

Shemini

THE WEISS EDITION

*Light
points*

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



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שמיני

Shemini

ט:א-ו | 6-1:9

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי... וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר
צִוָּה ה' תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֲלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד ה'

It was on the eighth day... Moshe said, "This is what G-d has commanded that you do, and the glory of G-d will appear to you."

Drawing Down vs. Drawing Up

The Zohar compares Moshe and Aharon to the *shushvinin*, the groomsman and bridal escort respectively, in the celestial marriage between G-d and the Jewish people.¹ Moshe focused on bringing G-d to the Jewish people; Aharon focused on drawing the people to G-d. Moshe made G-d's wisdom, the Torah, known to the world, whereas Aharon "loved the people, and *drew them* to the Torah."²

1. See Zohar, Vayikra 53b, et al.

2. Avos 1:12.

While both these tasks are integral to the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people, ultimately Aharon's work is what completes and fulfills G-d's most important desire.

This idea is hinted to by the fact that the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, did not rest in the Mishkan throughout the seven days of its inauguration, during which Moshe assembled and took down the Tabernacle daily. This caused the Jewish people to feel humiliated, says Rashi, until Moshe told them, "My brother Aharon is more worthy and important than I. Through his offerings and his service, the Shechinah will dwell among you."³ Aharon's service alone caused the Shechinah to dwell among the Jewish people, demonstrating that Aharon's life mission to elevate the Jewish people is what truly brings about G-d's ultimate delight. The goal of Moshe's work—to draw G-dly revelation from above—is to stimulate and facilitate Aharon's work, the Jewish people's ascent from below.

This lends even deeper significance to the Mishnah's directive, "Be of the disciples of Aharon... love the people [lit., creatures] and draw them near to the Torah." In addition to the obvious benefit this brings to those whom we draw near, by doing as Aharon did and drawing others to the Torah, we merit that the Shechinah will dwell in the work of our hands, as it did in Aharon's.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, pp. 298–299

3. Rashi, Vayikra 9:23.

 י'ב | 10:2

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה'

*Fire went forth from before G-d and consumed them,
and they died before G-d.*

Expectations

Why were Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, punished with sudden death? According to Rabbi Yishmael, they died because they entered the Mishkan under the influence of alcohol, as is evidenced by G-d's immediate warning to Aharon and his surviving sons to refrain from drinking wine before entering the Mishkan.⁴

To illustrate this explanation, the Midrash relates a parable of a king who once found his devoted domestic aide entering a tavern. The king executed him without a word, and appointed another aide in his place. "It might not have been obvious at first why the first aide was put to death," explains the Midrash, "but when the king instructed the new aide, 'Do not enter the doors of taverns,' the cause for the first aide's execution became evident."

Rashi⁵ cites Rabbi Yishmael's above explanation and refers the reader to the Midrashic parable: "This is analogous to a king who had a domestic aide, etc., as taught in Vayikra Rabbah." Though he does not quote the parable in full, Rashi draws attention to its opening words, thereby addressing the most troubling issue raised by Rabbi Yishmael's explanation:

4. Vayikra Rabbah 12:1.

5. Vayikra 10:2.

How could G-d punish Nadav and Avihu for entering the Mishkan while intoxicated, if they had never been instructed otherwise? The warning not to drink wine before entering the Mishkan was told to Aharon immediately *after* their deaths, but not before!

To explain, Rashi emphasizes that the Midrashic parable likens Nadav and Avihu to the king's trusted aide—בן בית in Hebrew, a member of the king's household. Even though he was not warned, the aide is held accountable for his behavior because as a member of the king's household he should have intuitively sensed that his behavior was against the king's wishes.

The same is true of Nadav and Avihu, of whom G-d told Moshe, "Through *those nearest to Me* I will be sanctified."⁶ Even if entering the Mishkan after drinking wine had not yet been explicitly forbidden, the appropriate mode of conduct should have come to Nadav and Avihu instinctively.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 12, pp. 50–52*

6. Vayikra 10:3.

 י' א-ב | 10:1-2

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֵישׁ מִחֶמְתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ
 עָלֶיהָ קְטֹרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לְפָנַי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם: וַתֵּצֵא
 אֵשׁ מִלְּפָנַי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אֹתְכֶם וַיָּמָתוּ לְפָנַי ה' (ויקרא י' א-ב)

Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before G-d foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. Fire went forth from before G-d and consumed them, and they died before G-d.

