

SH'MINI – “EIGHTH (DAY)”

LEVITICUS (VAY'YIKRA) 9:1 – 11:47

INTRODUCTION

1. The previous chapters detailed the services performed by Moses in consecrating *mishkan*.
 - a. Began on 23 Adar and for 7 days Moses functioned as High Priest.
 - b. Culminated with the consecration of Aaron and his sons.
 - c. From that moment on, only Aaron and sons were qualified to perform.
2. This chapter begins on 1 Aviv, which was the 8th from beginning of inauguration.
 - a. Footnote: Rambam taught that the offerings of this day to atone for Golden Calf.
 - b. Aaron – the one who crafted the calf and now ministers - offers from the cattle family.
 - c. The Hebrew term עגל בן בקר *egel ben bakar* “calf son of cattle” is numerically equivalent to חטא העגל לכפר *l'khafer chatah ha'egel* – “to atone for the sin of the calf.”
 - d. Further says people brought a he-goat to atone for selling Joseph into slavery.
 - e. Goat was used to hide their deed from their father (Gen 37:31-32).
3. This portion also deals with the dietary laws.
 - a. Demonstrates the contamination of the soul which physical examination discerns.
 - b. Those who consume forbidden foods cannot see the logic of these prohibitions.
 - c. Like painkillers dull the nerves, forbidden foods dull our spiritual sense.

CHAPTER 9: THE PRIESTS ENTER THEIR OFFICE

1. Verse 1: “on the eighth day” – after the beginning of the consecration.
2. Verse 4: “today the LORD appears unto you”
 - a. Hebrew renders it in perfect tense meaning, it is done.
 - b. Do these things not so that He will appear but because He is going to appear.
3. In previous portions we read what happened when all work was done – *sh'kinah* descended.
4. This is referring to that event so, because He is to appear, do what is commanded.
5. This reminds of our admonishment to be upright in expectation of Y'shua's return.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” - 2Peter 3:10-12

6. Verse 7: “Come near” – Moses speaks to Aaron because Aaron is hesitant to approach.
 - a. Traditionally this is the belief because of his involvement in Golden Calf.
 - b. Did not enter his duties with feeling of pride but humility.
7. Verse 10: “made smoke upon the altar” – belief is continual fire did not begin until fire came from the LORD and consumed the sacrifice (verse 24).
8. The order of sacrifices had significance in our approaching the Creator.
 - Sin offering – denotes purification
 - Burnt offering – self surrender

- Meal offering – consecration of labor
 - Peace offering – fellowship with God
9. Verse 22: Aaron lifted up his hands to bless – pronounced *birchat kohanim*. (Num. 6:22-27)
 - a. Even though they were not yet recorded.
 - b. Priests always raised their hands to bless the people.
 - c. He came down from the altar upon which he had been standing.
 10. Verse 24: “A fire came forth” – a sign that sacrifices were accepted and of His favor.
 - a. Tradition says fire came down in a pillar from heaven to earth and in Holy of Holies.
 - b. They shouted understood to be they broke into song and praises.

