



A Fantastic Revelation from the Chasam Sofer, zy"א

Nadav and Avihu Merited Death by Divine Kiss because They Attained the Sha'ar HaNun which Even Moshe Rabeinu Had Not Attained

In this week's parsha, Acharei Mot, it behooves us to examine the kedushah and deaths of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu (Vayikra 16, 1): **וידבר ה' אל משה: אחרי מות שני בני אהרן בקרבם לפני ה' וימותו. ויאמר ה' אל משה דבר אל אהרן אחיך, ואל יבוא בכל עת אל הקודש מבית לפרוכת אל פני הכפורת אשר על הארון ולא ימות כי בענן אראה על הכפורת. בזאת יבוא אהרן אל הקודש בפר בן בקר לחטאת.** **Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died. And Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Aharon, your brother—he may not come at all times into the Sanctuary, within the “parochet” (curtain), in front of the “Kaporesh” (cover) that is upon the “aron,” and he will not die; for with a cloud I appear upon the “Kaporesh.” With this shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary—with a bull, a young male of cattle, for a “chatas” and a ram for an “olah.”**

Rashi comments: **“And Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Aharon, your brother—he may not come . . .” so that he will not die the way that his sons died. For, if he comes, he will die. For, I always appear there with My pillar of cloud; and because the revelation of My Shechinah is there, he should take care not to come there regularly.** Thus, we learn that Nadav and Avihu died for entering the Kodesh HaKodashim to burn the “ketores,” on a day other than Yom HaKippurim. This is the message conveyed by the passuk (ibid.

וויקחו בני אהרן נדב ואביהוא איש מחתתו ויתנו בהן אש ושימו עליה: (1, 10 קטורת ויקריבו לפני ה' אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם, ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל אתם וימותו לפני ה'.” **Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his own pan, and put fire in them; they placed “ketores” (incense) on it (the fire). Thus, they brought an unauthorized fire before Hashem, which He had not commanded them to do. A fire emerged from Hashem and consumed them; thus, they died before Hashem.**

This seems to concur magnificently with the commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He explains that Aharon's two sons perished, because they drew exceedingly close to Hashem. Due to this extreme intimacy with the divine, their souls left them via a divine kiss, in keeping with the passuk (Shir HaShirim 5, 6): **«נפשי יצאה בדברו»—my soul departed as He spoke!** A similar explanation is found in Toras Kohanim. They entered the Kodesh HaKodashim to burn the “ketores” even though it was not Yom HaKippurim. There, they were in such close proximity to the supreme light associated with the presence of the Shechinah that they perished with a divine kiss.

Now, in the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 217a), the divine Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, teaches his son, Rabbi Elazar, an incredible chiddush. From the day that Nadav and Avihu passed away, their neshamos were unable to find any respite until Pinchas, the son of Elazar, rose from the midst of the congregation

to avenge the honor of Hashem by killing Zimri, the leader of Shevet Shimon. When Pinchas saw that Shevet Shimon were approaching him with malice, he was overcome with fear. His neshamah left him, and the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu entered him.

The Zohar hakadosh points out that this explains why after Pinchas killed Zimri, the Torah details his lineage all the way back to Aharon (Bamidbar 25, 11): **“פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל”**—**Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael.** The inference is that until that moment, **Pinchas** was merely the **“son of Elazar”**; from that time forward, he was associated directly with **“Aharon HaKohen,”** since the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, had entered him. We will endeavor to explain why HKB”H chose to reincarnate their neshamos specifically into Pinchas.

The Revelation of the Chasam Sofer

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a fundamental principle from the teachings of the Chasam Sofer, zy”a, in Toras Moshe (Acharei Mot): **Our blessed sages contend that they (Nadav and Avihu) were greater than Moshe Rabeinu, a”h . . . for (R.H. 21b) Moshe Rabeinu, a”h, did not attain the fiftieth gate (of binah), the secret of the “yovel” (the fiftieth year), and they did. Hence, the first letters of the words בקרבנתם ל'פני ה' ו'ימותו are an anagram for “יובל”.**

Without a doubt, the Chasam Sofer is providing us with a precious insight into the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. It clarifies very nicely what Moshe remarks to Aharon after their deaths (Vayikra 10, 3): **“ויאמר משה אל אהרן הוא אשר דיבר ה' לאמר בקרובי אקדש ועל פני כל העם אכבד וידום אהרן”**—**Moshe said to Aharon: Of this did Hashem speak, saying: “I will be sanctified through those who are close to Me, and I will be honored before the entire people”;** and Aharon fell silent.