No Instructions Necessary

The deaths of Nadav and Avihu were not a *punishment* for their actions, according to one explanation suggested by the Ohr Hachaim.⁷ Rather, they died by “Divine kiss,” in a manner akin to the deaths of Moshe and Aharon—i.e., they sensed G-d’s closeness to the point that their souls expired from sheer ecstasy.

According to this interpretation, the Torah’s characterization of the incense offered by Nadav and Avihu as “foreign fire, which He had not commanded them” must be understood not as criticism of their offering, but as praise of its virtue. It is called “foreign” because it wholly *surpassed* the fixed service in the Mishkan, for unlike the sacrifices that Aharon offered upon G-d’s explicit command, Nadav and Avihu offered their incense without requiring instruction. Their union with G-d was so deep and so much a part of them that they instinctively sensed G-d’s desire and acted accordingly.

7. Vayikra 16:1.

This explains why, after Aharon's sons' deaths, Moshe told him, "This is what G-d has said, 'I will be sanctified through those near to Me.'"⁸ Based on the Midrash, Rashi explains that Moshe said to Aharon, "I knew that this House was to be sanctified through G-d's beloved ones, but I thought it would be either through me or through you. Now I see that they were greater than both of us!"⁹ Nadav and Avihu, through their profound union with G-d, elicited a Divine response even greater than the G-dly revelation elicited by the sacrifices that Moshe and Aharon offered. Their *instinctive* worship of G-d, without requiring instruction, caused "the House to be—truly and *inherently*—sanctified."

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 32, pp. 98–102

8. Vayikra 10:3.

9. Rashi ad loc.

 11:17 | ז:א'

וְאֵת הַחֲזִיר כִּי מִפְּרִים פְּרָסָה הוּא וְשָׁסַע שָׁסַע
פְּרָסָה וְהוּא גְּרָה לֹא יִגַּר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם

And the pig, because it has a cloven hoof that is completely split, but will not regurgitate its cud; it is unclean for you.

Act Now, Perfect Later

In the future, says the Ohr Hachaim, the pig will regurgitate its cud and will thereby become a fully kosher animal (since it already has split hooves.) This is alluded to in the words of the verse above, “the pig [is unkosher] because it has a cloven hoof *but* will not regurgitate its cud,” which the Ohr Hachaim interprets to mean that it is unkosher only *so long as* it does not do so. Implied is that its nature and status is subject to change.¹⁰

Notably, the notion of a non-kosher animal being transformed in the future is unique to the pig, whose current “deficiency” is that it does not regurgitate its cud. Animals that regurgitate but lack split hooves will remain forbidden forever.

Why?

An animal that regurgitates its cud, thoroughly processing its food in order to make the food more digestible, symbolizes a person whose inner character is refined and up to par. In contrast, the pig does not process its food as thoroughly, but it bears the other sign of a kosher animal on the limbs with which it moves—it has split hooves. The pig thus represents a

¹⁰. This idea is mentioned in other Kabbalistic works as well. See Shnei Luchos Habris (Shaloh), Parshas Chayei Sarah; Me’orei Or, Ches, 6.

person whose inner character is unrefined but whose actions are nevertheless satisfactory.

In his current state, this person is deficient. In the future era of Moshiach, however, the entire universe will be elevated and refined, including the individual. Therefore, combined with his ample good deeds, this person will bear both spiritual qualities represented by the kosher signs, as is evidenced by the pig becoming fully kosher. Animals that only regurgitate their cud, however, will remain non-kosher even in the era of Moshiach, symbolizing that even exceptional inner refinement (such as that which the coming of Moshiach will bring) cannot compensate for a dearth of actual mitzvos performed and practical good accomplished.

—*Sefer Hasichos 5751, vol. 1, pp. 162–163, fn. 78*



לזכות

הנערה השלוחה חסיא בת נחמה דינה

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שמים ועול מצוות בלבב שלם, ותצליח

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טהורה לנח"ר הור' וכל משפחתה

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