



Parshas Shemini 2019, seeking balance

The Parsha Perspective is sponsored by the Hess family. May G-d bless them with much health, success, and happiness!

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the speedy recovery of Sasson Betzalel ben Batya and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated to the memory of Shlomo Ben Edward and Edward Ben Shaul. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our parsha begins on the eighth day of its inauguration; Aron and his sons began to serve as Kohanim in the Mishkan. G-d's fire consumed the sacrifices they had brought, signaling the divine presence dwelling in the G-d's physical home.

Amid all the excitement, Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought an incense offering they were not told to offer. Immediately a heavenly fire came down and consumed them, killing them instantly. Moshe quickly ordered his cousins to remove Nadav and Avihu's bodies from the Mishkan. G-d then commands Aaron and all future Kohanim never to drink alcohol while working in the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash.

The Parsha concludes with the signs that distinguish between kosher and non-kosher animals. Kosher animals must chew their cud seven times and have split hooves. A kosher fish must have both fins and scales.

While the Torah lists which birds are not kosher, it does not say what signs make a bird kosher. The Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish law) writes that it can not be a bird of prey; it must have an extra toe behind and above the other toes and have a gizzard that can be peeled by hand.

A question comes to mind: What did Nadav and Avihu do that was so wrong that they deserve such a grave consequence? Rashi explains that they died because of their lack of respect for G-d. They entered the Mishkan intoxicated and then offered an unauthorized offering.

But there seems to be a contradiction; the next Rashi says that Moshe told Aaron that his two sons, Nadav and Avihu, were greater than they were. So how can they be that great and make such a fatal mistake?!

The book of Vayikra is compiled of many different ways to connect to G-d physically. Whether through the sacrifices in the Mishkan, charity, Shabbos and holidays or not eating certain foods, they each give us an ability to live a spiritual life in a physical world.

The purpose of the creation of the universe is to build a physical dwelling place for G-d; to do so, we must live a balanced life with both the spiritual and the physical. For example, when we make blessings before we eat to thank G-d. We must be in the physical world to change it.

However, Nadav and Avihu did **not** want to live balanced lives with the divine and the mundane. They were intoxicated with spirituality and wanted to live a life entirely dedicated to G-d and his holiness and void of worldly matters.

Nevertheless, their idea of living utterly devoted to G-d still conflicted with G-d's desire for the world, and therefore they ultimately paid with their lives.

Moshe said that Nadav and Avihu were greater than he was because he was still connected to this world, but they wanted no part of it.

The Rambam (Maimonides) writes, *“Every person whose tendencies are of middle-course is called wise,”* Throughout his works, he stresses the importance of balance in the different areas of one’s life: thoughts, emotions, action, and character. The Rambam views balance as a condition of one’s service to G-d.

Achieving balance in our daily lives is essential for success and meaning. Balancing our personal and professional lives can be challenging, but it is important to prioritize our well-being and relationships.

Finding a balance between ambition and ethics is essential in our business dealings. By finding this balance, we can build a successful career while also maintaining our values and integrity. It is also important to seek balance in our relationships, as they are significant in our happiness and overall well-being.

Another area where balance is crucial is our diet. Striving for a balanced and healthy diet can help us feel physically and mentally better. By choosing various nutrient-rich foods, we can fuel our bodies and minds, improving overall health and wellness.

Seeking balance in all aspects of our lives is vital for achieving success, happiness, and fulfillment. Whether in business dealings, relationships, or diet, finding a healthy balance allows us to overcome life's challenges and reach our full potential.

“Balance is not something you find, it is something you create.”

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*