

SHMINI 1981

In the Torah portion Shmini we learn about how Nadab and Avihu were struck down when they offered strange fire to G-d. Rabbi Naftali Berlin said that the reason they were struck down was because they concentrated too much. They tried to achieve higher consciousness and spirituality the wrong way. This Torah portion begins "and it was on the eighth day". There are seven days of creation and then there was the 8th day when the Tabernacle was dedicated. All of us live in the world. The material things alone do not satisfy us. We all feel that there is something more to life. We want to go beyond ourselves. On the radio and in the newspapers we hear continuously about strivings for a higher consciousness, about how if we do all sorts of things from health foods to looking at our navel we will get into contact with higher realms. Unfortunately, most of these fads are at best foolish and at worst destructive. In an earlier period the music of our day was comforting and soothing. During the depression and World War 2 people did not crave excitement and exhilarating experiences. They had enough hardship and excitement in life and they were looking for a little solace and comfort and beauty. Today many of our young people have had it so good that they miss an excitement, a raised consciousness, and so the music of today is raucous and many times absurd and ludicrous. Even the costumes the singers wear are ridiculous. People feel they must do unusual and even ludicrous things to come into contact with their higher consciousness. We live in a world which was created in the 7 days but we want something more. We want to go beyond ourselves. We want the 8th day. How do we achieve this special feeling? Nadab and Avihu thought they could achieve it by denying this world. They refused to marry, etc. Judaism says that you cannot achieve the spiritual by denying the physical. You must go through the physical in order to reach the spiritual. That's why immediately after the story of Nadab and Avihu we learn about the laws of kosher. It's through the mundane things of life, through elevating them that we get a spiritual experience. We are not going to get a spiritual experience by contemplating our navel, exercising, etc. We must have the right attitude

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and elevate all aspects of life to have a special experience.

The story about a woman who came to talk to a group of youngsters about Purim.

She said, "Do you know what Esther's Jewish name was?" Nobody knew. She

then said, "I will give you a hint. Many of your mothers belong to this organization that has this name". All of a sudden a little girl jumped up

and said, "I know. I know". The woman looked at her and said, "Tell me".

She said, "It's easy. She belongs to Weight Watchers".

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In the Torah portion, Shemini, we learn how Aaron was installed as the High Priest. We learn how for seven days Moshe had conducted the impressive ceremony. We learn how on the eighth day Aaron had taken over. He had prepared the sacrifices and then he had blessed the people and then he and Moshe had gone into the Tabernacle and they came out and blessed the people again. Immediately afterwards it said a fire came out from G-d and consumed the sacrifices. Although in the text a new chapter opens by telling us how Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons, had brought strange fire which they had not been commanded to the altar and how they were struck down. In the Hebrew this is all one paragraph. The chapters were invented by an English monk in the Middle Ages. The Rabbis explain that Nadav and Avihu had grown impatient. They had wanted to feel G-d's essence. They wanted to have a spiritual experience and they could not wait. Some of the Rabbis say that they got drunk and others say they were ambitious and said, "When will these old people die so we can take over?". Others say, especially Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Berlin, that they really wanted a spiritual experience. They were not interested in the material things of life. They were sincere in their quest for a mind-expanding experience. They thought they could get it by some shortcut. In the Haphtorah we have recounted a similar experience. We have recounted how after the Ark which contained the Ten Commandments, which had been captured by the Philistines, was taken to the land of the Philistines. Many plagues happened to the Philistines who held it so it was set back across the border. King David wanted to bring it up to Jerusalem, his new capitol. He placed it on a wagon and then with many people accompanying it and playing many instruments he began to bring it up to Jerusalem. One of David's trusted lieutenants put out his hand to steady the Ark when the oxen pulling the wagon containing the Ark stumbled. He immediately was struck down. This upset David very much. David, however, had done the wrong thing. The Ten Commandments were not to be transported on a wagon. In fact, there were staves that went through the Ark that were there permanently so that the Ark could be carried on a person's shoulders. Religion is not something which you can just occasionally stick out your hand to steady or help. If it is to be effective and not be a magical or artificial high it must be carried on a person's shoulders. It must be lived day by day. There are no shortcuts.

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David later had the Ark carried up to Jerusalem as it was supposed to be done. Then he sang and danced and the people felt the joy of their religion. Michel, his wife, was upset by David. She did not believe that there was any joy in religion or life. As a result, she was barren. Nodov and Avihu made the same mistake. They thought they could force a spiritual experience. They were like the people today who take drugs. Apparently, sniffing cocaine is widespread among so many people today. It is not going to bring them happiness. It is only going to bring them disaster. Happiness can only come by fulfilling self-set goals, knowing that you are accepted, and by bringing joy to others. Nodov and Avihu did not want to live life the way it should be lived. They did not want to get married. They did not want to commit ourselves. Their artificial stimulants only led to their death. We say that the only way you can really feel life's high and be happy is by living life the way you should day in and day out. That's why immediately after we learn about Nodov and Avihu we learn about the kosher laws. We learn how there are no shortcuts to religion and we must live it in all our daily actions if it is to be effective. Of course, there are frustrations in life but the happiness still comes. It is like the story of the man who went to Mark Twain and asked him to autograph some of his books which he had just bought. Mark Twain asked him why he had bought the books. He said, "I am giving them to my wife for her birthday". Mr. Twain said, "I bet she'll be surprised". The man said, "She sure will, she is expecting a mink coat". In life it is the little things we do together day in and day out that allow us to feel life's high, that give us spiritual experiences. I am reminded of the story of a couple who were asked on their 50th wedding anniversary if despite the 50 years they were still in love with each other. Not in spite of the 50 years, but because of them they loved each other more. We all wish the young couple today much happiness and joy and I would like to conclude with a composition a little girl handed in to me about Benjamin Franklin. She wrote, Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston. He went to Philadelphia. He met a nice girl and they made electricity. We hope this young couple will make electricity, too.

Can L^{ove} of G-d overwhelm everything ELSE

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In our day and age there is a lot of talk about a higher consciousness. People want to really feel with it. They want to leave the humdrum affairs of everyday life and have an exhilarating experience. This, of course, is the underlying advertising theme of many of the products that are sold today, especially cruises, vacations, and trips of all sorts. Most people, even if they will not admit it, usually end up just tired and, sometimes, airsick or seasick from the trips. They never really ever get that extraspecial exhilarating experience that was promised them in the advertisements. They do learn a lot and see a lot of things, but usually they are very, very glad to get home again where they can have real satisfying life experiences.

In the Torah portion, Shmini, we learn about the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. This should have been Aaron's happiest day. He was being inaugurated as the High Priest. However, on this day tragedy struck. Two of his sons, Nadav and Avihu, were struck down because they offered strange fire to G-d. Rabbi Naftali Berlin says that the reason they were struck down was not because they were bad people, but because they were looking for spiritual experiences in the wrong way. They thought that they could take a shortcut to get an exciting, exhilarating spiritual experience. They had brought strange fire before G-d which He had not commanded them. They did not want the responsibilities of the world. All they wanted was just to love G-d.

The Rabbis tell us that the reason it took eight days to dedicate the Tabernacle was because there were seven days of creation. The first seven days of the dedication of the Tabernacle were to demonstrate

that the Tabernacle first had to be part of this world with all its responsibilities, and only then could it reach the spiritual level of the eighth day. We all know that material things alone do not satisfy, but we cannot short circuit them when we want to go beyond ourselves and gain a spiritual experience.

