

Parashat Shmini / פרשת שמניני

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Do you have a correct heart before G-d?

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Leviticus 9:1-11:47

Haftarah: 2 Samuel 6:1-7:17

B'rit HaChadashah: Hebrews 7:1-19; 8:1-6

What were Nadav and Avihu thinking when they went before Adonai with what the Torah calls “unauthorized fire?” I don’t know what they were thinking, but they certainly did something wrong which cost them their lives. Reading further in the text we get an idea what the problem was. I believe their hearts were made unclean by the consumption of alcohol before entering the Mishkhan (tabernacle) (See *Leviticus 10:8-9*). The context of these verses seems to indicate this is what happened because immediately after these events HaShem instructs Aharon to not drink any intoxicating liquor before entering the sanctuary (מקום קדוש).

Leviticus 9:23-10:10

9:23 Moshe and Aharon entered the tent of meeting, came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of ADONAI appeared to all the people! 9:24 Fire came forth from the presence of ADONAI, consuming the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. 10:1 But Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon, each took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and offered unauthorized fire before ADONAI, something he had not ordered them to do. 10:2 At this, fire came forth from the presence of ADONAI and consumed them, so that they died in the presence of ADONAI. 10:3 Moshe said to Aharon, "This is what ADONAI said: 'Through those who are near me I will be consecrated, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" Aharon kept silent. 10:4 Moshe called Misha'el and Eltzafan, sons of 'Uzi'el Aharon's uncle, and told them, "Come here, and carry your cousins away from in front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." 10:5 They approached and carried them in their tunics out of the camp, as Moshe had said. 10:6 Then Moshe told Aharon and his sons El'azar and Itamar, "Don't unbind your hair or tear your clothes in mourning, so that you won't die and so that ADONAI won't be angry with the entire community. Rather, let your kinsmen - the whole house of Isra'el -mourn, because of the destruction ADONAI brought about with his fire. 10:7 Moreover, don't leave the entrance to the tent of meeting, or you will die, because ADONAI's anointing oil is on you." 10:8 ADONAI said to Aharon, 10:9 "Don't drink any wine or other intoxicating liquor, neither you nor your sons with you, when you enter the tent of meeting, so that you will not die. This is to be a permanent

regulation through all your generations, 10:10 so that you will distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; (CJB)

In the temple service, the need for purity is of the utmost importance, however, the reason Nadav and Avihu died was not because of some sort of ritual impurity. What we can learn from these verses is that drawing near to HaShem requires not just an outward purity, but an inward purity of the heart. In the Psalm of David we find a similar principle of outward and inward purity.

Psalms 24:3-4

*24:3 Who may go up to the mountain of ADONAI? Who can stand in his holy place?
24:4 Those with clean hands and pure hearts, who don't make vanities the purpose of their lives or swear oaths just to deceive. (CJB)*

In this week's parsha, I would like to discuss the importance of inward purity, the condition of our heart before Adonai. It is vital that we stop thinking about purity in human terms and start thinking about purity from G-d's perspective with respect to the condition of our hearts. Let's go a little deeper with these scripture verses by asking: "what are the scriptures emphasizing here about the condition of the heart?" Hashem said: *Exo29:43 There I will meet with the people of Isra'el; and the place will be consecrated by my glory. (ונעדתי שמה לבני ישראל ונקדש בכבדתי) (CJB)* If we look at these events in light of the scripture verse from *Exodus 29:43*, HaShem consecrated the tabernacle which resulted in death, the fire of HaShem consumed Aharon's sons because of sin in their hearts. What is even more interesting in *Leviticus 10:4*, Misha'el and Eltzafan, sons of 'Uzi'el Aharon's uncle carried their cousins out of the Mishkhan (tabernacle) by their tunics? This indicates the consuming fire of Adonai did not burn their cloths. It was as if the fire burned from within (in their hearts and outward) and only affected their bodies.

Why the manifestation of fire?