Rashi comments: **“Of this did Hashem speak . . .” Where did He speak? (Shemos 29, 43) “I**

shall meet there with Bnei Yisrael, and it shall be sanctified through My honor.” Do not read this word as בכבודי—“through My honor”—but rather as במכובדי—“through My honored ones.” Moshe said to Aharon, “Aharon my brother, I knew that the House would become sanctified through those intimate with the Omnipresent. I was under the impression that it would be either through me or through you. Now I see that they are greater than me and you . . . “and I will be honored before the entire people”: When HKB”H carries out judgment against the tzaddikim, **He is feared and exalted and lauded; if it is so with these, it is all the more so with the wicked. Thus, it says (Tehillim 68, 36): “G-d is feared from Your Sanctuary.” Do not read ממקדשיך—“from Your Sanctuary”—but rather ממקודשיך—“from Your sanctified ones.”**

According to the Chasam Sofer, Moshe Rabeinu was informing Aharon that his two sons had attained the Sha’ar HaNun of the fifty gates of “binah,” a feat that they themselves had not accomplished. Let us refer to the Gemara (R.H. 21b): **“חמישים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד, שנאמר ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים.”** **Fifty gates of “binah” were created in the universe; they were all given over to Moshe except for one — as it is written (Tehillim 8, 6): “You have made him slightly less than G-d.”** If Moshe did not attain it, clearly Aharon, who was taught by him, did not attain it. Yet, Nadav and Avihu did attain the Sha’ar HaNun, the secret of the fiftieth year, the “yovel,” as alluded to by the first letters of the words: **«ב'קרבנתם ל'פני ה' ו'ימותו».**

Combining the Insights of the Ohr HaChaim and the Chasam Sofer

It is apparent that the Chasam Sofer is introducing us to a novel understanding of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. They approached the Shechinah close enough to attain the Sha’ar HaNun. To better understand this idea, we will refer to what the esteemed Rabbi Yehonasan Eibschutz, zy”a, writes in Ye’aros Dvash (Part 2, Drush 9). Regarding attaining the Sha’ar HaNun, HKB”H said

to Moshe (Shemos 33, 20): **“לא תוכל לראות את פני כי לא יראני—*you shall not be able to see My face, for no human can see My face and live.***

He explains why this is so: **“כי בהשיגו אור גדול כזה תתדבק נפשו למעלה ותתפרד מגופו, כי תתאוה לאור עליון כנר קטן המתדבק באור גדול, וכמו שאמרו (חגיגה יד): הציץ ומת וכו', כי כל המשיגים אור רב נפשמם תתדבק בשורש. למעלה, לכך לא יראני אדם וחי.”** In short, were one to achieve this exalted level of enlightenment, one’s soul would remain attached above and would separate from its body. It would desire to be associated with the supreme light like a small flame joining a larger fire.

Understood in this light, we can explain the allusion related to their deaths: The first letters of **«ב»קרבתם לאפני יי»ו»ימותו»** are an anagram for **יוב”ל**. When their neshamos departed due to their proximity to the supreme, heavenly light, the following became a reality (Vayikra 25, 13): **“בשנת היובל הזאת—in this “yovel” year—when you attain the Sha’ar HaNun, which is analogous to the “yovel”: “תשובו איש אל אחוזתו”—each of you will return to his ancestral property.** In other words, the neshamos will be released from the constraints of the physical body and return to their source, enabling them to cling to HKB”H.

Thus, we have combined the wonderful chiddush of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh with the wonderful revelation of the Chasam Sofer. The neshamos of Nadav and Avihu left them because of a divine kiss due to their close proximity to the supreme “yovel.” Their explanations complement each other beautifully.

At Matan Torah They Attained the Sha’ar HaNun

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to grab onto the coattails of the Chasam Sofer, zy”a. Where do we find that Nadav and Avihu attained the Sha’ar HaNun? Furthermore, how did they accomplish this feat that Moshe Rabeinu did not? I believe that we can clarify the matter by referring to a teaching from our master, the Arizal, in Likutei Torah (Vaeschanan), which we have introduced on numerous occasions. He focuses on the specific

language employed by the Gemara: **“חמישים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד”**

He contends that at Matan Torah, Moshe Rabeinu attained all fifty gates of “binah”; however, after the “cheit ha’eigel,” he had to relinquish the fiftieth gate. This is alluded to by the passuk (Shemos 32, 7): **«לך—go down, because your people (that you have brought up from Mitzrayim) have acted corruptly.** The term **לך**, with a gematria of 50, alludes to the Sha’ar HaNun, the fiftieth gate. HKB”H told Moshe to go down, to relinquish that coveted achievement, on account of his people’s corruption, because they were not worthy. This is the inference of the statement: **«וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחת»**. In truth, Moshe was given all fifty gates initially, but one was subsequently taken away from him.

