

# Parashat Shemini

## פרשת שמייני

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5

## Help me to sanctify Your Name Lord!

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Leviticus 9:1-11:47

הפטרה: Ezekiel 36:16-38

הברית: Luke 7-9

החדשה

*Triennial cycle: Vayikra / Leviticus 9:1-10:11*

10

According to the Torah, the sons of Aharon (Nadav and Avihu) did not maintain holiness before the Lord, the result they died. *Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. (NASB)*

15

The question though is how did Nadav and Avihu sin not maintaining holiness for the Lord? Some has suggested that drunkenness was the basis for their sin (*Vayikra / Leviticus 10:9*), others suggest that they died because they had entered the Kedosh Kedoshim (Holy of Holies) (*Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1-2*). The Scriptures however always associates the death of these two priests with their offering “strange” or “unauthorized” fire before God (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1-3, Bamidbar / Numbers 3:4, and 26:61*).

20

The Hebrew text provides some insight into the reason for their sin. According to *Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1*, it says “*va'yitnu vahen esh*” meaning “they put in them fire.” How did Nadav and Avihu placing fire into their firepans (censers) violate the command of God and how did this prevent them from sanctifying the Lord during worship? How do these Scriptures apply to us today?

25

### ויקרא 10:1-4

י החלבים וירא פלהעם וילנו ויפלו עלפניהם: ויקחו  
 בניאהרן נדב ואביהוא איש מחתתו ויתנו בהן אש  
 וישימו עליה קטרת ויקריבו לפני יהוה אש זרה  
 אשר לא צוה אתם: ותצא אש מלפני יהוה ותאכל  
 אותם וימתו לפני יהוה: ויאמר משה אלאהרן הוא  
 אשרדבר יהוה. לאמר בקרבך אקדש ועלפני כל  
 העם אנבד ויהם אהרן: ויקרא משה אלמישאל ואל  
 אלצפן בני עזאל דד אהרן ויאמר אליהם קרבו שאו  
 אתאחיכם מאת פני הקדש אלמחנה:

### Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1-4

10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 10:2 And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘It is what the Lord spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.’ So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. 10:4 Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, ‘Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.’ (NASB)

30 According to the Scriptures, the firepan (censer) was an instrument  
 (utensil) that was used during the ritual service of the altar. *Shemot / Exodus 27:1*  
*'And you shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits*  
 35 *wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. 27:2 'You*  
*shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and*  
*you shall overlay it with bronze. 27:3 'You shall make its pails for removing its*  
*ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make*  
*all its utensils of bronze. 27:4 'You shall make for it a grating of network of*  
 40 *bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners.*  
 (NASB) Note something interesting here in 27:4 which says that four bronze  
 rings were made at its four corners; these were meant for carrying (transportation)  
 of the altar from one place to another. This is similar to the construction of the  
 Ark of the Covenant. The rings were used for placing poles inside of them to  
 move the altar, the reason being the altar was holy, and man's hands were not to  
 touch the holy altar. In addition to the altar being holy, the instruments used  
 45 during the ritual service were also holy. The censer Nadav and Avihu brought  
 before the Lord were bronze cinder-basins used for the purpose of carrying live  
 coals for burning incense that was taken from the altar. The text says that Nadav  
 and Avihu placed fire in them but did not specify that they took the fire from the  
 altar from before the Lord. Was the sin that they committed a sin of using fire  
 50 from a source other than that of coals from the altar? Failing to sanctify the Lord  
 in this way, the Lord instructs Aharon to be careful not to drink wine or strong  
 drink before coming into His presence. *Vayikra / Leviticus 10:8 The Lord then*  
*spoke to Aaron, saying, 10:9 'Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor*  
*your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not*  
 55 *die it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations 10:10 and so as to make*  
*a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the*  
*clean, 10:11 and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord*  
*has spoken to them through Moses.'* (NASB)

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8 ׀ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: יִין וְשֵׁכָר אַל־תִּשְׁתּוּ |  
 9 אַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ אִתְּךָ בְּבָאֲכֶם אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ |  
 10 חֲקֵת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: וְלֹהֲבִדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין |  
 11 הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר: וְלַחֲזֹרֶת אֶת־בְּנֵי |  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד־ |  
 מֹשֶׁה:

