

## **CSH Shabbat Service Schedule**

**March 26** | **Parashat Sh'mini /Shabbat Parah**  
**April 2** | **Parashat Tazria / Shabbat HaChodesh**  
**April 16** | **Parashat Achrei Mot / Shabbat HaGadol**

**Friday, March 25, 2011 Candle Lighting 6:49 pm (Sag Harbor)**

This week's Torah reading: **Shmini / Shabbat Parah**

Annual: Leviticus 9:1 – 11:47 (Etz Hayim, p. 630)

Triennial: Leviticus 9:1 – 10:11 (Etz Hayim, p. 630)

Maftir: Numbers 19:1 – 22 (Etz Hayim, p. 880)

Haftarah: Ezekiel 36:16 – 38 (Etz Hayim, p. 1287)



**Musings on Sh'mini – And Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon, each took his incense pan, and they put fire in them, and they put incense upon it. Then they brought near before God strange fire, that he had not commanded them. A fire went forth from before God, and it consumed them, and they died in front of God. (Leviticus 10:1-2, Shemini)**

The Torah reading Shemini contains one of the more difficult episodes of the Five Books of Moses, the death of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu. Although their deaths were very clearly an act of God, and though there are some very compelling textual and midrashic hints which offer possible bases for their divine punishment, we do not have any simple and definite explanation of this tragedy. However, it does leave us with some very important lessons in the areas of faith and the proper service of God.

We should view Aaron's mute response to the loss of his sons not as passive but as active. Whereas we might have humanly expected Aaron to engage in possible criticism of his sons, himself, or even of the Master of the Universe, he restrains himself and sets a striking example of faith and the proper approach to mourning. Modern Jewish law converts this example into the ruling that the first three days of mourning are devoted not to words but to tears. One will have ample time to give verbal expression to one's spiritual reckoning in the weeks and years that follow.

Although we do not fully understand why God took the lives of Nadav and Avihu, we nevertheless should take notice of and internalize the lessons of their apparent misdeeds. The text states that Nadav and Avihu brought a "strange" offering to the altar, which God hadn't requested of them. This term could be compared to the Hebrew translation of idol worship, which is literally "foreign" or "strange" worship. In our day, we may not see people bowing before idols, but rather, we do face a very real problem in that all too many of us become accustomed to approaching God as "strangers", i.e., going through the motions of observance devoid of heart and the will to seek intimacy with our Creator. In our daily prayers, it is therefore incumbent upon us all to fully reach a proper level of intention not only in proclaiming God's oneness, but to maintain this level while reciting "you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul and all of your might".

<http://www.jewishmag.com/parsha/oldparshas/shemini.htm>



Nadav and Avihu acted on impulse instead of asking for instructions—even though Moses has issued warnings that the whole sanctuary is a dangerous place where the priests risk death unless they follow instructions meticulously. They probably took their incense pans all the way into the Holy of Holies—and later the Torah says that although Moses goes in to speak with God, no one else may enter that innermost chamber except the high priest, once a year. Nadav and Avihu bring their “strange fire” into the holiest place as an act of worship. But their impulsive violation means death.

Both Nadav and Avihu (unlike their two younger brothers, who stick to the instructions and live) have already beheld God’s feet on a pavement of sapphire (Exodus 24:10) halfway up Mount Sinai. After an experience like that, it’s hard to go back to just seeing the usual pillar of cloud and fire. They’re both hungry for more contact with God.

They see that when Aaron finishes the sacrifices and blesses the people from the altar, no manifestation of God occurs. But after Moses takes Aaron into the Tent of Meeting, the Holy of Holies, the miraculous fire of God comes forth and lands on the altar.

Clearly the way to bring about an encounter with God is to enter the Holy of Holies.

Nadav, whose name means a generous or spontaneous giver, decides to give himself as a nedavah, a spontaneous gift to God. He is willing, even eager, to let his own ego go up in smoke in order to be united with God. He picks up his incense pan.

Avihu, whose name means “he is my father”, is also carried away with the ecstasy of the moment. He sees his brother heading toward the innermost chamber with an incense pan, and he grabs his own pan. He doesn’t stop to think that he’s risking his life. He’s like his father, Aaron, who made the golden calf when the people asked for an idol, without thinking through the consequences. (The traditional explanation of Avihu’s name is that God is like a father to him, but I think the evidence points to Avihu’s actual father.) Now as Avihu wants to encounter God in the Holy of Holies, the way his father Aaron just did.