The Shela hakadosh (Vaeschanan) expands on this notion. The passuk states (ibid. 19, 3): **«ומשה—Moshe ascended to Elokim.** As a consequence of the “cheit ha’eigel,” it says of Moshe (Tehillim 8, 6): **«ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים—yet, You have made him only a little less than Elokim** (the divine). At that point in time, he no longer had the Sha’ar HaNun, so he became less than Elokim. This contrasts with his status at Matan Torah, where it says: **“Moshe ascended to Elokim.”** Moshe ascended to acquire all fifty gates.

Following this line of reasoning, we will proceed to explain how Nadav and Avihu attained the Sha’ar HaNun. Concerning Matan Torah, it is written (Shemos 24, 1): **«ואל משה אמר עלה אל ה' אתה ואהרן נדב ואביהוא—to Moshe He said, “Go up to Hashem, you, Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisrael, and you shall prostrate yourselves from a distance.** Afterwards, it is written (ibid. 10): **«ויראו את אלקי ישראל ותחת—they saw the G-d of Yisrael, and under His feet was the likeness of sapphire brickwork, and it was like the essence of the heavens in purity.** Rashi comments: **“They saw the G-d of Yisrael”—they gazed and glanced, and they deserved to die; however, HKB”H did**

not wish to spoil the joy of (receiving) the Torah; so, He waited for Nadav and Avihu, until the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan.

Another passuk states (ibid. 11): «ואל אצילי בני ישראל לא:—and to the nobles of Bnei Yisrael, He did not send forth His hand—they viewed G-d, yet they ate and drank. Here Rashi comments: “And to the nobles”—namely, Nadav and Avihu and the elders. “He did not send forth His hand”—this implies that they deserved to have a hand sent forth against them. “They viewed G-d”—they looked at Him with undue familiarity (vulgarity), while eating and drinking. This is the interpretation of the Midrash Tanchuma.

Now, I would like to propose that at Matan Torah, when Moshe Rabeinu ascended Har Sinai and was privileged to receive the Sha’ar HaNun; at the very same time, Nadav and Avihu gazed at the Sha’ar HaNun, even though they were instructed to bow down from a distance, i.e., not to draw near to the Sha’ar HaNun. For this they deserved to die with a divine kiss. Yet, since HKB”H did not want to mar the simchah of receiving the Torah, He waited until they gazed at the Sha’ar HaNun again on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan.

When Nadav and Avihu Entered the Kodesh HaKodashim Where the Aron Was Located They Were Exposed to the Illumination of the Sha’ar HaNun

Continuing this sacred pilgrimage, we will explain what it says in parshas Shemini—that Nadav and Avihu died, because they entered the Kodesh HaKodashim unauthorized to burn the “ketores.” What is the connection between entering the Kodesh HaKodashim and proximity to the Sha’ar HaNun, which caused their neshamos to leave them?

To reconcile the matter, I would like to introduce a precious gem from the Zera Kodesh (Beha’aloscha), authored by the great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy”a. He asserts that the enclosure in which the luchos were

housed is called an «ארון», because it is an anagram for אורן—it is where the illumination of the Sha’ar HaNun, the highest level, is revealed to us. We know that the Aron was located in the Kodesh HaKodashim. Therefore, only the Kohen Gadol, and only on Yom HaKippurim, was allowed to enter that space to provide Yisrael with forgiveness, pardon, and atonement from the Sha’ar HaNun.

Thus, we have achieved a better understanding of the combination of the insights of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh and the Chasam Sofer—that the souls of Nadav and Avihu left them with a divine kiss because of drawing too close to the Sha’ar HaNun. This is consistent with the fact that when they entered the Kodesh HaKodashim to burn the “ketores,” the site of the Aron, they gazed at and clung to the Sha’ar HaNun, the אורן.

This explains very nicely why HKB”H juxtaposed the deaths of Aharon’s two sons—“**after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died**”—with the admonition to Aharon to only enter the Kodesh HaKodashim once a year—“**speak to Aharon, your brother—he may not come at all times into the Sanctuary.**” Aharon was warned of the imminent danger of dying if he entered the Sanctuary on any day other than the holiest of days.

The Neshamos of Nadav and Avihu Reincarnated into Pinchas

It is with immense pleasure that I can now explain to our esteemed readership, based on the fantastic chiddush of the Chasam Sofer, the wondrous ways of Hashem. He arranged for the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu to reincarnate into Pinchas. When Pinchas saved Yisrael from extermination, HKB”H said to Moshe Rabeinu (Bamidbar 25, 12): «לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את:—therefore, say: **Behold! I give him My covenant of peace (“shalom”).** They expounded in the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (Pinchas):

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Pinchas is Eliyahu! HKB”H said to him: You established

peace between Yisrael and Me in Olam HaZeh; so, too, le'asid la'vo you will be the one to establish peace between Me and My children. As it says (Malachi 3, 23): "Behold, I send you Eliyahu HaNavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers."

