

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's Torah portion Shimini, we read about the tragic deaths of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu. Nadav and Avihu are among the few people mentioned in the Torah by name, who were killed directly by Hashem. This fact signifies the severity of their crime, because usually the Torah does not mention by name those who are struck down; and furthermore, rarely do we read that people are directly struck down from Heaven. (Heard from my father my teacher Reb Tovia Shlita). The Torah tells us that Nadav and Avihu were killed because, "they brought before Hashem an alien fire [of burning incense] that He (Hashem) had not commanded them." (Vayikra 10:1) Nadav and Avihu had good intentions. Their problem was however, that they tried to serve Hashem in their own way, i.e., disregarding the holy "protocol" established by Hashem Himself. The spiritually uplifting message of this incident is: we will have the best spiritual results in life when we serve Hashem according to His rules, i.e., when we serve Hashem the way He wants to be served, not the way we FEEL like serving him. There are those who drive to the synagogue on Shabbos, and they justify their acts by saying "otherwise I wouldn't be able to go pray with the minyan." However, they should ask themselves how "religious" they are during the week, when it is permissible to drive to the synagogue to pray... do they drive then to pray with the minyan? (Heard from Michael Zuckerbraun).

The following ironic true story illustrates how some Jews unfortunately serve Hashem with a "feel- good philosophy," while ignoring the basic spiritual guidelines that Hashem Himself has given us. Sally and Michael Korn were discussing plans for their son Gary's Bar Mitzvah. Sally insisted that they have a rock-music band at the hall, and that each classmate receive a sweatshirt bearing the slogan "I had a blast at Gary's Bar Mitzvah."

Michael, who was a little more "traditional," however, had only one request. He remembered his grandfather making Kiddush at his home on Friday nights; and to commemorate that ritual he wanted his son to recite the Friday night Kiddush on the day of his Bar Mitzvah, even it were to take place on a Sunday morning. Anyone who understands the meaning of the Friday night Kiddush, would surely view Michael's idea with skepticism. However, Michael could only think of how much he had loved his grandfather and how he wanted to perpetuate his memory by reliving that experience, absurd as it may have seemed to make kiddush on Sunday morning. The plans were finalized and Gary practiced chanting the Kiddush in the tune that Michael recalled from the days he had spent with his grandfather. The big day on Sunday morning arrived and the family traveled to the Beth El Synagogue, a good half-hour's drive from Gary's home.

The guests began to arrive and Gary was pleased to have his friends there for support. Finally Michael approached his son and motioned to him that it was time for him to put on his tefillin and for the ceremony to begin.

Rabbi Bruce Perlman was the officiating Rabbi. Beth El was the type of place where something unusual like reciting Kiddush on a Sunday morning would not raise eyebrows at all. The rabbi felt that if it was a meaningful religious experience it might lead to something more concrete, so he allowed it. Prior to Gary's recitation, the rabbi explained the reason for the ritual and why it was so important for Gary to carry on in his grandfather's footsteps. (sic.)

The rabbi finished and Gary, while wearing his tefillin got up to recite the Friday night Kiddush that Sunday morning. Holding his grandfather's antique silver cup in his hand, he spoke about his grandfather's wonderful attributes and ended with the wish that he himself follow in the ways of this special man. His "performance" was quite good; his father Michael was soon in tears.

Everyone congratulated Gary on a job well done and the tefillin were quickly removed and put aside. The time for the celebration had begun. As the crowd moved toward the ballroom next door, the rabbi took the cup and eyed it carefully. He was impressed by the exquisite workmanship. He turned toward the president of the synagogue and remarked, "It is a real beauty. I will just take it into my office and wash it out." The lively reception lasted for over three hours and as the Kornes were preparing to leave, Michael remembered his grandfather's Kiddush cup. But when he went back into the sanctuary to look for it, it was nowhere to be found. The president of the synagogue mentioned that he had last seen it in the rabbi's office, but the rabbi had already gone home. The family continued to look for it but it was no use. The precious heirloom was gone? Not being able to find the Kiddush cup dampened Michael's spirit and took away some of the joy of an otherwise perfect affair.

Gary had heard the whispers. He couldn't believe that the rabbi would be so uncouth as to steal a priceless family heirloom. And while Gary wanted to call the rabbi at his home, his father Michael insisted that it was disrespectful to do so. By the following morning, Gary and his family had forgotten about the kiddush cup.

Ten years passed. Gary went on to college, came back home, and soon became engaged to a girl from a local family. His parents were overjoyed and the wedding date was set. Prior to the wedding, Gary was planning to go to Rabbi Perlman (the same rabbi who had officiated at his Bar Mitzvah) with his fiancé to discuss the guidelines for a Jewish marriage. But the thought made Gary very ill at ease, because he remembered all too well the incident of the missing Kiddush cup from his Bar Mitzvah and was not interested in speaking to the rabbi about his upcoming marriage. But once again his parents insisted that he listen to what the rabbi had to say. The bride and groom entered the rabbi's study and Gary shifted uneasily in his chair. He could barely look the rabbi in the face. But he was committed to controlling himself. However, when the rabbi began to speak about the hallmarks of a Jewish marriage being honesty and trust, Gary lost control of himself. "Rabbi, how dare you lecture me about honesty and trust when you stole my great-grandfather's Kiddush cup?!"

The rabbi was startled. He thought for a moment and remembered the incident but did not realize that the family had never found the treasured Kiddush cup. "Gary, I promise you. I did not steal any Kiddush cup." By now Gary was furious. He was red in the face and embarrassed that he had lost control of himself in front of his fiancé. "Well, then, where is it? You were the last one seen with it." "Gary," the rabbi spoke calmly. "I put it back where I knew you would find it. I put it in your tefillin bag." (From Touched by a Story 2, P. 75, Reb Yechiel Spero)

The Bar Mitzvah marks the beginning of a Jewish male's obligation to perform mitzvahs. It is a shame that many Bar Mitzvah celebrations have a "bar" but not the "mitzvah." Let us be inspired by this story - and let us remember the examples of Nadav and Avihu, so that we will serve Hashem according to the way He wants, not according to our own "feel good" Judaism. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**