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*Parashat HaShavuah Series*

**Parashat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim**

There are moments in the life of any spiritually sensitive soul when s/he longs to scale the heights and loose the bonds to achieve union with God. And who could blame him/her? One can imagine the *Kohen Hagadol* in the *Kodesh HaKodashim* on *Yom HaKippurim* feeling such a moment coming on.

This week's Torah portion, it seems to me, addresses that exact situation:

וַיִּקְרָא טֹזָא – וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי ה' וַיָּמָתוּ.  
 ב – וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן אַחִיד וְאֵל יבֵּא בְּכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לַפָּרֹכֶת  
 אֶל פְּנֵי הַכֹּפֶרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בַעֲנַן אֲרָאָה עַל הַכֹּפֶרֶת.  
 ג – בְּזֹאת יבֵּא אַהֲרֹן אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ...

Leviticus 16:

- 1 – God spoke to Moses following the death of Aaron's two sons when they approached God and died.
- 2 – God said to Moses: speak to your brother Aaron that he should not, at any time, enter the Shrine behind the curtain that is in front of the cover upon the Ark, that he not die, because I appear in a cloud hovering over the cover.
- 3 – Only thus shall Aaron enter the Shrine...

What follows, of course, is the detailed description of the Tabernacle (and later, Temple) service for *Yom HaKippurim*.

The implication of juxtaposing the death of Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's two eldest sons, for bringing an uncalled-for fire on the day the Tabernacle was inaugurated seems pretty clear.

No doubt Nadav and Avihu were extremely sensitive souls. Overcome by the heightened spirituality of the moment of God's manifestation in the Tabernacle, they certainly would want to rise even higher towards God. In the spontaneity of the moment, they chose to

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*After 46 years in the pulpit rabbinate, Rabbi Zimand retired to Jerusalem.*

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add their own “fire” to the fire already offered. As the Torah reports it (Lev. 10:2), the results were disastrous. They were consumed in flames before God.

By juxtaposing this incident as introduction to Aaron being instructed in the elements of the *Yom HaKippurim* service, God, through Moses, seems to be cautioning Aaron that though a desire to cleave to God is admirable, it is not a license for boundless enthusiasm. Aaron’s entry into the *Kodesh HaKodashim* is circumscribed, and going beyond is fraught with danger.

Spiritual seeking is certainly desirable. But this Torah portion, it seems to me, teaches us that in an authentic Judaic expression thereof, it is to be a “disciplined spirituality” sought with “controlled spontaneity”.

*Shabbat Shalom!*

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