

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

## SH'MINI

*The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu... brought before G-d a strange fire that He did not command them [to bring]. Fire came forth from G-d and it consumed them, and they died before G-d. Moshe said to Aharon, "That is what G-d was speaking about when He said: I will be sanctified by those who are close to Me" (10:1-3).*

The Rashbam writes that the words BIKROVAI EKADEISH: "I will be sanctified by those who are close to me", apply to Aharon himself, and his sons Elazar and Itamar, the younger brothers of Nadav and Avihu. Not to Nadav and Avihu. The reason is that Aharon, Elazar and Itamar were so devoted to the service of G-d that they continued the holy proceedings at the dedication of the Mishkan even though Nadav and Avihu had just died. True dedication is serving under the greatest hardship. And those who are 'close to' G-d are those who serve Him with extreme dedication.

Rashi, however, follows the well-known Midrashic interpretation that the words BIKROVAI EKADEISH: 'I will be sanctified by those who are close to me' do apply to Nadav and Avihu. The deaths were indeed a fulfillment of G-d's previous words to Moshe. In reference to the Mishkan,

G-d had said: "It will be sanctified through My glory" - BICHVODI (Sh'mot 29:43) which is similar to the Hebrew word meaning 'those who honor me'. Rashi elaborates with the words: Moshe told Aharon: "I knew that the Mishkan would be sanctified by someone in whom G-d's glory rests, but I thought it would be one of us. Now I know that they were greater than either of us."

The following alternative explanation may be suggested. Nadav and Avihu wished to get close to G-d, but they took an unauthorized short cut. As the text states: Nadav and Avihu... brought before G-d a strange fire that He did not command them [to bring]. Even though normally 'the sons of Aharon would put fire on the altar' (1:7), on this occasion G-d said He would send the fire down Himself - to demonstrate His super-natural support of the Mishkan. Nadav and Avihu's acts of bring the fire on this occasion - however enthusiastically - undermined the impact in the eyes of the public. Therefore G-d send the fire that in one instance consumed Nadav and Avihu (10:2) as well as the animal offering specially for the occasion (9:24) (Rashbam). And G-d was effectively making an example of them to teach the Israelites the following lesson. Closeness to G-d comes though using His Commandments as a guide to approach Him, stage by stage. Not doing what you

think He wants. But doing what He tells you He wants. And if He doesn't tell, hold back. Getting close to G-d goes stage by stage, not instantaneous, though He may well give a 'helping hand' on the way...

That is the meaning of the words BIKROVAI EKADEISH: 'I will be sanctified by those who have the patience rather than the impetuosity to get close to me.' Those who have that great dedication, of the quality exemplified by the Rashbam (above).

This concept also applies to human relationships. Most satisfying friendships and contacts are the products of sustained effort to get to know the other, and working together in sometimes trying conditions, rather than on the basis of just a quick meeting where there is momentary 'chemistry'. 📖