CHAPTER 10: DEATH OF NADAV AND AVIHU

1. Verse 1: Considering the enormity of this day, marked by deaths of Aaron’s sons.
 - a. After the preparation so that the *mishkan* would be *echad*, almost immediate tragedy.
 - b. Interestingly, Nadav is related to the name Abinadav (haftarah).
 - c. Nadav “generous” comes from a word that means “liberal, to incite, make willing.”
 - d. Abinadav “father of Nadav” has housed the ark in time of David.
 - e. It is his son Uzzah that reaches to steady ark and struck dead.
2. Strange fire is understood to mean “unconsecrated” – something not commanded.
3. Three opinions as to what happened.
 - Brought incense into the Holy of Holies
 - Offered daily incense upon inner Altar.
 - Literally alien fire because it did not come from the altar.
4. Verse 2: fire came forth and devoured them.
 - a. Believed to be a lightning flash.
 - b. God holds those in leadership to strictest standards of justice.
 - c. Some traditions say that whatever they did it was because they were intoxicated.
 - d. An injunction against drinking wine before entering Sanctuary follows.
5. Verse 3: “This is that the LORD spoke” – the fire was a divine statement.
 - a. He had said of the *mishkan*, “it will be sanctified through My glory” (Ex 29:43).
 - b. This demonstrated what was meant and why He said it!
 - c. The greater a man the stricter the standard by which He is judged.
 - d. When He is sanctified by those closest to Him it will affect the people.
 - e. The people look to their leaders for guidance and example.
6. And Aaron held his peace – either had no answer or resigned himself to what happened.
 - a. As High Priest, his responsibility took precedent; Moses admonishes him not to mourn.
 - b. Is this God being cruel? It is because He is holy.
 - c. If He relaxed His standard for anyone, who could we depend upon?
 - d. Comparison of Elohim to YHVH.
7. Reminds of the silence of Y’shua as He performs the Father’s will.

“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions; do not make me the reproach of the foolish. I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did it. Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; Surely every man is vapor. Selah” - Psalm 39:7-11

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” - Isaiah 53:7

8. This was the Father’s will – “not my will, but your will be done.”
9. Verse 4: Aaron’s first cousins carry bodies out because Aaron and sons had to remain pure.
 - a. Touching the bodies would have rendered them contaminated unable to minister.
 - b. Buried outside the camp so that the camp would not be defiled.
 - c. City of Jerusalem had same halachic status which is why no burials inside city.
10. Verse 5: Carried outside by their tunics indicates they were completely burned.
 - a. Strengthening idea that lightning flash is what killed them.
11. Verse 6: Moses compels them to continue in their duties and not show signs of grief.
 - a. If they break down, this will have an effect throughout the camp.
 - b. For priests to perform duties with long hair or torn garments are liable for death.
 - c. Some traditions conclude the previous 7 days were for Aaron’s mourning.
12. Verse 9: “Drink no wine or strong drink” – inferring they were intoxicated.
 - a. Service to God not based on emotion but clear understanding and sobriety.
 - b. Entering the Sanctuary having drunk wine which confused their thinking.
 - c. Doesn’t forbid priests from drinking wine but when they are to minister.
 - d. Inhibits their ability to discharge their duties as indicated by what follows.
13. They must be able to distinguish between clean and unclean, holy and common.
 - a. Word “distinguish” is הבדיל *havdil* from which we get הבדלה *havdalah*.
 - b. This is the eternal duties of those who minister unto YHVH.
 - c. They must teach difference between light and darkness, right and wrong.

“They shall neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long, but they shall keep their hair well trimmed. No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. . . . And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.” – Ezekiel 44:20-21, 23-24

14. Verse 11: “that you may teach” – in addition to discerning between holy and profane.
 - a. Must have a clear mind in order to render halachic decisions.

“For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” – Malachi 2:7

15. There arose a dispute between Moses and Aaron about the sin offering.
 - a. Moses’ rebuke directed at sons but meant for Aaron.
 - b. Aaron answers under great duress, yet clearly (compare to response of Golden Calf).
 - c. In the end, Moses agrees that Aaron’s decision was proper (student teaches teacher).
 - d. As a result we see first instance of a command that had to be reasoned.
 - e. Specifics were vague and common sense (wisdom) had to be appropriated.
16. Some commands seem vague and require us to apply wisdom.

a. Paul admonishes us in this manner:

