

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

SHEMINI—Leviticus 9:22-10:7

MIT'RACHEK MIN HaKAVOD—Distancing From Honor

...Key KOSHI...

HOW does Nadav & Avihu's approach to "K'vod Adonai" reflect their untimely end?
WHAT do Nadav & Avihu seek/pursue in their "drawing near"...? WHAT do WE?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

<p>22] Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after offering the purgation offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. 23] Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the Eternal appeared to all the people. 24] Fire came forth from before the Eternal and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces.</p> <p>10:1] Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the Eternal alien fire, which had not been enjoined upon them. 2] And fire came forth from the Eternal and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the Eternal. 3] Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Eternal meant by saying: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, And gain glory before all the people." And Aaron was silent.</p> <p>4] Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." 5] They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses</p>	<p>22 וַיִּשָּׂא אֶהָרוֹן אֶת־יָדָיו [יָדָיו] אֶל־הָעָם וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיֵּרֵד מִעֲשֵׂת הַחֲטָאֹת וְהַעֲלָה וְהִשְׁלֵמִים : 23 וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֱלֹהֵי מוֹעֵד וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם : [שְׁלִישִׁי] 24 וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הַעֲלֵה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּרְאוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם :</p> <p>1 וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אֶהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מַחֲתָתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֹת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם : 2 וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה :</p> <p>3 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶכְבֹּד וַיִּדָּם אֶהֲרֹן : 4 וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־מִישָׁאֵל וְאֶל־אֶלְצָפָן בְּנֵי עֲזִיזֵאל דָּד־אֶהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קְרִיבוּ שָׂאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה : 5 וַיִּקְרְבוּ וַיִּשָּׂאם בְּכַתְּנֹתָם אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה : 6 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֲרֹן וּלְאֶלְעָזָר וּלְאִיתָמָר </p>
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had ordered. 6] And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. But your kin, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that the Eternal has wrought. 7] And so do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die, for the Eternal’s anointing oil is upon you.” And they did as Moses had bidden.

בְּנָיו רָאשֵׁיכֶם אֶל־תִּפְרְעוּ | וּבְגְדֵיכֶם לֹא־
 תִּפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ וְעַל כָּל־הַעֲדָה יִקְצָף
 וַאֲחֵיכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכוּ אֶת־
 הַשְּׂרֵפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יְהוָה : 7 וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל
 מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ פֶן־תִּמְתּוּ כִּי־שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת
 יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כַדְבָר מִשָּׁה :

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...

When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. –R’ Avi Fertig

9:23-24 *They blessed the people, and the Presence of Adonai appeared to all the people. Fire came forth from before Adonai, consuming the burnt offerings on the altar.*

RASHBAM...This is the fire of God from the Tent of Meeting, the same sacred fire that will come forth to consume Nadav and Avihu.

J.P.S....The SIFRA interprets this as a fire from Heaven...God’s fire issued from the *Kavod*, which itself was a fire that was enveloped in a thick cloud and pervaded the Tent of Meeting..

10:1 *Then Aaron’s two sons, Nadav & Avihu, each took his firepan, put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered before the Lord alien fire which He had not commanded.*

RASHI... The verse prior explains, [9:24] “A fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed the offering...And all the people saw...and fell on their faces.” All Israel “fell on their faces” in prayer “*lifnei Adonai*”...(But) Aaron’s two sons...”

VaYIKRA RABBAH...On account of four things did Aaron’s two sons die. For drawing too close—that they entered the innermost Altar; for the *Korban*—that they offered a sacrifice not commanded; for the alien fire—that they brought in fire from the kitchen; and because they did not consult---as it says, “*each one took his firepan...*” acting on his own accord.