Thus, it should be apparent to us that the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu actually reincarnated into Eliyahu HaNavi, since Pinchas and Eliyahu are one and the same. It is worthwhile noting the magnificent words of the Arizal in Likutei Torah, who reveals to us the underlying meaning of the request Elisha HaNavi makes of his mentor Eliyahu HaNavi before the latter ascended to the heavens in a whirlwind (Melachim II 2, 9): **"ויהי נא פי שנים ברוחך אלי"—may twice as much as your spirit be mine.**

The Arizal explains that Eliyahu is double; he is a gilgul of Nadav and Avihu. Hence, Elisha requested of Eliyahu that he give him **"twice as much"**—i.e., a double portion, namely the souls of Nadav and Avihu. Hence, the word **נא** in this passuk is the first letters of **נאדב אביהוא**. Additionally, the first letters of the phrase **נפ"ש ב"א נא פי שנים ברוחך אלי** spell **נפ"ש ב"א**. In other words, Elisha was requesting that Eliyahu give him the souls that came to him when he killed Zimri (when he was Pinchas).

Eliyahu HaNavi Will Resolve All Doubts by Revealing the Sha'ar HaNun

I had a wonderful thought! With the utmost reverence and love, I would like to explain why HKB"H arranged for the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu to reincarnate into Eliyahu HaNavi. As we know, whenever there is doubt or uncertainty in the Gemara regarding a halachic ruling, they invoke the term **"תיקו"**. The Tosfos Yom Tov (Maseches Eduyos 8, 7) explains that this term is an abbreviation for **תשבי תירץ קושיות ו'איבעיות**—**Tishbi (Eliyahu/ Pinchas) will answer and resolve all outstanding difficulties and questions.**

The Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 27b), however, suggests a different interpretation: **"תיקו חסר ו' דלית ליה תיקו", חסר נו"ן**. דאיהו עלמא דאתי". In other words, **תיקו** is the word **תיקו** without its final **"nun"** that alludes to Olam HaBa. We can propose that the reason certain halachos remain uncertain and cannot be determined until le'asid la'vo is because they require the Sha'ar HaNun for resolution.

Now, at the time of the future geulah, HKB"H will reveal to us even the Sha'ar HaNun. This is implied by the promise He makes to the navi (Yeshayah 51, 4): **"כי תורה מאתי תצא"—for Torah will come forth from Me.** They expounded on this passuk in the Midrash (V.R. 13, 3): **HKB"H said: "A new Torah will come forth from Me"—novel aspects (chiddushim) of the Torah will come forth from Me.** Therefore, le'asid la'vo, when HKB"H will reveal even the Sha'ar HaNun to us, in keeping with the notion of—**"a new Torah will come forth from Me"**—all the uncertainties of the Torah will be resolved.

This then is what the Zohar hakadosh is teaching us. The word **תיקו** is the word **תיקו** without its final **"nun."** This teaches us that all the uncertainties of the Torah are due to the lack of the Sha'ar HaNun. Yet, le'asid la'vo, when HKB"H will reveal the Sha'ar HaNun to us, the word **תיקו** will be upgraded to **תיקו**. Then, all the uncertainties in the Torah will be resolved and will achieve their **tikun**.

Thus, we have learned a new explanation for the word **«תיקו»**, which is commonly interpreted as **תשבי תירץ קושיות ו'איבעיות**. This is because le'asid la'vo, Eliyahu HaNavi will resolve all questions and uncertainties for us when HKB"H enlightens him with the perception of the Sha'ar HaNun. Thus, the final **"nun"** will be added to the word **"תיקו"** to transform it into its complete form—**«תיקון»**.

In this manner, we can explain how Eliyahu HaNavi will become privy to the Sha'ar HaNun. As we have learned, the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu reincarnated into Eliyahu. As we learned from the Chasam Sofer, their neshamos left them in a state of

purity when they glanced at the Sha'ar HaNun. In truth, their intent was l'shem Shamayim, to hasten the geulah. Therefore, in their merit, Eliyahu HaNavi will be privileged to attain the Sha'ar HaNun and to resolve for Yisrael all the uncertainties and ambiguities in the Torah.

We now have cause to rejoice! We can truly appreciate the wonders of Hashem. He arranged for the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu to reincarnate into

Eliyahu HaNavi. Albeit, they intended to hasten the arrival of the geulah by revealing the Sha'ar HaNun, but they erred. It was not yet time for the geulah. Therefore, HKB"H rewarded them and provided them with a tikun by having them reincarnate into Eliyahu HaNavi. He will come and announce for us the arrival of the true geulah; he will be privileged to attain the Sha'ar HaNun without forfeiting his life. For, at the time of the geulah, death will cease to be—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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