

March 22, 2014

D'RASH - SH'MINI

The name of this week's *parashah* is *sh'mini* which means eighth. When Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests, the process took seven days, so they were told to stay at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for seven days and to do what the Lord required so they would not die. If you don't stay put and do exactly what I say, you will die, so there! I know that I am seeing this through human eyes, but it just sounds a bit harsh or even dictatorial. On the other hand, our God is a holy God who demands respect.

A few weeks ago, Bruce delivered a message about the holiness of God, and the phrase that kept popping up was "Be holy for I, your God, am holy." We know, of course, that being holy is an absolutely impossible task to accomplish in our own human power. Isaiah reminds us that even our "righteous acts are like filthy rags." And yet, in Hebrews we are told, "Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence." In this week's *parashah*, we know what happened to Nadav and Avihu when they offered incense when it was not authorized. They thought they were doing a good thing, but HaShem did not see it that way and zapped them. In 2 Samuel 6, King David was in the process of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. He had good intentions but went about it the wrong way. The Ark was placed on a new cart that was drawn by oxen instead of being carried on poles by the Kohathites as HaShem had instructed. When one of the oxen stumbled, Uzzah thought he was doing a good thing when he reached out to steady the Ark. But he was struck down for his irreverent act. Understandably, David was alarmed by this act of Divine Retribution and no longer wanted the Ark of God so close to him. Remember in the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, when the bad guys opened the Ark to look inside - they melted the wax of a candle.

In the *haftarah* reading for today, HaShem pointed out to the Israelites that they had profaned His holy name among the nations where they were dispersed. He says that He will bring them back to the land and they will prosper once again. He will restore them, not for their sake, but so that the nations will know that He is Elohim.

We sometimes begin our prayers with the phrase, "*Avinu Malkeinu*" - our Father, our King. There is a big difference between *Avinu* and *Malkinu*. Likewise, there must be a balance between our desire to be close to our Father and the reverence we must show to our King. To have only fear of HaShem limits the blessings that can come **only** from having a close and loving relationship with Him. But to **only** love God without any kind of fear or respect diminishes our relationship with Him and can lead us into sin. God is our loving Father but He is also our King. Proverbs tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and Romans 8 says that nothing can separate us from the love of God. It is our job to relate to Him in both ways and to keep a healthy balance between the two.

Hebrew reading Leviticus 10:1-3

English reading Leviticus 9:23-10:3

Haftarah reading Ezekiel 36:21-23

Birit Chadasha Hebrews 7:14-19