

## Parshas Shmini

For the week ending 17 Nissan 5756  
12 & 13 April 1996

### Summary

**O**n the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, Aaron, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanos* 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 out 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.

**The "strange fire" may feel spiritual, but it cannot connect with the Source.**

### Commentaries

**"And Moshe said 'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you'" (9:6).**

The higher a person reaches on the ladder of spiritual achievement, the more exactly he is judged. Even something that would not be considered a transgression in a person of lesser standing, may be unacceptable in him. One Rosh Hashana, Rav Naftali m'Ropshchitz was staying with the Seer of Lublin. Rav Naftali was walking to the river to perform the custom of *Tashlich* (the symbolic casting of sins into a stream or the sea). On the way, he saw the Seer coming back from *Tashlich*. The Seer asked Rav Naftali "Where are you going?" He answered "I'm going to retrieve that which you have discarded"... What are considered sins to you, are like *mitzvos* to me!

(Mayana Shel Torah)

**"...And they [Nadav and Avihu] 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 the 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 blithely assuming that they are not putting water in their spiritual gas tank or brake fluid in their spiritual crankcase! *We live in an era where people are more interested in feeling spiritual than in being spiritual.* Where the instant gratification of a spiritual "high" and "mail-order *Kaballa*" masquerades as an authentic relationship with the Creator. That is what the Torah is warning us against in the incident 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 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. Only when we do Hashem's will, do we bring ourselves close to Him.

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Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair  
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-810-315

fax: 972-2-812-890

ohr@jer1.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or eastern@Gramercy.ios.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

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**“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 make the animal kosher. The Torah specifically tells us that one of these aspects without the other renders the animal as unkosher as if it had neither. The split hoof represents the outward behavior of man towards his fellow man, and the chewing of the cud, the inward relationship between Man and G-d. If a person behaves in a kosher way only with his fellow man or only with Hashem, he is, nevertheless, *treif*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Pam)

## Haftorah: Shmuel II 6-7:17

**A**fter the Parsha described the dedication ceremony for the *Mishkan*, the Haftorah describes the arrival of the Ark into Jerusalem. The death of two *Kohanim*, Aaron's sons, in this week's Parsha on the first day of the *Mishkan's* inauguration was a permanent warning that strict obedience, rather than arbitrary actions done with the very best intentions, is the way to reach Hashem. In a similar fashion Uzzah died by Hashem's hand when he tried to protect the Ark from falling. In a moment of thoughtlessness he forgot that Hashem Himself transported the Ark, and He would never let it fall. Although Uzzah's intentions were good, he had forgotten the awe due to the One Whose Word lay in the Ark. When King David finally brought the Ark to Jerusalem we see that he was a true servant of the Torah, and that he saw himself and his kingly powers as a responsibility rather than a privilege. This is exactly what displeased his wife, Michal, when she thought he had trivialized his dignity by dancing like a commoner before the Ark. However, this was the stamp of a true Jewish King according to the Torah laws for kings. On account of his loyalty, David was rewarded that the Temple that would be built by his son would carry his name.

(Rabbi S.R. Hirsch)



Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

**Baruch Kel Elyon - ~~ilgkt~~ lrc**  
**“...And He shall seek out Zion, the outcast city.”**

“In all your dwelling places you shall do no work.”  
*b'chol moshvosaychem lo sa'asu m'lochoh*  
*vftknuag` tk ofh` ucaun kfc*

In its description of the holiness of the Sabbath, the Torah (Vayikra 23:3) states: “It is Shabbos for Hashem in all your dwelling places.”

This, points out the *Sfas Emes*, is the crucial difference between Shabbos and the Festivals. In order to realize the full potential of holiness offered by the Festivals one must make a pilgrimage to the Beis Hamikdash - *aliya laregel*. In regard to Shabbos, however, the holiness of the day comes marching into every Jewish home - “in all your dwelling places.”

We may therefore view the *zemiros* we sing at the Shabbos table as songs of welcome to this special guest who does not require us to come to him but rather honors us with a visit to our own dwelling place.

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