10:2 *And fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed them, so they died “lifnei Adonai.”*

TALMUD...Why would Aaron’s sons have entered such a sacred (forbidden) place? They did so to have a clearer view of God’s Presence. This is why they brought the special offering of incense, not commanded them, so as to have a reason for entering behind the curtain, to be very close. [Yoma 53a]

SIFRA...Aaron’s two sons witnessed the great display of love that God showered upon Israel by sending the heavenly fire, so they desired to reciprocate with a display of their own love for God. R’ Yishma’el taught, however, ‘They brought the incense into the Holy of Holies where even the *Kohen Gadol* may only enter on *Yom Kippur*, as it is said: “*The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron’s two sons...saying: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Holy of Holies behind the curtain...lest he die; for there I appear in a cloud over the cover.*” [Lev 16:2]

TALMUD... “*alien fire*” It was taught: R’ Eliezer says, The sons of Aaron did not die until they taught *halacha* in the presence of Moses, their teacher. What did they expound? “*And the sons of Aaron shall put fire on the Altar...*” [Lev 1:7] They said, Even though fire descends from Heaven, is it not a *mitzvah* for men to bring fire as well? [Eruvin, 63a]

VaYIKRA RABBAH... Nadav & Avihu were punished because they plotted to overthrow their father and teacher. “Look at these two old men...Soon they will be gone and we will become the leaders of all Israel!” God then warns, asking: “And who will bury them?” Stunned at the question, the Holy One replies: “They will bury you, and continue to lead My people.”

R’ Morris ADLER...The fire that the two sons brought, the one which burned within them, was the fire of ambition; the kind of destruction that people bring upon themselves. It was a fire of desire; they were victims of their own appetites for wanting more...They were consumed by their own fierce ambition.

SIFREI...Not alone did Nadav & Avihu fail to consult with their teachers, Moses & Aaron, but they failed to talk with each other...Instead of discussing the matter, “each took his own firepan...” That is, each one alone...

BIUR...Out of a superabundance of joy Nadav & Abihu lost their heads and entered the Holy of Holies...The fire they took was from the outer altar. They offered the incense properly...but such an offering is not mentioned in Torah except on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest alone enters... Such religious leaders as Nadav & Abihu should have been more careful “*walking humbly before their God.*” ...In wishing to show their zeal, by burning more incense, by bringing more fire—it consumed them.

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

"Rabbi Elazar Ha'Kapar taught: Envy, desire and the pursuit of honor put a person out of this world." [P.Avot, 4:21]

ALAN MORINIS...

This is the nature of the pursuit of honor. People seek honor in the hope of filling an inner void. It never works. No matter how much honor a person accumulates, it will not fill the inner vacuum...If you seek honor, you won't acquire Torah, because you'll be endlessly preoccupied with egotistical self-glorification, not the real needs of your spiritual life.

...Honor itself is not a negative trait...as long as we are giving it to others. The twenty-four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva who died in the weeks between Passover and Shavu'ot are said to have died because they did not honor one another. Indeed, rather than seeking it out, honoring others is the way one gains honor for oneself:

"Ben Zoma says: Who is honored? One who honors others." [Pirkei Avot, 4:1]

...Fleeing from honor is not a passive activity. You must actively seek ways to avoid being honored. You need to aspire to humility and make a practice of avoiding situations in which honor is likely to come your way....In the Talmud, Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar teaches that a Sage should travel by the route that will cause the fewest number of people to have to stand in his honor. [Kiddushin, 32b]

...A man once asked the Chasidic teacher Rabbi Simcha Bunim... "Rebbe, I flee from honor, yet it does not pursue me. Where is the truth in the Sages' statement that 'One who flees from honor, it pursues...?' The Rebbe replied, "From your question, I can see that when you run from honor, you are looking back over your shoulder to see if it is coming after you. That is not considered "fleeing from honor."
[With heart in Mind, pgs. 185-189]

RABBI M.M.SCHNEERSON...Nadav and Avihu were impassioned seekers of the Holy One, consumed by the fire burning within their souls. Their desire to be near to God was akin to that of the Talmudic "four who entered Par'des"—the orchard of mystical speculation. [Chagigah 14b]. There too we read of death and madness: "Ben Azzai looked and died; Ben Zoma looked and was stricken...Only Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and left in peace." Why? Because only Rabbi Akiva entered with the intention of exiting. Only he sought to unite the higher with the lower, pursuing enlightenment, in order to transmit it. Ecstasy, for Akiva, was not an end in and of itself. The others aimed at breaking through the barriers that separate humans from the Holy One, achieving a mystical union. Indeed, having lost themselves in the Divine, they were no longer able to reimmerse themselves into the constraints of being human...The religious experience is only *part* of the journey, for it must lead the devotee back into the world....Otherwise, the spiritual seeker is guilty of appropriating the Divine for self-serving purposes, an inclination which is tantamount to idolatry.

