

**"A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them"**

## **Two Strands of Fire that Emerged from the Kodesh HaKodashim Consumed the Neshamos of Nadav and Avihu with a Divine Kiss**

In this week's parsha, parshas Shemini, we learn about the deaths of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, on the day the Mishkan was consecrated (Vayikra 10, 1): **"ויקחו בני אהרן נדב ואביהוא איש מחתתו ויתנו בהן אש וישימו עליה קטורת, ויקריבו לפני ה' אש זרה ואביהוא איש מחתתו ויתנו בהן אש וישימו עליה קטורת, ויקריבו לפני ה' אש זרה—the sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, they put fire in them and placed incense upon it; and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that he had not commanded them. A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them, and they died before Hashem.**

In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 52a), our blessed sages describe the heavenly fire that consumed Nadav and Avihu in greater detail: **"שני חוטין של אש יצאו מבית קודש הקדשים ונחלקו לארבע, ונכנסו—two strands of fire emerged from the chamber of the Kodesh HaKodashim and split into four; two entered this one's nostrils and two entered this one's nostrils; and they consumed them.** We must endeavor to explain why this phenomenal fire initially emerged as two strands and subsequently split into four. Why didn't it emerge as four strands from the onset? Additionally, why did two strands of fire enter each one's nostrils respectively? Wouldn't it have sufficed for one strand to enter each's body to consume him?

I found an answer to these questions in the incredible teachings of the Megaleh Amukos, zy" a, on this week's parsha. He reconciles the matter in a logical fashion by scrutinizing the precise language employed by the passuk: **"ותצא אש מלפני ה'."** Note that the passuk employs the divine name **"Havaya."** This is somewhat surprising, seeing as the name Havaya connotes the attribute of **"rachamim"**—divine mercy. Here, however, the fire that consumed them was a vehicle of the attribute of **"din"**—divine justice. Seemingly, the passuk should have employed the name **"Elokim."**

He reconciles the matter in one fell swoop based on the following passuk (Devarim 9, 20): **"ובאהרן התאנף ה' מאד להשמידו—Hashem became very angry with Aharon to destroy him, so I also prayed for Aharon, at that time. Rashi explains: "To destroy him" connotes the annihilation of children. This is similarly demonstrated in the following passuk (Amos 2, 9): "Yet, I destroyed his fruit (offspring) from above." "So I also prayed for Aharon"—and my prayer effectively atoned for one half; two sons died and two sons remained.**

Accordingly, the Megaleh Amukos explains that this is why two strands of fire emerged initially, which then split into four. This indicated that, in reality, HKB" H wished to consume all four of Aharon's sons; however, in the merit of Moshe Rabeinu's supplication, two strands entered each one's nostrils respectively. This is the implication of the words: **"ותצא אש מלפני ה'—HKB" H transformed the midah of "din" into "rachamim."** As a result, only two sons—Nadav and Avihu—were consumed rather than all four.

### **The Sons of Aharon Died because They Taught a Halachah in the Presence of Their Teacher Moshe**

So, let us examine the cause of the deaths of the sons of Aharon according to what our blessed sages reveal to us in the Gemara (Yoma 53a; Eiruvim 63a): **"רבי אליעזר אומר, לא מתו בני אהרן אלא על שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן. מאי דרוש, (ויקרא א-2) ונתנו בני אהרן הכהן אש על המזבח, אף על פי שהאש יורדת מן השמים מצוה להביא מן ההדיוט— Rabbi Eliezer says: The sons of Aharon died only because they rendered a legal decision (halachah) in the presence of Moshe, their teacher. What did they expound? It states: "The sons of Aharon shall place a fire on the mizbeiach." They inferred from this passuk that even though the fire comes down from heaven, there is a mitzvah to bring fire**

from ordinary sources. Rashi explains: **“Even though they pronounced the correct ruling, they were punished for not obtaining permission.”** According to Rashi, Nadav and Avihu ruled correctly; nevertheless, it was considered a sin, because they did so in the presence of their teacher, Moshe.