60 Regardless of the sin that was committed, Nadav and Avihu did not  
 foresee that they failed to sanctify the name of the Lord in their actions. Nadav  
 and Avihu were not aware that there was a problem when they drew near to the  
 65 Lord and worshiped. Is this kind of problem prevalent today? Do we see sin  
 today as the serious rebellion that it really is? Or, does sin seem like “no big  
 deal?” I have to say that today, in main stream Christianity sin has become “no  
 big deal” that is both an affront to our Holy God and an assault against God's  
 authority in our lives, and in the Scriptures. This last week (March 9, 2011) was

70 the beginning of “Lent” which is followed by 40 days until the Easter and  
 Pentecost holiday. These things are used to celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua  
 (Jesus) the Messiah (Christ). The problem with Lent, the 40 days, and Easter is  
 that these are part of the pagan fertility religions that date back to Baal and  
 Ashtoreth worship. For example, the “the weeping for Tamuz” (*Ezekiel 8:12-14*)  
 75 has a connection to Lent. The abomination that is occurring right now as you read  
 this Parashat is the sin of syncretism where pagan practices are mixed with God’s  
 Holy Scriptures (sacred things) in the name of worshiping the Lord. I go into  
 greater detail in the following articles: “*Easter or Pesach (Passover)*”  
<http://www.matsati.com/2008-2009/Pesach%20 2008-2009 .pdf> and “*The*  
 80 *Pagan Instruments of Pagan Worship*”  
<http://www.matsati.com/Pesach%20 2009-2010 .pdf>.

Now, from the messianic aspect, do Messianic believers practice the sin of  
 syncretism? You might say “No” but how about combining rabbinic tradition in  
 the worship of God? Nadav and Avihu went before the Lord by either offering  
 85 fire that was not from the altar, or by drinking wine, they failed to sanctify the  
 name of the Lord and they died. When we combine the traditions of men  
 (rabbinic tradition and/or Lent/Easter tradition) with worshiping God we are  
 committing the same sin Nadav and Avihu committed.

Have we gotten soft on Scripture? Yeshua said that if your hand causes  
 90 you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands  
 to go into hell where the fire never goes out. The literal translation of the Greek is  
 “*And if should cause you to stumble your hand, cut it off. Good to you it is*  
 95 *crippled into life to enter, rather than two hands having to go forth into Gehenna*  
*into the fire inextinguishable.*”

### Μ Α Ρ Κ Ο Σ 9:43-48

τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ βέβληται εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἐὰν σκαν- 43  
δαλίξη σε ἡ χεὶρ σου ἀπόκοπον αὐτὴν καλὸν σοί· ἐστὶν κυλλὸν  
εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν ἢ τὰς δύο χεῖρας ἔχοντα ἀπελθεῖν εἰς  
τὴν γέενναν εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον, ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ 44  
τελευτᾷ καὶ τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, καὶ ἐὰν ὁ πούς σου σκαν- 45  
δαλίξη σε ἀπόκοπον αὐτὸν καλὸν ἐστὶν σοὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν  
ζωὴν χωλὸν ἢ τοὺς δύο πόδας ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν γέενναν  
εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον, ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ καὶ 46  
τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, καὶ ἐὰν ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου σκανδαλίξη σε 47  
ἔκβαλε αὐτὸν καλὸν σοὶ ἐστὶν μονόφθαλμον εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν  
βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ δύο ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν  
γένναν τοῦ πυρός, ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ καὶ τὸ 48  
πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται καὶ πᾶσα θυσία 49

100 According to Yeshua, if our hand causes us to stumble, it is better to cut off our  
 hand than to enter into hell. The consequences of sin and hell are very serious.  
 The account of Nadav and Avihu remind us that sin is deadly and that all sin  
 brings death. At times, the sin and death are instantaneous. At other times it is  
 not. But regardless of the immediacy of the consequences of sin (death) all sin  
 separates us from God. Most importantly, God expects us to take Him seriously  
 105 and especially His Words in the Bible. God expects us to respect Him, in addition

#### Mark 9:43-48

9:43 ‘If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 9:44 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] 9:45 ‘If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, 9:46 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] 9:47 ‘If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 9:48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (NASB)

110 to this, He gives us instructions in His Word and He expects us to obey them (live  
by them). When we disregard God's command, we show great disrespect that  
occurs by the implication of our actions. In fact, our actions imply what we truly  
believe. Our actions imply that God is not supreme because we decide for  
ourselves making us the ultimate authority. Our actions imply that God is not  
truthful and not holy because we act like He did not mean what He said in  
Scripture, and that we get away with sin. Understanding how our actions speak  
115 should remind us that some of the things we think of as "little things" are not so  
little. If you believe that God's instructions about purity, honesty, discipline,  
consistency in worship, prayer, and money are little things, you would be wrong.  
If we could ask Nadav and Avihu what they thought, what do you think they  
would say?

