



Parshas Shemini 2024, Bridging the Divide

**The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers.
May G-d return all the hostages in Gaza immediately.**

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, and in loving memory of Hinda Bas Udl, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

The release date of this episode coincides with the birthday of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka on the 25th of Adar. A beacon of modesty, her legacy exemplifies the profound influence of inner strength and the power of subtle impact.

Despite her prominent status as the Rebbe's wife, a position often associated with considerable fame and prestige, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka embraced a life of remarkable modesty. Though exercised with a gentle touch, her influence resonated powerfully and broadly. May her life inspire us all to seek strength from within and live a life of purpose and dedication.

Our Parsha begins as Aaron and his sons are officiated as Kohanim in the Mishkan on the eighth day from its inauguration. G-d's fire consumed the sacrifices they had brought, signaling that the divine presence was in the Mishkan.

Amid all the excitement, Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, presented an incense offering without direct command—a decision that led to immediate and tragic consequences. 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 spoke directly to Aaron and commanded him and all future Kohanim to never drink while working in the Mishkan or the Beis Hamikdash. If intoxicated, a Kohen might not differentiate between the pure and impure, potentially making a fatal mistake.

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

While the Torah lists which birds are not kosher, it does not say what signs make a bird kosher. But the Shulchan Aruch writes that a bird must 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.

However, a question comes to mind: Following the death of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, the Torah recounts a rather interesting story. After detailing the laws of what to do with each sacrifice, Moshe Rabbeinu inquired what happened to a previously sacrificed sin offering.

The Pasuk writes: (10:16) וְאֵת שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהָיָה שָׂרָף וַיִּקְצַף עַל־אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל־אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַנּוֹתָרִים לֵאמֹר - *Moshe inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and it had already been burned! He was angry with Eliezer and Itamar, Aaron's remaining sons.*

Aaron responded that his two sons had just passed, and therefore he could not eat the sacrifice. Moshe understood Aaron's answer and accepted his explanation. But why is this exchange and conversation recounted in our Parsha? What lesson and message is the Torah conveying through detailing this story?!

While there are multiple answers to this question, one explanation connects with the life of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Although she shied away from the

public eye, all those who interacted with her were amazed by her generosity, kindness, and compassion.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar writes that this story teaches us about empathy and understanding. How to interact and deal with a person who has lost a loved one or is going through a hard time.

When Moshe initially sees that one of the sacrifices was not done correctly, he chastises Aaron's two sons for not following his instructions. It was just a few days since the Mishkan's inauguration, and they were already veering from the directives that they were given. This follows the death of their older brothers, who died because they did not adhere to the guidelines that Moshe established.

But Aaron correctly steps in and explains to his brother that they could not eat the sacrifice since they were in the state of onen for Nadav and Avihu. According to Jewish law, after the death of a loved one, a person assumes the status of onen until the deceased is buried.

An onen must deal with the arrangements of the burial and is not obligated to fulfill many mitzvahs. They cannot pray or study Torah, nor can they make a bracha over bread or say Birkas Hamazon after their meal.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh quotes the Toras Kohanim that when Moshe saw the ashes of the sacrifice, he immediately got upset with Aaron and his sons. Why weren't they following G-d's instructions to the letter? Wasn't Nadav and Avihu's death enough to reiterate that they must follow G-d's command precisely and not deviate in any way?!

While Moshe may have been correct, according to the Ohr Hachaim, his anger caused him to forget the status of Aaron and his sons. Hence, when Moshe heard Aaron's response, he realized he made a mistake and immediately accepted responsibility. As the Pasuk writes "וַיִּשְׂמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו" - ***And when Moshe heard the response, it was good in his eyes.***

The Ohr Hachaim explains that this episode follows the death of Nadav and Avihu to teach us the compassion we must have when interacting with a person who has suffered a loss. We must be extra mindful of their pain and recognize the gravity of their loss. We should offer our unwavering support and understanding as they navigate this challenging time.

By all accounts, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka epitomized a profound level of understanding, kindness, and compassion. Her humility and generosity extended not only to those unaware of her identity but also to the Chassidim, whom she regarded with the affection and concern one reserves for family.

In our daily lives and amid this difficult time that Jewish people face worldwide, it's crucial to foster a deep understanding to bridge divides within our people. Despite differences in appearance or practice, it is both our responsibility and duty to uphold unity, strengthening the bonds of the Jewish people across the globe.

**"No matter how engrossed one may be in the loftiest occupation,
one must never remain insensitive to the cry of a child."**

-Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini