

The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan. (10:1)

Yalkut Shemoni (Shemini, Remez 524) adds that each one – Nadav and Avihu – took his fire pan, *mei'atzmo*, on his own, neither discussing it with – nor accepting advice from – his brother. The two brothers erred in thinking that it was a *mitzvah* to offer on their own without first receiving a Divine mandate. It makes sense to assume that their error was extremely minute, as they were such righteous individuals. They certainly did not arrive at their individual decisions without intense cogitation. Clearly, they thought the matter through and rendered their individual decisions. Nonetheless, the *Yalkut* implies, that had they talked it over together and sought each other's advice, things might have been different. Why is this? They both arrived at the same decision independently of one another. Would a conversation between them have changed the result?

Horav A. Henoch Leibowitz, zl, derives from here that even if both autonomously felt that this was the correct approach, had they sought the other's advice, they would have arrived at the truth – which they did not by going at it alone. This is human nature; once one expresses his opinion to another person, he is apt to review and deliberate with greater depth and clarity, thus arriving at the truth.

Seeking and giving advice are central to effective leadership and decision-making. People misgauge in thinking that pursuing advice, talking it over with someone, is a weakness that indicates passivity on the part of the guidance seeker. On the contrary, it demonstrates that one is concerned about developing the best possible solution and that he is open to feedback from others. He understands that others might have a new or different take on the matter, which can add nuance and texture to his line of thinking.

One must overcome hurdles, of which first and foremost is an ingrained tendency to prefer one's own opinion – irrespective of its merit. To seek advice requires greatness, restraint, dignity and strong self-esteem, which are commodities not easily acquired. One who seeks advice must overcome his self-imposed notion that he already has all the answers. Over-confidence leads to solo decision-making which can be misguided by one's delusionary thinking. Some who ask for help have already made up their minds, but only seek validation and encouragement – not advice. It is difficult to advise someone who does not sincerely want your assistance.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* quotes from *Pirkei Avos* (6:6) where *Chazal* detail the forty-eight *kinyanei haTorah*, ways to acquire Torah, among which is included *dikduk chaverim*, precision/analysis with fellow students. We normally understand *dikduk chaverim* as an opportunity to correct one's mistakes, or to better one's logic by listening to what the other fellow has to say. It goes much further than this. When one reviews his thoughts, so that his friend hears what he has to say, he delves deeper into the logic. By plumbing its depths, he will arrive at the truth. In other words, the mere fact that he must present his thoughts to his fellow serves as a catalyst for him to review and

question his original reasoning until he arrives at the truth.

Furthermore, the mind grows from social interaction. Reason and intelligence develop and grow the more people interface with one another. One who spends his youth alone, without even the stimulating effect of parents, will grow up staring at the world through a fog of dull indifference. When one spends time with others, he has access to precise knowledge concerning everything that he learns. Otherwise, he is not in the loop. Others will not listen to an individual whose mind is not stimulated, because he very likely has nothing much to offer.

In his commentary to *Pirkei Avos*, *Maharal* adds that when a person learns by himself, his mind remains imbedded within his body. Only when he teams with another person does his mind extend beyond himself, to the point that it enables him to have a purer connection to the Torah.

Last, when one presents his thoughts to another person, he learns to deal with opposition. When Reuven prepares his thesis to be read by Shimon, he will make sure to address whatever question Shimon may have – thus solidifying and strengthening his presentation. This is especially true if the presenter has a different perspective than his audience. Life is not a bed of roses, and we often have to deal with people and situations which test our patience and acumen. Life is filled with contradictions and incongruities. When we feel that our opinion is founded and rooted in analytic bedrock, however, the product of precise analysis and cogency that has been reviewed from all angles, we feel confident and sure. When we preempt every question that might be posed to us, we cover every negative ramification that might result from our decision. There is no question that Nadav and Avihu were the most distinguished and holy upcoming leaders of *Klal Yisrael*. Their thoughts regarding the offering they brought had merit in their eyes,