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” - Phillipians 2:12-13

PURPOSE OF THE DIETARY LAWS

1. The first ten chapters contain laws of Sanctuary; this deals with laws for daily living.
 - a. According to Torah, nothing human is secular.
 - b. In other words, Torah addresses every point of life.
 - c. This flies in the face of secular culture and its thinking.
 - d. Ironically this is how Islam views the Koran – two opposing views.
2. Specifically this chapter addresses laws of *kashrut*: assigned to חוקים *chokim*.
 - a. These laws thought to be decrees with no specific reason.
 - b. Perhaps the reason is unknown to human comprehension.
 - c. Invites the derision of those who don't follow such instructions.
3. We can say that dietary laws teach us of Creator's desire for healthy souls in healthy bodies.
 - a. Disease a sign of weakness, sin and failure.
 - b. None of these attributes exist in Creator.
 - c. God, who is holy, wishes to “dwell in them” thus we should be clean temples.
4. Helps us discern holiness; by ignoring these decrees one contaminates himself.
 - b. This leads to not being able to comprehend holiness.
 - c. Someone exposed to loud music, over time, can't distinguish subtle sounds.
 - d. Consumption of unclean affects physically and spiritually.
 - e. Can lead to disease and dulls our senses for what is holy.
5. The prohibition against blood is related to this overall concept.
 - a. Spores in blood carry disease and germs; blood drained from clean animals.
 - b. This is done by *shechitah* – proper slaughter and koshering of meat.
 - c. In middle ages Jews far less affected by plagues; led to accusation they were to blame.
6. Trains us to master our appetites physically, thus spiritually.
 - a. If not, opens the door to ingesting spiritual things that are unclean.
7. After death of Nadav and Avihu, forbidden to drink wine before entering Sanctuary.
 - a. This would affect their clarity of judgment.
 - b. Afterwards they were required to eat sacred meat in holy place.
 - c. Implication is what a person eats has bearing on spiritual calling to be holy nation.
 - d. It affects our ability on how we perceive the responsibility that goes with that calling.
8. Does this save someone? No – they were saved before these instructions were given.
 - a. Doing this without a change in heart is nothing more than white-washed sepulchers.
 - b. Yet, dietary laws foster self-surrender; not self-righteousness.
 - c. That would defeat the purpose.

CHAPTER 11 - THE DIETARY LAWS

1. Verse 2: “These are the creatures” – החיה *ha'chayah*. Comes from word for “life.”
 - a. The creatures permissible for food speak to life – physically and spiritually.

- b. Romans 8 Paul says being spiritually minded leads to life and peace.
 - c. Spiritually minded is being subject to God's instructions.
2. Verse 3: Animal must possess three characteristics:
 - Must divide the hoof.
 - Must be cloven footed.
 - Must chew the cud.
 3. Typically, these distinctions demarcate beasts of prey or those unfit for human consumption.
 - a. Predominantly meat eaters.
 4. The presence of one kosher sign is considered worse than none.
 - a. Considered to typify hypocrites.
 - b. Yiddish term for this is *chazir fissel* or "pig's foot."
 - c. Outwardly looks kosher, but doesn't chew cud – outward appearances deceiving.
 5. This speaks to the issue of mixing; Y'shua addresses this.

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." - Revelation 3:15-16

6. Essentially saying that if you aren't going to produce all signs don't produce one.
 - a. Don't mix good with evil.
7. He admonishes against producing just outward signs.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."

– Matthew 23:25-26

8. Many of the animals listed are considered food in many cultures including ours.
 - a. Just because culture pronounces clean doesn't make it clean for God's people.
 - b. Other cultures eat things we wouldn't think of eating but they consider it normal.
 - c. Therefore, culture isn't dependable when it comes to pronouncing clean or unclean.
 - d. Eve saw that the tree was "good for food" but still rendered death.
9. Also instructs us in what fish are considered clean: fins and scales must be present.
 - a. No shellfish, which are disease breeding, especially in hot conditions.
10. It also addresses fowl – primarily abstain from birds of prey.
11. Addresses insects: certain kinds are permissible but Judaism tends to steer away.
 - a. Not certain of the words used in Torah as far as the clean ones.
12. Verse 29: One word mentioned is translated as "mouse" or "rat" – עכבר *akhbar*.

