

Moshe and Aharon: Relationship between Brothers

1. Exodus 4:13-15, 27

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח־נָא בְי־תְשַׁלַּח: וַיַּחֲרֹאֶף יְהוָה בְּמִשְׁעָה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶהְיֶה אֶחָדִךָ הַלּוֹי יְדַעְתִּי כִּי־דַבֵּר יִדְבָר הוּא וְגַם הִנֵּה־הוּא יֵצֵא לִקְרֹאתְךָ וּרְאֵה וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ: וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו וְשָׂמַח אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים בְּפִיו וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם־פִּיךָ וְעִם־פִּיהוּ וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן:

But he said, "Please, O my lord, make someone else Your agent." God became angry with Moses and said, "There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth—I will be with you and with him as you speak, and tell both of you what to do."

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לִקְרֹאת מֹשֶׁה הַמִּדְבָּרָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ בְּהַר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁקֵלּוּ:

God said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." He went and met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him.

2. Shemot Rabbah 5:2

וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ, הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב (תהלים פה:י) "חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ." חֶסֶד זֶה אַהֲרֹן... וְאֱמֶת זֶה מֹשֶׁה... צְדָק זֶה מֹשֶׁה... וְשָׁלוֹם זֶה אַהֲרֹן, "וַיִּשְׁקֵ לּוֹ" - מֵהוּ וַיִּשְׁקֵ לּוֹ, זֶה שְׂמַח בְּגִדְלָתוֹ שֶׁל זֶה וְזֶה שְׂמַח בְּגִדְלָתוֹ שֶׁל זֶה.

"He went and met him" – As it is written, "Loving-kindness and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Psalms 85:11). Loving-kindness – this refers to Aaron. Truth – this refers to Moses. Righteousness – this refers to Moses. Peace – this refers to Aaron.

"He kissed him" - This means: each rejoiced at the other's greatness.

3. Leviticus 9:23-24

וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם: וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּרְנוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם:

Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of God appeared to all the people. Fire came forth from before God and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and exulted, and fell on their faces.

4. Rashi, Leviticus 9:23

וַיִּצְאוּ וַיִּבְרְכוּ אֶת הָעָם. אָמְרוּ וַיְהִי נֵעֵם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ, יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׂתִשְׁרָה שְׂכִינָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה דִיכֶם; לְפִי שֶׁכָּל שְׁבַעֲת יְמֵי הַמְּלוּאִים שֶׁהָעַמִּידוּ מִשְׁעָה לְמַשְׁכַּן וְשָׂמַשׁ בּוֹ וּפְרָקוּ בְּכָל יוֹם לֹא שָׂרְתָה בּוֹ

שְׂכִינָה, וְהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִכְלָמִים וְאוֹמְרִים לְמֹשֶׁה, מַלְּשָׁה רַבְּנוּ, כָּל הַטֶּרַח שֶׁשָּׂרַחְנוּ שֶׁתְּשִׁיבָה שְׂכִינָה בֵּינֵינוּ וְיִגְדַע שְׁנֵנֶתְכֶפֶר לָנוּ עוֹן הָעֵגֶל, לְכֹף אָמַר לָהֶם זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֲלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד ה' — אֲהָרֹן אָחִי כְּדָאִי וְחָשׁוּב מִמֶּנִּי, שֶׁעַל יָדֵי קַרְבָּנוֹתָיו וְעִבּוּדוֹתָיו תְּשִׁיבָה שְׂכִינָה בְּכֶם וְתִדְעוּ שֶׁהַמְּקוֹם בְּחָר בּוֹ:

AND THEY CAME OUT AND BLESSED THE PEOPLE — They said (Psalms 90:17): “May the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us” — i. e. May it be God’s will that the Shechinah may rest upon the work of your hands. They invoked just this blessing because during the whole seven days of the installation when Moses was setting up the Tabernacle and officiating therein and dismantling it daily the Shechinah had not rested upon it and the Israelites felt ashamed, saying to Moses: “O, our Teacher Moses! All the trouble which we have taken was only that the Shechinah may dwell amongst us, so that we may know that the sin of the golden calf has been atoned for on our behalf!” He therefore had said to them (v. 6): “This is the thing which the Lord commanded that you should do so that the glory of the Lord may appear unto you” (i. e. only after these offerings will have been brought by Aaron will God’s glory appear unto you). My brother Aaron is more worthy and excellent than I am, so that through his sacrifices and service the Shechinah will rest upon you, and you will thereby know that the Omnipresent God has chosen him to bring His Shechinah upon you.

