

Parshat Shemini: Moshe and Aharon – Two Forms of Strength

Based on Rabbi Hershel Reichman's shiur on Chassidut on Naaleh.com

The Midrash writes that because Moshe argued for seven days with Hashem in an attempt to refuse to lead the Jews, Hashem punished him by taking away the *kehuna gedola* and preventing him from entering Eretz Yisrael. The Shem Mishmuel explains that these punishments were measure for measure. Moshe was very humble. He thought Hashem was specifically selecting him to lead the Jews because they had sunk to the forty-ninth level of impurity and did not deserve anything better. He was afraid that his flawed leadership would cause the Jewish people even more suffering and pain. However, he should have realized that if Hashem commanded him to go, he was obligated to fulfill His will. This is why he was punished.

The Gemara in Sotah states that Moshe

desired to enter Eretz Yisrael because he wanted to fulfill the commandments that could only be performed in Israel. Rav Chaim Vital explains that the body and soul of a Jew has 248 limbs which correspond to the 248 positive commandments. Each *mitzva* creates a spiritual energy and perfects its corresponding soul and body part. Therefore, Moshe yearned to enter Eretz Yisrael so that he could achieve perfection of the soul. The Midrash writes that if he would have entered, he would have prevented the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. His punishment was a blessing in disguise. Hashem poured out his wrath on the *Beit Hamikdash* and not on the Jews. He did not want to lead the Jews for fear of causing them pain and punishment. His not entering into *Eretz Yisrael* prevented the Jews from suffering ultimate retribution.

Moshe wanted to be the *Kohen Gadol* so he

could fulfill the special mitzvot associated with the position and thereby perfect himself on every level. Moshe symbolizes *moach-neshama* – the highest level of the soul. Aharon corresponds to *lev-ruach* – a secondary level of the soul. Aharon was not only the High Priest but he was an *ohav shalom v'rodef shalom*, he loved peace and pursued peace. He was involved with the people at their level and worked to promote peace among them. Moshe was at a higher level, detached from the people, and could not be as good a bridge as Aharon was to bring the people closer to Hashem.

Moshe's sin was that he had the Jewish people's well-being in mind and did not want to cause them pain. Therefore, he needed to relinquish his longing to be the High Priest for the betterment of Israel.

Parshat Shemini: Holy Bites

Based on Mrs. Shira Smiles' shiur on Naaleh.com

Parshat Shemini discusses the fire that came down and consumed the *korbanot* (sacrifices) on the 8th day of the consecration of the Mishkan. It then details the laws of the *simanim*, signs, that identify a kosher animal. Why is this law found here in the book of Vayikra and how does it connect with the previous theme of *chanukat hamishkan*?

Rav Nebenzhal explains that the Mishkan was a place for the Divine Presence to rest and a spark of the holiness engendered there still exists within our homes and at our tables. This is why the laws of *kashrut* are found here. It teaches us that we must consecrate our lives for matters of holiness. The foods we eat have a tremendous impact on our ability to cleave to Hashem. The Ramchal writes that non-Kosher

food can negatively influence us and block our spiritual connection. By the same token, eating for the sake of Heaven, and being careful with the laws of *kashrut*, bring us to greater holiness and *deveikut b'Hashem*. We can then come to the level of experiencing the Divine Presence as it once dwelled in the house of Hashem.



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Dimensions of Sefirat Haomer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The time period of Sefirat Haomer is a golden opportunity to elevate our middot. Each of the 49 days of the Omer rectifies another week in the year. It is written that if you truly work on hanging yourself during this time, you do not need to worry about the yom hadin (day of judgement).

Rabbi Tatz writes in his book, *Living Inspired*, "In Torah terms, counting towards a goal is the building of that goal. That is why we count from Pesach and not towards Shavuot. We cannot cause Shavuot. We can build a path. When we have built 49 days, we have built Shavuot. Counting is about building. It's about working on ourselves step by step."

Rav Wolfson writes that we need to utilize the time of sefirah to sanctify ourselves. We need to get rid of our bad middot in order to become a fitting vessel to accept the Torah. Our sages say, "Derech erez kadma l'Torah"

(proper middot come before Torah). A person's Torah learning and avodat Hashem will be limited if his middot are found lacking. The Alter of Kelm explained that there are 48 ways to acquire the Torah. Each of the 49 days of sefirah is meant to be dedicated to one aspect of these ways, and the 49th day is review. The Gra notes that since

it is impossible for one person to perfect himself in all 49 ways, the most essential middah to work on is ahavat habriyot – love of your fellow man. When you love others, you can learn from them, and then you can come to a composite whole of all the 48 ways.

Middot are the principle upon which Torah rests. The 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva lacked proper middot. Therefore there was a deficiency in their Torah and that is why they died. Rav Bunim writes in his commentary on *Pirkei Avot*: Ben Zoma saw a multitude of Jews and pronounced the blessings, "Blessed is He

who knows secrets," and, "Blessed is He who created all these people to serve me." Was Ben Zoma so haughty to deem people his servants? Ben Zoma saw a pool of potential teachers and an opportunity to learn. They were not his rivals. Rather, they were fellow teachers in the great school of human experience.

Rav Stern explains that a person's greatness depends on how he values his time. A person's mission in this world is to transform the present into the future, to turn passing moments into something lasting and eternal. If a person uses his moments for fleeting pleasures he has turned his moments into the past, which is useless. Our challenge is to take the 49 days, and build one day upon the other. You can grow closer both to your fellow man and to Hashem, and gradually change yourself to become a fitting vessel for Kabbalat HaTorah.