CHAPTER 11 – UNCLEAN OBJECTS

1. Torah turns to objects and how they receive contamination through contact with carcasses.
 - a. That is, the creeping things and rodents.
2. Verse 33: Earthen vessels that are contaminated must be broken.
 - a. Immersion in *mikveh* doesn't remove contamination.
 - b. Only way to cleanse it is to break it so it can't perform its original task.

- c. If it contained liquids, must be punctured.
- d. If it held solids, a hole big enough to cause contents to fall out.
- 3. Consider that earthen vessels could “absorb” holiness of holy foods.
 - a. Likewise, they can absorb contamination.
 - b. Earthenware is made of clay, which is virtually worthless.
 - c. Its value is determined by that which it holds.
 - d. Compare to vessels of gold and silver – they have value even if shattered.
- 4. Did Y’shua absorb contamination of mankind by becoming sin for us?
 - a. Thus, the earthen vessel had to be broken – this is my body...
 - b. Had to be punctured, pierced etc.
- 5. If an object touched the outside of earthen vessel, it remained pure.
 - a. Interesting that Y’shua touched dead – they lived.
 - b. The woman with the issue of blood touched Him and out flowed virtue.
- 6. Likewise, we are earthen vessels and can become contaminated by unclean things.
 - a. Flesh has to be “broken” that we can become vessels of honor.
- 7. Verse 36: When one of these unclean things falls into fountain or spring, water is not defiled.
 - a. This brings us to our next point in verse 42.
- 8. Verse 42: “Whatever goes upon the belly” – belly is גחון *gachon* meaning “to gush forth.”
 - a. There is an elongated *vav* to acknowledge that this is the exact middle of Torah.
 - b. It is the “belly” of the Torah.
- 9. Is taught that central principle of Torah is one should be vigilant of what goes into the belly.
 - a. More than speaking of food, it is to teach spiritual principle revealed through *kashrut*.
 - b. To train our appetites.
- 10. Y’shua put it this way:

“Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” – Matthew 15:11

- 11. Yet, food is what caused man’s fall (Gen 3) and caused Esau to be rejected (Gen 25).
- 12. The word גחון *gachon* is related to the word גיחון *gichon* – spelled identically.
 - a. This is the name of the spring in Jerusalem that forms the pool of Shiloach.
 - b. Interesting considering what Y’shua said on last of Sukkot during water libation.

“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Y’shua stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart (literally “belly”) will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Y’shua was not yet glorified.” - John 7:37-39

- 13. We can conclude that Y’shua would have known this: was He alluding to these statutes?
- 14. Verse 43: “do not make yourselves unclean” – either physically or spiritually.
 - a. “lest you be contaminated” – could be read “lest you be dulled.”
 - b. If he contaminates himself a little, he becomes contaminated a great deal.
- 15. Verse 44: “Sanctify yourselves and be holy”:
 - a. Literally “strive for holiness and you shall be holy.”
 - b. If a person sanctifies himself a little, he becomes sanctified a great deal.

- c. To imitate God – withdraw from things impure and abominable.
 - d. Such action carries his own merit.
 - e. It is evident of the Holy Spirit within us – the power to walk according to His ways.
16. Verse 45: Brought them out of Egypt that they would be holy.
- a. Redeemed by blood of lamb; now live accordingly.
 - b. Don't be slaves to food or your own lusts.
17. Verse 46-47: “this is the law ... for distinguishing the contaminated and the pure.”
- a. Does this mean to distinguish between a pig and a cow? No.
 - b. Many things are obvious; we are to distinguish between things that seem to be similar.
18. Reason America escaped British bondage was to serve His purposes.
- a. To be set apart – not to fit into expectations of other nations; not to be European.
 - b. Likewise, we are to be what He intended us to be in order to serve His purpose.
 - c. Important that we are faithful to live according to His commands.