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your l*

SIRKMAN... [Friday pm sermon, LT, March 27, 1992]

...Enter Nadav & Avihu, Aaron's priestly sons, caught up in the crescendo of the moment perhaps, (or just a bit jealous of Pop's prestige,) as they decide that they, too, are deserving of a shot at the Big Time. "This sacrifice-stuff; nothin' to it!...We know what just what God wants, and here it is!"

And as the sons of you know who present their self-ignited firepans before the Holy Altar, that same sacred flame, a few moments before miraculously Divine, now brings the Ordination Ceremony to a scorching, anti-climactic close, consuming Nadav & Avihu...

And we who are witness to the tragedy from less of a distance than we realize think: Does the Holy One know something that we are missing? If added ingenuity and ardent zeal kindle God's wrath, then there's no question, I'm in big trouble...But Nadav & Avihu did not merely add their offering to that of their father's...Caught up in the faithful fervor, they offered "*eysh zarah*."

Now wait one minute, you might be saying. ...Shouldn't this be the ultimate goal of Israel's spiritual leaders, to kindle the spark of God's Presence, to move the masses by the firepower of their offering?...

Yet, when our passion somehow leads us to diminish the flame of faith...that fervor can easily become foreign fire...

...The Lubavitcher Rebbe, presiding over an empire of half a million from Brooklyn to B'nai B'rak, with his mitzvah-mobiles and on-the-street outreach, has spearheaded the struggle against assimilation. And yet, for every living room which proudly displays a framed portrait of Schneerson above the mantle, I fear that greater misunderstanding could be in store...It is early on a Sunday morning. The line outside of 770 Eastern Parkway, Lubavitcher World-wide HQ, stretches for blocks. Beggars and businessmen, politicians and the pious weekly regulars all wait to get a glimpse...Each one with a story to tell, with problems to share, standing in line for hours, all for the sake of a 15-second hand shake, and a crisp dollar bill straight from the Rebbe himself. "Don't look at his face," a frightened Russian Jewish woman whispers to her young son.

"Don't stare into the holy man's eyes. *Gottenyu—Mashiachzeit!*"

I can't help but wonder, what fire is it that burns in the Rebbe's electric-blue eyes?...

...Rashi suggests that Nadav & Avihu's wrongdoing was primarily the result of their own-self-righteousness, their assumption of automatic holiness. They were the sons of the High Priest; they knew their way 'round the Tabernacle. They had Yichus! After all, their Uncle was Moses himself; a true Chasidic Rebbe is ever there was one...So they took it upon themselves to decide what to offer and how...They presume that whatever their sacrifice, it would surely be acceptable. They were accountable to no one—or so they thought. Perhaps, not even to God....

...The Lubavitcher, or any other religious leader or movement, whose declarations guarantee its followers undenied access to the gates of God's Glory, always worries me, more than a bit...For as the enthusiasm of the faithful builds...and faith in the Rebbe, (despite his humble claims to the contrary) or the Reverend or Imam heightens to a frenzied crescendo; as shouts of hosanna and slogans of salvation fill the Shul, the Tent, the Church, the air, the Presence of God is often drown out in the process. All the people can hear—is themselves.

...Twelve years ago, when I sat across from Prof Wiesel in a directed study, he explained to me Hasidism's original intent. "Once, a great poet was asked what seemed an impossible question. 'If you could save from your burning home one and only one thing, what would it be?' Without hesitation, the poet replied, 'The fire.'

The fire of faith when kindled by self-interest, can scorch if not burn. When Spiritual leaders come to believe that the fire is of their own making, it can even destroy. Yet the very same flame, if sparked by a Spirit beyond us...arising from within us, can light a path for God's illuminating Presence in this world....

CONSIDER

HOW does drawing near to the Light enable you to shed light on others?
HOW does honor pursue you, or you, it? WHAT is the source of the light you reflect
WHAT kindles the spark in you?

