

INTENTION VS. EXPRESSION

ויקחו בני אהרן נדב ואביהוא...ויקרבו לפני ה' אש זרה...ותצא אש...
ותאכל אותם וימתו לפני ה'¹

Oftentimes, people can have noble intentions, but the way they channel those intentions can cause things to go awry. These words were made famous by the מלאך who repeatedly appeared in the dreams of the מלך כוזר.² The holiest עבודה becomes פסול if performed incorrectly, no matter the purity of the intentions. Sometimes, we have מצוות purely based on intention. There is an איסור of פיגול, where a קרבן becomes פסול to eat if one had intention to eat it at the wrong time or in the wrong place. Even if he later changed his כונה, there is still an איסור כרת to eat this קרבן.

There is an opinion brought down³ that נדב and אביהוא died because they came into the משכן drunk. However, רש"י also brings down the שיטה of רבי אליעזר quoted in the גמרא⁴ that they were חייב because they *paskined* a *halachic* matter in front of their רבי, who was רבינו⁵. We will soon get into what exactly the הלכה was, but it is interesting to note that there is another story in which someone *paskined* the הלכה in front of his רבי, and he wasn't punished with death. By analyzing our story with נדב and אביהוא and this other story, hopefully we can come to a better understanding of this הלכה and its ramifications, as well as its exceptions.

The גמרא⁶ tells a story between עלי הכהן and שמואל. As שמואל was growing up and being mentored by עלי, there was a קרבן being offered. עלי called for a כהן to perform the שחיטה. However, שמואל interjected, this isn't necessary, as we know that a זר (כהן-זר) can do שחיטה.⁷ After this happened, עלי agreed that שמואל gave a good פשט, but was חייב מיתה for being פוסק הלכה in front of his רבי. We know that obviously שמואל was not put to death. This is because חנה saved him by begging עלי not to kill him, using the argument of "אל הנער הזה התפללתי".⁸ What exactly was happening here? Why was חנה so adamant that שמואל live? One answer is that this is the child that she *davened* for and sacrificed so much for. She didn't want to lose the "fruits of her labor" (no pun intended) and have a child that she didn't work hard for, as עלי had promised. Additionally, the מדרש⁹ brings down that before שמואל was born, a קול בת came down and said that a baby boy named שמואל will be born who will be the נביא and leader of ישראל בני ישראל, and save them from the פלישתים. Every mother who gave birth to a boy after this קול בת named him שמואל. However, from the child's behavior, every mother knew that this was not the baby that would save ישראל כלל. To חנה, it was clear that she was זוכה to be the mother of the נביא, and she was trying to save him so he could fulfill his תכלית as the leader and savior. This is implied in the word "הזה". This is the one who will lead the Jews.

There's still an elephant in the room that can't be ignored. This story happened when שמואל was

1 ויקרא יא-ב

2 עין התחלת ספר הכוזרי

3 רש"י יב ד"ה "ותצא אש"

4 עירובין סג

5 זה גם הלכה למעשה. עין שו"ע יו"ד רמב"ד

6 ברכות לא:

7 עין רש"י ויקרא אה ד"ה "ושחט...והקריבו" וזבחים לב.

8 שמואל א א.כז

9 ילקוט שמעוני על נ"ך רמז עח

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a kid. The Gemara¹⁰ says that man isn't חייב מיתה בידי שמים until he reaches the age of 20. This is learned from the Jews in the מדבר.¹¹ When the Jews sinned by the מרגלים, the פסוק¹² says everyone from 20 and up is חייב מיתה for complaining about ארץ ישראל based on the negative report of the מרגלים. If this is the case, and שמואל was under 20, why was עלי trying to condemn him to death?¹³ עלי wanted to kill שמואל, and חנה tried to arouse his compassion. We know that חנה was distressed about being barren, and עלי prayed for her to have a child. Realizing this, עלי said "let me kill him, and I'll pray for a new child." עלי knew that שמואל was destined to die young (he lived until 52). Therefore, he was assuring חנה that she will have a child that will live longer.¹⁴ However, the הלכה states that the איסור and חיוב מיתה only applies to arguing with one's רבי over מדרשים and סברות. If the תלמיד brings a ראייה from a פסוק supporting his view, he is not over the איסור of *paskining* in front of his רבי, and is not חייב מיתה.¹⁵ Therefore, שמואל was saved from punishment because he argued based on a פסוק (as we saw in רש"י in ויקרא and גמרא in זבחים).¹⁶

Now that we solved why שמואל was absolved from punishment, we have another problem. When ונתנו בני אהרן הכהן אש על המזבח¹⁷ of אש זרה, they did it based on the פסוק of "the sons of אהרן shall offer fire on the מזבח (and set wood on the fire)."¹⁸ If they based their actions off a פסוק, as שמואל did, why did they die, and שמואל didn't?! There is one striking difference between the two stories. שמואל only voiced his opinion, while בני אהרן actually acted based upon their assumption.¹⁹ Their error wasn't in their mistake of incorrectly inferring the הלכה, but the fact that they acted based upon this incorrect inference in front of משה רבינו.¹⁹

Additionally, the נפש החיים says that חנוכת המשכן was a "rebuilding of the world". There is a famous idea based on the בריסקר רב²⁰ that when it comes to beginnings, everything needs to be done right. Just like the קרבן תמיד של בין הערבים מעכב the קרבן תמיד של שחר, the unauthorized offering of the בני אהרן messed up the beginning of a new era. Therefore, even according to the ones who say that the act that נדב and אביהוא performed in and of itself isn't enough to be חייב מיתה, performing the act in this specific תקופה is an exception, and was deserving of such a harsh punishment.

We are approaching the יום טוב of פסח, which celebrates the beginning of our people. As we experience יציאת מצרים once again, and start a new chapter in our lives, it is imperative that we start off on the right foot. The מורה הלכה לפני רבו of סוגיא teaches us that we can't always put our faith in ourselves, but we must put our faith in הקב"ה. We couldn't get out of מצרים alone, and we can't get out of anything alone. This פסח, we should be זוכה to once again experience the ישועה of יציאת מצרים, but this time, we should come into it with a new perspective of who is really in charge. With this, we can go

10 שבת פט:

11 רש"י שם ד"ה "דל עשרין"

12 במדבר יד.כט

13 ריטב"א ברכות לא: ד"ה "מימר שפיר אמרת"

14 בן יהוידע ברכות לא:

15 רמ"א יו"ד רמבג.

16 עץ יוסף ברכות לא:

17 ויקרא א.ז

18 There are those who say that נדב and אביהוא were indeed right in their שיטה, but the problem was not confirming with משה.

19 רשב"א עירובין סג. ד"ה "מאי דרוש"

20 חידושי הגר"ז על תנ"ך אות קטו

עניינים על פרשת השבוע

בס"ד

ישיבת שעלבים תשע"ט

אפרים אליעזר גרשון קליין

כ"ב אדר ב' ה'תשע"ט

פרשת שמיני

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into שבועות and properly, and carry this message with us through the rest of our lives.