

PARASHAT SHEMINI, PARASHAT PARAH- 2014, 5774
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

The Zohar (Beginning of Parashat Acharei Mot) relates that both Nadav and Avihu were under the age of twenty when they died. The problem with that is, that we have a rule that the heavenly court does not mete out punishment to anyone under the age of twenty (Bamidbar Rabba 18:4).

Rashi, in beginning of Parashat Acharei Mot (16:1) seems to allude to address this problem. Rashi explains the juxtaposition between the deaths of Aharon's sons and the prohibition of entering the Kodesh Kedoshim (Holy of Holies) by saying that just as a doctor's warning is very effective when he points out to the patient that if he fails to heed the directives, he will die. So too, if Aharon HaKohen would enter the Kodesh Kedoshim indiscriminately, he will die. **Why does Rashi use the warning of a doctor-patient scenario rather than to a king warning his subjects?**

The answer is quite simple yet very profound. In a king-subject scenario, the message is that if the subject does not follow the king's directives, he will die "**as a punishment**". You don't listen, you suffer the punishment. However, if a patient fails to follow the doctor's instructions and dies as a result, we don't consider this as a punishment, but rather, **a logical, "natural consequence"**. The doctor is not punishing the patient but rather, the patient brought about his own demise. This natural consequence will come about under all circumstances; it is the law of nature. You drink poison-you die! It makes no difference if the patient was of age or a minor, if he drank it intentionally or inadvertently, natural law takes over. Not so regarding punishment of a king. The king will take into consideration the age of the violator, the intention and the circumstances.

How do we view the laws of our Torah? Are they laws given by our King, the Melech Malchei HaMelschim to His subjects Am Yisrael, or are they directives given to us by our Doctor, as it is written, "*Ki Ani HaShem Rofeicha*" *I am HaShem your Healer?* (Shemot 15:26) It seems that originally, HaShem regarded His commandments as coming from a Doctor, that's Elokim, and judges us with Midat HaDin, and any violator will suffer the full consequence of "**natural law**". However, He saw that we could not survive under such circumstances that He changed His commandments to the King-subject relationship, which is the Midat HaRachamim. Therefore, we are not punished immediately for our transgressions and we are given opportunities for Teshuva. All this would not be possible under "**natural law**"; there is no Teshuva for drinking poison. We constantly emphasize this by referring to HaShem as "**HaMelech**" in our Tefillot.

The only exception was made for the Kedusha of the Mishkan and Beit HaMikdash, while standing. There, the rule of "**natural law**" applied, and thus, Nadav and Avihu died instantly and Aharon HaKohen is warned that if he enters the Kodesh Kedoshim indiscriminately, he would die immediately. We are grateful to HaShem that we are regarded as His subjects, Avdei HaShem, and He treats us with Midat HaRachamim.