

"And they wept for Aharon thirty days all the house of Yisrael." (20:29)

Regarding Moshe's death, in Sefer Devarim 34:8 the Torah states, "And Bnei Yisrael wept for Moshe." It does not assert that "all the house of Yisrael wept," as it says in response to Aharon's death. Rashi explains that Aharon's passing generated a greater outpour of grief among the people. Aharon was rodef shalom; he pursued peace. He constantly sought ways to bring peace among men of strife, as well as between husband and wife. His passing was, therefore, felt more strongly by the common Jew.

The Ohr Ha'Chayim responds to this perplexity in a number of ways. After citing Rashi's answer, he cites the Ibn Ezra. The Ibn Ezra asserts that the unusual outpouring of grief for Aharon reflected respect for Moshe, his brother, who survived to mourn him. The Ohr Ha'Chayim disagrees with Rashi's approach, claiming this explanation maligns Bnei Yisrael's sincere display of grief. The Ohr Ha'Chayim further discerns between the suddenness of Aharon's death and Moshe's death, which was foretold. Klal Yisrael had time to come to grips with Moshe's imminent passing. Aharon's death, however, came suddenly, shocking them with the tragic reality of Aharon's mortality. The abruptness of his death created a heightened sense of grief.

Aharon's demise also caused the pillars of glory to be removed. Their protective barrier was now gone, creating circumstances more advantageous to Klal Yisrael's enemies. Inasmuch as this occurred with Moshe's passing, Klal Yisrael were so engrossed in the joy of their impending entry into Eretz Yisrael that their concern was not as intense. When Moshe died, Bnei Yisrael immediately recognized Yehoshua as his successor. True, Yehoshua did not replace Moshe, but the realization that they had continuous leadership was in itself a consolation. Although Elazar, Aharon's son, assumed his father's position, this filled only one of Aharon's many roles. Aharon's station in life, the Kehunah Gedolah, would not be abolished, but his unique personality which touched so many people, was gone.

In his final response, the Ohr Ha'Chayim seems to imply that Moshe's key relationship with Klal Yisrael was that of the quintessential leader with his congregation. The people perceived Aharon, on the other hand, as Kohen Gadol and additionally as a person with whom they interacted on a personal level. This answer is parallel to Rashi's concept which emphasizes Aharon's singular relationship with individual members of Klal Yisrael.

Horav Eliyahu Shlesinger, Shlita, suggests the following explanation for the disparity in mourning. There are two types of leaders: 1) one who acquires his position either by inheritance or through any other means other than personal merit; and 2) one who earns his leadership role as a result of his illustrious personality and singular scholarship. He is chosen to be a leader because he stands above the rest. Due to their distinct manner of ascending to the position of leadership, these latter leaders receive extraordinary approbation from their respective communities. The worthiness of

one whose position is bequeathed him by inheritance is rarely criticized or denounced since no one can question a "chronological" choice "mandated" by history. In contrast, one who is selected because of merit will invariably have detractors who will impugn and oppose him. Nobody is perfect and the nature of people is to verify that fact. Indeed, concerning Mordechai, the Megillah writes his appellation as uhjt curk humr, *"he was accepted by and pleasing to only the majority of his brethren."*

This is the difference between Aharon and Moshe, which reflected itself in the people's mourning upon their respective deaths. Aharon assumed the position of kehunah, which ultimately became an appointment based upon the pedigree of kehunah. His function was acceptable to everyone. Moshe, on the other hand, became leader because of his unique personality, erudition and devotion to Klal Yisrael. As one who was chosen because of personal merit, he experienced opposition. Indeed, whenever there was strife, it was focused upon Moshe, rather than upon Aharon.