

Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat April 14, 2007/Nisan 26, 5767

Parashah #26: *Sh'mini (Eighth), VaYikra (Leviticus) 9:1-11:47*

Haftarah: *Sh'muel Bet (2 Samuel) 6:1-17:17*

Suggested *Messianic Writings* reading: Acts 5:1-11

Shalom,

In the previous Parashah, Aharon and his sons had been instructed to remain in the Tent of Meeting for a seven-day consecration period, and now on the eighth day they began their service as *Kohen HaGadol and Kohanim* (High Priest and Priests) of the new nation Israel. As our current Parashah begins, Aharon made the required sacrifices, Moshe and Aharon blessed the people, and Adoni in turn showed that He was pleased. The Glory of Adoni (*k'vohd-Adoni*) appeared to all the people, and fire came forth from the Glory and consumed the entire offering. The people saw this, then gave a shout (*rah-nahn*, which usually means a shout of joy) and fell prostrate on their faces.

Next – *Nadav (Nah-dav)* and *Avihu (Ah-vee-hoo)* (Nadab and Abihu). This is a very puzzling section of Torah. What were they doing? What were they thinking? Why did they do what they did? Since immediately after their death, HaShem commanded Aharon not to drink wine or strong drink while in service, many commentators think that possibly the two sons were intoxicated. That may be possible, yet they had all just completed the seven days of consecration, and no mention prior to that is made of there being any wine or strong drink involved during the week.

In studying this section, and reading the various commentators, it seems to me that more than likely the error was either in taking the service of HaShem for granted, or doing it pridefully. When one ministers unto Adoni, all selfish desires must be set aside, even if they seem righteous. This should be considered for both public and private service unto Him. When a person is intoxicated, the ability to reason clearly is removed. When one's eyes are upon self while ministering unto HaShem, it could be compared to being intoxicated, for the one who is ministering is not reasoning clearly, and Adoni is not the object of his affections. *Mishlei* (Proverbs) 31:45 underscores this thought: "It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted."

The drinking of wine and "strong drink" is not disallowed in itself by HaShem, and in fact permission is given to do so in such passages as *D'varim* (Deuteronomy) 14:26. The wine spoken of in Biblical texts definitely was a fermented juice (Yeshua did turn water into wine, not grape juice); what is called "strong drink" may have possibly been Egyptian barley beer, or other stronger alcoholic beverages. However, one must be careful, for alcohol has the ability to take control of a person's body and mind, just as does any addictive agent. Yet wine and strong drink does have some worth according to Scripture: "Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his trouble no more" (*Mishlei* 31:6-7). Also, twice in 1 Timothy, Sha'ul says that congregational leaders are not to be *addicted* to wine, but does advise Timothy to drink wine for a medicinal purpose. Anyone who took a Nazarite vow was not allowed to drink even grape juice, in the event that it had become fermented.

Strange fire – what exactly is that? The brothers may have acted out of joy; maybe they had become drunk; or maybe out of a disregard for consulting their elders, Moshe and Aharon. Pride of some sort had obviously taken control of their senses. It is possible, since the holy incense was under the control of Moshe and Aharon, that they offered common, or strange, *incense* against the command of HaShem as given in *Sh'mot* (Exodus) 30:9, "You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar...." The Hebrew word for "strange" is *zah-rah*, the root of which is *zoor*, and is also translated as "unauthorized; alien." Other definitions include, "to commit adultery; to come from another; strange thing; strange woman; to be estranged; deviating; nonacquaintance; unrelatedness." The word is used several times in *Mishlei* (Proverbs) to describe "the other

woman; the strange woman; the forbidden woman, etc.” It would therefore seem to me that essentially Nadav and Avihu broke away from the Marriage Covenant that HaShem had made with Israel at Sinai, in order to “do their own thing.” The 60’s phrase, “If it feels good, do it,” was nothing new. In a sense, when *Pinchas* (Phinehas), the son of one of Aharon’s surviving sons, *El’azar* (Eleazar), later killed the sinning man of Israel and the “foreign” woman in *B’Midbar* (Numbers) 25:6-9, he reversed this curse of Nadav and Avihu.

Dietary laws concerning “clean” and “unclean” animals are given in chapter 11. I will probably step on some toes now, but I have come to believe that the Gentile Church has some repenting to do, not only to the Jewish people, but to HaShem Himself, regarding this matter. In our ignorance (not stupidity, but lack of knowledge), and I have been there, still am in many ways, we ate what seemed normal because our society eats it – pork, shellfish, etc. But our Creator had good reason to permit certain meat, and forbid certain meat. When the church rid itself of its Jewish roots some 1700 years ago, it substituted its own holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrations for such usually include baked ham, breaded shrimp, boiled lobster, etc. Now of course there is grace – which means “the power to do the *right thing*,” and Romans 8:1 says that there is “no condemnation for those in Messiah Yeshua,” but also it must be noted that in Mark 7:19, which says that Yeshua “declared all foods clean,” in context, He was simply declaring that it was not necessary to perform a ritual handwashing before eating. Yeshua was (and still is) Jewish, talking to Jewish people, and this was not a discussion about the food, because they were eating “clean” kosher food anyway. If you end up somewhere that unclean foods are the only items offered on the menu, and the location cannot be changed, or for whatever reason, then that is a matter between you and your G-d and is up to no one else’s judgment. Otherwise, I suggest observing His commandments concerning food.

The same thought applies to Acts 10, *Kefa’s* (Peter’s) vision. This again had nothing to do with making all unclean animals suddenly clean, but in context had everything to do with letting Kefa know that the Gospel was being given to the Gentiles; that it was okay for him, as a Jewish believer, to go to the home of a Gentile with the message of Messiah Yeshua, who was to be also the Messiah for the world.

And with these commandments, the Parashah closes with the theme of the entire book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Certainly this is something that our flesh man struggles with. The Haftarah reading in *Sh’muel Bet* (2 Samuel) 6:1-17:17, and the suggested Messianic Writings reading in Acts 5:1-11 both deal with the very important issue of being true to the commandments of HaShem. Uzzah died because David disregarded the proper handling of the Ark of the Covenant, and Ananias and Sapphira died because they lied to the Spirit of G-d. HaShem is very much a G-d of love, but such holy love must include justice and righteousness, and His written Word is given to help us learn how to live in obedience: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And the *Ruakh HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) is given to *empower* us to obediently live the Word.

Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) is observed on Sunday, April 15 (Nisan 27). The demonic darkness that controlled Hitler is on the rise, and darker days are coming. Anti-Semitism, as well as increased persecution of Christians, is increasing constantly. Yeshua will return, and the enemy HaSatan is doing all he can to prevent that, or at least take as many people down with him as he can. We must remember the past, and as believers we must “war on our knees” in these last days. When push comes to shove, will you stand with Israel and the Jewish people?

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah (Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi (Marc) & Yisraela Carmela (Teresa)

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you
into heaven, will come back to you in just the

same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1:11 CJB)