We find a similar explanation in Rashi’s commentary on this week’s parsha (Vayikra 10, 2): **“ותצא אש. רבי אליעזר אומר, לא מתו: לא מתו: בני אהרן אלא על ידי שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן.”** The Maharal in Gur Aryeh, his classic commentary on Rashi, writes: **“אף על גב דקרא כתיב אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם, מפני שאותו אש שהקריבו הורו הלכה בפני משה רבם נקרא אש זרה, דכיון דהוא הלכה בפני משה רבם, היה אותו אש זר לפני ה’—even though the Torah refers to the fire they brought as “an alien fire that he had not commanded them,” it was only designated as such, because they pronounced the halachah in the presence of their Rav, Moshe Rabeinu; as such, it did not represent the fire of a “ketores”—incense.”**

First, let us make one point very clear, so that we don’t make the mistake, chas v’shalom, of accepting the narrative at face value—implying that Nadav and Avihu had the audacity, chas v’shalom, of pronouncing a halachah in the presence of Moshe, their Rav. After all, Moshe Rabeinu himself attests to their greatness, as it is written (ibid.): **“ויאמר משה אל אהרן הוא אשר: 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 “through My honor”—but rather as “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 “from Your Sanctuary”—but rather “from Your sanctified ones.”**

Let us provide an explanation based on a question posed by the Maharsha (Eiruvin 63a). The Torah explicitly states: **“ונתנו בני אהרן הכהן אש על המזבח—the sons of Aharon shall place a fire on the mizbeiach—**Aharon’s sons were directed to bring fire from an ordinary, earthly source. That being the case, how can we claim that they taught a halachah in the presence of Moshe, when they were merely fulfilling a directive stated explicitly in the Torah? He explains, however, that the passuk does not actually specify where the fire was to be brought from. Hence, it could be interpreted as directing them to bring fire from the heavenly fire that descended and crouched upon the mizbeiach—in order to kindle the wood. Seeing as the source of the fire was not specified explicitly in the passuk, it was viewed as if they had pronounced a halachah in the presence of their teacher.

Thus, we can only presume that the holy Nadav and Avihu did not deem their actions as the pronouncement of a halachah in the presence of their Rav, Moshe. After all, the passuk explicitly directs them to place fire on the mizbeiach--**“ונתנו בני אהרן הכהן אש—על המזבח.”** Yet, since the passuk is open to interpretation—for, it could be instructing them to bring fire from the heavenly fire that descended regularly upon the mizbeiach--it could be viewed as if they did indeed pronounce a halachah in the presence of their Rav. It turns out, therefore, that their transgression falls into the category of (Tehillim 50, 3): **“וסכיביו נשערה מאד”.** Regarding this passuk, we find the following elucidation (Yevamos 121b): **“וסכיביו נשערה מאד, מלמד שהקב”ה מדקדק עם סכיביו כחוט השערה—this teaches us that HKB”H is exacting with those surrounding Him—i.e. those closest to Him—like a strand of hair—to an extreme degree.**

Now, it behooves us to clarify how Nadav and Avihu’s punishment characterizes the principle of “midah k’neged midah.” How was the punishment fitting and appropriate for their particular transgression? For, we learn in the Mishnah (Sotah 8b): **“במדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו”**-- in the manner a person deals with others, so will Hashem deal with him—“measure for measure.” How does fire coming out of the Kodosh HaKodashim and consuming these two holy personages—Nadav and Avihu—exemplify the principle of “midah k’neged midah” for their having pronounced a halachah in the presence of their Rav?

### **“בקרבתם לפני ה’” Indicates that Their Deaths Were by a Divine Kiss**

We shall begin to shed some light on the matter by referring to a passuk in parshas Acharei Mos (Vayikra 16, 1): **“וידבר ה’ אל משה אחרי מות שני בני אהרן בקרבתם לפני ה’ וימותו”**—and Hashem

spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died." Here the Torah defines the nature of their sin. According to the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, this passuk teaches us that Aharon's two sons died, because of their extreme intimacy with Hashem. Their souls departed their physical bodies, because they drew too near, in keeping with the notion of (Shir HaShirim 5, 6): "נפשי יצאה בדברו"-- my soul departed at His decree! Here are his inspirational words:

דיבר ה' למשה דרך מיתתו, שהיתה על זה האופן בקרבתם לפני ה', פירוש שנתקרבו לפני אור העליון בחיבת הקודש וכוזה מתו, והוא סוד הנשיקה שבה מתים הצדיקים. והנה הם שווים למיתת כל הצדיקים, אלא שההפרש הוא, שהצדיקים הנשיקה מתקרבת להם, ואילו הם נתקרבו לה, והוא אומר בקרבתם לפני ה'.