This manifestation of fire has a lot of significance especially with the manifestation of the presence or approval of HaShem. Looking at a few verses from the Tanach we can learn a few things about fire:

1. S'dom and Amora (see *Gen10:19 Gen13:10 Gen13:12 Gen13:13*, etc)
 - a. *Eze16:49 The crimes of your sister S'dom were pride and gluttony; she and her daughters were careless and complacent, so that they did nothing to help the poor and needy. Eze16:50 They were arrogant and committed disgusting acts before me; so that when I saw it, I swept them away. (נה זה היה עון סדם אחותך גאון שבעת לחם:) ושלות השקט היה לה ולבנותיה ויד עני ואביון לא החזיקה ותגבהינה ותעשינה תועבה לפני ואסיר אתהן: (כאשר ראיתי: (CJB)*
 - b. *Sodom and Amora were consumed by fire which fell from heaven.*
2. Metal is passed through the fire to be purified: *Num31:23 can all withstand fire, so that you are indeed to purify everything made of these materials by having them pass through fire; nevertheless they must also be purified with the water for purification. Everything*

*that can't withstand fire you are to have go through the water. (כל דבר אשר יבא באש תעבירו) (CJB)
:באש וטהר אך במי נדה יתחטא וכל אשר לא יבא באש תעבירו במים:*

3. Adonai gives us examples of a refiners fire throughout the holy scriptures, for example, *Psalms 66:10 For you, God, have tested us, refined us as silver is refined. (כי בחנתנו אלהים) (CJB)
:צרפתנו כצרף כסף:*
4. We find other manifestations of fire while HaShem revealed himself in the Torah. In the making of the covenant with Avraham (*Genesis 15:17*), the burning bush (*Exodus 3:2-4*), pillar of fire (*Exodus 13:21*), on Sinai (*Exodus 19:18*), in the flame on the altar (*Judges 13:20*), and HaShem answering by fire (*1 Kings 18:24, 38*).

Fire is consuming, it is the rapid burning of combustible material producing heat and is usually accompanied by a flame. For sacred purposes, the sacrifices were consumed by fire (*Genesis 8:20*) the ever burning fire on the altar was kindled from heaven (*Leviticus 6:9, 13, 9:24*). As we can see from the scripture verses above, the flame of fire is HaShem's chosen symbol of holiness (*Exodus 3:2* and *Revelation 2:18*) indicating the intense and all-consuming operation of His holiness in relation to sin. Furthermore, in the sacrifice, our sins are transferred to the ram or bull, etc which is then to be consumed by fire upon the altar.

I think it is pretty well established now that sin is consumed by fire, and the sin that was found within the heart of Nadav and Avihu was consumed by fire in the presence of HaShem thus resulting in their death. So what does this mean to us today? We can see the importance of sin in our hearts while being in the presence of Adonai. Next, I would like to get a little personal, and ask some very personal questions.

Ask yourself the following questions!

Self-questions

1. How pure is your heart towards HaShem?
 - a. This is something we can do on only on our own, because no one knows our heart except HaShem. The key point here is self examination and evaluation. Do you want a real and authentic relationship with Adonai?
2. How pure is your heart towards your spouse?
 - a. I believe whole heartedly, if my heart is not right with my wife, then my heart is not right with HaShem.
 - b. Purity of heart with HaShem also involves your relationship with those you love. Do you hate your husband? Do you hate your wife? The word "hate" can be manifested in a number of ways, such as disrespect, contempt, scorn, rudeness, impudence, or even a dislike ... that is anything that would draw the relationship apart and maintain the separation of oneness in marriage. I believe that if you do not have a good relationship with your husband or wife, then there is a serious problem with your relationship with G-d.
 - c. Having a wrong heart towards your spouse will result in HaShem reproving you. The usually method of reproof comes in the form of physical ailments. The key

point here is our relationship with those we love is directly connected to our relationship with HaShem and it is quite possible the physical manifestation of our heart can be found in our ailments (illness, disease, affliction, etc).

3. How pure is your heart towards your neighbor?

- a. Charity towards others gives us a picture of the greatness of the love HaShem has placed in our hearts. The greatness of His love should so overflow from our hearts that it will reach out and touch everyone we come into contact with. The key point here is to examine your heart in relation to charity, which properly denotes love towards others (benevolence).

In conclusion, purity of heart with HaShem requires us to have a right heart towards our brothers, our sisters, friends and family, husbands and wives. It is only then we can have true spiritual growth and nearness with G-d.

Matthew 5:8

5:8 "How blessed are the pure in heart! for they will see God. (CJB)

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever