

SHABBAT LASHEM

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PARASHAT SHMINI | ISSUE 22

Josh Zeltser | Boger Dvar Torah

In this week's Parshah we read the story of the death of Aaron's two sons Nadav and Avihu. The Parshah writes "The sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, took each one his fire pan, they put in them fire, and they placed upon them incense; and they brought before Hashem a fire that was alien, that He had not commanded them". Nadav and Avihu decided to take it upon themselves to bring an offering in the Temple without being commanded to do so by Hashem.

As punishment for this, a fire went forth from before Hashem and consumed them, and they died. This whole scenario seems strange. The purpose of offerings in the Temple was that they were an

integral part of the service of Hashem. Nadav and Avihu were Kohanim, sons of the Kohen Gadol himself, who served Hashem on behalf of the Jewish people in the Temple. Why then were they punished so severely when all they were really doing was serving Hashem?

An answer to this question was suggested by the Sefat Emet. He explains how Nadav and Avihu were exceedingly righteous men who acted for the sake of heaven, with only a pure and sincere desire to draw closer to Hashem. There was however one fundamental problem with their intentions, the command from Hashem was missing. With this idea the Sefat Emet teaches us the importance of Hashem's command in

all religious activities. It is the command by Hashem that should ultimately make us decide to carry out any religious act and not just our urge to serve Him. One place where we can see this in our everyday lives is when it comes to Brachot over a Mitzvah. Before carrying out many Mitzvot we recite a Brachah which begins with the following statement: "Blessed are you the Lord our G-d, king of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to...".

This wording clearly highlights to us that the main reason we are about to carry out the following act is due to the command that Hashem has given to us.

This idea comes to teach us an important lesson against the concept of extremism which is so

prevalent today. From the Crusades in medieval times, to ISIS today, fanatics have tried to use religion to justify their murderous and barbaric deeds. The actions of Nadav and Avihu in this week's Parshah show us just how much harm this type of extremism can have. They went too far, much further than they were commanded to by Hashem, leading to sad consequences. Every day as we carry out our religious practises we should keep in mind this story and focus our observances on what Hashem has commanded, so that we can concentrate on the real intent and meaning of the Mitzvot.

Shabbat Shalom



Achieving Balance



Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

After months of planning and work, in which all of Bnei Yisrael had been involved not just through their donations, but through active building as well, the Mishkan has finally been completed. Not only has the physical structure been completed, as we read at the end of Sefer Shemot, but now Aharon and Bnei Yisrael are commanded to bring certain sacrifices to atone for them (VaYikra 9:7), as a result of which "the Presence of Hashem shall appear to you (9:6)." When these sacrifices are brought, Bnei Yisrael are blessed by Moshe and Aharon, the Presence of Hashem appears to all and a fire comes down from High and consumes the offerings on the Mizbeach. Bnei Yisrael are so overcome at this display that they shout and fall on their faces.

their death (VaYikra 10:2): "And a fire came forth from Hashem and consumed them, and they died in front of Hashem." When attempting to understand the nature of the sin of Nadav and Avihu, among the approaches suggested are the lack of boundaries they set in their service of Hashem. For example, the midrash (VaYikrah Rabbah 20:8) suggests that they entered the Mishkan after drinking, and for this reason Aharon and his sons are immediately commanded to ensure they do not drink when coming to serve in the Mishkan (VaYikra 10:9): "Drink no wine or other intoxicating beverage you or your sons, when you enter the Ohel Moed, so that you may not die..."

To understand the emotional environment in which this story takes place, we would do well to remember that the building of the Mishkan is intended not just to ensure the construction of a place in which sacrifice and service can take place, but is an attempt to do the seemingly impossible and have Hashem dwell amongst us (Shemot 25:8). This is especially important in the aftermath of the sin of the golden calf, which has among its many consequences the fact that Hashem states that He will no longer be in our midst (Shemot 33:2-4). The building of the Mishkan is an attempt to re-establish a state in which Hashem dwells amongst Bnei Yisrael. When the fire consumes the atonement offerings and Bnei Yisrael see the Presence of Hashem, they know that they have been forgiven enough that Hashem has returned to them. We can only imagine the jubilation that they experienced at such an occurrence!

"the building of the Mishkan is intended not just to ensure the construction of a place in which sacrifice and service can take place, but is an attempt to do the seemingly impossible and have Hashem dwell amongst us"

The ecstatic state of Nadav and Avihu (one in which perhaps much of Bnei Yisrael found themselves as well) led to them wanting to bring an additional sacrifice, one motivated by ahavat Hashem, love of Hashem. As "love knows no bounds", their actions violate the boundaries that yirat Hashem, fear of Hashem, would have put in place. The response of Hashem is to remind Aharon and his remaining sons of the necessary boundaries, of the need to achieve a balance between love and fear of Hashem.