ואומר 'וימותו' בתוספות וא", רמז הכתוב הפלאת חיבת הצדיקים, שהגם שהיו מרגישים במיתתם, לא נמנעו מקירוב לדביקות נעימות עריבות ידידות חביבות חשיקות מתיקות, עד כלות נפשם מהם והבן. ובחינה זו אין מכיר איכותה, והיא מושללת ההכרה, לא מפי מין האנושי ולא מפי כתבו, ולא תושג בהשערות מושכל הגשם.

He explains that their deaths exemplify the concept of "misas neshikah"-- "death by a divine kiss." This is the death reserved for all tzaddikim. There is one difference, however; in general, the kiss comes to them; in this instance, they came to it, as indicated by the words: **"when they approached Hashem."** Then the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh focuses on the word "וימותו"—meaning **"and they died"**—which appears with an initial "vav" for emphasis. The "vav" alludes to the extreme devotion demonstrated by tzaddikim. Although they sense their imminent deaths, they are not deterred from drawing closer to Hashem and delighting in the feeling of intimacy. This is beyond definition and comprehension.

There appears to be a big contradiction here, which we must address. According to the holy Tanna, Rabbi Eliezer, cited above, Nadav and Avihu died because they pronounced a halachah in the presence of Moshe. Thus, their pronouncement qualified as: **"אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם"**—an alien fire, which they were not authorized to bring. If that was truly the case, then how did they merit "misas neshikah," which is reserved exclusively for tzaddikim? Even if we postulate that this particular "misas neshikah" represented a form of punishment, we must endeavor to explain how it fulfilled the criteria of "midah k'neged midah."

## "Yirah" Protects Tzaddikim so that Their Lives Do Not Expire from Ahavas Hashem

To explain all of these issues, I was struck by a wonderful idea. I would like to begin by presenting a valuable concept from the teachings of the Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy" a, in Avodat Yisrael (Bechukosai), regarding the passuk (Vayikra 26, 12): **"והתהלכתי—I will walk among you, and I will be G-d unto you. Rashi comments: I will walk with you in Gan Eden, like one of you; and you will not shudder from Me. You might suppose that you will not fear Me. Therefore, the Torah states: "And I will be a G-d unto you." The holy Maggid interprets this passuk in his unique, sacred manner by referring to the following Mishnah (Avos 3, 2): "רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר, "הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות, שאילמלא מוראה איש את רעהו חיים בלעו"—Rabbi Chanina the deputy Kohen Gadol says: Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear of its authority, a man would swallow his neighbor alive.**

We can suggest that Rabbi Chanina concealed within his remark an exalted notion. The ultimate aim of a Jew's service of Hashem is to serve Hashem with extreme love and fiery devotion. As a result of this great love and delight, one will cling to Hashem with intense intimacy, reflecting the words of the passuk (Devarim 4, 4): **"ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום—but you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, are all alive today.**

However, if a person only serves Hashem with "ahavah," there exists an inherent danger. As a result of the extreme delight, one's life might expire; his soul will abandon its physical body and attach to HKB"H, the source of life. It is analogous to a small candle; as it draws near to a large bonfire, it is extinguished, because its fire is engulfed by the greater flame of the bonfire. Therefore, it is imperative for a person to also serve Hashem with the midah of "yirah"—fear and reverence. The thought of standing in the presence of HKB"H should fill a person with reverence and fear, since HKB"H is the almighty and exalted King. Thus, this degree of "yirah" will temper the person's "ahavah," so that his life will not expire.

This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol: **"Pray for the welfare of the government"**—referring to the welfare of the sovereignty of Heaven that moves a person to "yirah," like a servant who stands in fear and trepidation before his king; **"for were it not for the fear of its authority, a man (איש) would swallow**

**his neighbor alive.** The term “איש” here alludes to HKB”H, as we find in the passuk (SheMos 15, 3): “ה' איש מלחמה”—**Hashem is a Man of war**; “את רעהו”—alludes to the person who serves Hashem with intimate devotion and pleasure; “חיים בלעו”—due to his pleasure and devotion, his soul would detach and depart from his body.

