



Shimini

VaYikra (Leviticus) 9:1-11:47

After the seven-day ordination, and the consecration of the *Mishkan* (tabernacle) described in *Parshat Tzav*, *Parshat Shimini* begins with the description of the eighth day, the first “regular” day in the *Mishkan*. All seems to proceed according to plan. Aaron comes forward and offers his daily sacrifices, which are readily accepted by Hashem.

Soon it was time for Nadav and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, to come forward and offer their sacrifices as well. But the order and sanctity that marked Aaron’s sacrifice would not be achieved.

“Now Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Abihu, each took his fire pan and put fire in it, set incense on it, and they offered before the Lord alien fire, which He had not commanded them to do. So fire came forth from the presence of the Lord and consumed them; thus they died before the Lord.” (10:1-2)

The nature of the sin of Aaron’s sons, especially the “*aish zarah*” the alien fire offered by them, has been the subject of much speculation. Did they prepare the sacrifice incorrectly, thus defiling the sanctuary? Were they drunk, as the following section seems to imply? Or was it a terrible reminder that only that which was commanded by G-d could be offered in the *Mishkan*, and that any infractions would be judged swiftly and harshly?

Parshat Shimini concludes with the list of permitted and forbidden animals, birds and fish. Like the “*aish zarah*” the nature and purpose of Kashrut (the dietary laws) has been the subject of much debate and discussion throughout the generations. But they are consistent with the general tenor of the entire Book of *VaYikra*: to seek *kedusha* (greater holiness), in every aspect of our lives.



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