



LT TORAH TO GO

Volume 13 - Issue 30

Edited by Rabbi Mara Nathan on behalf of generations of Torah Learners at Larchmont Temple.

EXPERIENCE TORAH THIS WEEK: April 12-18
PRE-ONEG KABBALAT SHABBAT 6:30PM
SHABBAT AM SERVICE SATURDAY 10:30AM

SHABBAT SHEMINI 5769

Leviticus 9:11-11:47

pp. 798-823 in [Torah, a Modern Commentary](#)

PSHAT... *The plain/simple story*

Parashat Shemini opens with Moses' instructions to Aaron and his sons for bringing offerings to the sanctuary as atonement for any sins that they or the people may have committed. Aaron follows Moses' instructions carefully and places the offerings on the sanctuary altar. Afterwards two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, decide to bring offerings of their own. Because they have brought offerings not commanded by God, they are punished by death. Moses tells Aaron and his other sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, not to mourn for them. Later God tells Moses and Aaron which foods are permitted for eating and which are forbidden to the people of Israel.

REMEZ... *Looking for clues*

Koshi... What could cause God to destroy Nadab and Abihu?

LEVITICUS RABBAH... Not only did Nadab and Abihu fail to consult Moses and Aaron about their plan to bring a "foreign fire" into the sanctuary, they also failed to communicate with each other. Instead of discussing the matter in a way that might have led them to speak with the fathers, or others in authority, they acted quickly, without carefully subjecting their ideas to criticism. For not consulting, they suffered serious consequences.

RASHI... rather than following the carefully detailed directions for offering a sacrifice or bringing fire to the sanctuary, they took upon themselves the power of deciding what to offer, how to bring the offering and when. For disregarding the process and failing to consult with Aaron and Moses about what they planned to do, Nadab and Abihu were punished. It was their arrogance that led them to believe that they were accountable to no one.

RASHBAM... The Torah states *each took his fire pan, put fire in it. and the offered before God fire, which God had not commanded them.* Their sin is that they offered a kind of fire that had not been commanded. That is why the Torah calls it *esh zarah*, or alien or foreign fire. Nadab and Abihu took the law into their own hands.

DRASH... *Discovering Meaning...*

NAPHTALI HERTZ WESSELY... The two sons of Aaron were deeply moved by the beauty and meaning of the ritual sacrifices offered by Moses and Aaron. In their enthusiasm and joy they lost their heads and entered the Holy of Holies to burn incense, something that they had not been commanded to do by Moses. Their wrong doing was not the deliberate breaking of the law but rather their failure to control their religious enthusiasms. They should not have gone beyond what Moses had commanded. They should have been more humble instead of blindly assuming that whatever they did in the sanctuary would be acceptable. They were punished because they occupied positions of importance, which they misused in their misguided excitement and zeal.

HIRSCH... When individuals act out of their own zeal to change or break the law, they end of disrupting community expectations and unity. Nadab and Abihu may have been dedicated priests but they endangered community discipline and trust with their new and alien fire.

Yashar Koach to this week's B'nei Mitzvah:
ELLA VOLPANO & HOLDEN GREENBERG

Come hear them teach Torah this Saturday at 10:30AM

SOD...Finding Ourselves

....What are the laws of *kashrut* and why are they so important to the Jewish nation? Moses Maimonides believed that people kept kosher for medicinal reasons. He thought that if you ate something dirty or not kosher you would get sick. For Maimonides, keeping kosher was G-d's way of keeping us healthy. The Hasidic teacher Levi Yitchak of Berdichev believed that keeping kosher makes you think about what you eat before you eat it, which will make you become more thoughtful about your actions and words. Thinking about what you put in your mouth should make you more careful about what comes out of your mouth. The lesson is that you should think before you speak or act.

The most common understanding of *kashrut* is that it's a kind of system that keeps the Jews separate from the non-Jews..... Milton Steinberg said, "keeping kosher is high survival-value for the Jewish group, serving as a reminder to Jews of their identity and as a deterrent to their being swallowed in to the non-Jewish world." I think he's saying that keeping kosher is a major part of what keeps the Jewish nation strong. But are the dietary laws the only way to keep the Jewish ways and culture alive?

In my opinion, keeping kosher is only one way of keeping the Jewish nation strong. To me one of the big parts of Jewish life and culture is spending time with your family and observing the holidays with them and your friends. Also when you go to services you are keeping the Jewish ways alive. I don't keep kosher and neither do a lot of my friends or family. That doesn't change who I am as a Jew. I still do mitzvahs, go to services and I am still becoming a bat-mitzvah. When I celebrate the Jewish holidays it makes me proud to be a Jew. But don't get me wrong. Food does play a very important part in our lives and in Jewish history. Many of our holidays are centered around or involve food.... I know that when I'm older I will make sure that I will have my grandmother's sweet potato pie at my Seder. My family's recipes will always remind me of my connection to Judaism.....

-ELLA VOLPANO

....I want to talk about why Nadab and Abihu felt the need to make their own sacrifice. Were they feeling that this power would be good for them? Or were they feeling that this power would help the community as a whole? So my koshi, my key question is: What is the difference between "bad ambition" and "good ambition"?

Rabbi Morris Adler believes that Nadab and Abihu were killed because of their intense desire for power. He argues that greed and ambition drove their actions. He actually believes that no fire came from the altar but rather that they were killed by their own "fierce and false ambitions". Adler's interpretation makes sense to me. Nadab and Abihu probably were trying to gain power for themselves. While God's punishment seems a little harsh to me, I can see how this portion is intended to teach us a lesson.

I see how ambition can sometimes lead to bad actions. Barry Bonds took performance-enhancing drugs to make him a better baseball player. Doing so was against the rules of Major League Baseball which defeats the purpose of this great game. Like Nadab and Abihu, his desire to be great caused him to cheat. Ever though he didn't die, his reputation as a great athlete and hero was definitely killed.

In last year's Presidential Race, I was disappointed by John McCain's negative campaigning. How many times did we hear McCain's surrogates say "Obama is a terrorist"? Although most people know that Obama is not a terrorist, this comment took votes away from him. I was also disappointed by some of Obama's behavior. During the primaries, he promised to only use federal funds in the general election. But when the election drew near, he realized that his ability to raise money was greater than McCain's and he decided to break his promise.

....Ambition is a temptation that we all face in our everyday lives. If somebody wants something enough, they might decide to steal it. If somebody wants a better grade, they might decide to cheat on a test. If somebody wants to be popular, they might bully the weaker kids in a group in order to build themselves up. As the Torah teaches us through the story of Nadab and Abihu, we need to be careful not to seek power only for our own gain....

-HOLDEN GREENBERG

MITZVAH of the WEEK...

ELLA raised money for a girl named Kayla in Florida who is 12 years old. "Last August Kayla was diagnosed with type four Lymphoma Cancer. Her doctors said that with the right treatment she could make a full recovery... Since her mom didn't work they couldn't afford the right treatments. So to raise money for her I had 500 bracelets made. They are lime green and say "friends 4 life" on them. Lime green is the color that stands for Lymphoma Cancer. I sold each bracelet for \$5.00. And thanks to my friends and family I've raised over \$2,000 for Kayla's treatments and family."

HOLDEN went to the Sarah Neuman™ nursing home and made crepes for a group of residents. "My goal has been not only to give these people a snack, but also to sit down and have conversations with them, in an attempt to brighten up their day. I owe my interest in cooking and spending time with the elderly to my great grandmother, Miriam Pastan. At 98 years old, she is still the best baker I know."