### “And I will be a G-d unto you” to Imbue You with the Midah of “Yirah”

In this manner, the Avodat Yisrael interprets Rashi's comment: “זהתהלכתי בתוכם”—**I will walk with you in Gan Eden, like one of you; and you will not shudder from Me.** He is referring to the pleasure the Neshamos derive from the amazing attachment and intimacy, which will cause them not to shudder in the presence of the Almighty. On the contrary, due to the sparks of fire, the soul will adhere to HKB”H. This prompts Rashi to add: **In case you will not fear Me . . .**

Here is how he explains Rashi's meaning: **“In other words, since you will not fear Me, you will reach a level of detachment from your physical beings and you will be null and void, as it says with regards to Nadav and Avihu: “When they approached before Hashem, and they died.” For, they, too, brought themselves too close and their souls remained at their source, as we know. Therefore, the Torah states: “And I will be a G-d (Elokim) unto you”—the service out of “yirah” (alluded to by the name Elokim) will be combined with that stemming from “ahavah” in order to moderate it and limit it.”**

In truth, according to this explanation, we must explain the following: Why then did Nadav and Avihu's souls depart as a result of their intense love and closeness to Hashem? Why didn't their midah of “yirah” effectively temper their extreme degree of “ahavah,” so that their souls would not depart? For, we cannot suggest, chas v'shalom, that these great tzaddikim lacked the midah of “yirah.” After all, as we pointed out above, HKB”H Himself attests to their righteousness: “בקרובי אקדש”.

### Revere Your Rav as You Revere Heaven

It appears that we can explain the matter, with reverence and adoration, by first explaining the following teaching in the Mishnah (Avos 4, 12): “מורא רבך כמורא שמים”—**the reverence of your teacher as the reverence of Heaven.** We can suggest

that the Tanna wished to teach us the following: While it is important to serve Hashem not only with the midah of “ahavah,” but also with the midah of “yirah”; because the midah of “yirah” moderates the level of “ahavah,” so that a person's soul will not depart due to the extreme love and attachment to Hashem. In similar fashion, a person must take care not to develop too great a love and familiarity with his Rav, lest he become lax in his kavod, chas v'shalom. Hence, one should adopt an appropriate degree of “yirah,” in order to moderate one's degree of “ahavah”; this will prevent him from drawing too near and becoming too casual.

This notion coincides wonderfully with what we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 2, 10): “הווי מתחמם כנגד אורן של” —**and warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their glowing embers lest you be burnt.** Here is Rabeinu Yonah's comment:

**“Warm yourself by the sages' fire”—by the fire but not in too close proximity; “but beware of their glowing embers lest you be burnt.”** This is analogous to a person who warms himself by a fire. If he stands at an appropriate distance from it, he will derive pleasure but will not be burnt; if he draws too near, he will be burnt. The same applies to a person who draws warmth from the fire of the sages and derives pleasure from their wisdom. He must stand in their presence with an attitude of “yirah,” awe and seriousness. He should not behave flippantly in their presence; and he should not draw nearer to them than the degree to which they draw him near. For, that would distance him from them and would warrant a serious punishment.

It is worthwhile interjecting at this point what the Bnei Yissaschar writes in his sefer Agra D'Pirka (8):

**Rabeinu HaKadosh instructs his son (Kesubos 103b): “Cast fear upon your students.” And I heard from the esteemed Admor, the great Rav Menachem Mendel (of Rimanov) of blessed and sacred memory, that it is essential that the moon receives light from the sun at a distance, as is well known. The greater the distance, the more light it will receive. The closer it comes to the source, it will be dulled by her light. The same applies to what a student receives from the Rav. By adopting an attitude of respectful distance from his Rav out of “yirah,” he will receive more from him. Due to his obligation to revere him, he will receive more.**

This enlightens us with regards to Rabbi Eliezer's comment: "לא מתו בני אהרן אלא על ידי שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן". One of the reasons it is prohibited to pronounce a halachah in the presence of one's Rav is in order to demonstrate an appropriate degree of "yirah" for the Rav's kavod—that one would not dare do so without his Rav's permission. This is the message of the Mishnah: "And warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their glowing embers lest you be burnt." Accordingly, when Nadav and Avihu pronounced a halachah in the presence of their Rav, Moshe, by bringing fire from a mundane source, their act constituted a serious misdeed. It demonstrated a serious lack of reverence for their Rav, inconsistent with their level of kedushah.

