

—Shemini—

Saturday Morning Torah Study

Shabbat April 11, 2026

(Plaut pp. 800-03)

Leviticus 10:1-3:

א וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אֶהֱרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֵישׁ מִחֶתְתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בְּהֵן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ
עָלֶיהָ קִטְוֹת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם: ב וַתֵּצֵא
אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה
אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה | לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי
כָּל־הָעָם אֶכְבֹּד וַיָּדָם אֶהֱרֹן:

Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the Eternal God alien fire, which God had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the Eternal One and consumed them; thus they died at God's instance. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what God meant when God said: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, and gain glory before all the people." And Aaron was silent.

Commentary of ibn Ezra (Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra: 1091/92-1167):

איש מחתתו. כל איש לקח מחתתו ולפי דעתי שזה הדבר היה גם ביום השמיני
והעד הן היום הקריבו את חטאתם: ויתנו בהן אש. לא מהאש שיצאה וזה טעם
אש זרה: וטעם אשר לא צוה אותם. שמדעתם עשו ולא בצווי להקטיר קטורת גם
באש זרה:

1. Each took his fire pan. In my opinion, this too took place “on the eighth day” of Nisan (9:1). The proof is that Aaron tells Moses in v. 19, “See, *this day* they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering.” **Put fire in it.** Not from the fire that came forth (9:24); that is what made it **alien fire. Which God had not enjoined upon them.** They had not been commanded to use fire and burn incense, but did it on their own.

הוא אשר דבר ה'. כבר אמר לי השם שהוא יראה קדושתו בקרובים אליו כטעם
רק אתכם ידעתי וכאשר אראה בם קדושתו אז אהיה נכבד ועל פני כל העם
אכבד וייראו ממני:

3. This is what God meant when God said. More literally, “This is what God spoke.” “The Eternal One told me long ago that God would demonstrate Divine Holiness through those closest to God.” The logic is the same as we find in Amos: “You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth—that is why I will call you to account for all your iniquities.”(Amos 3:2) When I show My holiness through them, I shall be respected **and gain glory before all the people.** A better English word that “glory” here would be “respect.” “I shall gain all the people’s respect, and they will fear Me.”

Commentary of Gersonides (Rabbi Levi ben Gershom: 1288-1344):

2. Fire came forth from the Eternal and consumed them. The Exalted One inflicted this miraculous punishment upon them for treating such an important ritual so casually, preventing it from having its desired effect and, what is worse, influencing all who would follow after them to treat this ritual with equal disrespect.

3. Through those near to me. Through those who try to draw near to Me intellectually and spiritually in such a way as to be able to convey to the rest of the people the ineffable quality of My reality. When the priests whom I have chosen to draw near to Me fail to do so in the proper way, they withhold from themselves and from the people the marvelous benefit I intended for them.

Commentary of Abarbanel (Don Isaac Abarbanel: 1437-1508):

3. This is what God meant when God said. No one has yet explained this phrase correctly. I believe Moses was referring to Ex. 19:24, “Let not the priests or the people break through to come up to the Eternal, lest God break out against them.” This is the precise command violated by Nadav and Abihu.

Leviticus 10:4-7:

ד וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־מִישָׁאֵל וְאֶל אֶלְצָפָן בְּנֵי עֲזִיָּאֵל דָּד אֶהֱרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֲלֵהֶם קִרְבּוֹ שָׂאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה:

ה ויקרבו וישאם בכתנתם אל־מחוץ למחנה כאשר דבר משה:
 ו ויאמר משה אל־אֶהֱרֹן ואל־עֶזֶר וְלֹא־יִתְמָרוּ | בְּנֵי־רֵאשִׁיכֶם
 אֶל־תִּפְרְעוּ | וּבְגֵדֵיכֶם לֹא־תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ וְעַל כָּל־הָעֵדָה יִקְצֹף
 וְאַחֵיכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכּוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂרֹפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יְהוָה: ז וּמִפְתָּח
 אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ פֶּתַח־תִּמְתּוּ כִּי־שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
 כַּדְּבַר מֹשֶׁה:

Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered. And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. But your kinsmen, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that the Eternal One has wrought. Do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die, for God's anointing oil is upon you." And they did as Moses had bidden.

Commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak: 1040-1105):

אל תפרעו. אל תגדלו שער, מכאן שאבל אסור בתספורת, אבל אתם אל תערבבו שמחתו של מקום (מועד קטן י"ד): **ולא תמתו.** הא אם תעשו תמותו (ספרא): **ואחיהם כל בית ישראל.** מכאן שצרתן של תלמידי חכמים משלת על הכל להתאבל בה (מועד קטן כ"ח):

6. Do not bare your heads. Rather, "Do not let your hair grow out." We learn from this that one who is in mourning must not cut his hair. "But you—do not show signs of mourning that would interfere with God's celebration." **Lest you die.** If you do let your hair grow out, you will die. **But your kinsmen, all the house of Israel shall bewail.** We learn from this that when the learned are grieving all Jews are to share in their sorrow.

Leviticus 10:8-11:

ח וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן לֵאמֹר: ט יִין וְשֵׁכָר אֶל־תִּשְׁתְּ | אֶתְּהָ | וּבְנֵיךְ
 אֶתְךָ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדוֹרֹתֵיכֶם:
 י וְלֹהֲבִדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר: יא וְלַהוֹרֹת
 אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה:

The Eternal One then spoke to Aaron, saying: Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages, for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Eternal One has imparted to them through Moses.

Commentary of Rashi:

יין ושכר. יין דָּרָךְ שְׁכָרוֹתוֹ (ספרא): בבאכם אל אהל מועד. אין לי אלא בבאכם להיכל, בגשתם למזבח מנין? נאמר כאן ביאת אהל מועד ונאמר בקדוש ידים ורגלים ביאת אהל מועד, מה להלן עשה גישת מזבח כביאת אהל מועד, אף כאן עשה גישת מזבח כביאת אהל מועד (שם):

9. Drink no wine or other intoxicant. That is, drink no wine to the point of intoxication. **When you enter the Tent of Meeting.** This verse specifies only entering the Tent of Meeting. How do I know that the same rule applies when they approach the altar? That the Tent and the altar are to be treated the same in this respect is evident from Ex. 30:20, “When they enter the Tent of Meeting they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they approach the altar to serve, to turn into smoke an offering by fire to the Eternal One.”

Commentary of ibn Ezra:

ובין הטמא ובין המהור. בבהמה ובשרץ המים ובעוף על כן נכתבה אחרי זאת הפרשה פרשת זאת החיה ואחר כן טומאת היולדת וצרעת אדם ובגד ובית ובעל קרי וזב וזבה ונדה וזה טעם ובין הטמא ובין המהור:

10. For you must distinguish. You are the High Priest and must be able to distinguish between a place that is holy and one that is profane. It may refer as well to distinguishing between a *time* that is holy and one that is profane. **Between the unclean and the clean.** Whether land animal, water creature, or bird. That is why this chapter is followed in ch. 11 by the rules about ritual purity, which are also a case of distinguishing “between the unclean and the clean.”

Leviticus 10:12-15:

יב וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶל אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶל־אִיתְמָר | בְּנֵי הַנוֹתָרִים קָחוּ
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַנּוֹתֶרֶת מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה וְאֶכְלוּהָ מִצֹּת אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כִּי
קָדֵשׁ קָדָשִׁים הוּא: יג וְאֶכְלַתֶּם אֹתָהּ בַּמָּקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ כִּי חֶקֶךָ וְחֶקֶךָ בְּנֵיךָ
הוּא מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה כִּי־כֵן צִוִּיתִי: יד וְאֵת חֲזֵה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת | שׁוֹק
הַתְּרוּמָה תֹאכְלוּ בַּמָּקוֹם טְהוֹר אִתָּהּ וּבְנֵיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ אִתְּךָ כִּי־חֶקֶךָ
וְחֶקֶךָ בְּנֵיךָ נָתַנוּ מִזִּבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: טו שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְחֲזֵה
הַתְּנוּפָה עַל אֲשֵׁי הַחֲלָבִים יָבִיאוּ לְהַנִּיף תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהָיָה לְךָ
וּלְבָנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ לְחֶק־עוֹלָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: Take the meal offering that is left over from God's offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. You shall eat it in the sacred precinct, inasmuch as it is your due, and that of your children, from the Eternal One's offerings by fire; for so I have been commanded. But the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering you, and your sons and daughters with you, may eat in any clean place, for they have been assigned as a due to you and your children from the Israelites' sacrifices of well-being. Together with the fat of fire offering, they must present the thigh of gift offering and the breast of elevation offering, which are to be elevated as an elevation offering before the Eternal One, and which are to be your due and that of your children with you for all time—Just as God has commanded.

