

## **Moshe said to Aharon: Come near to the Altar and perform the service of your sin-offering and your elevation-offering. (9:7)**

*Chazal (Toras Kohanim)* teach that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had to coerce Aharon to participate in the holy service. Apparently, he was reluctant to approach the *Mizbayach*, Altar, because he saw the image of an *eigal*, calf, on top of the *Mizbayach*. The calf brought to mind his participation in the sin of the Golden Calf. As a result, he was self-conscious concerning coming forward and taking his rightful position at the *Mizbayach*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* noticed Aharon's hesitancy and said, "Why are you embarrassed to go forward and serve? Indeed, *l'kach nivcharta*, it is specifically because of your extraordinary humility that you were Divinely selected to lead the service." *Chazal's* statement begs elucidation. Why should Aharon, indeed, not feel a sense of shame? He played a role in the sin of the Golden Calf. While, in fact, he did not actually sin, one cannot ignore his participation.

The *Nesivos Shalom* quotes *Chazal (Avodah Zarah 4b)* who teach that the only reason the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf was to introduce the lesson of *teshuvah*. The incident of the Golden Calf underscores the depth and power of Divine mercy and the potential for human growth even after failure. Mistakes are inevitable. Humanity is defined by its ability to transform, correct and grow from its infractions. The sin of the Golden Calf became a teaching tool, illustrating that no sin is beyond repair – if a person sincerely regrets his actions and repents.

If the sin of the Golden Calf was, in fact, a "gift" to humanity, providing *Bnei Yisrael* with the lesson that one can repent, repair and rebuild, why does Hashem hold the nation in such contempt that, even today, every collective punishment is, to some extent, a punitive response to the Golden Calf?

The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that the unabashed revelry that accompanied the creation of the Golden Calf sealed the fate of *Bnei Yisrael*. A Jew, even if he errs and commits a sin, is not proud of his actions. He feels bad; he is regretful; he is ashamed and broken, but revelry, singing, dancing and debauchery? This is the nadir of sin for which we are still in the "red." Thus, Moshe said to Aharon, "You have no reason to be ashamed, since you did not participate in the aspect of the *chet ha'eigel* which Hashem considered sinful.

*Horav Chaim Vital, zl (Likutei Torah)*, explains *Lamah atah bush*, "Why are you ashamed?" as a sign of Aharon's unique humility. Therefore, Moshe told Aharon, *L'kach nivcharta*, "This is why you were chosen." Aharon's meekness was the reason Hashem decided he would be the perfect individual to stand at the spiritual helm of the nation. Concerning Moshe, the Torah wrote that he was the humblest of all men on earth. This would mean that Moshe was more modest than Aharon. If so, why did Hashem not choose Moshe to be the *Kohen Gadol*? If the primary criterion was humility, Moshe should have been *Kohen Gadol*. Indeed, during the Seven Days of Inauguration, Moshe served as *Kohen Gadol*. Why did Hashem not extend his tenure?

The *Nesivos Shalom* cites *Sefarim Kedoshim* who distinguish between two concepts of *hashro'as HaShechinah*, resting of the Divine Presence upon someone. One must be the paragon of humility to enable himself to be a vessel for the Divine Presence to rest on. Moshe and Aharon, however, represent two distinct forms of humility.

Moshe's humility stemmed from his acute awareness of Hashem's infinite greatness. He recognized that Hashem inspired and assisted his achievements. While our quintessential leader was without peer, his exposure to the Almighty gave him pause for thought: "I am what I am because of Hashem." His humility was not rooted in a lack of self-awareness, but, rather, in a clear understanding of his role as the *eved Hashem*, servant of Hashem. He viewed himself as an instrument of Divine Will, a perspective that made him feel infinitesimally small in comparison to Hashem's greatness.

Moshe's humility was not about self-deprecation, but about living with a constant awareness of his place in the grand scheme of Creation. It was a humility of one who fully grasps his responsibilities and privileges as an *eved Hashem*.

Aharon's humility emerged from awareness of his personal flaws and limitations. Aharon blamed himself for his participation in the sin of the Golden Calf. While he clearly had good reasons and intentions, he was an individual who felt a sense of inadequacy and contrition. He sought a closeness with Hashem, albeit thinking himself unworthy of this distinction. This form of humility may, at first, appear to be negative. It is, however, an incredible tool for spiritual growth. One who considers himself broken is always trying to mend and repair himself. This leads to a heightened sense of dependency on Hashem, a stronger relationship with Him and a life of constant spiritual growth.

Moshe's humility was unattainable, because Moshe's spiritual level, his relationship with Hashem, was beyond that of anyone else. Thus, he was the humblest man on earth – on his own unique level of humility. Aharon, however, was the only one who could achieve his level of humility, which resulted from his contrite introspection and self-deprecation. *Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbarah*; "The sacrifices G-d desires are a broken spirit, a heart broken and humbled, O' Hashem, You will not despise" (*Tehillim* 51:19).

The *Bais Avraham (Stolin)* explains the use of the words, *Va'yehi bayom ha'Shemini*, "And it was on the eighth day." *Chazal* teach that *va'yehi* is a *lashon tzaar*, a word the Torah uses when the topic it is discussing is sad. What was sad about that auspicious day? He explains that Moshe was sad because he had not achieved the level of broken heartedness that Aharon had reached. He had nothing to be sad about, because he did not sin. Nonetheless, he was aware that this was the reason that Hashem did not select him to be *Kohen Gadol*. This is why he was sad.