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*Foreign fire and  
halachic  
evolution...*

*Rabbi Alon Meltzer*

*A New Page of Talmud*

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*Shemini 5782*

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Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the LORD. **Vayikra 10:1-2** Rabbi Eliezer said: Aaron's sons died only because they rendered halachic decisions in the presence of Moses, their teacher.

**Rashi on Vayikra 10:61**<sup>2</sup> Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many

disciples and make a fence for the Torah – **Pirkei Avot 1:1**<sup>3</sup> The sage has only that which his intellect provides him and allows him to learn from within the Talmud. And when his understanding and wisdom lead him to err, he is nonetheless beloved to God so long as he is issuing instructions based on the dictates of his reason. For a judge has only what his eyes see. And this person is preferable to the person who determines halacha from within one book, knowing not the reason for the matter, walking like a blind person along the way – **Maharashal**<sup>4</sup> This is the ritual law that the LORD has commanded: Instruct the Israelite people to bring you a red cow without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which no yoke has been laid. automatically”–

and they offered before the Lord an alien fire that He had not commanded them.

**אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֲתֶם:  
Vayikra 10:1**

**Bamidbar 19:2**<sup>5</sup> The thing which is most baffling in the red heifer legislation is that most who is ritually pure becomes ritually contaminated by direct contact with it, although the whole purpose of the red heifer, its ash, etc., is to purify the people who had been ritually contaminated prior to being sprinkled with spring water containing its ashes. – **Seforno on Bamidbar 19:2**<sup>6</sup> a) Learn – without learning we become political pundits. We have to understand the halachic process and the rules within the playing field.

b) Realise that we are not God – Hashem made a decision to strike down Nadav and Avihu with Godly fire. It is not our job to strike down those we disagree with, with Godly fire.

c) Listen – we have to listen to what people are saying, understand why they are saying it

d) Accept – if we disagree with them, that is ok, but we have to embrace them. We have to model Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel

e) Finally, we have to do – you cannot push the evolution of halacha from the outside. You cannot stand up and say halacha is bad, halacha must change when you yourself are not engaged in the halachic process. – **Rabbi Alon Meltzer**<sup>6</sup>

**A new page of Talmud - Rabbi Alon Meltzer**