5. **Rabbi Nehemia Polen, “Touches of Intimacy: Leviticus, Sacred Space, Torah’s Center” from *A New Hasidism: Roots*, edited by Rabbi Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse**

But why did Moses and Aaron enter the Tabernacle? To be sure, the talmudic Rabbis offer reasons, such as that Moses instructed Aaron on the procedure for the incense offering. But why now, and why is the text silent about this? I suggest that the entry of the two brothers into the tent completes a narrative arc that began in Genesis, where brothers are always at odds with each other and the tension usually revolves around blessing, with siblings competing for their parents’ special favor. The benevolent collaboration of Moses and Aaron in Exodus and Leviticus reverses this pattern and is a model of two brothers who get their relationship right. The result is blessing for all and the appearance of the *kevod* to the entire people. Wisely, the biblical narrator does not tell us what Moses and Aaron say to each other in the sanctuary; perhaps they are silent, just gazing tearfully into each other’s eyes, with joy and *nachas*. In any event, when they emerge, the model of irenic sibling cooperation is firmly established, and the result is blessing and divine theophany.

6. **Leviticus 10:4-20**

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אֲהָרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶתְתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בְּהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֲתֶם: וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֲהָרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה | לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֲקַדֵּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעַם אֲכַבֵּד וַיִּדָּם אֲהָרֹן: וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־מִישָׁאֵל וְאֵל אֶלְצָפָן בְּנֵי עֲזִיזָאֵל דֹּד אֲהָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קְרָבֹו שְׂאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־מַחֲוִיץ לְמַתְּנָה: וַיִּקְרְבוּ וַיִּשָּׂאֵם בְּכַתְּנֹתָם אֶל־מַחֲוִיץ לְמַתְּנָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֲהָרֹן וְלֹא־עֲזָרוּ וְלֹא־יִתְמָרוּ | בְּנֵי־רֵאשִׁיכֶם אֶל־תִּפְרְעוּ | וּבְגֵדֵיכֶם לֹא־תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמָּתוּ וְעַל כָּל־הָעֵדָה יִקְצָף וְאֲחֵיכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְפוּ אֶת־הַשָּׂרֵפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יְהוָה: וּמִפְּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצֵאוּ פֶן־תִּמָּתוּ כִּי־שָׂמֵן מִשְׁחַת יְהוָה עָלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כַּדְּבַר מֹשֶׁה: {פ}

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: יֵינוּ וְשִׁכַּר אַל־תִּשְׁתֶּה | אֲתָהּ | וּבָנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תִמְתְּנוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: וְלֹהֲבִדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֵל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר: וְלֹהוֹרֹת אֶת־בָּנֶי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: {פ}

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶל־אִיתָמָר | בְּנֵי הַנְּזוֹתֵרִים קָחוּ אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַנּוֹתֵרֶת מֵאִשֵּׁי יְהוָה וְאֶכְלוּהָ מִצֹּחַ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים הִוא: וְאֶכְלֹתֶם אֹתָהּ בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ כִּי חֹקָה וְחֹק־בְּנֵיךָ הִוא מֵאִשֵּׁי יְהוָה כִּי־כֹן צִוִּיתִי: וְאֵת חֹזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת | שׂוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה תֹאכְלוּ בְּמָקוֹם טָהוֹר אִתְּהּ וּבָנֶיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ אִתְּךָ כִּי־חֹקָה וְחֹק־בְּנֵיךָ נִתְּנוּ מִזְבְּחֵי שְׁלָמֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: שׂוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְחֹזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה עַל אִשֵּׁי הַחֻלְבִּים יָבִיאוּ לְהַגִּיף תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִלָּה לָךְ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ לְחֹק־עוֹלָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה: וְאֵת | שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרֹשׁ דָּרֹשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהִגֵּה שְׂרָף וְקִצָּף עַל־אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל־אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַנּוֹתֵרִים לֵאמֹר: מִדּוּעַ לֹא־אֶכְלֹתֶם אֶת־הַחַטָּאת בְּמָקוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים הִוא וְאֲתָהּ | נָתַן לָכֶם לִשְׂאת אֶת־עֹנֶן הַעֲדָה לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: הֵן לֹא־הוּבָא אֶת־דָּמָהּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ פְּגִימָה אֲכֹל תֹאכְלוּ אֲתָהּ בְּקֹדֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי: וַיְדַבֵּר אַהֲרֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הֵן הַיּוֹם הִקְרִיבוּ אֶת־חַטָּאתָם וְאֶת־עֲלֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְתִקְרָאנָה אֹתִי כַּאֲלֵה וְאֶכְלֹתִי חַטָּאת הַיּוֹם הַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינַי יְהוָה: וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו: {פ}