On the radio and in the newspapers we hear continually about striving for a higher consciousness, about how, if we will do all sorts of things from eating health foods to looking at our naval, we will get into contact with higher realms. Unfortunately, most of these fads are, at best, foolish and, at worst, destructive. In our day music and, unfortunately, drugs are being used as vehicles to get these types of exciting, exhilarating experiences. In an earlier period popular music was comforting and soothing. During the Depression and World War Two people did not crave those exciting and exhilarating experiences. They had had enough of them in the hardships of poverty and war. They were looking for a little solace and comfort and beauty. Today much of our popular music is meant to create excitement, exhilaration, and a raised conscience. The music is raucous and, many times, ludicrous. Even the costumes the singers wear are ridiculous. These young people feel that they must do unusual and even ludicrous things to get into contact with a higher consciousness.

This was, of course, Nodov and Avihu's error. They thought that they could achieve this higher conscience by shunning and denying this world. They refused to marry. They had such a great passion for G-d that all they wanted to do was concentrate on getting closer

to G-d. Some Rabbis said that they even got drunk, like some of our youngsters do today when they take drugs, in order to reach a higher conscience. They thought that they could force a spiritual experience. The people who sniff cocaine today are doing the same thing. There are no shortcuts to a spiritual experience. The Tabernacle could not be dedicated until the eighth day.

We in Judaism do not believe that you can reach the spiritual by denying the material. The only way you can have a spiritual life is by going through the material. Nodov and Avihu brought strange fire to G-d. Fire in Hebrew is "Eish", a word which is composed of two letters, Aleph and Shin, which can stand for "Emes" and "Sholom", which mean "truth" and "peace". Nodov and Avihu felt that all that was important in life was truth and peace. They wanted the truth and peace of a mystical experience with G-d. We in Judaism reject the mystical experience which does not go through people. Communing with G-d while letting others suffer is not religion in Jewish eyes. Abraham even told G-d to wait, according to the Rabbis, when G-d had appeared to him in order that he could take care of the needs of three strangers.

We reach G-d best, according to our tradition, when we join together with others to do good, when we use the physical, not deny it, to elevate ourselves and others. It is interesting to note that the Rabbis say that when Nodov and Avihu died only their souls were consumed. Their bodies remained untouched. This, too, emphasizes the fact that their death was caused because of a passion of their souls.

The passions of the soul are the worst kind of passions because they give usually kind and considerate people the capacity to do terrible things to themselves and to others. The Rabbis also say that Nodov and Avihu said among themselves, "When will these old people die so we can take over and do things right?" Their passion for G-d had even caused them to show disrespect and contempt for their own father and uncle.

We have always believed that a spiritual life comes from elevating the physical. It is true that the upper levels of a house are more beautiful than the foundations, but if the foundations are neglected or destroyed then the house will totter. This is the same lesson which Yisro taught his son-in-law, Moshe, when he saw him sitting while all the people were standing when he was judging them. Yisro did not like this one iota because Moshe, by so doing, was not showing respect to the people. No one could have loved the Jewish people more than Moshe but this act of disrespect could, in time, destroy the love that Moshe had for the Jewish people. When we go to so called higher levels like love we must never do away with the so called lower levels of respect of etiquette because our lack of respect will eventually destroy our love, and we will be left with nothing.

Nodov and Avihu did not understand this. They thought that because they loved G-d and wanted to love Him more than anything else they were free from the responsibilities of this world, from marrying and having a family, that they were free from showing respect to Moshe and Aaron, and that they were free from other normal forms

of behavior like sobriety. They justified what they were doing by claiming that they were overwhelmed by love of G-d. This in Judaism will not wash. We never say that higher forms like love supercede any other forms like respect or law or etiquette.

This is illustrated even in the blessings we say every day. It is true that we have a special blessing for fruits and for vegetables and for cakes. There is a hierarchy in blessings. However, if one did make the blessing for a vegetable on a fruit, he has still fulfilled the requirement for making a blessing. He may not have said the best blessing, but he has fulfilled the requirement. The higher blessing never supercedes the lower blessing. This is why, too, I believe that the laws of Kashruth are stated right after this incident of Nodov and Avihu. The Torah is telling us, "You want a spiritual life? Then elevate all aspects of your life. Make sure you do not give pain to animals. Make sure you do not do disgusting things and feel that by so doing you can reach Me."

