

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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And Aharon was silent! (Vayikra 10:3) How so, after seeing his two sons die in front of his eyes? Moreover, this terrible happenstance occurred during the peak of the celebration of the dedication of the Mishkan - and in front of the whole, joyful crowd!

Was it just happenstance, however? Of all people, Aharon the Kohen Gadol must have understood in one sudden flash that his two sons, who brought a "strange fire before G-d", were the victims of their own careless passions. For in their desire to come closer to G-d, Nadav and Avihu transgressed in a way that Aharon had been warned about endless times.

For concerning the Mishkan, the sacrifices, and the seven days of preparation, Moshe had repeatedly cautioned Aharon and his sons that, "You shall protect G-d's charge, so that you shall not die; for so have I been commanded" (8:35). And the Torah comments - oh, so many times! - how Aharon and his sons did exactly as commanded by the word of G-d (Rashi: not to the right nor to the left).

Clearly, notes R' Shmuel Kohl, Aharon understood at that moment of distress that there was nothing to say. Like Iyov in his grief, Aharon could have uttered a mournful cry: but that alone may have stirred a rebellion among the masses of onlookers. Indeed, in tandem with Kohelet, Aharon taught us that, "There is a time to be silent and a time to speak up" (Kohelet 3:7).