

ISSUE #81

י"ב אייר תשפ"ה
10/5/25



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת אחרי - קדושים

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי ה' וַיִּמָּתוּ. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ, וְאֵל יְבֵא בְּכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ. (ויקרא טז, א-ב)

Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died. And Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Ahron, your brother – he may not come at any time into the Kodesh ... (Vayikra 16:1-2)

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn about the most important *avodah* of the year, performed on Yom Kippur. This is introduced by noting that Hashem spoke to Moshe *after the death of Aharon's two sons*, Nadav and Avihu. This suggests a connection between that tragedy and the service performed on Yom Kippur.

The Ramban explains that Moshe was to warn Aharon about the seriousness and gravity of approaching Hashem by entering the Kodesh. Hashem gave two commandments that restricted Aharon's entry into the Kodesh HaKodoshim. Firstly, the command states: **וְאֵל יְבֵא בְּכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ**, meaning that the Kohen Gadol was not permitted to enter the Kodesh at any time. Secondly, it states: **שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן אֲשֶׁר יָבִיא אֶת יְדָיו אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ**, which teaches that the Kohen Gadol could only enter the Kodesh HaKodoshim when performing the entire *avodah* listed below. By following these conditions, Aharon would distinguish himself from Nadav and Avihu, who died after approaching the Kodesh improperly.

Chazal expound upon the severity of Nadav and Avihu's actions, providing various explanations for their sin. Rashi (*Vayikra* 10:2) cites the opinion of R' Eliezer, who maintains that they died for rendering a halachic decision in the presence of their teacher, Moshe, and the opinion of R' Yishmoel, who argues that they entered the Kodesh while intoxicated by wine. The Midrash Rabbah (20:5) recounts Hashem's declaration, which highlights the distinction between the entry of Aharon's sons and other comings into the Kodesh. Hashem said, "The sons of Aharon are not comparable to Aharon's staff, which entered dry and left moist. Furthermore, when the wicked Titus entered with his outstretched sword, piercing the Peroches and spilling blood, he left in peace as he arrived. However, Aharon's sons approached the Kodesh and were burned!"

R' Leib *zatzal* explained the difference: only **קִירְבָּה לִפְנֵי ה'** – drawing close to Hashem, demands perfection and is otherwise met with retribution. In contrast, Aharon's staff remained a **דוּמָם** (an inanimate object) or a **צוֹמֵחַ** (a growing thing), and therefore, there were no conditions attached to it. Similarly, Titus did not enter to come close to Hashem. However, Nadav and Avihu attempted to draw close to Hashem, which required specific preparations and flawless conditions. When they approached the Kodesh, there was some imperfection on their part - either because they were intoxicated or had not received approval from Moshe - and their intention to come close to Hashem was inappropriate. Achieving closeness to Hashem requires optimal states of holiness and purity, and their lack of these qualities resulted in their deaths.

R' Yerucham Levovitz elaborates that studying Torah is akin to קִרְבָּה לַפָּנִי ה' – drawing close to Hashem. Unlike other types of knowledge gained through standard education and revision, Torah study involves unique spiritual preparation and connection. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (2:12) states: הַתּוֹרָה תּוֹרָה עֲצֻמָּה לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה, *prepare yourself to study Torah*, highlighting that specific preparation is essential. Among the 48 qualities necessary for this preparation, the Mishnah (ibid. 6:6) lists: הַתּוֹרָה הַתּוֹרָה וְכוּ' בְּאִימָה, בְּיִרְאָה, בְּעִנּוּה, בְּשִׂמְחָה, בְּטַהֲרָה וְכוּ' *The Torah is acquired through ... awe, reverence, modesty, joy, purity etc.* How are these qualities related to studying Torah? R' Yerucham teaches that because learning Torah is a way of drawing closer to Hashem, it requires particular readiness and circumstances, similar to the Kohanim who must prepare themselves before approaching the Kodsh to perform the *avodah*.

This concept is echoed in the Gemara (*Yoma 72b*):

מֵאִי דְכָתִיב "וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה" – זָכָה, נְעֻשִׁית לּוֹ סָם חַיִּים. לֹא זָכָה, נְעֻשִׁית לּוֹ סָם מֵיָתֵהּ.
What is the meaning of that which is written, "And this is the Torah that Moshe put (סָם-sam)"?
This alludes to the following lesson: if one is deserving, the Torah becomes a drug (סָם-sam) of life to him. But if one is not deserving, it becomes a drug of death to him.

R' Yerucham explained that in this context, the term זָכָה, *deserving*, refers to someone who has perfected themselves and is free from any deficiencies. If a person has not made an effort to improve themselves, the Torah cannot bear them, and will become a source of harm - a "drug of death". One might question this assertion: aren't there many flawed individuals who have learned Torah without suffering negative consequences? This concern can be addressed by referring to the Midrash mentioned earlier. When one studies Torah with the noble intention of drawing closer to Hashem, the Torah expects strict adherence to behaviour. However, someone learning Torah merely as if it were another form of knowledge is not held to the same standard, much like Titus, who disgracefully entered the Kodsh but was not punished for his actions.

Similarly, R' Elyah Lopian *zatsal* famously explains that the 48 קְנִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה correspond to the 48 days of the Omer, with one *middah* to focus on each day. The final day is dedicated to reviewing and mastering all of them to achieve complete perfection. The days of the Omer are not merely a time period between Pesach and Shavuos, but rather a time for growth and self-improvement.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* emphasises that the primary title of the upcoming Yom Tov of Shavuos reflects our *avodah* and the efforts we must exert during these weeks of the Omer. We do not refer to the Chag simply as זְמַן מִתֵּן תּוֹרָתֵינוּ, but primarily as חַג הַשְּׂבוּעוֹת. Unlike mastering mundane knowledge, acquiring the Torah on Shavuos requires *weeks* of preparation.

The tragic death of Nadav and Avihu teaches us about the perfection required when coming closer to Hashem. A true connection with Hashem demands proper preparation and elevated behaviour; otherwise, it can be harmful. This principle also applies to learning Torah, which is our means of drawing closer to Hashem. During these weeks of the Omer, as we prepare to receive the Torah, we must strive to improve ourselves to the best of our abilities. By enhancing our devotion and focusing on our learning without distractions, the Torah connects us with Hashem, providing the "drug of life"!

This Devar Torah is adapted from השמועה ומפי ראשי שיעורים and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.