Holiness means remembering that G-d took you out of Egypt. It means remembering the poor and the afflicted. You want a high? You can get it, but there are no shortcuts. Everyone knows that if you want to play beautiful music, you have to practice long and hard, and if you want a spiritual experience you must sanctify all aspects of your life. You must never say that since I love someone or something that is enough. You must show your love by your deeds, and you must live all aspects of your life whether eating or drinking, walking or talking, with holiness. Love never supercedes law or etiquette or respect. It just compliments it.

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In the Torah portion Shmini we have one of Judaism's basic principles: "You shall not make yourself detestable." This principle many people are not aware of. They do not realize that one of Judaism's basic principles is not to become disgusted with yourself. "You shall not make yourself unclean." In our day and age this principle has been under challenge or completely ignored. People today feel that if something is possible to do they should do it. They challenge themselves to do everything that they think they can do even if they have to steel themselves and take sensitivity training in order to do it. The Torah tells us that we are not to make ourselves disgusting. It is true that sometimes we have to do things that make us disgusting, but that is only if there is an overriding reason, for example, preparing the dead for burial or, in the case of medical students, cutting into a cadaver. These things are necessary. We must, because of the Mitzvah involved, steel ourselves and do the things that normally would be disgusting. However, this does not prevent us from becoming ritually unclean. The Rabbis tell us the highest form of ritual uncleanness is to come into contact with the dead. This does not have anything to do with morality. Ritual uncleanness has to do with a psychological state. When we handle the dead we become depressed. We become disgusted with ourselves. In our religion we are all supposed to have self-worth. If we do not believe we have any worth, then we cannot believe that anyone else has worth either. If you are disgusted with yourself you must, of necessity, feel that everyone else is disgusting, too. That's why we say "Veahafta L're Echa Kamocho" "You should love your neighbor as yourself." It is not enough just to say you should love your neighbor, but you should love your neighbor as yourself. If you do not have feelings of self-worth, if you do not love yourself, then you cannot love others. Of course, we do not mean excessive self-love. If you do not think you are important and worthwhile, then you cannot feel others are important or worthwhile. Especially teenagers have a tendency to want to try and do all sorts of things just because they are there, even though they know they will make themselves disgusting. They also set up all sorts of challenges for

themselves which are not real or necessary. I am reminded of a high school student who decided he was not going to do any homework to see if he could pass. He almost failed before he realized that he had to do homework. He accepted a false challenge. The students who play chicken, or the students who drink to get drunk even though they do not like liquor and throw up all over the place, or do different sexual practices which make everyone very disgusted which they feel they have to do to be accepted. Peer pressure is very great, especially among teenagers. We do not have to do everything just because it is possible, or because other people think we should. All the initiation rites that young people go through, and many of which are degrading and humiliating but they do it to belong, or the terrible, gruesome rites that people engage in in order to prove their love, like harming their children or even killing them. If a person really loved you he would not ask you to do disgusting things. I am reminded of a T.V. film strip which was taken in Syria on the day of independence, how Assad clapped and cheered when young girls bit off the head of snakes and drank their blood to show their bravery against Israel, or how they would slaughter dogs and cats and drink their blood. We do not have to accept challenges which make us feel disgusted. We do not have to succumb to group pressure and become drug or alcohol addicts. I constantly warn our teenagers. Sometimes it is the brightest and most sensitive who have the most trouble. They feel that every challenge is worthwhile and if anything is possible it should be done. This is wrong. I hope and pray that our youngsters will always realize this. This, of course, was the sin of Nadav and Avihu in this Torah portion. They loved G-d so much that they thought they could accept any challenge to serve Him. They brought strange fire. G-d does not want us to become disgusted with ourselves. That's why, also, we have the laws of kashruth in this portion. It is to teach us that we are not to make ourselves disgusting. We are not to eat everything just because it is possible to eat everything. We are not to eat insects and disgusting creatures, etc. It was actually believed in the Middle Ages that to be a godly person you had to be dirty and filled with lice. People in Europe were warned not to take baths because only Jews and babies took baths. Queen Isabella

