

**PARSHAT SHMINI**

**PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'**

**CHET NADAV & AVIHU (and a little 'methodology')**

1. The most 'popular' topic in this week's Parsha is the sin of Nadav and Avihu. If you are indeed discussing this at the 'shabbos table', ask anyone who is listening (or at least yourself): to the best of your recollection - what did Nadav and Avihu do wrong?

[Most likely you will hear several different answers. If so, before you continue, try to explain why everyone has heard so many different answers.]

2. Now, ask yourself a different question. In your opinion, to what degree was their 'sin' intentional, i.e:
- (a) Were they totally aware that they were about to do something wrong, but intentionally did it anyhow?  
[what we call 'meizid'.]
  - (b) Did they unintentionally do something wrong, but could (and should) have been more careful?  
[what we call 'shogeg'.]
  - (c) Did they have good intentions (i.e. they intended to do something that they thought was good - sort of like Aharon's original intentions at 'chet ha-egel'), but unfortunately it was something that they did not realize was forbidden?  
[what we call a 'tragedy'.]

Return now to the various answers (i.e. what their sin was) that you may have raised in question #1. Categorize those answers according to these three possibilities.

3. Return now to these three possibilities:  
Considering Nadav & Avihu's punishment, which possibility seems to be the most logical one?  
Can you suggest a reason why their punishment may have been so severe, even if their sin was not intentional?  
[Relate to both when and where their sin takes place.]
4. Review 8:1-5 and 9:1-6. As you study and compare these two sets of psukim, note how Nadav & Avihu's sin takes place at a 'public gathering' - called to celebrate the dedication of the Mishkan. Considering this 'setting' - that their sin takes place during a ceremony that was attended by the entire nation, can you suggest a reason for the severity of their punishment (even had their intentions been good)?  
In your answer, relate to the phrase "asher **lo tzivah** otam" (10:1) in contrast to the phrase "ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" that is repeated so often in the Torah's description of the assembly of the Mishkan in Parshat Pekudei. [For example, see that phrase in Shmot 40:16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32, while noting how the events in Vayikra chapter 9 take place on the same day as the events in Shmot chapter 40, i.e. the day of the dedication of the Mishkan. Note as well a similar phrase in Vayikra 8:5,9,13,17,21,29,36 and 9:6]

5. Next, before we discuss the various opinions of the commentators (and in order to appreciate the various opinions), review 9:23 thru 10:20, paying attention to how the Torah tells the story Nadav & Avihu's sin and its aftermath. Based on these psukim alone, attempt to determine on your own what it was that Nadav and Avihu's did that angered God.  
How do we know for sure that they sinned?  
In your answer, relate to 10:3, as well as to the 'inserted' 'parshia' from 10:8-11.

Do the psukim tell us precisely what it was that they did wrong? Do they at least 'hint' to what was done incorrectly?

6. Next, see Vayikra 16:2 and Bamidbar 3:4 & 26:21. Do these psukim add any information that we were not aware of in Parshat Shmini? How can they shed light on any of your answers to the above questions?

Now, let's study the various interpretations raised by the classic commentators:

7. See Rashi on 10:2, noting how he quotes the two opinions found in Eiruvin 63a [i.e. disrespect to their elders, or entering the mishkan in a state of drunkenness]. What is the 'textual basis' for each of these two opinions?

In your opinion, are these two opinions based on thematic considerations supported by a textual 'nuance', or visa versa?

How would Rashi answer our question in relation to their intentions (see question #2 above)?

See also Chizkuni on 10:1-3, noting how he also relates to the two opinions of Chazal (quoted by Rashi), and how he uses them to provide a very interesting explanation of these psukim.

8. Next, see Ibn Ezra, noting how he explains explicitly that Nadav and Avihu had good intentions. Nonetheless, they were punished. Does he explain why? [Again, relate to question #2 above.] Relate this to Ibn Ezra's explanation of Aharon's behavior at "chet ha-egel" and the phrase "asher **lo** tziva Hashem" in 10:1.

Can you explain why Ibn Ezra does not quote Rashi (i.e. either opinion of Chazal)?

9. Next, see Ramban on 10:1. Note how his interpretation is based primarily on his textual analysis of 10:1 itself (and the obvious parallel to the laws of the mizbach ktoret in Shmot 30:9). Note as well how Ramban focuses on the 'fire' aspect, in both 10:1 and 10:2, and less so in regard to the 'ktoret' itself.

How would Ramban answer question #2 above (re: their intentions)? Can you explain why?

In your opinion, why do you think that Ramban does not quote Rashi (either to agree or disagree with the two opinions in Chazal - or even Ibn Ezra) before he offers his own interpretation? [What can we infer from this in regard to Ramban's methodology when he studied Chumash?]

Now, see Ramban on 10:3, noting how he quotes Chazal on a different issue, and Ibn Ezra; and explains why he disagrees. [See footnotes on Ramban 10:1 in either Torat Chaim or Chavell editions, noting how they explain that Ramban is alluding to concepts in 'kabbala' in this interpretation.]

10. See Seforno on 10:1, noting how he bases in interpretation on the juxtaposition in Sefer Shmot between the laws of the daily olah offering (see Shmot 29:38-42) and the laws of the mizbach ha-ktoret (see Shmot 30:1-10).

Note as well how Seforno claims that not only did Nadav and Avihu have good intentions, they even based their actions on their own understanding of this juxtaposition of psukim!

First of all, relate this to question #2 above!

In what manner is Seforno's interpretation similar to Ramban's, and in what manner is his interpretation different?

[Recall our TSC shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh, in relation to the location of the laws of mizbach ha-ktoret (in Shmot 30:1-9) **after** the completion of the 'Shchina' unit (chapters 25 thru 29), and hence the ketoret serves as protection from the "shechina". Relate the conclusions of that shiur to Seforno's interpretation!]

Finally, note how Seforno concludes his interpretation, claiming that this action is precisely what Chazal refer to (i.e. R. Eliezer's opinion) that 'they taught a law without consulting Moshe' (quoted by Rashi on 10:2).

However, the Gemara in Eiruvin appears to provide a different explanation (re: to 'even though fire comes from heaven, it is a mitzva to bring our own fire as well'). In your opinion, would

Seforno agree with that interpretation as well, or is he offering a different explanation for R. Eliezer's opinion?

11. In regard to these various opinions, can you explain why the various commentators search for additional or different reasons for Nadav and Avihu's sin, even though there are already two answers provided by Chazal?

[Note how some of the parshanim attempt to connect their own explanation to that of Chazal's (e.g. Chizkuni and Seforno) in an attempt to add insight to what Chazal said; while others will offer a completely different interpretation, as long as it based on a thorough analysis of the psukim (Ibn Ezra and Ramban). As you study these commentators, keep this in mind; and see if this pattern continues!]

12. For 'afikomen', see Rashbam on 10:1. Note how he provides a very clear and concise explanation for what Nadav and Avihu did wrong (even though they may have had good intentions). Note as well how and why he explains that 10:1 should be understood as 'past perfect' (i.e. 10:1 took place before 9:24), as the fire in 9:24 and 10:2 is the same!

Then, see Rashbam on 10:2-3 where he explains this in greater detail, and note how he beautifully explains 10:3, even though this pasuk (at first glance) appears to be rather cryptic.

Note how Rashbam bases his interpretation on the laws of Vayikra 21:10-12 (assuming that Aharon was already aware of those laws - as they were given at an earlier time). What major assumption does Rashbam make in regard to these psukim (that is not written)? What does he gain by making this assumption?

Would you agree that Rashbam's interpretation is the simple 'pshat' of these difficult psukim? Explain why yes, or why not!

#### THE OHEL MO'ED / OLD & NEW

1. Recall from Parshat Ki Tisa that in the aftermath of chet ha-egel, Moshe moved his tent to 'outside the camp' [read Shmot 33:7, noting its context in 33:1-12]. In that pasuk, how does the Torah refer to Moshe's tent? Can you explain why the Torah chose this specific name - "ohel moed" - to describe his tent?

To the best of your recollection, does Moshe's tent ever return to 'inside' the camp? If so, when? [Relate to Shmot 25:8.]

2. How does this name 'ohel mo'ed' (n 33:7) relate to the fact that later on the mishkan is also referred to as an ohel mo'ed?

Note the translation of Unkelos for the word "ohel mo'ed" in Shmot 33:7 and then in Shmot 40:1,34,35, etc. Is it the same or different? Can you explain why?

What is the 'shoresh' [root] of the Hebrew word 'mo'ed'? Relate to the Hebrew word 'va'ad' or 'va'ada' (a committee - in modern Hebrew). Relate also to Shmot 25:22 and 29:42-43!

3. If the word "moed" implies 'meeting', 'who would be meeting whom' in the "ohel moed"?

Why is the word "mo'ed" also used to describe a 'yom-tov', as in Vayikra 23:1-4 and Shmot 23:17? In that context, does it relate to a 'meeting' of any sort? If so, who is meeting whom?

Based on this discussion, how would you explain the word 'mo'adim' in the phrase "ve-hayu le-otot u-lemo'adim..." in Breishit 1:14? In that pasuk, does "moed" imply 'meetings' or 'holidays'?

#### KASHRUT OR KEDUSHA?

4. How would you title the entire section of laws recorded in chapter 11 (at the end of Parshat Shmini)? In your answer, relate to the summary psukim in 11:43-47.

If these laws are more than just 'kashrut' [i.e. the laws that define what animal are kosher], then explain what the more general title should be, and why this section does include certain laws pertaining to what we refer to as "kashrut". [In your answer, relate to what happens if someone eats an animal that is not 'kosher'.]

Compare these psukim to the laws in Devarim 14:3-21. Do the psukim in Devarim deal only with kashrut or is there a more general topic there as well?

In what manner is the section in Devarim different than the one in Vayikra? [Relate to the difference between the primary themes of Vayikra and Devarim.]

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#### PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur) The Special Korbanot of Yom ha'Shmini

1. Review 9:1-6, noting how these psukim introduce the special ceremony that is to take place on **yom ha-shmini** - the day of the mishkan's dedication. Based on these psukim, in your opinion, what will be the 'highlight' of this ceremony? [Relate to 9:5-6 & 9:22-24.]

How does this 'highlight' relate to the special set of korbanot that are to be offered on this day, as described in 9:1-4?

2. In what manner does this special ceremony on Yom ha'Shmini parallel the events that took place at Har Sinai? [In your answer, relate to Shmot 24:1-17, especially to 24:5-6 and 24:15-16.]

How (and why) is this parallel significant? [Relate your answer to the first Ramban on Parshat Teruma (Shmot 25:1)].

In what manner do these korbanot, as detailed in 9:2-4, relate to the sin of the Golden Calf? Relate to both their category (i.e. olah, chatat etc.), and the specific animal.

3. Review 9:1-4 once again, and make a chart of all of the special korbanot that were to be offered on **yom ha-shmini**.

Organize your chart according to:

- a) the korbanot of Aharon vs. korbanot of the people,
- & b) korbanot olah, chatat, and shlamim.

Then, using that chart as a base, compare these korbanot to the korbanot that were offered:

- a) during the 7 day milu'im ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1-36)
- b) at 'brit na'aseh ve-nishma' at Har Sinai (Shmot 24:4-6)
- c) yearly on Yom Kippur based on Vayikra 16:1-5.
- d) yearly on Shavuot with the 'shtei ha-lechem' (23:17-19).

While doing so, relate to:

**who** must bring each korban (Aharon or the people);

**what categories** of korbanot are offered;

What specific animal is offered for the korban.

[Note that an 'egel' is a baby 'par'; & a 'keves' is a baby 'ayil'.]

Attempt to explain the thematic significance of these parallels (i.e. between the korbanot of yom ha-shmini; Yom Kippur and Mamad Har Sinai) while relating to 9:4-6 & 9:23-24.

Relate as well to Shmot 24:9-11, 24:15-17, and 40:34-38.

5. In what manner does this day (i.e. yom ha-shmini) coincide with the day of 'hakamat ha-mishkan', as described in Shmot 40:1-2, and 40:38?

In your opinion, which of the korbanot offered on yom ha-shmini relate directly to the events of Ma'amad Har Sinai, and which korbanot relate to the events at chet ha-egel.

Which of these aspects do we find in the korbanot offered on Yom Kippur, and which of these aspects do we find in the special korbanot offered on Shavuot (in Vayikra 23:17-21)?

What event at Ma'amad Har Sinai is parallel to Vayikra 9:23?

What event (and/or warning) at Har Sinai is parallel to Vayikra 10:1-2? [Relate to Shmot 19:20-24.]

6. Based on that parallel, attempt to explain why are Nadav & Avihu punished, even though they may have had good intentions? [See Chizkuni on Vayikra 10:3!]

Based on our TSC shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh, why do you think that Nadav & Avihu thought that it was necessary to offer **ktoret** when they saw the "shchina" descending unto the Mishkan? [See Seforno on Vayikra 10:1.]

In what manner is their sin similar to Aharon's sin at chet ha-egel? In your answer, relate to the last phrase in Vayikra 10:1.

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### PART III - PARSHANUT

#### AHARON'S SPECIAL KORBAN

1. As you may recall, Parshat Shmini opens by telling us that Aharon must offer an "egel" [a calf] for a korban **chatat** on yom ha-shmini, as it was the first day that he officiated in the mishkan (see 9:1-2). In your opinion, why must Aharon offer specifically an 'egel' for his **chatat** on this day?

Relate to the fact that during each of the seven days of milu'im that preceded yom ha-shmini, Aharon offered a par for a **chatat**. [btw, an egel (calf) is a baby par (bull).]

Now see Rashi on 9:2. How does he answer this question?

You may have understood that Rashi explains that Aharon brings an egel as he needs forgiveness ['kapara'] for his sin at chet ha-egel. [It's only an assumption, but 95% of the time that I have asked this question in class, that is the answer that everyone gives.]

Now, read this Rashi once again, this time carefully. Explain why Rashi begins his commentary with the phrase: "lehodi'a..." [to make it publicly known...]. Attempt to arrive at a more precise understanding of how Rashi relates this egel to chet ha-egel. Can you explain why? In your answer, relate to Rashi's explanation for why Aharon had to bring a par for his chatat during each of the seven days of the milu'im.

Then, see Rashi on Shmot 29:1-2, where he explains why Aharon must offer a par on each day of the seven day milu'im. Note how this explanation is different than his explanation for the egel on yom ha-shmini. Can you explain why?

Next, see Chizkuni. Is his peirush the same as Rashi's or different? [See also Ibn Ezra.] How do they both relate to the difference between the 'par la-chatat' during the 7 day milu'im, and the 'egel la-chatat' on yom ha-shmini? How does Rashi relate to this?

Then, see Ramban on this topic / in his commentary to 9:2 towards the end - "ve-hinei ha-korbanot ha-eilu...", and note how and why he argues with Rashi. How does he explain why Aharon must bring a par during the seven day milu'im?

Can you explain the reason for these respective opinions of Rashi & Ramban? Be sure to relate to their controversy concerning **when** chet ha-egel took place, i.e. before the commandment to build the mishkan (Rashi) or afterwards (Ramban). [Finally, see Tanchuma on Vayikra 9:2.]

#### WHAT CAUSED THE SHCHINA TO APPEAR?

2. As you review the opening psukim of the Parsha (9:1-6), note how God informs Moshe that 'kvod Hashem' would appear - once Aharon & Bnei Yisrael would offer a certain set of korbanot. [Note especially 9:4 & 9:6, in their context.]

Then, quickly review 9:6-24, noting how these commandments are fulfilled. Based on the concluding psukim of chapter 9, did "kvod Hashem" appear immediately upon the completion of these sacrifices, or did something else happen in between?

If there was a need for something additional, can you explain why? In your answer, relate to 9:23!

Then, see Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni on 9:23, and enjoy!

#### THE FIRST OR EIGHTH OF NISAN?

3. On what day of the month (of Nissan) did **yom ha-shmini** take place? Consider the following sources:

Shmot chapter 40, especially 40:2,17,34-35.

Vayikra 1:1-2; 7:37->8:4; 8:33->9:5

Bamidbar 7:1-11,88-89.

[Note, that since **yom ha-shmini** was preceded by the seven day 'milu'im' ceremony, then it depends if the seven day milu'im began with the erection of the mishkan by Moshe on the first of Nissan as described in Shmot 40:1-2,17 or 7 days earlier on the 23rd of Adar. ]

This is a very complicated sugya, and the source for a major controversy among the commentators. Be sure to see:

Rashi on Vayikra 9:1 and Vayikra 8:2

Ibn Ezra (aroch) & Ramban on Shmot 40:1!

Ramban on Vayikra 8:2 !

be-hatzlacha,  
menachem