

# ALSHICH

## INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא

פרשת שמיני

SERIES 1: ISSUE 26

## WHO SHOULD MOURN FOR NADAV AND AVIHU?

### Chapter 10

4) Moshe then called Mishael and Eltzafan, sons of Aharon's uncle Uziel, and he said to them, "Draw near, [and] carry your brothers out of the Sanctuary to outside the camp."

ד) ויקרא משה אל־מישאֵל וְאֶל אֶלְצָפָן בְּנֵי עֲזִיזָאֵל דָּד אֶהֱרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קִרְבוּ שָׂאוּ אֶת־אֶחָיְכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה.

6) Moshe then said to Aharon, and to his sons, Elazar and Isamar, "Do not let your hair grow wild and do not rend your clothes lest you die and lest He [Hashem] become angry at the entire congregation. But your brothers, the whole House of Israel, shall weep about the fire that Hashem [caused to] burn."

ו) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶל־עֲזָרָה וְאֶל־יִסְמָר בְּנֵי רָאשֵׁיכֶם אַל־תִּפְרְעוּ וּבִגְדֵיכֶם לֹא־תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ וְעַל כָּל־הָעֵדָה יִקְצֹף וְאֶחָיְכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכּוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂרֵפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף ה'.

### Consider the following questions:

1. Why should Hashem *become angry at the entire congregation* if Aharon and his sons disobey Hashem's command not to show the signs of mourning mentioned in verse 6?
2. Why should Aharon and his sons die just because they would show signs of mourning for Nadav and Avihu?
3. Why does Moshe first refer to the people as "*your brothers*" before referring to them as "*the whole House of Israel*"?
4. How could it be that only the rest of the people should weep for their deaths and not Aharon and his sons, who were the real mourners?

The day that Nadav and Avihu died was one of celebration for Hashem, as it were, for He was coming to rest His *Shechinah* on the Mishkan through the offerings that Aharon and his sons were bringing. It was as if there was a marriage taking place between Hashem and the Jewish people, with Aharon and his sons serving as *shoshvinim* — friends who assist the bride and groom. Their deaths were a disturbance to this celebration. Moshe thus commanded that their bodies be removed from the Mishkan (verse 4) and that Aharon and his remaining sons should continue with the Divine service. This can be compared to the *halachah* that if a bride or groom's mother or father die after the wedding celebrations have already been prepared, their bodies are removed to another room while the wedding celebration continues.

If Aharon and his sons had involved themselves with the rites of mourning, Hashem's celebration could not have gone ahead, since it was only possible through the offerings they were in the process of bringing.

**[This begins to answer Question 4.]** Therefore, Moshe told them, “Do not let your hair grow wild and do not rend your clothes lest you die if you disobey this command. The consequences are so severe that all three of you will die.” **[This answers Question 2.]**

Hashem would also *become angry at the entire congregation*, Moshe said, because an unfortunate outcome of their deaths would be that the people will come to question Hashem’s ways and say, “First two *tzaddikim* died, and then three others right after them.” Because of such questioning Hashem would vent His rage upon them – and instead of the death of Nadav and Avihu being an atonement for the people (as will be explained below), it will serve to increase their guilt.

Now, our Sages have said many times (see, for example, *Mo’ed Kattan* 28a) that Hashem removes a righteous man from this world so that his death would protect the people from some evil that would otherwise have befallen them due to their sins. However, after his death the people may not reflect and recognize that the generation is to blame and that they must therefore do *teshuvah* – thereby committing yet another sin. Then what happens is that other righteous people also die, to serve as a further atonement.

We can see that there are three distinct stages: (1) The *tzaddik* dies in order to protect his generation from punishment. Then, (2) if the people do not understand the reason for his death and fail to do *teshuvah*, the remaining righteous people, whose merits could have still earned Hashem’s kindness and saved the people, also die. As a result, (3) the people remain unprotected and liable to experience a third calamity.

These principles can be applied to verse 6. Moshe was saying: “If after the loss of the two *tzaddikim* (Nadav and Avihu), the people of kindness (Aharon and his sons), also die, then Hashem will *become angry at the entire congregation*. This is because they will not only fail to understand the reason for these deaths and fail to do *teshuvah*, but also will add to their guilt by questioning the justice of Hashem’s actions. **[This answers Question 1.]**

A person might still ask, “Since Nadav and Avihu were *tzaddikim*, why should their father and brothers not mourn for them?” For this reason, Moshe tells Aharon and his sons, “*the whole House of Israel shall weep*” – i.e., **they** will fulfill the obligations of mourning instead. But they might still have responded, “We are their relatives; we are the ones who are obligated to mourn!” Moshe therefore told them that regarding this matter the entire Jewish people are considered as their siblings – “***your brothers, the whole House of Israel, shall weep.***” This is because Chazal (*Shabbos* 105b) tells us that when a Torah sage (such as Nadav and Avihu) dies everyone is considered his relative and is obliged to mourn for him, in this case taking the place of their biological family. **[This answers Question 3 and completes the answer to Question 4.]**

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This sedra sheet is an excerpt from the newly released Alshich on Sefer Vayikra in memory of Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu zt”l. For further sponsorship opportunities and to participate in this ground breaking project please call David Rose on +44 7833 938 734.