

## After the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died. (16:1)

The *Midrash* (quoted by the *Chida* in *Nachal Kedumim*) relates that when Iyov heard of the incident concerning the tragic passing of Nadav and Avihu, he said, *Af l'zos yecheirad libi*, "Even for this my heart trembles." The *Midrash Rabba* (*Vayikra* 20) elaborates concerning Iyov's trembling: (Iyov said to himself) "Titus the wicked had the audacity to enter the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies (a place where only the *Kohen Gadol* entered on the holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur*), brandishing a sword. He pierced the *Paroches*, Curtain, and his sword emerged blood-soaked. Yet, he went in peacefully (unharmful) and left the same way. Nonetheless, two saintly Priests, such as Nadav and Avihu, went in and did not fare as well."

Iyov trembled from their death – but why? *Chazal* do not suggest what about their deaths made Iyov tremble. Simply, as explained by *Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl*, Iyov wondered why Hashem was punishing him so. After all, he was deeply righteous and pious. What could he possibly have done to incur such punishment? Iyov mused, "But Nadav and Avihu were righteous individuals; yet, tragedy struck them on what was supposed to be the happiest day of their lives." This indicates that it is "stormy" in Hashem's Presence. The greater one is, the closer he is to Hashem. With this nearness comes overwhelming responsibility. Thus, Iyov felt that since no one is perfect and even such distinguished *Kohanim* as the two sons of Aharon were struck down, then he, too, could be subject to punishment.

The *Chida* quotes *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 52a) that, when Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* were walking, Nadav and Avihu walked behind them. Nadav turned to Avihu and asked, "When will these two old men die, and you and I will lead the nation?" Apparently, it was Nadav who spoke and Avihu who remained silent – not commenting one way or another. Yet, both received equal punishment: Nadav, who spoke; Avihu, who listened. This taught Iyov a powerful lesson: silence can also warrant punishment. Sometimes, one must speak up, regardless of the consequences. This lesson pointed directly at Iyov, intimating to him the reason for his suffering: silence.

Three leaders sat with Pharaoh to discuss the "Jewish problem." Bilaam advised Pharaoh to annihilate the Jews. Yisro ran away in protest, as well as to save his life. Iyov sat silently, knowing that it was useless to say anything. He was well aware that Pharaoh was not interested in "taking prisoners." He wanted all of the Jews dead. When Iyov saw the punishment that Avihu received for his silence, he understood why he was suffering. As the *Brisker Rav* declared, "*Az es tut vei – veint men!* When it hurts – one cries out!"

*Rav Eliyahu Baruch* distinguishes between Avihu, who quite possibly could have achieved something by protesting, and Iyov, who knew that to protest against Pharaoh and Bilaam would be futile. We should consider the *Brisker Rav's* comment that, when it hurts, one cries out – regardless of its futility; it should be a natural reaction to pain. When one is silent, it indicates that he is not in

pain. We do, however, derive from here the greatness of Iyov in not looking for justification to qualify his behavior. He was looking for the reason behind his punishment, because he wanted to know where and how he had erred, rather than a reason to absolve himself.