

## Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon...by the border of Edom saying...Aharon shall be gathered to his people...(20:23,24)

*Rashi* explains that the *Torah* juxtaposes Aharon's death upon *Klal Yisrael's* unfruitful dialogue with Edom because of a distinct relationship between the two. When *Klal Yisrael* attempted to join Eisav's descendants, they created a breach in their activities which resulted in the loss of Aharon. Why? How is Aharon's death associated with their attempt to establish diplomatic relations with Eisav? **Horav Nissan Alpert, zl**, cites the *pasuk* in *Devarim 32:4*, "*The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice.*" Hashem's rectitude in justice is manifest in that He will not punish a person if it will cause undue and unwarranted pain to another person. His justice is meticulous; only those whose behavior, for whatever reason, warrants punitive discipline will receive said punishment. Thus, if Aharon's time on this world had come to an end, he would not have died if his death would cause unjustified pain and anguish to others. Aharon would not have died at that moment because his death would have caused unjustified pain and grief. When the people submitted themselves to Edom, when they attempted to breach the separation between them by establishing a relationship with them, they created a rift between themselves and a *tzaddik* of Aharon's caliber. By becoming closer to Eisav, *Bnei Yisrael* distanced themselves from Aharon to the point that his death would not be as difficult for them to endure as it previously would have been. Hashem, therefore, decided to recall Aharon's soul to its source.

In a second approach, *Horav Alpert* reconsiders Aharon's involvement in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon allowed himself to participate in the Golden Calf, because he felt that if he protested *Bnei Yisrael's* iniquity, they would kill him. Hashem does not punish a person unless the spiritual damage he has inflicted is obvious. Only when *Bnei Yisrael* attempted to get close to Edom, an action which undermined their spiritual superiority, was the lesson clear: a relationship with evil or wicked people, regardless of their religious persuasion, is wrong and hazardous. It ultimately cannot produce positive results, even if the immediate results seem promising. Only misery and destruction will be the final product. The incident involving *Bnei Yisrael* and their attempted relationship with Edom was an indication that Aharon's reaction, although noble, was erroneous. Hashem called upon him to answer for his spontaneous participation in *Chet HaAgel*.