Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aaron, his sons, and the entire nation bring various korbanos (sacrifices) 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 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.

Insights

Good Advice

“And the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, each man took his fire-pan.” (10:1)

Nadav and Avihu made an error of judgment. They thought it was not only the Kohen Gadol who could bring the incense offering in the Holy of Holies, but that even they were permitted to do so.

They were great tzaddikim and no doubt pondered their conclusion before committing themselves to action.

The Midrash comments on the above verse: “Each man his fire-pan; each man by himself, without taking advice one from the other.” (Yalkut Shimoni, Shmini 524)

The implication here is that if they had taken advice one from the other, if they had talked it over before they acted, that they would not have erred.

But why should they have arrived at a different conclusion? Seeing as they both did the same thing — they both brought the ‘strange fire’ — it must be that they both were of the same opinion, that a non-Kohen Gadol was permitted to offer the incense. So even if they had consulted with each other, wouldn’t they have still come to the same conclusion?

Such is the power of counsel. That even though two people may share an identical opinion, through discussion and mutual counsel they can arrive at the truth — which may be 180° from what they both previously believed.

Well-Known in Prague

“And it was that on the eighth day, Moshe called to Aaron and the elders of Yisrael.” (9:1)

The great talmudic authority and Rabbi of Prague, the Noda B’Yehuda, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau passed away. After his passing, the leaders of the community gathered together to choose a successor. Rabbi Yakovka, the Noda B’Yehuda’s son told the gathering that prior to his father’s passing, he had left specific instructions that Rabbi Yakovka’s son, Rabbi Shmuel, should assume the position of Rabbi of the community.

Rabbi Zerach Idlitz, who had presumed himself to be the Noda B’Yehuda’s successor, rose and stated that he did not believe Rabbi Yakovka.

Rabbi Yakovka quoted him the Midrash Tanchuma on the above phrase “and the elders of Yisrael.” He asked “Why were the elders called to witness Aharon’s elevation to the Kehuna? Hashem himself told Moshe to anoint Aaron and appoint him Kohen Gadol (High Priest) in front of the elders so that no-one could claim that Aharon had elected himself to the job.

“Of course, the question arises, if the elders would have suspected that Aaron had not been commanded by Hashem to be Kohen Gadol, but had appointed himself, why should they have been more ready to believe Moshe that Hashem had told him to appoint Aharon in front of them?

“It’s true they may not have believed Aharon, for he was biased in the matter, but if Moshe had wanted to lie, he could have claimed that Hashem had appointed him as Kohen Gadol!

“Similarly in our case, if I had wanted to lie, I could have said that my father wanted me to fill his place, and not my son.”
**Haftorah for Shabbos HaChodesh: Yechezkel 45:16 - 46:18**

**Partners In Time**

The Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Nissan (the first day of the Hebrew month of Nissan) is called Shabbos HaChodesh. Nissan, the first month of the year, is called the ‘king of the months.’ On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Jewish People received the first of all the 613 mitzvos — the sanctification of the moon.

Through this mitzvah, the Jewish People were given a partnership in the mastery of time: The world of Shabbos is fixed in time. We return to it every seven days. Through this mitzvah, the Jewish People were given a partnership in the mastery of time: The world of Shabbos is fixed in time. We return to it every seven days.

Thus Man becomes a partner with Hashem in sanctifying time. The Cesium and Rubidium atom clocks at the U.S. Naval Observatory Time Center are accurate to one second in 300,000 years. But three thousand years ago, Moshe, had no such time-piece. However, somehow Moshe knew the exact length of the lunar month — 29.53059 days — an accuracy which was literally out of this world!

In the reference work ‘Astronomy and Astrophysics’ (Loudolt Bornstein Group vol. a Sec 2.2.4, Berlin 1965) the precise length of the lunar month is listed as 29.530589 days! How did Moshe have a figure so accurate that it took science three thousand years to come to the same number?

**Insights into the Zemiros Sung at the Shabbos Table Throughout the Generations.**

**Yom Shabboson - "The Sabbath Day..."**

Its remembrance is like a pleasing fragrance

The Torah describes the offering of sacrifices in the Beis Hamikdash as providing “a pleasing fragrance for Hashem.” Even when we are not capable of offering sacrifices, our study of the laws of sacrifices is considered as if we actually offered them and provided this “pleasing fragrance.”

In the same manner we are capable of infusing the entire week with the sanctity of the Shabbos by studying the laws of Shabbos and remembering the holy day. This sort of remembering is therefore similar to the “pleasing fragrance” created by the remembering of sacrifices.

**Please Read Before Using!**

“...And they 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 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, assuming that they are not putting water in their spiritual gas tank.

The purpose of life is to become close to the Creator of the world, and only the Creator of the world knows how the world can be utilized to become close to Him.

We live in an era where people are more interested in feeling spiritual than being spiritual. We are a TV generation taught to expect endless effortless instant gratification, where this-week’s-guru, or mail-order fire that He had not commanded them...” (10:1)

Parshas Shmini

For the week ending 27 Adar II 5757, 4 & 5 April 1997

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