Leviticus 10:16-20:

טז וְאֵת | שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ [חֲצִי הַתּוֹרָה בְּתִיבוֹת דָּרַשׁ מִכֹּאן וּדְרַשׁ
מִכֹּאן] דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהִנֵּה שָׂרָף וַיִּקְצָף עַל־אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל־אִיתְמָר בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן
הַנוֹתָרִים לֵאמֹר: יז מִדּוּעַ לֹא־אֶכְלַתֶּם אֶת־הַחַטָּאת בַּמָּקוֹם הַקָּדֵשׁ כִּי
קָדֵשׁ קָדָשִׁים הוּא וְאִתָּהּ | נָתַן לָכֶם לְשֵׂאת אֶת־עוֹן הָעֵדָה לְכַפֵּר
עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: יח הֵן לֹא־הוּבָא אֶת־דָּמָהּ אֶל־הַקָּדֵשׁ פְּגִימָה אֲכֹל
תֹאכְלוּ אֹתָהּ בְּקָדֵשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי: יט וַיְדַבֵּר אֶהֱרֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הֵן הַיּוֹם
הַקָּרִיבוּ אֶת־חַטָּאתֶם וְאֶת־עֲלֹתֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְתִקְרָאנָה אֹתִי כַּאֲלֵה
וְאֶכְלַתִּי חַטָּאת הַיּוֹם הַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינַי יְהוָה: כ וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּיטֵב
בְּעֵינָיו:

Then Moses inquired about the goat of sin offering, and it had already been burned! He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and

said, "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and God has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before the Eternal One. Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded." Aaron spoke to Moses, "See, this day they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Eternal One, and such things have befallen me! Had I eaten sin offering today, would God have approved?" And when Moses heard this, he approved.

Commentary of Rashi:

מדוע לא אכלתם את החטאת במקום הקדש. וכי חוץ לקדש אכלוה, והלא שרפוה, ומה הוא אומר במקום הקדש, אלא אמר להם שמה חוץ לקלעים יצאה ונפסלה: כי קדש קדשים הוא. ונפסלת ביוצא, והם אמרו לו לאו. אמר להם הואיל ובמקום הקדש היתה, מדוע לא אכלתם אותה: ואתה נתן לכם לשאת וגו'. שהכהנים אוכלים ובעלים מתכפרים: לשאת את עון העדה. מכאן למדנו ששעיר ראש חודש היה, שהוא מכפר על עון טמאת מקדש וקדשיו, שחטאת שמיני וחטאת נחשון לא לכפרה באו:

17. Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? Did they eat it outside the sacred area? No, they burned it. Moses was asking them if it had been moved outside the enclosure, which would have invalidated it; **“For it is most holy,”** and would thus be invalidated if any of it had left the sacred area. They told him it had not, and he replied, “Since it remained in the sacred area, why didn’t you eat it? **God has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community.** And the expiation of those who bring the sacrifice does not take effect until the priests eat their share of it. This confirms that the goat in question was that of the monthly offering. For this sacrifice removes the impurity of the sanctuary and its holy accoutrements, which was not the purpose of the offerings of the eighth day and of Nahshon.

Commentary of Gersonides:

17. God has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them. Though expiation was already made when the blood

was dashed against the altar, it is nonetheless preferable that the priests should also eat their share of the offering.

20. When Moses heard this, he approved. Moses' intellect was so focused on the higher matters that at times it prevented him from turning his complete attention to more practical, temporal affairs. This was the very reason that he needed Aaron in order to communicate with ordinary people.