



Parshas Shemini 2022, uniquely qualified

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Gittel, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as Kohanim in the Mishkan on the eighth day of its inauguration. G-d's fire consumed the sacrifices that they had brought, signaling the divine presence was in the Mishkan.

Amid all the excitement, Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought an incense offering they had not been told to offer. Immediately, a heavenly fire came down and consumed them, killing them instantly.

Moshe quickly ordered his cousins to remove Nadav and Avihu's bodies from the Mishkan. He told Aaron and his two remaining sons not to mourn traditionally, for they have to serve in the Mishkan on behalf of the Jewish people.

G-d then spoke directly to Aaron and commanded him and all future Kohanim never to drink while working in the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. Because if they are drunk, they might not be able to differentiate between the pure and impure, potentially a fatal mistake.

However, a question comes to mind: Moshe enthusiastically gave his brother Aaron encouragement to step into the role of the high priest multiple times. Rashi explains (9:7) that Aaron felt embarrassed, ashamed, and unworthy of this sacred duty. **But why did Aaron feel undeserving of this most spiritual commitment?**

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentary and Kabbalist*) gives an interesting explanation. He writes that the primary purpose of the Mishkan was to repent and atone for the golden calf. But since Aaron played a crucial role in the golden calf's creation, he felt unqualified to lead the services that will seek forgiveness for that sin.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that Moshe responded to Aaron that this was the reason he was chosen to be the high priest. Since he had a role in sin, he could sincerely seek and pray for forgiveness for it. But Moshe Rabbeinu had no part of the sin, as he was on Mt. Sinai with G-d.

Therefore, his prayers and pleas would be less effective in this specific circumstance. As Moshe says in Pasuk (9:7) "וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת־עֹלֹתְךָ וְכִפֵּר בְּעֵדָךְ וּבְעֵדֵי הָעָם - *bring your sin offering and burnt offering and it will atone for you and the nation.*"

However, Rabbi Sacks z"l gives a deeper and more profound explanation. In his book *Covenant & Conversation*, he writes that Aaron did not hesitate to be the Kohen Gadol because of a specific sin. **He was hesitant and reluctant because he felt entirely unworthy of such a sacred position.**

Aaron did not have any ambition and desire to be in the focus of attention of the whole nation. He would much rather live a life out of the public eye committed and devoted to G-d.

Rabbi Sacks explains that Aaron Hakohen suffered from "**imposter syndrome**," loosely defined as people who doubt their unique abilities and feel unworthy of their successes.

This phenomenon disproportionately affects high-achieving and successful people. Aaron Hakohen did not feel deserving of such a role despite being specifically chosen by G-d for it.

Rabbi Sacks continues that Moshe responded to Aaron that **his hesitation was the basis and reason for him being selected**. For the position of the high priest was a singular role with a unique responsibility. To be the representative and emissary of the entire Jewish people before G-d. Hence, any person running after and desiring such an immense responsibility is not the correct individual.

Moshe Rabbeinu saw Aaron's hesitancy regarding assuming such a significant role and knew he was the perfect person for that job.

In our daily life, we must realize that running after honor and positions of leadership usually drives it further away. We are not as covert as we think we are, making our intentions and ambitions crystal clear. Yet, if we just work and strive to be a person who is guided by Torah values and principles, we will find ourselves in G-d's unique role for us!

***"Honor is like a shadow:
the more you run after it, the farther runs away."***

-Famous Yiddish saying

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*