Although the two brothers act from different impulses, they both bring “strange fire” before God. Symbolically, this fire is their passion: Nadav’s burning desire to give himself to God, and Avihu’s burning desire to experience more divine ecstasy. Their consuming desires are met with a consuming fire from God.

Aaron’s two younger brothers, Elazar and Itamar, stick to doing the job God has given them. They are rewarded with long lives and many descendants who also serve as priests.

Is it better to die in an ecstasy of worship, hurtling your soul into the unknown? Or is it better to keep your feet on the ground and pay attention to the demands of this world, even as you keep your sense of awe?

I believe we are all in this world for a reason, with a job to do, even if we don’t know what it is. I’d rather be like Elazar and Itamar, and hope for a long life of service in this world, doing my work as well and as carefully I can. (But I’m glad I wasn’t given the work of a priest!)

[http://www.mtorah.com/Torah\\_Monologues/Blog/Entries/2010/4/4\\_Strange\\_Fire.html](http://www.mtorah.com/Torah_Monologues/Blog/Entries/2010/4/4_Strange_Fire.html)

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In the Talmud we find a statement that tells us that the letter Vav in the phrase HOLECH AL GACHON, “...creeps on its belly...” (Lev. 11,42) marks half of the letters of the Torah and the words DAROSH DARASH, “...inquired insistently...” (Lev. 10,16) mark the midpoint of the words in the Torah. (Ked. 30a) These words appear in this week’s Sidra.

If one counts the letters and counts the words he will find that they are off by approximately 5000 letters and 1000 words. The Talmud later says that we are not thoroughly versed in the exact letters. Hence we can assume that these discrepancies are due to the fact that we do not have the exact text. This is a very difficult statement to accept.

There is another explanation given to this dilemma. In the Torah there are 17 letters that are written either larger or smaller than the other letters, or defective (cut in half). The letter Vav mentioned above is number 9 among these letters; hence it is the middle letter.

There are also 77 double words in the Torah (such as Avraham, Avraham). The words DAROSH DARASH mentioned above are the 39th set, which makes them the middle ones. When we find a difficulty in the Talmud we should not assume immediately it is a mistake. We should assume that there is an explanation and should seek one.

<http://torahportion.wordpress.com/category/3-vayikra/shemini/>



### **Yom Huledet Sameach**

Merrill Barnett

### **Passover Alert --Amaranth and Quinoa**

Are amaranth and quinoa kitnios?

Amaranth and quinoa are seeds which are similar enough to wheat and barley that they theoretically would be kitnios, and in fact some Poskim do treat them as such. However, Rav Schwartz accepts Iggeros Moshe's (OC III:63) position that foods which were not consumed by Jews at the time the minhag of kitnios began are not forbidden on Pesach. Therefore, because when the minhag began (3-4 centuries ago) no Jews lived in the South American and Far Eastern countries where these grains grew, amaranth and quinoa are not considered kitnios and may be consumed on Pesach if one can be certain that no chametz-grains are mixed in.

This last caveat poses a particular concern for amaranth and quinoa, as these small seeds are often packaged on the same equipment as other small grains such as wheat, barley and oats, which means that they can only be used after being carefully checked that no chametz grains are mixed in. In practice, most consumers are not familiar enough with the difference between one grain and the next to be able to perform this check, and as a result they cannot use them for Pesach.

This year, we were once again able to confirm that the whole grain quinoa sold under the Ancient Harvest and Trader Joe brand names, and bearing the KOAOA/Half- Moon K kosher certification, are produced in plants which do not package chametz grains, and are therefore suitable for Pesach use. [This does not apply to the quinoa flour or flakes]. It is worth verifying this information before each Pesach to make sure the information remains accurate.

<http://www.kashrut.com/Passover/Quinoa/>

### **End Quote**

When you know who you are;  
when your mission is clear and you  
burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will;  
no cold can touch your heart;

no deluge can dampen your purpose.  
You know that you are alive.

Chief Seattle

Shabbat Shalom.

Stacy