was proud on her deathbed of never having taken a bath. Perhaps that is why perfume was invented. We should never make ourselves disgusting. It only makes us callous and hard and it makes it easier for us to do disgusting things to others. We should not let others talk us into things which will make us disgusting either. The story about the man who went to a Chinese restaurant and thought everything he was served came from a duck. He asked the waiter who brought him a dish what it was. The waiter told him it was the wings of duck. The next item he asked the waiter about was breast of duck. The next dish was feet of duck. Finally the waiter brought him a dish that the man recognized as chicken. The man asked, "What is this?" The waiter said, "Friend of duck." We should not let our friends influence us to do disgusting things, and we should never do disgusting things ourselves.

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In the Torah portion Shmini we learn how Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's two oldest sons, brought strange fire to G-d, how fire came out from G-d and consumed them. They died on the very day that their father, Aaron, was inaugurated as High Priest. This day, which should have been the happiest in Aaron's life, turned into a tragedy. In the Chumashim that we have today Aaron's inauguration and the story of Nadav and Avihu are in two separate chapters. The Torah has no chapters or verses. The Torah is divided only into paragraphs. In the story of Aaron's inauguration and the story of Nadav and Avihu they are all in the same paragraph. These two events are intimately connected. We learn how after Aaron had performed all the necessary sacrifices, that Aaron lifted his hands to the people and he blessed them, and then we learn how Moshe and Aaron came into the tent of meeting and how they went out and blessed the people. First of all, what's going on here? Why is Aaron going in and out of the tent of meeting, and Moshe and Aaron, why are they blessing the people? The rabbis tell us that Moshe and Aaron are really stalling. The eight days of the dedication ceremony has been completed, and Moshe has been assured by G-d that a fire will come down and ignite the sacrifices but nothing is happening here. Aaron blesses the people and still no fire comes. Then Moshe and Aaron enter into the Tabernacle and then they came out and blessed the people again. They were starting to get frantic. The fire from G-d did not appear. G-d's presence was not being felt. It was at this point that Nadav and Avihu brought their strange fire. They looked at Moshe and Aaron and they said, "When will these old men die so we can take over? They are completely discredited now. They deserve to have the leadership taken away from them. They have not been doing a good job anyway." In other words, Nadav and Avihu thought that Moshe and Aaron were not worthy and deserved that G-d's fire should not come down. New ways were needed. New approaches were needed. Moshe and Aaron deserved that G-d should not send fire down for them. In another part of the Torah when Nadav and Avihu's names are mentioned, we have recounted how they beheld a mystical vision in which they, so to speak, were standing above G-d looking down at the people. This is where the sapphire brickwork is mentioned. Their tendency was always to look down at people, to judge people harshly, to say if a person was sick,

"He must be sick because he deserves to be sick," if a person was poor, "He must be poor because he deserves it." We find the same attitude in people here in the United States today, that if a person is having a hard time financially, it must be because he deserves it. This is the same attitude the German people had vis a vis the Jews. After all, how could it happen that the whole German people stood aside when the Nazis decided to murder all our people? During this past week we commemorated the Holocaust on Yom Hashoa. The Nazis were able to do what they did because the German people believed, by and large, that the Jews deserved this type of treatment. Although most Germans, themselves, would not kill Jews, they really felt that Jews were vermin and parasites and deserved to be killed. They had been conditioned by 2000 years of contempt for Jews and Judaism. The Jews were a wandering cursed people who deserved the curses that came down upon them. This was the terrible sin of Nodov and Avihu. They felt that Moshe and Aaron deserved to be repudiated. They did not join them in prayer or offer to try and help them. Instead they brought strange fire, new approaches which only led to their death. This is always the case with new approaches in Judaism. It always leads to the death of these people as Jews. Nodov and Avihu's souls were burnt but their bodies remained intact. It is true that not always do we obtain spiritual experiences and not always are we blessed with good things, but instead of telling people who are sick or poor or broken in spirit or body, we should be down there helping them. We should be praying with them and extending a helping hand to them. That's why at the end of this Torah portion it says, "I am the Lord Hama'alah Who brought you up from the land of Egypt." It does not say "Hamotzi" Who brought you "out" of the land of Egypt because G-d, so to speak, was in Egypt with us. He experienced our slavery and brought us up. That's the same thing we are supposed to do. We are supposed to be compassionate people who, when we see other suffering, help them. We are not supposed to turn out back and say they deserve it. That's the strange fire which Judaism abhors. The story about a woman who was sitting in a crowded theater. A man came to take the only empty seat in the theater next to her. She said, "That's my husband's seat."

