



# Parshas Shmini

For the week ending 27 Adar II 5757  
4 & 5 April 1997

## Overview

**O**n the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, Aaron, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanos* (sacrifices) as commanded by Moshe. Aaron and Moshe bless the nation. Hashem allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the *Mishkan* and draw closer to Him through their *mitzvos* there. Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an original offering that was not commanded by Hashem. A fire comes from before Hashem and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aaron, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the *Mishkan*. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. The *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate, and holy – like Hashem.

## Insights

### GOOD ADVICE

**“And the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, each man took his fire-pan.” (10:1)**

Nadav and Avihu made an error of judgment. They thought it was not only the *Kohen Gadol* who could bring the incense offering in the Holy of Holies, but that even they were permitted to do so.

They were great *tzaddikim* and no doubt pondered their conclusion before committing themselves to action.

The Midrash comments on the above verse: “*Each man* his fire-pan; *each man* by himself, without taking advice one from the other.” (*Yalkut Shimoni, Shmini 524*) The implication here is that if they had taken advice one from the other, if they had talked it over before they acted, that they would not have erred.

But why *should* they have arrived at a different conclusion. Seeing as they both did the same thing — they both brought the ‘strange fire’ — it must be that they both were of the same opinion, that a non-*Kohen Gadol* was permitted to offer the incense. So even if they *had* consulted with each other, wouldn't they have still come to the same conclusion?

Such is the power of counsel. That even though two people may share an identical opinion, through discussion and mutual counsel they can arrive at the *truth* — which may be 180° from what they both previously believed.

### WELL-KNOWN IN PRAGUE

**“And it was that on the eighth day, Moshe called to Aaron and the elders of Yisrael.” (9:1)**

The great talmudic authority and Rabbi of Prague, the *Noda B'Yehuda*, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau passed away. After his passing, the leaders of the community gathered together to chose a successor. Rabbi Yakovka, the *Noda B'Yehuda's* son told the gathering that prior to his father's passing, he had left specific instructions that Rabbi Yakovka's son, Rabbi Shmuel, should assume the position of Rabbi of the community.

Rabbi Zerach Idlitz, who had presumed himself to be the *Noda B'Yehuda's* successor, rose and stated that he did not believe Rabbi Yakovka.

Rabbi Yakovka quoted him the *Midrash Tanchuma* on the above phrase “*and the elders of Yisrael.*” He asked “Why were the elders called to witness Aharon's elevation to the *Kehuna*? Hashem himself told Moshe to anoint Aaron and appoint him *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) in front of the elders so that no-one could claim that Aharon had elected himself to the job.

“Of course, the question arises, if the elders would have suspected that Aaron had not been commanded by Hashem to be *Kohen Gadol*, but had appointed himself, why should they have been more ready to believe Moshe that Hashem had told him to anoint Aharon in front of them?

“It's true they may not have believed Aharon, for he was biased in the matter, but if Moshe had wanted to lie, he could have claimed that Hashem had appointed *him* as *Kohen Gadol*!

“Similarly in our case, if I had wanted to lie, I could have said that my father wanted *me* to fill his place, and not my son.”

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PLEASE READ BEFORE USING!

**"...And they brought before Hashem a strange fire that He had not commanded them..." (10:1)**

The Torah is the instruction manual of the world written by the Maker of world.

No one knows better how to operate a machine than its maker. Imagine someone buying a new car. The salesman says to the proud new owner "Oh, yes sir. One more thing — your instruction manual." The driver says "Oh, I don't need that. I instinctively *feel* what the tire pressures should be, and I *have a sixth sense* when the car needs a major service. I *know intuitively* what octane fuel the car needs."

Few people when faced with operating something as precise and unforgiving as a car would leave these sorts of decisions to instinct and feeling. Life is no less demanding nor complex than a car. Rather more so!

And yet many people are happy to coast along, assuming that they are not putting water in their spiritual gas tank.

The purpose of life is to become close to the Creator of the world, and only the Creator of the world knows how the world can be utilized to become close to Him.

We live in an era where people are more interested in *feeling spiritual* than being spiritual. We are a TV generation taught to expect endless effortless instant gratification, where this-week's-guru, or mail-order instant-kabbala try to replace the hard work of real spiritual growth.

That is what the Torah is warning us against in the story of Nadav and Avihu. The "strange fire" may *feel* spiritual, but it cannot connect with the source. And the reason it cannot connect is the seemingly redundant

**Haftorah for Shabbos HaChodesh: Yechezkel 45:16 - 46:18**

**PARTNERS IN TIME**

The Shabbos before *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* (the first day of the Hebrew month of Nissan) is called *Shabbos HaChodesh*.