Now, we have learned: "מורא רבך כמורא שמים"—that HKB"H demands that one reveres his Rav as he reveres Heaven. Therefore, for neglecting to properly revere their Rav--"מורא" "מורא--the sons of Aharon were punished in kind—"midah k'neged midah." Their reverence of Heaven--"מורא שמים"--was also temporarily confiscated from above. As a result of this temporary lack of "yirah"—which would have ordinarily moderated their level of "ahavah"—their lives expired, as their souls departed due to their extreme devotion, as it states: "בקרבתם לפני ה' וימותו"—when they approached Hashem and they died.

### **"Do not come any closer to this spot" so that You Will Not Die with a Divine Kiss**

Continuing onward with this line of reasoning, we will proceed to explain the amazing connection between what we learned in the Gemara above: "שני חוטין של אש יצאו מבית קודש הקדשים ונחלקו לארבע, ונכנסו שנים בחוטמו של זה ושרפום"—and what we learned from the sacred writings of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh—that Nadav and Avihu's deaths were by "divine kiss." First, however, let us explain the mystical conversation that took place between HKB"H and Moshe Rabeinu at their very first encounter—at the revelation of the burning bush (SheMos 3, 2):

"וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וירא והנה הסנה בוער באש והסנה איננו אוכל. ויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מדוע לא יבער הסנה. וירא ה' כי סר לראות, ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר הנני, ויאמר אל תקרב הלום של נעליך מעל רגליך, כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא. ויאמר אנכי אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים".

**"An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn-bush. He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, 'Let me turn aside now and behold this great sight—why will the bush not be burned?' Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, 'Moshe, Moshe,' and he replied, 'Here I am!' He said, 'Do not come any closer to this spot; take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.' And He said, 'I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov.' Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to look at G-d."**

We must endeavor to explain why we do not find an answer in the Torah to Moshe's bewilderment: "מדוע לא יבער הסנה"—why isn't the bush being consumed by the flames? After all, it is the nature of fire to burn and consume the objects it comes into contact with. Nevertheless, we find an answer provided for us by Chazal in the Midrash (S.R. 2, 5). HKB"H tells Moshe that it is He Who is revealing Himself to him through the thorn-bush. Thus did HKB"H hint to him the answer to his inquiry. For, the nature of divine, heavenly fire is different; it illuminates but does not necessarily consume.

We find a similar answer in Tosafos (Chagigah 27a), who cite the Midrash Tanchuma (Terumah 11). When HKB"H commanded Moshe to build a mizbeiach of "shittim wood" and to cover it with copper in order to sacrifice korbanos, Moshe was perplexed. For, the passuk states (Vayikra 6, 6): "אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה"—**a permanent fire shall remain aflame on the mizbeiach; it shall not be extinguished.** Shouldn't the copper melt and the wood be consumed by the fire? In response, HKB"H explains to him, as brought down by Tosafos: "כך דרכי באש של מעלה, אש אוכלת אש ואינו מכלה, כדכתיב והסנה איננו אוכל—**this is the nature of fire from above; the fire eats fire but does not consume, as it is written: "And the thorn-bush was not consumed."**

We can now comprehend the order of the pesukim. When Moshe Rabeinu saw that the thorn-bush was aflame but was not being consumed, he innocently assumed that the fire was an ordinary, earthly fire that ordinarily consumes the objects that it engulfs. Therefore, he was bewildered by this unnatural sight: "מדוע לא יבער הסנה". To which HKB"H reveals to him that the sight he was witnessing was not that of an earthly fire lit by a human being. Rather, he was witnessing a heavenly fire

employed by HKB”H to reveal Himself; and the nature of such a heavenly fire is that it burns without consuming.

