

This week's *Parashah* opens on the eighth day ("Yom ha'shemini") of the dedication of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle--a day the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 10b) teaches was as joyous to *Hashem* as the day on which the heavens and earth were created. R' Moshe Shapiro z"l (1935-2017; *Rosh Yeshiva* in several Israeli *yeshivot*; best known for his deep lectures on Jewish Thought) explains that that day was one of a handful in all of history when *Hashem's* purpose in creating the world was nearly fulfilled, only to end in disappointment.

The first such day, R' Shapiro writes, was the day of Adam's creation. Adam was created in order to fulfill *Hashem's* Will, as we read (*Mishlei* 16:4), "Everything *Hashem* made, He made for His own sake." However, Adam did not succeed in doing *Hashem's* Will for even one day; instead, he ate from the *Etz Ha'da'at* and was banished from *Hashem's* Presence.

The world almost fulfilled its purpose again when the Torah was given, but *Bnei Yisrael* made the Golden Calf 40 days later. Even before that, on the day the Ten Commandments were given, *Bnei Yisrael* declined to have a direct relationship with *Hashem* and asked instead to hear the Torah from Moshe's mouth. Thus, another opportunity was lost.

The next occasion was the day discussed in our *Parashah*, when *Hashem* rested His *Shechinah* on the completed *Mishkan*. However, Nadav and Avihu brought an unwanted offering and died, as described in our *Parashah*--irreparably marring another day when the world could have achieved perfection.

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Pesach

"It shall be when your son will ask you 'Machar': 'What is this?' and you shall say to him, 'With a strong hand *Hashem* removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage.'" (*Shmot* 13:14)

Rashi z"l writes: There is a "*Machar*" which is now (meaning "tomorrow"), and there is a "*Machar*" which is after the passage of some time. Here, "*Machar*" has the latter meaning. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Chaim Williamowsky z"l (1896-1971; rabbi and *Mohel* in Hendersonville and Durham, North Carolina; Alexandria, Virginia; and Washington, D.C.) writes: When hope rises in the human heart, though the present is dark and dismal, the expectation of a better tomorrow strengthens our spirits and sustains our faltering steps. All people dream of redemption, and every slave has visions of freedom. Every person whose existence is darkened by misery looks for the sunrise on the distant horizon. The question is, however: Are these people concerned with the immediate tomorrow, a short-range objective, or do they aspire to more than that? Do they also take into account the distant tomorrow? Is their vision confined to that which confronts them directly, or does the dream of freedom also provide happier days for generations yet unborn?

R' Williamowsky continues: When the freedom of *Yisrael* was guaranteed, it was to include not just the foreseeable tomorrow, but was to be writ large upon the complete canvas of the future. "*Machar*" clearly implies a great and glorious tomorrow which will ensure the freedom of all mankind, in G-d's good time, and under His Law.

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(Yitzchak ben Yehudah a"h)

“The sons of Aharon--Nadav and Avihu--each took his fire pan, they put fire in them and placed incense upon it, and they brought before Hashem a foreign fire that He had not commanded them.” (10:1)

R' Naftali Hertz Weisel z"l (1725-1805; German banker, and prolific author of works of Torah commentary, Hebrew grammar, and *Mussar*) writes: Nadav and Avihu were among the greatest men in the world, and G-d forbid that they blatantly transgressed a commandment of G-d. Rather, their great joy at the dedication of the *Mishkan* caused them some confusion, and they offered incense that they had not been commanded to offer, albeit in a way that did not expressly violate any *Halachah*.

Firstly, they did not actually offer a “foreign fire,” *i.e.*, they did not place any fire on the altar at all. Rather, our verse is stating in shorthand that they brought foreign--*i.e.*, unwanted--incense, which they burned on a fire.

Secondly, they did not place their foreign incense on the altar. Rather, they burned it in a pan, as the *Kohen Gadol* is commanded to do on *Yom Kippur*. This did not strictly violate *Halachah*, because the commandment that the *Kohen Gadol* offer incense in that manner on *Yom Kippur*--only the *Kohen Gadol* and only on *Yom Kippur*--had not yet been given. Likewise, the commandment that no one enter the Holy of Holies except on *Yom Kippur* also had not been given.

Nevertheless, writes R' Weisel, Nadav and Avihu were punished because they should have been more unassuming and should not have undertaken this activity of their own accord, as we read (*Michah* 6:8), “What does Hashem ask of you? Only . . . that you walk humbly with your *Elokim*.” Being as great as they were, they were held strictly accountable for lacking this *Middah* / character trait. (Peshuto Shel Mikra)

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Three other such opportunities that were lost were the day Moshe hit the rock, the day King Shlomo married the daughter of Pharaoh, and the day described in the *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 14b) when “Four entered the orchard” (*i.e.*, four Torah scholars attempted to study the deepest secrets of *Kabbalah*), but only one, Rabbi Akiva, emerged unscathed.

All of these failures could lead one to think that Hashem wasted His time, so-to-speak, creating the world, which seemingly will never be what He envisioned. This, explains R' Shapiro, is why R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) identifies belief in *Techiyat Ha'meitim* / the Resurrection of the Dead as one of the fundamental articles of our faith. To imagine that Hashem failed would be heresy; necessarily, a better future awaits, when Hashem's plan for Creation will, at last, be fulfilled. (Shuvi Ve'ne'che'zeh: Purim Vol. II, p.8)

“Va'yehi / It was on the eighth day, Moshe summoned Aharon and his sons, and the elders of Yisrael.” (9:1)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: Our Sages suggest that the word “*Va'yehi*” always introduces trouble (see *Megillah* 10b). Here, the impending trouble was the death of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu.

R' Kluger continues: We read (*Mishlei* 14:10), “The heart knows its own bitterness.” And, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 3a) teaches that a person's “*Mazel*” can see things that the person himself cannot see. This explains why Moshe needed to “summon” Aharon and his sons on the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*--the day when Nadav and Avihu ultimately would die. Every other day, Aharon and his sons would wake up early to learn Torah from Moshe. On that day, however, Aharon and his sons felt “bitterness” in their hearts, they had a premonition, so they hesitated to appear before Moshe or to come to work in the *Mishkan*. Therefore, he had to call them, and therefore his calling them is introduced with “*Va'yehi*.”

In addition, R' Kluger writes, the use of “*Va'yehi*,” which portends a sad event explains why Aharon and his sons are not referred to in this verse as “*Kohanim*.” We read (*Kohelet* 8:8), “There is no authority on the day of death.” Thus, for example, King David is not referred to as “King” in the verses that speak of his death. Since “*Va'yehi*” in our verse portends the death of Aharon's two sons, they are not given any title here.

(Imrei Shefer)

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We read (*Shmot* 8:19), “I shall make a ‘*Pedut*’ between My people and your people [the Egyptians] -- *Machar* / tomorrow . . .” Some commentaries (*e.g.*, *Rashi*) understand “*Pedut*” to mean distinction or separation, while others translate it as redemption or deliverance. Actually, writes R' Williamowsky, a careful study of the historic import of this event will persuade us that the word implies a combination of both meanings.

He explains: There is a basic difference, a marked distinction, between the concept of redemption or freedom that is concerned only with the immediate breaking of physical chains and that exalted concept of liberty which seeks to liberate man for all time. The latter declares that freedom can be obtained only within the framework of law and justice--specifically, within the Torah and its teachings. [Through the Exodus, Hashem promises to show us this distinction by breaking the physical chains of slavery “*Machar*” / “tomorrow,” and also liberating man for all time “*Machar*” / “after the passage of some time.”]

(RCA Manual of Holiday and Sabbath Sermons - 5715, p.25)