

Parshas Shemini

This week's parsha Shemini- is the 8th day of inauguration, and according to Rashi it is Rosh Chodesh Nissan, meaning the 8 days of inauguration preceded this parsha. According to the gemara in Shabbos 87b, there were ten crowns set on the first day of Nissan, i.e., this day that is stated in the parsha.

Interestingly, this day parallels the day that humans were created, which the Rebbe explains in his ma'amer Zeh Hayom Techilas Ma'asecha Zikaron Liyom Rishon. This 8th day represents beyond the week, which is beyond teva, which is "mashiachdik" in that it represents the culmination of spiritual growth.

Interestingly therefore we recount the story of Nadav and Avihu- the two sons of Ahron whose lives were extinguished when they brought a foreign fire on the alter. According to Halacha the issue with the two sons were they "paskined halacha" in front of their Rebbe (Moshe Rabeinu), which was deciding to bring their own fire on the alter (Eiruv 63a). The Kohanim were supposed to light the alter, (as we know the fire couldn't be a miracle, it had to be human created), which means their foreign fire was on their own volition. There are other mepharshim that explain that Ahron was punished for the Eigel, and even though Moshe davened on his behalf, only half Ahron's family was saved.

The Trop under the last words of chapter 10 posuk 1- i.e., the first posuk of the story of the sons of Ahron carries a unique intonation, perhaps to indicate that the face value of the story isn't to be interpreted

simply. The underlying issue with the son's according to Rashi was that they were inebriated (as indicated by the law which immediately follows the story, that is for the priest's work they cannot be inebriated). Which means that if the sons were inebriated, they tried to connect to Hashem in a way that was not for this world.

Which is likely why the Alter rebbe on the parsha talks about hidden versus revealed Tzadikim who practice in their own way. For example, RaShbi- who lived hidden in a cave for many years with his son survived on carob, which means he didn't have Matza on Pesach, yet he was able to fulfill the mitzvos (presumably- he was such a great sage, his actions are never questioned). Yet for most of us, we cannot connect to Hashem in this way. The Alter rebbe explains the method serving hashem through only the spirit by way of kabbalistic imagery between a large ox and leviathan, who will fight in the final days of Mashiach. But the water of the leviathan and being able to be consumed by water and live on land (a seeming oxymoron) is a way some tzadikim can live, but most of us this is utterly unattainable. I think then the Alter Rebbe was telling us this, to highlight about the sons of Ahron, who tried to connect to Hashem in a way that was not humanly possible, and therefore their death, wasn't so much a punishment, rather their souls were too lofty for this world, and a fire of life left them, as their soul needed to cleave back to its maker in heaven (Ohr Hachaim).

This is a lesson for us, in that we need to follow Halacha to serve Hashem, we cannot change what is required of us (at least on a communal level) because we feel that we can somehow connect to Hashem on a

metaphysical level. Which is why the Halacha following this story is not to serve inebriated.

But this isn't to say one must abstain from wine. As we know for the Yisraelim, to abstain from wine, one becomes a Nazir, yet, once a person completes his bout of Nazirus, he must bring a Korban Chatas, as abstinence isn't necessarily required of us. Wine can lead to bad things, but also has the ability to bring out the truth, finding the balance is key, and also realizing that we can work enough on ourselves to achieve connectivity to Hashem by following Halacha. Furthermore, one may act on an individual basis in a way that connects to Hashem, but that method cannot be expected of a community. At the end of the day, subjective motives are unsustainable, and Halacha stands the test of time, and sustains.

Ahron's silence as a response to the news of his son's death was laudable, and the Rebbe, mepharshim and others have many interpretations on the greatness of Ahron's silence.

This week we also read from Parshas Parah. We read parah as a reminder of becoming pure, ahead of Pesach so we can bring the korbanos required of us on Pesach. Furthermore, the law-is absolute, a chok with no reason, which fits nicely with the narrative above, which is that we serve Hashem in Halacha not necessarily because there are subjective interpretations as to why we do things.

Finally, there are theoretically 2 haftaros for this week. The first which is the parsha itself is from Shmuel 2 6:1-7:17 and for Sephardim 6:1-19, where Uzza

disrespectfully touched the ahron hakodesh and died because of it. But we don't read that one because this week we have the additional parsha of Parah, where we read from Yechezkiel where yechezkiel explains about purity.

Both the haftaros mention about the (re)building of the Beis Hamikdash. In Shmuel it is David Hamelech's longing to build the Beis Hamikdash, whereas Yechezkiel is for the future.

Good Shabbos.