Now Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before God strange fire that was not commanded them. And fire came forth from before God and consumed them; and they died in the presence of God. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what God meant by saying: 'Through those who are close to me I shall be sanctified; in the presence of the whole people I shall make my gravity felt.'" And Aaron was silent. Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered. And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Elazar and Itamar, "Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. But your kin, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that God has wrought. And so do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die, for God's anointing oil is upon you." And they did as Moses had bidden.

And God spoke to Aaron, saying: Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages, for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the impure and the pure; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which God has imparted to them through Moses.

Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Elazar and Itamar: Take the meal offering that is left over from God's offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. You shall eat it in the sacred precinct, inasmuch as it is your due, and that of your sons, from God's offerings by fire; for so I have been commanded. But the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering you [and your wife], and your sons and daughters with you, may eat in any pure place, for they have been assigned as a due to you and your sons from the Israelites' sacrifices of well-being. Together with the fat of fire offering, they must present the thigh of gift offering and the breast of elevation offering, which are to be elevated as an elevation offering before God, and which are to be your due and that of your sons with you for all time—as God has commanded. Then Moses inquired about the goat of sin offering, and it had already been burned! He was angry with Elazar and Itamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and it is what was given to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before God. Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I

commanded.” And Aaron spoke to Moses, “See, this day they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering before God, and such things have befallen me! Had I eaten sin offering today, would God have approved?” And when Moses heard this, he approved.

7. Sforno, Leviticus 10:20

וייטב בעיניו. שמח על טוב סברת אחיו ובניו שהיטיבו לראות ולהורות:

Moses enjoyed the reasoning Aaron presented and was happy that he and his sons understood and instructed well.

8. VaYikra Rabbah 13:1

"וְאֵת שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה" - מֵהוּ דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ? שְׁתֵּי דְרִישׁוֹת: אָמַר לָהֶם אִם שְׁחַטְתֶּם לָמָּה לֹא אָכַלְתֶּם? אִם לֹא הֵייתֶם עֲתִידִין לֶאֱכֹל לָמָּה שְׁחַטְתֶּם?... שְׁנֵאמַר (ויקרא י, טז) "וַיִּקְצַף עַל אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל אִיתָמָר" וְכִינּוּן שְׁכַעַס נִתְעַלְמָה מִמֶּנּוּ הַלֵּכָה שְׁאוֹנֵן אֲסוּר לֶאֱכֹל בְּקִדְשִׁים... (ויקרא י, יט) "וַיִּדְבֹר אֶהָרֵן אֶל מִשָּׁה" - בְּדַבּוּר עֲנָה כְּנִגְדּוֹ, כְּדַכְתִּיב (בראשית מב, ל) "דָּבַר הָאִישׁ אֲדֹנָי הָאָרֶץ וְגו'" (ויקרא י, יט) "הֵן הַיּוֹם הִקְרִיבוּ אֶת חַטָּאתְכֶם וְאֵת עֲלֵתְכֶם" - אָמַר לוֹ הַיּוֹם מִתּוֹ בְּנֵי וְהַיּוֹם אֶקְרִיב קִרְבָּן? הַיּוֹם מִתּוֹ וְהַיּוֹם אֲכַל בְּקִדְשִׁים? מִיָּד דָּרַשׁ אֶהָרֵן קֵל וְחוֹמֵר לְמִשָּׁה, וְיִמָּה מַעֲשֵׂר הַקֵּל אֲסוּר לֶאֱוֹן חַטָּאת דְּחָמִיר אֵינוֹ דִּין שְׂיָהָא אֲסוּר בְּאוֹנֵן, מִיָּד (ויקרא י, כ) "וַיִּשְׁמַע מִשָּׁה וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו" - הוֹצִיא כְּרוֹז לְכָל הַמַּחֲנֶה וְאָמַר, אֲנִי טְעִיתִי אֶת הַהֵלְכָה וְאֶהָרֵן אָחִי בָּא וְלִמַּד לִי.

“Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering” – What did he inquire about? Two inquiries. He said to them, “If you slaughtered, why did you not eat? If you were not going to eat, why did you slaughter?” Immediately, “He was angry with Elazar and Itamar” (Leviticus 10:15), and because he was angry, he forgot the law that a person in acute mourning is forbidden to eat the sacrificial meat... “And Aaron spoke (*vayidaber*) to Moses” (Leviticus 10:19) – with speech, he responded against him, as it is said “The man who is lord of the land spoke harshly (*diber*) to us and accused us of spying on the land” (Genesis 42:30). “This day they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering” (Leviticus 10:19) – He said to him, “Today, my sons died, and today I will make a sacrifice? Today, my sons died, and today I will eat sacrificial meat?” Immediately, Aaron made an *a fortiori* inference to Moses. If the tithe, for which the Torah is more lenient, is forbidden to someone in acute mourning, all the more so the sin offering, for which the Torah is more stringent, should be forbidden to one who is in acute mourning. Immediately, “And when Moses heard this, he approved” (Leviticus 10:20) - He announced to the entire camp, I made a mistake regarding the law, and my brother Aaron came and taught me.

9. Sifra, Shemini 1:2, 12

אמר רבי יהודה, חנניה בן יהודה היה דורש כל ימיו: קשה הקפדה שגרמה לו למשה לטעות.

R. Yehudah said: Hananiah ben Yehudah would teach throughout his life that insistence on stringency is something to be wary about; indeed it caused Moshe to err.

10. Avital Hochstein,

[Shemini: Regarding Mistaken Stringencies and Humanity that is Good in the Eyes of God \(hartman.org.il\)](http://hartman.org.il)

It seems that Moshe erred in being strict and stringent with Aharon. His mistake was in assuming that Aharon must add to the prohibitions placed upon him as a kohen, forbidding him from various acts of mourning, among them requiring him to eat from the sacrifice despite the state of mourning. Moshe's mistake was in imposing stringency in the laws of a mourning kohen.

It is possible that Moshe is offering a particular understanding of "sanctification through those who are close," according to which one should push aside human needs, such as mourning...

Aharon claimed that "sanctification through those who are close" is expressed at moments when people serve in integrity, fully attuned to the holiness called for, and step forward in their fullness as human beings, creatures who are sad, happy and at times in mourning. According to Aharon, dismissing these human dimensions is not good in the eyes of God...

Aharon's voice teaches that one must give room to the human experience, especially regarding holiness.

11. Midrash Tehillim 8:2

במתן תורה כשבא הקב"ה ליתן תורה לישראל התחילו המלאכים מדיינין ואומרים לפניו מה אנוש כי תזכרנו. ואמרו לפניו אישורך שתתן תורה בשמים למה שאנו קדושים ותורתך קדושה אנו טהורים ותורתך טהורה אנו חיים ותורתך חיים. אמר להם אינה ראויה להתקיים בכם... אמר הקב"ה למלאכים אין התורה מתקיימת בכם למה שאין ביניכם פריה ורביה לא מיתה ולא טומאה ולא חולי אלא כולכם קדושים. וכתוב בתורה (במדבר יט יד) אדם כי ימות באהל. (ויקרא יד ב) זאת תהיה תורת המצורע. (שם יב ב) אשה כי תזריע. (שם טו יט) ואשה כי תהיה זבה. וכן (שם יא ט) את זה תאכלו. וכל הדברים האלה אין ביניכם.

When the Lord came to give the Torah to Israel, the angels began to argue and said before Him, "What is man that you should remember him?" And they said before Him, "Let your Torah be given in the heavens, for we are holy and your Torah is holy; we are pure and your Torah is pure; we are living and your Torah is life." He said to them, "It is not fitting to be upheld in you... The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the angels, "The Torah cannot be fulfilled among you, for there is no procreation, death, impurity, or illness among you; rather, you are all holy." And it is written in the Torah (Numbers 19:14): "This is the law of a man who dies in a tent," (Leviticus 14:2) "This shall be the law of the leper," (Leviticus 12:2) "When a woman at childbirth," (Leviticus 15:25) "And if a woman has a discharge," and also (Leviticus 11:9) "These shall you eat," and all of these things are not among you.