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The man said, "Where is your husband?" She answered, "He died." He said, "Couldn't you have brought a friend or relative?" She replied, "Oh no, they're all at the funeral." We must always learn to be compassionate.

Feeling Good can lead to a curse

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In the Torah portion Shmini we learn how, on the day the Tabernacle was dedicated in the wilderness, the two older sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, were struck down because they offered strange fire unto the Lord. The rabbis explain that they were not struck down because they were wicked people. They were struck down because they tried to achieve a spiritual experience through shortcuts, ~~and~~ ^T they longed to mystically cling to G-d, ~~but~~ ^{but} they failed to realize that spiritual experiences gained in the wrong way are very dangerous, that they corrupt humanity and that they can cause the death of all those involved with them. We learn the same lesson in the Haftorah when David wanted to bring up the Ark of G-d from Kiryat Yareem, where it had been left by the Philistines, to Jerusalem. David wanted to build a temple in Jerusalem and wanted to bring up the Ark, which had been captured by the Philistines and then discarded by them, up to Jerusalem so it could be housed in a proper temple. This David set out to do. He took the Ark and he placed it upon a wagon where it was drawn by oxen, and then he and the elders of Israel sang and danced in front of it. The Ark went a short way and started to totter. All of a sudden, Uza pushed out his hand in order to steady the Ark, and he, too, was struck down. This seems very strange that here was a man who wanted to prevent the Ark from falling and he, too, was struck down.

Here, too, we see that those who tried to gain spiritual experiences through shortcuts endangered themselves and the community. The rabbis say that David sinned when he brought up the Ark because the Ark was not to be carried on a wagon. It was

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to be carried on the shoulders of the Tribe of Levi. The Tribe of Levi had three sub-clans. Two of them were to carry their *part of the* Mishkan, or Tabernacle, when it was dismantled in the desert in wagons, but one of them, the sub-clan of Kohos, had the job of taking the furniture of the Holy part of the Tabernacle and carrying these objects on their shoulders. When they were to carry the Ark they were to carry it on their shoulders. They were not to put it on a wagon. It says, "Yeasu B'Kosaif - They were to carry it with their shoulders." The word "Yeasu" in Hebrew means both "to sing" and "to carry". They were to have this elevating spiritual experience of being able to sing before the Lord but only if they would carry the Ten Commandments on their shoulders. They had to ~~have~~ *assume* the responsibility of living a moral and decent life before they could have a spiritual experience. Too often people try to separate morality and spiritual experiences, and when they do ~~that~~ they end up with a deadly experience, an experience which deadens man's senses and causes him to be cruel and mean and vicious. Sometimes people do things because they want to feel good. They want to get ~~on~~ an emotional high. They want to feel the joy and meaning of life. That's why many times today youngsters and also adults take drugs. They want to have a spiritual experience. They want to feel the high of life, but that shortcut, of course, leads to death. It leads to death for ~~many of~~ *He* those who take drugs themselves.

