

Short Comments on Aharei Mot and Asseret Yemei Todah - Ten Days of Gratitude  
Rabbi Eliot Malomet April 30, 2022 29 Nisan 5782 Shabbatodah

ויקרא ט"ז:א-ב' וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לַפְּנֵי־ה' וַיֹּמְתוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְאֶל־יָבָא בְּכָל־עַת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבְּיַת לְפָרְכַת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרוֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת בִּי בְּעֵנֹן אַרְצָה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

**Leviticus 16:1-2 God spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of God. God said to Moses: Tell Aaron your brother**

*that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.* You would think that the Torah which economizes so much in its use of language would have condensed the redundancy in these two verses. Why not just say, **God spoke to Moses... tell Aaron your brother...?** We are always trying to find the story beneath the text. We recall that Aaron's sons died on the eighth day of the consecration ceremonies. At the climactic moment when the sanctuary was sanctified and the altar was *altari*-fied, Aaron's sons brought a *foreign fire* into the sacred area and were incinerated. What had been a joyous ecstatic moment was transformed into a tragedy. Nevertheless, the sanctuary has to function, and the leaders have to function in it. (Imagine, God forbid, if a great personal tragedy happened to the President on Inauguration Day. There would be acknowledgement of course, but very soon after, the needs of the people - and the Constitution - would require the President to govern and for the whole apparatus of government to function. It's not so different here.) Does the text acknowledge the difficulty of the intersection of the personal and public lives of Moses and Aaron in this particular moment? It all depends how you read these verses. God *speaks* to Moses and then God *says* to Moses. As in music, we have to be attentive to the space or the "rest" between the phrases. How soon after from when God *spoke* to Moses did God *say* to Moses? If we let these verses pass without comment, we lose the drama and the tension. But if we pause and allow ourselves to linger between them, we come to an understanding that this moment is not so simple. That resuming the public role after the private tragedy requires at least some kind of recognition. We also need to take note of the way God says to Moses, **tell Aaron your brother**. It would have been sufficient to say **tell Aaron**. *Why Aaron your brother?* Because it would be precisely at this moment that Aaron would need Moses to be more than just the leader but also to be *his brother*. Aaron is mentioned 286 times in the Torah; in 11 of those he is **Aaron your brother**.

Speaking of brothers, why did Nadav and Avihu die? We often point to the plain interpretation of the text, that they violated the sacred boundary. But the midrash lists other reasons:

ויקרא רבה כ"ח: ב' קפרא בשם רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר אמר בשביל ארבעה דברים מתו בניו של אהרן, על הקריבה, ועל הקרבה, על אש זרה, ועל שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה.

**Vayikra Rabbah 20:8 Bar Kappara said in the name of Rabbi Yirmiya ben Elazar: the sons of Aaron died on account of four things: coming too close to the sacred; the item that they brought; because of the foreign fire and because they did not take advice from one another.** The first three are "technicalities" in the violation of the rules. But the last one is most interesting. *They did not take advice from one another.* Death is a rather severe penalty for obstinacy, but perhaps Bar Kappara wants to direct us to the arrogance of Nadav and Avihu. In thinking that they had authority and honor, they thought that the rules did not apply to them. In wanting to outdo each other in their zeal and in their demonstration of power, they *did not consult with each other* on the manner of their firepans. They each did whatever they wanted on their own. Their actions rise to the level of anarchy and even mutiny. With the very life of Israel in the balance, they incurred the ultimate penalty for that and the other infractions.



עשרת ימי תודה - TEN DAYS OF GRATITUDE - ASSERET YEMEI TODAH - Yom Hashoa, Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut

This is a special week in the national calendar of the Jewish people. The 'Ten Days of Gratitude' weave the days from Yom Ha'Shoah to Yom Ha'atzmaut together with a thread of gratitude. This year the 'Ten Days of Gratitude' runs on April 26th – May 5th, 2022, 24 Nisan to 4 Iyar 5782. Modeled after the *עשרת ימי תשובה - Asseret Yemei Teshuva*, (the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), these Ten Days between Yom HaSho'a and Yom Ha'atzma'ut offer an opportunity for reflection and celebration. On Yom HaShoa we remember the Six Million and the destruction of European Jewry. On Yom HaZikaron we remember the 24,068 men and women who have been killed defending Israel and the Jewish people from the very beginnings of the Yishuv in 1860 until today. During the last year alone, 56 soldiers were killed, and 84 disabled IDF veterans died from complications due

