

## And your brethren, the entire House of Yisrael, shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited. (10:6)

*Chazal* derive from here that the suffering of a Torah scholar (in this case, Aharon *HaKohen* and his remaining sons grieving) should be shared by all of *Klal Yisrael*. Indeed, as *Horav Shlomo Kluger, zl*, says, all Jews should show solidarity by mourning and grieving over a fellow Jew's misfortune. *Kol Bais Yisrael* applies to every generation of Jews. Forever, until *Moshiach* arrives and wipes away our tears, it is incumbent upon us to shed tears over the tragic and untimely deaths of the two sons of Aharon *HaKohen*, Nadav and Avihu. Indeed, in the *Yom Kippur Machzor* right before *Krias HaTorah*, it is stated that it is a noble merit to weep over the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. [The Torah reading of *Yom Kippur* is from *Parashas Acharei Mos*, which mentions their deaths.]

This imperative (to mourn Nadav and Avihu) is not consistent with an inference made by *Chazal* (*Moed Kattan* 27b) from a *pasuk* in *Yirmiyahu* 22:10, *Al tivku lameis v'al tanudu lo*, "Do not cry for a deceased and do not shake your head for him." We should not mourn/grieve for the departed more than necessary. During the first three days (following the death of a relative), the family grieves/weeps. Seven days are allotted for eulogy and lamenting, i.e., intellectual appreciation of the deceased; thirty days are set aside for prohibiting haircuts. After that (thirty days after passing), Hashem says to the mourners, "You do not have greater compassion than I." In other words, after thirty days we move on. How do we reconcile *Chazal's* allotment of a thirty day limit on mourning with the injunction to mourn Nadav and Avihu forever?

*Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl*, explains the concept of "moving on" as related to the *seudas ha'vraah*, the meal eaten by the mourners following the funeral. The foods that are consumed are round, i.e. eggs, beans, bagels, which express the concept of the life cycle. This illustration that the world was created upon the principle of *v'zarach ha'shemesh, u'ba ha'shemesh; dor holeich v'dor ba*, "The sun rises and the sun sets; a generation leaves (dies), and a generation comes (is born)." The ensuing generation completes/fills the vacuum left by the previous generation. Thus, mourning and expressing grief has limits, because we must keep in mind that what has departed has been (sort of) replaced. We must move on.

This applies only when the passing of the deceased has been a natural phenomenon. In a situation in which the passing represents an uprooting, however, a removal of sorts in which the original nature and character of the deceased and what he/she represented is gone forever, the lament and grief do not end. One who loses a limb mourns its loss for the remainder of his mortal life. Some "endings" are final and overwhelming, leaving no room for replacement.

The sudden, untimely deaths of Nadav and Avihu, under such tragic circumstances, went far beyond the pale of acceptability. Had they died after living long lives, after having mentored successors who would replace them in accordance with the level of the upcoming generation, then

the mourning and grieving expressed over their loss would be “normal,” within the parameters of the loss of a *gadol*, Torah giant. They, however, neither died naturally under normal circumstances, nor did they leave anyone in line to step into their shoes. Our nation will forever be bereft of the two Torah and spiritual giants of the caliber of Nadav and Avihu. Thus, the weeping continues throughout the generations.

This, posits *Rav* Pincus, is the underlying reason for the weeping that continues for the myriads of Jewish souls that were prematurely – and under the most brutal circumstances – taken during the *Churban* of the *Batei Mikdash*, when the Temples were destroyed. Gone was a world that never returned; gone was a generation that left a void which is felt throughout the millennia. This is an incalculable, irreplaceable loss. Thus, we continue to weep on the Tenth of *Teves*, Seventeenth of *Tammuz* and on *Tishah B’Av*. These destructions were followed by the Crusades, Inquisition, Pogroms of *Tach v’Tat*, the many wanton murders that devastated our people in Western and Eastern Europe for hundreds of years, until the cataclysmic Holocaust which saw the cruel murder of six million of our brothers and sisters. For them we continue to weep – and weep.

*Yad Vashem*, the Holocaust museum in *Eretz Yisrael*, is a unique memorial to the martyrs of the Holocaust. A little over thirty years ago, with funds donated by a family in California, they added a wing dedicated to the memory of the one and a half million children under the age of twelve who were sadistically slaughtered by the Nazi murderers. Among the victims was the donor’s (Spiegel family) son.

Rabbi Berel Wein describes his experience visiting this poignant memorial. He walked into a single enormous underground room, which was pitch black, so dark that he was unable to see his hand in front of his face. In the middle of the room, a single burning candle provided a small dot of light which was bounced off mirrors placed strategically throughout the room. One candle multiplied many times over to give the impression that there were candles burning all over. Indeed, wherever one looked, an eerie reflection of candlelight greeted him. As Rabbi Wein remarked, “It was a congregation of tiny souls in search of bodies.”

The darkness was overwhelming – but so was the bouncing light. Adding to the frightening spectral effect was the sound of a recorded (man’s) voice reading off names of young children, their ages and the cities from which they were taken captive to be murdered. He stood in the blackest of rooms, staring at the ghastly light and imagining that he was surrounded by one and a half million children whose names he was hearing. These children would have now (late 1980’s) been in their forties and fifties, with children and grandchildren of their own. Instead, their lives were cruelly snuffed out.

Understandably, this scene was compelling, to the point that Rabbi Wein remembers breaking into incessant weeping and running from the building into the blinding *Yerushalayim* sunlight. Then he stopped – and thought for a moment. It had just occurred to him that his name had not been called. The age was a good fit; so was the name. The difference was that he “happened” to live in

Chicago during the Holocaust – not Europe. Had his grandfather moved east instead of west, his name quite possibly could have been on the list of *Kedoshim*, martyrs.

Those of us who survived – either by being in the right place at the wrong time, or, like myself, being a child of survivors who by *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, was born after the war to parents who survived the *Gehinom* – have an awesome, unbelievable prodigious obligation, a responsibility to do whatever we possibly can to elevate *Kavod Shomayim*. We were spared for a reason. Those one and a half million souls whose lives were cut short provide a reason for us to weep. Weeping is personal, an expression of our emotions over what we/our generation/*Klal Yisrael* have lost. We cry for ourselves. What do we do for them? As Rabbi Wein says: We increase our efforts to do something positive for our People: build more *yeshivos*; welcome more Jews into the fold; reach out to those boys and girls who we are about to lose; do not rest until we have added our brick to the future *Bais Hamikdash*. We should remember that we live not only for ourselves, but we must also live for them.