120 This week is Purim that recounts the story of Esther in the Bible who  
became the wife of Ahasuerus, the ancient king of Persia. The kings of Persia  
should remind me of the importance of this week's Parashat. The kings of Persia  
demanded absolute obedience and deference. The Father of King Artaxerxes  
(note that Artaxerxes is the Greek form), Xerxes the Great, is a major character in  
the book of Esther where a central drama swirls over whether he will permit her  
(Esther) to live when she commits the capital offence of approaching his throne  
125 without being asked to approach. Esther goes boldly to seek the salvation of her  
people. Artaxerxes himself murdered his own two brothers in asserting his claim  
to the throne and according to ancient historian Plutarch; he was considered one  
of the gentlest of the Persian kings.

130 In the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah is described as cupbearer to the King  
of Persia. Having this task of cupbearer, Nehemiah had daily and close access to  
the king. The position of cupbearer required the king's full trust because  
Nehemiah was responsible for the king's safety from anyone who might try to  
tamper with his wine (see *Nehemiah 1:11-21*). Being in close company with the  
King, Nehemiah always had a pleasant demeanor. But according to *Nehemiah 1-*  
135 *2*, he could not hide his grief at the news of the destruction of Jerusalem and the  
holy Temple. Here, Nehemiah offers some insight into the right way to approach  
the throne of men and the throne of God. First, Nehemiah displayed the  
appropriate respect to the king (3:7). This gives us instruction that we need to be  
respectful to those in leadership positions (see *Romans 13:1* for a commentary on  
140 this). Secondly, Nehemiah placed his ultimate trust in God and not the king.

## נחמיה 2:4

וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל-  
אֲכָלוּ בָאֵשׁ: וְאַתָּה מִבְּקֵשׁ  
מִהֲרָה אֶתָּה מִבְּקֵשׁ

145 Notice the brief prayer that Nehemiah offers before answering the king in verse  
2:4? Even as he prepared to make a bold request to the king, that could change  
his life, he sought to place himself under the authority of the Lord. Nehemiah  
also credited God with the favorable response from the king saying "*Because the  
gracious hand of God was on me, the king granted my request.*" (2:8). Here the  
Lord opened a door of opportunity for Nehemiah to make a difference for the  
150 rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. He was willing to walk boldly through

the door God was about to open because he trusted in the Lord. Nehemiah requested the king's permission to rebuild Jerusalem, asked for letters of protection, and then petitioned the king for materials from his own forest (read *Nehemiah 2:5-9*). Nehemiah understood that God can work through anyone, even a Persian king, to accomplish His will and that is exactly what happened.

If you are waiting to see what God will do or what God is planning to do and have not heard a response could the reason be that you have not sanctified the Name of the Lord in your life like Nadav and Avihu? The opportunity to make a big difference may be constrained because of the integrated tradition of men and pagan tradition that is so prevalent in congregations today. If you are waiting to see God work mightily, you can prepare by cultivating your prayer life and leaving the traditions and pagan practices that fail to sanctify the name of the Lord in our lives. Nehemiah was prepared because of his relationship with God through prayer. Let us prepare and pray too.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for Your holy Word that always brings us back to reality helping us to realize that we have not truly sanctified Your Holy Name. Thank You for sending Your son Yeshua (Jesus) to help us come into a deeper and more intimate relationship with You. I ask that you would show me the areas in my life that do not sanctify You Lord and help me to change. I leave and forsake the traditions of men and the pagan practices that have become integrated into the worship services. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to turn from my evil ways. Thank You Lord for all that You did, all that You are doing, and all that You will do. I give You all of the glory, the honor, and the praise, in Yeshua's name I pray.

Amen!

**Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!**

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever