

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

PARSHAS SHEMINI

Wine Is Okay, Drunk Is Not

In this week's Parsha, Shemini, we read that a Kohen is not permitted to do the Temple service while intoxicated. Hashem said this mitzvah directly to Aharon, instead of the usual, when He would say it to Moshe or both Moshe and Aharon together.

Why the change? What can we learn from this?

Earlier in our Parsha, we read about the death of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu when, without being commanded, they brought incense offerings. Moshe said to Aharon, "This is what G-d spoke, 'I will be sanctified by those nearest to Me, and I will be honored before all the people.'" And Aharon was silent.

From here we understand that Nadav and Avihu were "those near to Me." They were at a very high spiritual plane. Hashem chose to be "sanctified" through them.

Rashi tells us that Aharon was rewarded for his silence. Hashem handed down the mitzvah, not to do the Temple service while intoxicated, directly to Aharon alone.

Aharon's acceptance of Hashem's will in the most difficult and painful situation earned him divine communication.

Wine is symbolic of the deepest secrets of the Torah. To be intoxicated on this "wine" means to go to spiritual heights with the intention to lose yourself totally, to the extent that the Neshama leaves the body to become one with its source, Hashem.

Though this sounds idealistic and lofty, it is not what Hashem wants of us. He wants us to reach spiritual heights for the purpose of returning with the spiritual power to infuse the physical world with G-dliness.

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Aharon was all about the fusion of G-dliness into the physical. That is what a Kohen Gadol is all about. To help us reach spiritually higher so that we can, in turn, use our newfound heights to make this world into a home for Hashem.

By being silent, he demonstrated his acceptance of

Hashem's will. Aharon recognized his children's greatness and their ability to attain such a high spiritual plane. Yet he realized that this is not what Hashem wants. Being able to accept Hashem's will in the sight of his children's lifeless state earned him divine communication.

We all suffer heartbreak and pain. Accepting it as Hashem's will, even and especially when it makes no sense at all, puts you on an exalted level, worthy of being Hashem's conduit to lift and help others achieve higher heights and greater accomplishments.

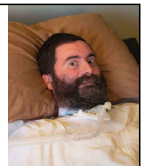
I don't know why Hashem makes us suffer. I wish He wouldn't. However, this is His will, and He surely has a good reason. All we can do is accept, and when we do, we become His agent for positive change.

This is in no way giving up hope that things will get better. Rather, we accept what Hashem has burdened us with and pray for things to get better.

There is a story of a man digging through the toughest of rock in search of precious gems. As he is digging, the work is so hard and seems so pointless and he is tempted to give up so many times. But he knows that if he persists, no matter how tired he is, or how pointless it seems, he will find treasure. We are all digging deep in the hardest of circumstances right now. If only we knew how close we really are, we would be doing it with renewed energy and joy.

For thousands of years, our ancestors have been digging. We are the most fortunate generation, for we will reach the goal. Of course, the rock is hardest towards the end, but we are most determined, and our will is stronger than ever. May we all be rewarded for our persistence, our pain, and our suffering with the coming of Moshiach immediately.

Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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