

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא

פרשת אחרי מות-קדושים

SERIES 1: ISSUE 28

AHARON IS WARNED NOT TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Chapter 16

1) Hashem spoke (וַיְדַבֵּר) to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons because of their closeness (בְּקִרְבָּתָם) before Hashem and they died.

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־ה' וַיָּמָתוּ.

2) Hashem said (וַיֹּאמֶר) to Moshe, "Speak to Aharon, your brother, and he should not enter at all times into the [inner] Sanctuary, within the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the Ark [so that] he not die; for in a cloud will I appear upon the Ark-cover.

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאַל־יָבֹא בְּכָל־עֵת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לְפָרֹכֶת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בְעָנָן אֶרְאֶה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת.

Consider the following questions:

- Verse 1 begins by saying that *Hashem spoke to Moshe*, but it does not tell us what Hashem said to him, only that He spoke after the death of the two sons of Aharon. Verse 2 then repeats "*Hashem said to Moshe*" and tells us what Hashem said. Why is this?
- Why does verse 1 employ the harsher term for speaking, וַיְדַבֵּר, while verse 2 uses the gentler term, וַיֹּאמֶר?
- The words "*and they died*" at the end of verse 1 seem superfluous, as the verse has already stated that God spoke *after the death of Aharon's two sons*.
- Why does it say that Aharon's sons died *because of their closeness* (בְּקִרְבָּתָם) before Hashem rather than because *they offered* (בְּהִקְרִיבָם, lit., when they brought close) *an unauthorized fire before Hashem*, as it says in Bamidbar 3:4?
- Why does the verse say "*before Hashem*" and not "*to the Sanctuary*" (the way verse 2 says, "*and he should not enter ... into the Sanctuary*")?
- Why does it say "*Aharon, your brother*" in verse 2? Surely Moshe knew that Aharon was his brother!

We can start our explanation by focusing on the reason given here for the death of Aharon's sons (Nadav and Avihu), namely that it was *because of their closeness* (בְּקִרְבָּתָם) before Hashem. According to *Vayikra Rabbah* 20:8, one of the reasons Nadav and Avihu died was that they came into the Holy of Holies without permission. But if this is what the Torah is referring to in the closing words of verse 1, it should have said something like "*because of their coming close* (בְּהִתְקִרְבָם)" instead of "*because of their closeness* (בְּקִרְבָּתָם)." Rather, we can explain as follows: At this point, Hashem is coming to warn Aharon that he should *not enter...into the Sanctuary, within the curtain* so that he will not die as his sons

did. However, the fact that Hashem found it necessary to mention the deaths of Nadav and Avihu when issuing this warning to him would seem to suggest one of two things: either that Aharon's sons were considered wicked sinners before Hashem, and He therefore mentions their death at every opportunity; or, alternatively, that Hashem does not trust Aharon sufficiently to fulfill His command not to enter the Holy of Holies without mentioning the death of his two sons when they entered there. Therefore, in order to back up His command and make him afraid, He warned Aharon to be careful in case he died as his sons did.

In order to make clear that the first reason is incorrect, the verse tells us that Aharon's sons died right after it says that *Hashem spoke to Moshe*. What did He tell him? Hashem said, "Do not think that Aharon's sons were wicked sinners in My eyes and that is why they died. Rather, it was *because of their closeness* (בְּקִרְבָּתָם) before Hashem, i.e., it was because they were *tzaddikim* and close to Me that *they died*." [This answers Question 5 and the first part of Question 1.]

This is the message with which Moshe consoled Aharon when he told him earlier (10:3 above), "That is what Hashem spoke about, saying: 'I will be sanctified through those who are close to Me.'" This also explains why the Torah says here, "because of their closeness (בְּקִרְבָּתָם)" rather than "because of their coming close (בְּהִתְקַרְבָּם)" or "because they brought close (בְּהִקְרִיבָם) an unauthorized fire." [This answers Question 4.]

This also explains why it says, "their closeness before Hashem," rather than "their closeness to the Sanctuary." They died because they were *tzaddikim* and close to Hashem — and Hashem is very exacting with His holy ones and sanctifies His Name through them. The verse ends with the seemingly extraneous words "and they died" to make it clear that it was because of their closeness to Hashem that they died. [This answers Question 3.]

After this first statement to Moshe, Hashem wanted to warn Aharon to be careful about entering the Holy of Holies. This was a separate issue and therefore it is introduced by the words (verse 2), *Hashem said* (וַיֹּאמֶר) to Moshe, "Speak to Aharon ..." [This answers the second part of Question 1.] In talking about Aharon here, the Torah uses the word וַיֹּאמֶר as opposed to וַיְדַבֵּר (as in verse 1, which discussed Aharon's sons) because וַיֹּאמֶר connotes a gentler and more affectionate mode of speech than וַיְדַבֵּר. Aharon found greater favor in Hashem's eyes than his two sons because he did not sin as they had done when they entered the Holy of Holies. [This answers Question 2.]

In order to make clear that the reason Hashem mentioned the death of Aharon's sons was not because He did not trust Aharon to fulfill his command, He told Moshe, "Speak to Aharon, **your brother**." He emphasized that he is Moshe's brother as if to say to Moshe: "Just as you have not stumbled in sin before Me, even unintentionally, Aharon is your brother in this matter and is similarly pleasing to Me." [This answers Question 6.]

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