This theme is evident in this week's haftarah as well, which tells the story of the transport of the Aron Hashem to Yerushalayim. The first attempt takes place with much joy and happiness, full of music and dancing (Shmuel II 6:5). However, this boundless love and joy lead to a situation in which the Aron is not carried on the Leviims' shoulders (as it should be), but instead on a wagon. When Uzza touches the Aron, he is struck down and the joyous occasion quickly becomes mournful. After a three month break, a second attempt is made. Although this too is an occasion for great joy, there are elements that give expression

In the midst of these celebrations, we are told of Nadav and Avihu's "strange fire" that Hashem had not commanded them to bring. This "voluntary" additional sacrifice, leads to

to the fear of Hashem as well. For example, the process is done slowly and deliberately, offering a sacrifice every six steps (6:13). Additionally, the process is accompanied by the blowing of the shofar, which lends an air of solemnity. Together with the great joy and love of Hashem that David HaMelech and Bnei Yisrael exhibit and express, they are also expressing their fear of Hashem. They have

achieved the correct balance between these two modes of service, and for this reason the transport ends successfully.

In our lives and times, we must remember to achieve the correct balance between love and fear of Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom



Pictured: Torani on their Pre-Pesach Seminar

Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION: I'm not sure if I ended up counting one of the nights of the omer. Should I keep counting?

ANSWER: In general, if a person did not count one of the nights of the omer, they should continue counting the rest of the nights. However, they should no longer recite a bracha (SA 489:8). The reason for this is that we are concerned that the mitzvah of counting the omer is to count all of the days as one unit; if one day is missing the mitzvah can no

longer be fulfilled properly. We are concerned for this opinion only with regards to reciting a blessing; with regards to counting, one should continue to count even if one day was forgotten. In a case where one is unsure if they have counted, they may continue to count even with a bracha (SA ibid). The reason for this is that we now have two reasons to continue counting with a bracha: the halacha may follow the opinion that each day is its own independent mitzvah (allowing you to make a bracha even if you outright forgot one day), and even if the halacha is not like this opinion, it is possible that you actually counted correctly.

Community Updates

Yom HaShoah and March of the Living UK: BNEI AKIVA currently has a few delegates with March of the Living UK out in Poland. over the past week. Here is what KOBI WEINER, BOGER had to say about his experiences yesterday.

"Today we started off in Belzec extermination camp, visited the renovated shul and geniza in Lancut, paid our respects at the mass graves in zbylitowska góra forest and ended our day in Krakow, with a tour of the Jewish area, testimony from a survivor and a talk on the work of the JCC with the Jewish community in Krakow today. Particularly moving was seeing a BA chultzat Tnuva attached to the children's mass grave in zbylitowska góra. Stuck to the shirt is a small tag with the name and picture of a teenager from Tarnow, Poland who was killed there."



is the significance of returning to our historic and spiritual homeland, and how does this hinge on the complicated political situation Israel is in. On Monday, the group encountered the diversity of Israeli society, meeting with reps from various "tribes": LAURA WARTON of the left-wing MERETZ party, RAV YECHZEKEL FRIEDMAN of the BELZ CHASSIDUT, YASMINE BARAHOOM, an ISRAELI ARAB and RABBI PINI COHEN of YESHIVAT HAR ETZION. It was a fascinating opportunity to engage with these people who represent such different world views. On Thursday, they we set-off to Tel Aviv to meet alumni of BAUK's Mazkirut who have made

Aliya. We heard perspectives on Aliya and how they believe we can be "pioneers" in the modern era. They then traveled to the North of Israel to KIBBUTZ LAVI, where we met and heard from some of the founders of the kibbutz (BAUK alumni). We also had a surprise meeting with former BAUK Rav-Shaliach Rabbi Yehudah Gilad. The closing "Tekes" took place at the cornerstone marking the spot the Kibbutz was founded by alumni of Bachad-BAUK in 1949; it was an extremely apt place to conclude the seminar!

Torani had their Pre-Pesach seminar in Israel. They had some amazing experiences and they were visited by current RAV AND RABBANIT SHALIACH, RAV AHARON AND SHIRA HERSKOVITZ. Here are some of the highlights of the week:

"On Sunday they began their journey in the Binyamin region. They asked themselves what

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