Points to Ponder

Shmini 5781

**זֶ֧ה הַדָּבָ֛ר This is the thing that Hashem said you should do (9:6) – Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** contrasts this command with the actions of Nadav and Avihu later in the Parsha. Rav Sabato explains that when it comes to the service of Hashem “Zeh” is critical. While it is important to bring the Shechina into our world and that might be the main purpose of why we do what we do, our acts have to be in concert with the Mitzvos that Hashem gave Moshe.

**קְרַ֤ב אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּ֨חַ֙ Come to the Mizbeiach (9:7) – Rashi** notes that Aharon was embarrassed to come close until Moshe told him that he should not be embarrassed as he was selected precisely for this job. Moshe comment is strange as Aharon weas embarrassed since he was scared about his involvement in the sin of the Eigel. Why then would Moshe tell him that “it was for this that you were chosen”? He became Kohein Gadol because he did Cheit HaEigel? The Baal Shem Tov notes that there is no way that a Tzaddik can raise Klal Yisrael unless he has a Yerida – he meets them somewhere in their sin. As he works to correct himself, he brings the people up with him in the process. Based on this idea, **Rav Eliyahu Schlessinger** explains that the reason Aharon was part of the Eigel was because Hashem knew that when he would be chosen Kohein Gadol, he would be able to effect Teshuva not only for himself but for the people too, bringing them along with him. Thus, while he was embarrassed, Moshe asked him why he should be – Lekach Nivchrta – you were chosen specifically to be a part of the Eigel story BECAUSE of your future role as Kohein Gadol.

**וַיָּמֻ֖תוּ לִפְנֵ֥י ה They died before Hashem (10:2)** – Many different reasons exist as to why Nadav and Avihu passed. The Midrash notes that they made many women into Agunos waiting to see if they would be picked to be appropriate wives. Others explain that they walked behind Moshe and Aharon asking when the older 2 would pass and they would lead the people. Both explanations are somewhat unbelievable for 2 of whom described as Hashem’s “close ones”? The **Chofetz Chaim** suggested that Nadav and Avihu were worried that they would not be up to the challenge of leading if Moshe and Aharon died and were encouraging each other to rise to the occasion. **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** suggested that Nadav V’Avihu wanted to add on – their whole being was invested in building steeper levels of holiness and Ahavas Hashem. But sometimes when we step too far out of where we belong we damage ourselves. By demanding steps of Klal Yisrael that they couldn’t handle or by deciding that no women would be able to be a proper Eizer to them, they did more damage than good and they lost their lives in the process.

**יַ֣יִן וְשֵׁכָ֞ר אַל־תֵּ֣שְׁתְּ  Wine and beer you shall not drink (10:9) – Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted Daas Zkeinim who offers a comment about getting drunk. One pshat in the נדב ואביהוא story is that they were drunk, **Daas Zekanim** writes that Adam married Chavah, and he got drunk at his own wedding, and that’s what led to his miscalculation and he ate from the Eitz Hada’as.  Daas Zekanim adds that this is why the minhag is that we say לחיים when one has an intoxicating drink.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֣ע משֶׁ֔ה And Moshe heard and it was good in his eyes (10:20) – Rashi** explains that he admitted the correctness of Aharon and his sons and he was not embarrassed to say “I didn’t hear that”. Why did Moshe need to publicly state that he was wrong? Why couldn’t he have simply said nothing and make it apparent that he was backing down? **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ztl** explained that the ability to understand Torah is dependent upon the person having good middos. Moshe demonstrated that the good Middos of admitting promotes that you have loftier goals than your own Kavod – namely to keep growing. It is middos like these that allows one to understand Torah better and better.

**וְהִתְקַדִּשְׁתֶּם֙ וִֽהְיִיתֶ֣ם קְדשִׁ֔ים כִּ֥י קָד֖וֹשׁ אָ֑נִי And you will sanctify yourselves and be holy because I am (11:44) – Rav Leib Chasman ztl.** noted that Prishus – Separation – is a great avenue of advice for someone looking to be saved from a troubling life situation. Separating from the unnecessary and somewhat dangerous futility of this world. Hence, separating from eating bugs was reason enough to serve as a merit to leave Mitzrayim even if eating bugs are not enticing.

**לְהַבְדִּ֕יל בֵּ֥ין הַטָּמֵ֖א וּבֵ֣ין הַטָּהֹ֑ר To distinguish between Tamai and Tahor (11:47) – Rashi** explains that this distinction is not between the kosher and not kosher species but rather between the animal shechted fully and that which is not properly shechted. **Rav Zevin ztl.** notes that in life, as well as in food, the difference between Tamai and Tahor can be as small as a hair – making the difference between half a siman versus a majority – and no good versus great!

**Haftara:**

**So spoke Nassan the Navi (Shmuel II: 7:17) – Rav Dovid Feinstein ztl.** points out that in the beginning of the Haftara, Nassan was right about taking it upon himself to build the Beis HaMikdash now he told the king that it would be his son who would receive that command from Hashem. But the message that would comfort Dovid was that Hashem would choose Shlomo’s Beis HaMikdash as the resting place for the Shechina just as he chose to do in the Mishkan built by Moshe.