran, and adds that Haran died during his father Terach's lifetime. *Rashi* cites the *Midrash* that claims that Haran actually died because of his father. Terach was an idol merchant who complained to the wicked Nimrod that his son, Avraham, had smashed his wares. Nimrod could not tolerate that someone "defaced" his idols, so he threw Avraham into a fiery furnace. Haran was challenged to decide between his brother and his king. Should he follow Avraham, whose belief in monotheism made sense? Or should he follow what was in vogue at the time and side with Nimrod? Vacillating back and forth, he decided to side with Avraham - if he emerged unscathed.

When Avraham was miraculously saved from death, Haran decided that he would now join forces with Avraham and dispute the pagan Nimrod. Haran was immediately thrown into the fiery furnace. His willingness to defy Nimrod only because he expected to be saved resulted in his death. He was not worthy of being saved, as Avraham was, because of his insincere belief. On the other hand, he did die *Al Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying Hashem's Name through his death. As the progenitor of Rachel and Leah, he had unique characteristics that were praise-worthy. His role as a vehicle for *Kiddush Hashem* also leads us to believe that he possessed spiritual nobility of a sort. Who really was Haran, and how was his character manifest?

The *Shem Mishmuel* cites the *Arizal* who provides us with an ambiguous note about Haran. He says that Haran possessed the same *neshamah*, soul, as Aharon *Hakohen*. We now must endeavor to comprehend the nature of Aharon *Hakohen* in order to understand why his *neshamah* was a reincarnation of Haran. The *Maharal* presents us with a fascinating insight into Aharon's personality. He notes that the name Aharon in Hebrew consists of four letters: *Aleph*, *hay*, *reish* and *nun*. The "*reish*" has a numerical value of two hundred and is the middle letter of the hundreds. (*Tav*, the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet is four hundred.) The "*nun*" has a numerical equivalent of fifty and is the middle letter of the tens. The "*hay*" has a numerical value of five and is the middle letter of the units. Aharon's name expressed his true nature. He was a man who remained focused on the "middle" aspects of life - on the internal, spiritual essence of existence, rather than the external, more obvious concepts.

While the *Maharal* does not give a reason for the "*aleph*" which prefaces these three letters of Aharon's name, the *Shem Mishmuel* suggests a profound explanation. The *aleph* is the first letter of the *aleph-bais* and has a numerical value of one. It is the first, literally the chief of all letters. Indeed, the word *aleph* means chief. It is an allusion to the *aleph*, "chief" of the world - Hashem. The *aleph* at the beginning of Aharon's name tells us that the spiritual focus implied by the rest of his name, the internal/spiritual perspective, was to draw himself closer to Hashem.

Keeping this in mind, we may note that actually the names of Aharon and Haran are alike, except for the *aleph* which is missing from Haran (Aharon - Aleph, hay, reish, nun. Haran - Hay, reish, nun). This implies, says the *Shem Mishmuel*, that while Haran demonstrated the right idea by concentrating on the internal/spiritual aspects of life, as suggested by his name, he lacked the *aleph*. He did not manifest the crucial factor, the necessary focus of his devout concentration: directing his aims toward *avodas Hashem*, serving the Almighty.

As we mentioned, Haran did have some good qualities, as evidenced by the descendants he merited. In order to be *mesaken*, rectify, his soul and atone for the sins of his generation, it was necessary that Haran serve as a medium for *Kiddush Hashem*. His inability to focus his attributes towards serving Hashem would now be amended. The generation during which Avraham and Haran lived was one that reeked of idol-worship. The people's defiance of the Almighty was manifest when they attempted to build the Tower of Bavel. Rejection of Hashem as Ruler of the world was the prevalent atmosphere at the time. It would require an incredible display of *Kiddush Hashem* to challenge and overwhelm this attitude.

In his *Magid Meisharim*, *Horav Yosef Karo, zl*, explains that the supreme merit one can achieve in this world is to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*, particularly if one is burned to death. One who dies in this manner becomes like a *Korban Olah*, an elevated offering, which is totally consumed and goes up to Heaven. Likewise, the reward for such a person is immeasurable. Haran was *mekadesh Shem Shomayim* in this manner. His death confirmed the miraculous nature of Avraham's situation. Even those who thought that Haran had saved Avraham through magical powers, now realized the folly of their beliefs.

Through his death, Haran achieved the ultimate *deveikus b'Hashem*, connection with the Almighty, as he cleansed his soul of defect. His *neshamah* could now be reincarnated in the body of Aharon *Hakohen*, whose life was lived in total devotion to Hashem.