

Parasha Meditation Shemini

Vayikra 9:1-11:47

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

A Vessel for the Fire of Love and Excitement

Introduction:

“The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, placed within it fire and put incense upon it. And they [thus] offered a strange fire before Hashem, one that He did not command of them. And a fire came forth from before Hashem and devoured them and they died before Hashem.”¹

Their Fire of Love and Excitement

What was so terribly wrong with the act of Aharon’s sons that they had to pay for it with their lives? After all, they were holy men, and very close to Hashem.² They didn’t have in mind to sin at all. On the contrary, when they saw the new fire which descended from heaven to consume the burnt offering, they desired to add their own fire out of the excitement of their love for the holy.³ This is learned from the word וַיִּקְחוּ – *vayikru* – “They took,” which denotes happiness.⁴

Acting upon Spontaneous Feeling without Consulting the Lawgivers

The problem was that they did something they were not commanded to do, as it states in the Torah verse quoted above: “They offered a strange fire before Hashem, one that He did not command of them...” They took the initiative on their own, to do what they thought was right, without first checking with the established authority of their father and uncle, Aharon and Moshe. While some might interpret this as a good thing, it is evident that G*d did not! This way of acting is considered taking Divine service lightly.⁵

Halacha – the Vessel for our Love

Today, in our generation of “love” rather than “fear,” we all too often experience the desire to act spontaneously, expressing our personal love and excitement, without first making sure that our actions are in accordance with accepted halacha (Jewish law). Yes, it is important not to become halachic robots, discussing hairsplitting differences of exactly how many grams of matzah we need to eat at the Seder night within a particular amount of minutes, without any feeling of love and excitement for the mitzvah of eating matzah. On the other hand, we cannot just follow our

¹ *Vayikra* 10:1-2.

² “I will be sanctified through those who are close to me” (Ibid. 3).

³ *Yalkut Shimoni, Vayikra*, 10, Allusion 525.

⁴ Note the same word is also used to mean “marriage,” the epitome of love and excitement.

⁵ Rabbi Moshe David Valle, top student of the Ramchal, commentary to *Vayikra* (*Avodat HaKodesh*).

heart by lighting the Shabbat candles overflowing with deep intentional devotion five minutes after sunset. While we must strive to emulate the passion of Aharon's sons, we mustn't forget that the lives of Aharon's sons were taken in order to teach the importance of balancing inner personal intention with correct outer action. The measurements of halacha are the vessels to contain our light of love and excitement. Without the proper vessels, this light becomes a strange fire!

Meditation:

Sit down in a relaxed, comfortable position and close your eyes.

1. Raise your right hand in front of your face and take a complete inhalation and exhalation. Close your left nostril with your middle and ring fingers, and inhale slowly through your right nostril. Now, closing your right nostril with your thumb, exhale through your left nostril.
2. Now, while closing your left nostril again with your middle and ring fingers, breathe in all the air you can through your right nostril on a count of 4.
3. Close your right nostril with your thumb, placing your index finger on the ridge of your nose. Hold your breath for a count of 2, then slowly open your left nostril by removing your middle and ring fingers, and breathe out slowly to a count of 8.
4. Now breathe into your left nostril to a count of 4. This time, close the left nostril with your middle and ring fingers, with the index finger on the ridge of your nose, and hold your breath for a count of 2. Then breathe out from your right nostril to a count of 8. Repeat this cycle up to five times. You may pause this recording while you do this.
5. Put your hand down now and breathe naturally. Allow your mind to scan your consciousness for a mitzvah you particularly connect with. It could be a special part of a Jewish holiday service, or a mitzvah between people such as guarding our tongue or visiting the sick.
6. Dwell in your mind's eye on one mitzvah you personally feel a great passion for – a mitzvah you really enjoy.
7. Now imagine doing this mitzvah not only with your ultimate love and excitement, but also with precision and attention to detail. Note the correct timing and amounts of the action, in addition to the particular words needed to be pronounced correctly.
8. Resolve to study up on the details of your favorite mitzvah and/or consult a rabbinic authority for fine-tuning your chosen mitzvah.

Notes:

Rashi teaches us that the death of Aharon's sons took place by two threads of fire entering into their nostrils and extracting their souls from their bodies.⁶ The nostrils connect our body with our soul. Actually, soul in Hebrew – *neshamah* – shares the same root with the Hebrew word for “breathing” – *neshimah*. This is because when Hashem originally imbued the first human being with a soul, “He breathed a living soul into his nostrils.”⁷ By slowing our breath and breathing in a measured way, we can fine-tune our connection between body and soul – between action and intention.

⁶ Rashi, *Vayikra* 10:5.

⁷ *Bereishit* 2:7.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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