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to injuries sustained in their service, including psychological injuries. While not yet widespread, this initiative is gaining ground among certain circles and communities, such as Beit Prat, a secular Yeshiva (beitprat.org). With programing and publication, media and events, The 'Ten Days of Gratitude' offers an opportunity for national reflection as we learn and examine our relationship to Israel and recognize the gift of sovereignty together with the complex challenges that remain to be resolved. The 'Ten Days of Gratitude' provides us with a chance to appreciate and give thanks for the accomplishments, achievements and successes of the State of Israel. (Adapted from Beitprat website). Like the Shabbat Shuvah between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, this Shabbat has been named, ShabbaTodah - שבחודה. A suggested additional "Haftarah" for this Shabbat is this text from Jeremiah 30:18-31:10

(יח) פֶּה אָמַר ה' הַגְּנִי-שֵׁב שְׁבוּת אֶהְיֶי עֲלוּב וּמִשְׁפַּנְתִּי אֲרַחֵם וּנְבִנְתָה עִיר עַל-תֵּלְתֵּיָה וְאֶרְמֹן עַל-מִשְׁפָּטוֹ יֵשֵׁב: (ט) וַיֵּצֵא מֵהֶם תּוֹרָה וְקוֹל מִשְׁחָקִים וְהִרְבִּיתִים וְלֹא יִמְעָטוּ וְהִכְבַּדְתִּים וְלֹא יִצְעָרוּ: (כ) וְהָיוּ כְּיָד כְּקִדְמָם וְעִדְתוֹ לִפְנֵי תַכְוֹן וּפְקֻדָּתַי עַל כָּל-לְחֻצָיו: (כא) וְהָיָה אֲדִירוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִשְׁלוֹ מִקִּרְבּוֹ יֵצֵא וְהִקְרַבְתִּי וּנְגַשׁ אֵלַי כִּי מִי הוּא-יָהּ עֲרַב אֶת-לִבּוֹ לִגְשַׁת אֵלַי נְאֻם-ה': (כב) וְהִיָּתָם לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָּכֶם לֵאלֹהִים: (כג) הִנֵּהוּ סִעְרַת הַחַמָּה יֵצֵאָה סֶעַר מִתְגַּבֵּר עַל רֹאשׁ רְשָׁעִים יְהוּל: (כד) לֹא יִשׁוּב חֲרוֹן אַף-יְהוָה עַד-עֲשִׂיתוּ וְעַד-הִקִּימוּ מִזְמֹת לִבּוֹ בְּאַתְרֵי הַיָּמִים תִּתְּכֹנְנוּ בָּהּ: (כה) בָּעֵת הַהִיא נְאֻם-ה' אֶהְיֶה לֵאלֹהִים לְכָל מִשְׁפַּחֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה יְהוָה לֵעָם:

(א) פֶּה אָמַר ה' מִצָּא חֵן בְּמַדְבָּר עִם שְׂרֵיֵדֵי חֲרֵב הַלְוָה לְהַרְגִיעוֹ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל: (ב) מִרְחֹק ה' נִרְאָה לִי וְאֶהְבֵּת עוֹלָם אֶהְבֵּתִיךְ עַל-כֵּן מִשְׁכַּתִּיךְ חֹסֵד: (ג) עוֹד אֶבְנֶה וּנְבִנֶה בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד תַּעֲדֵי תַפְיֵד וַיֵּצֵאת בְּמַחֲוֹל מִשְׁחָקִים: (ד) עוֹד תַּסְעִי כְרָמִים בְּהֵרִי שְׁמְרוּן נִטְעוּ נִטְעִים וְחִלְלוּ: (ה) כִּי יִשְׁׁוּם קִרְאוֹ נִצְרִים בְּתֵר אֶפְרַיִם קוֹמוּ וּנְעַלְהָ צִיּוֹן אֶלֶּה אֶלְהֵינוּ: (ו) כִּי-יָהּ אָמַר ה' רְנוּ לְעֵקֶב שְׂמִתָּה וְצַהֲלוּ בְּרֹאשׁ הַגּוֹיִם הַשְׂמִיעוּ הַלְלוּ וְאִמְרוּ הוֹשַׁע ה' אֶת-עַמּוֹתָ אֶת שְׂאֲרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (ז) הַגְּנִי מִבְּיַד אוֹתָם מִצָּרוֹן צִפּוֹן וּקְבַצְתִּים מִיַּרְבְּתֵי-אֲרָץ בָּם עָנָר וּפְסָח הָרָה וְיִלְדַת יִתְּנוּ קוֹל גְּדוֹל יִשׁוּבוּ הִנֵּה: (ח) בְּכִי יָבֹאוּ וּבִתְחִנּוּנֵים אוֹבִילִם אוֹבִילִכֶם אֶל-גְּחִלֵי מַיִם בְּדֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִפְשְׁלוּ בָּהּ כִּי-הִיָּתִי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֵב וְאֶפְרַיִם: (ט) שְׂמְעוּ דְבַר-ה' גּוֹיִם וְהִגִּידוּ בְּאֵזִים מִמְּרַחֵק וְאִמְרוּ מִזְרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל יִקְבָּצֵנוּ וְשָׁמְרוּ כְרֵעָה עֲדָרוֹ: (י) כִּי-פָדָה ה' אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וּנְגַלְוֹ מִיַּד חֲזַק מִמֶּנּוּ:

(18) Thus said the LORD:  
I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents,  
and have compassion upon his dwellings.  
The city shall be rebuilt on its mound,  
and the fortress in its proper place.  
(19) From them shall issue thanksgiving,  
and the sound of dancers.  
I will multiply them, and they shall not be few;  
I will make them honored,  
and they shall not be humbled.  
(20) His children shall be as of old,  
and his community shall be established by My grace;  
and I will deal with all his oppressors.

(21) His chieftain shall be one of his own,  
His ruler shall come from his midst;  
I will bring him near, that he may approach Me—  
declares the LORD—  
For who would otherwise dare approach Me?  
(22) You shall be My people, and I will be your God.  
(23) Lo, the storm of the LORD goes forth in fury, a  
raging tempest; It shall whirl down upon the head of  
the wicked. (24) The anger of the LORD shall not turn  
back, till it has fulfilled and completed His purposes.  
In the days to come, you shall perceive it. (25) At that  
time—declares the LORD—I will be God to all the  
clans of Israel, and they shall be My people.

(31:1) Thus said the LORD:  
The people escaped from the sword,  
Found favor in the wilderness;  
When Israel was marching homeward  
(2) The LORD revealed Himself to me of old.  
Eternal love I conceived for you then;  
Therefore I continue My grace to you.  
(3) I will build you firmly again,  
O Maiden Israel!  
Again you shall take up your timbrels  
And go forth to the rhythm of the dancers.  
(4) Again you shall plant vineyards  
On the hills of Samaria;  
Men shall plant and live to enjoy them.  
(5) For the day is coming when watchmen  
Shall proclaim on the heights of Ephraim:  
Come, let us go up to Zion,  
To the LORD our God!  
(6) For thus said the LORD:  
Cry out in joy for Jacob,  
Shout at the crossroads of the nations!  
Sing aloud in praise, and say:  
Save, O LORD, Your people,<sup>c</sup>  
The remnant of Israel.  
(7) I will bring them in from the northland,  
Gather them from the ends of the earth—  
The blind and the lame among them,  
Those with child and those in labor—  
In a vast throng they shall return here.  
(8) They shall come with weeping,  
And with compassion will I guide them.  
I will lead them to streams of water,  
By a level road where they will not stumble.  
For I am ever a Father to Israel,  
Ephraim is My first-born.  
(9) Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,  
And tell it in the isles afar.  
Say: He who scattered Israel will gather them,  
And will guard them as a shepherd his flock.  
(10) For the LORD will ransom Jacob,  
Redeem him from one too strong for him.

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