Therefore, with the very same utterance that HKB”H reveals to Moshe that the fire in question is from the heavenly realm, HKB”H cautions him: **“Do not come any closer to this spot.”** For, if you draw too near to HKB”H, your soul will depart from your body, due to the extreme attachment. This is what happened with Nadav and Avihu: **“בקרבתם לפני ה' וימותו”**—they came too close to Hashem. This, too, is the implication of HKB”H’s statement: **“I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov”**—Who is revealing Himself to you via this heavenly fire. When Moshe grasped HKB”H’s message, immediately: **“Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to look at G-d.”** He was overwhelmed with “yirah” and fear of HKB”H, and took care not to approach any further, lest his soul exit his body.

Thus, we have gained a better understanding of how the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh’s comment—that Aharon’s two sons experienced death by means of a divine kiss-- coincides magnificently with what we learned in the Gemara—that two strands of fire emerged from the Kodesh HaKodashim and consumed them. Those two strands of fire represented the light of Hashem, Who rests His Shechinah in the Kodesh HaKodashim. Because they approached and entered the Kodesh HaKodashim, in order to bond with Hashem, two heavenly strands of fire emerged. Consequently, their Neshamos attached to the fire like the fire of a candle that merges with and is absorbed by a bonfire.

I was delighted to find a source for this interpretation of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh’s comment in the holy sefer Eitz HaDa’as Tov, authored by Rabeinu Chaim Vital, the outstanding disciple of the Arizal (Acharei Mos). Here is how he explains the deaths of Aharon’s sons:

**“גם נדב ואביהוא ביום חנוכת המשכן, כי אותו היום היה ראשון לרדת השכינה לדור בתחתונים, ואז נתקרבו אלו על ידי הקטורת להתקשר בשכינה אשר לפנים מבית להכפורת, וחשבו לחזות בשכינה על ידי הקטורת, ונתדבקו נפשותם בשכינה הנקראת אש אוכלת ומתו בנשיקה.”**

וזהו סוד ותצא אש, היא השכינה מלפני ה', שהוא בית קודש הקדשים, ותאכל אותם. וזהו שכתוב בקרבנתם לפני ה', בבית קודש הקדשים נתקרבו אל השכינה, ואחר שנתקרבו וימותו בנשיקה, ושאר הצדיקים אינם כן אלא מתים ואחר כך מתדבקים בשכינה. וזהו עצמו סוד מה שאמר משה, הוא אשר דבר ה' בקרובי אקדש, כי אדרבה להיותם מתקרבים לו נקדש בהם.”

**The day of the inauguration of the Mishkan was the first day that the Shechinah descended to dwell among the inhabitants of earth. On that day, Nadav and Avihu approached the location of the “kapores,” in order to attach themselves to the Shechinah, by means of the “ketores.” They intended to glimpse the Shechinah by means of the “ketores”; however, their souls attached to the Shechinah, which is referred to as a consuming fire, and they died by divine kiss.**

**This is the deeper significance of the words: “And a fire went out.” This refers to the Shechinah going out from Hashem, from the Kodesh HaKodashim, and consuming them. This is the implication of the words: “When they approached Hashem.” They approached the Shechinah in the Kodesh HaKodashim. After drawing near, they perished by means of a kiss. This is not what happens with other tzaddikim; first they die and then they attach themselves to the Shechinah. This is the deeper meaning of Moshe’s statement: “Of this did Hashem speak, saying: ‘I will be sanctified through those who are close to Me.’” On the contrary, due to their extreme devotion and drawing near to Him, He was sanctified by them.**

Thus, we have an explicit source stating that the fire that emerged from the Kodesh HaKodashim was the holy Shechinah that HKB”H placed there. So, when the passuk states: **“והצא אש”**—it is referring to the Shechinah that emerged from the Kodesh HaKodashim. Due to their intimate attachment with the Shechinah, the souls of Aharon’s righteous sons departed their bodies and they perished with a divine kiss. Regarding simple people like us, we can only strive to serve Hashem with “yirah” and extreme devotion. In this manner, we can fulfill the words of the passuk (Devarim 4, 4): **“ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים: -- כולכם היום”** **and you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive (חיים) today.**

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