Nissan, the first month of the year, is called the 'king of the months.' On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Jewish People received the first of all of the 613 *mitzvos* — the sanctification of the moon.

Through this mitzvah, the Jewish People were given a partnership in the mastery of time: The world of Shabbos is fixed in time. We return to it every seven days. However, the mitzvah of *kiddush hachodesh* (sanctifying the moon) gave the Jewish People the ability to establish the length of the months, and thus to determine the dates of *Pesach, Shavuot, Succos*, etc.

Thus Man becomes a partner with Hashem in sanctifying time.

The Cesium and Rubidium atom clocks at the U.S. Naval Observatory Time Center are accurate to one second in 300,000 years. But three thousand years ago, Moshe, had no such time-piece. However, somehow Moshe knew the exact length of the lunar month — 29.53059 days — an accuracy which was literally out of this world!

In the reference work 'Astronomy and Astrophysics' (*Loudolt Bornstein Group vol. a Sec 2.2.4, Berlin 1965*) the precise length of the lunar month is listed as 29.530589 days! How did Moshe have a figure so accurate that it took science three thousand years to come to the same number?

phrase "which He had not commanded them." If it was a strange fire, then by definition it was not commanded by Hashem. Rather, the reason it was strange is *because* it was not commanded.

Our connection with Hashem is through doing His will. Because the will of a person and himself are indivisible — the self expresses itself as the will. Only when we do Hashem's will, do we bring ourselves close to Him. The *mitzvos* are the will of Hashem expressed in concrete form.

Any other form of worship is merely *feeling* spiritual — it's not *being* spiritual. And for people on the level of Nadav and Avihu, that was a failing of a very fundamental kind.

**KOSHER STYLE**

**"Every (animal) that has a split hoof, which is completely separated into double hooves, and that brings up its cud - that one you may eat." (11:3)**

These two aspects of a kosher land animal are not a means of identifying them as being kosher, rather they are the *cause* of them being kosher.

In other words, having split hooves and regurgitating its cud are what *makes* the animal kosher.

The Torah specifically tells us that one of these aspects without the other renders the animal as non-kosher as if it had neither.

The split hoof represents the outward behavior of man towards his fellow, and the chewing of the cud represents the inward relationship between Man and G-d. If a person behaves in a kosher way only with his fellow or only with Hashem, he is, nevertheless, *treif*.

Our Sages tell us that this number was given to Moshe by Hashem at the beginning of *Parshas HaChodesh*. It was passed down from Moshe to Hillel II, the last prince of the House of David. When Hillel II sanctified all the new moons from his day until the final redemption, he had to know the exact length of the lunar month to within a fraction of a second, for even a small error would, over millennia, amount to a visible error.

This was in fact the case with the calendar of Julius Caesar, which by the year 1582 had wandered so far that Pope Gregory XIII erased 10 days from the calendar, with the result that the day after the 4th October 1582 was called the 16th October!

There have been approximately 41,000 new moons since the time of Moshe, but from Mount Sinai onward, the secret of the exact length of the lunar month has always been known to the Jewish People, because Moshe *Rabbeinu* had a clock that was literally 'out of this world.'

The Haftorah of *Parshas HaChodesh* describes a month of Nissan yet to come. *Mashiach* has arrived and the Third *Beis Hamikdash* is to be consecrated in a ceremony which starts on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. As in *Parshas HaChodesh*, so too in the Haftorah, the laws and sacrifices of Pesach are detailed.

Sources:  
Good Advice: Chidushei HaLev  
Well-Known In Prague: Y. Yafes in Iturei Torah  
Kosher Style: Rabbi Avraham Pam



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS  
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE  
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.  
**יום שבתון - יום שבתון**  
"THE SABBATH DAY..."

Its remembrance is like a pleasing fragrance זכרו כריח הניחוח Zichru c'rayach hanicho'ach

The Torah describes the offering of sacrifices in the *Beis Hamikdash* as providing "a pleasing fragrance for Hashem." Even when we are not capable of offering sacrifices, our study of the laws of sacrifices is considered as if we actually offered them and provided this "pleasing fragrance." In the same manner we are capable of infusing the entire week with the sanctity of the Shabbos by studying the laws of Shabbos and remembering the holy day. This sort of remembering is therefore similar to the "pleasing fragrance" created by the remembering of sacrifices.

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