This, of course, happens in other areas as well where people want to have a spiritual experience without the Ten Commandments. They want to feel good about themselves. This happened in Nazi Germany where the people who joined the Nazi party felt good about what they were doing. After all, they were not physically

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benefitting from what they were doing. They were not getting more money or more status. They were saving Germany, helping Germany. The Nazi movement was actually an idealistic movement where people thought that by becoming a Nazi and hating Jews and exterminating Jews they would save Germany. They, themselves, felt so good when they attended rallies and participated in the Nazi party activities. Hitler, himself, was a man who did not do things for himself. He never took a penny from the state. He lived off the proceeds from Mein Kamp. He was a vegetarian. He loved children. He loved animals. He was faithful to Eva Braun, yet he was the most evil person who ever lived because he tried to sing before the Lord, to have a good experience, to feel good about himself. ^{While Violating the 10 Commandments.} After all, he was doing things for Germany, not for himself, ^{and for Germany} but he was willing to let the Ten Commandments

totter and fall. If others would come and rationalize and say ^{Hitler was} ~~you are~~ really not breaking the Ten Commandments, they were ^{ACTING} ~~doing~~ as evil as ~~even worse than~~ Hitler. That was the crime of Uza. He was trying to reconcile ~~that you could sing~~ ^{and breaking the 10 Commandments,} before the Lord, ~~and even~~ though the Ten Commandments were tottering ^{Uza said} ~~and falling~~ you could still ~~still~~ rationalize ^{and say} ~~that~~ what you were doing ~~was~~ right ^{could} and sing before the Lord.

That is, of course, what they did in all the German universities. The German universities were ^a ~~the~~ hotbed of anti-Semitism. In fact, those who carried out the Holocaust, the SS, were all highly educated Germans. The SS had requirements. You couldn't just join the SS. You had to have a certain education, belong to a certain family, be a certain height, have certain racial characteristics. It was the cream of German society which joined the SS. They had no problems ^{with} at all throwing Jewish babies into the fire ^{in order to save} ~~saving~~ a few cents of gas, ~~throwing them into the fire~~

~~active~~ because they were doing it for the good of Germany. They had no problem reconciling their love of music and nature and animals and killing Jews because to them Jews were evil and they were saving Germany. There was Mozart played at Auschwitz. *The number of lawyers doctors, educated people in the S.S. was just astounding.*

This, too, explains why the churches did not say anything.

Almost none of the churches protested, and they knew what was going on. *IT WAS* Not only ~~was it~~ because they, themselves, might be in danger *if they spoke out* ~~because churches~~ *on* other ~~issues~~ *issues* had spoken out ~~when~~ *when* they were ~~in danger~~ *in danger* ~~but the reason they did not speak out was but~~ *that* because ~~it~~ *Naziism* was good for Germany. ~~They felt German morale was~~ increasing. Employment was high now. There weren't the same problems they had before. Many times we do things *in order* to feel good *or have* ~~about them~~ *society feel good* but feeling good and being moral are not always the same thing. We do not just do things because they make us feel good or positive; they also have to be based upon the Ten Commandments.

Young people today are faced with two challenges. One is the challenge of selfishness when they take drugs so they, ~~themselves, want to feel good.~~ *can* The other is the challenge of altruism when they want to do things that personally do not benefit them ~~but benefit others, but it makes them feel so good~~ *but makes them feel good* because they are sacrificing for humanity, for their country, for their family. We can even do evil when we sacrifice for our family. After all, how did the Mafia start, and what is the credo of the Mafia? The Mafia's credo is that the family counts. The most important thing ~~are~~ *is* my family ~~and friends~~, and I will do everything to preserve and help ~~them~~ *its members*. If this requires me to get involved in prostitution and drugs and loan sharking, so be it as

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long as my family is taken care of, as long as my family is not harmed. These people are willing to forget all about the Ten Commandments and morality just so their family will be taken care of. *So too many Germans became Nazis because it was good for their family. It got them in better schools etc.*

That, of course, is what this Haftorah and the Torah portion is railing against. There are no shortcuts to spiritual experiences. You ultimately cannot feel good about yourself and others if you violate morality. The Germans killed 6 million of our people. They coincidentally suffered 6 million casualties in the Second World War. They are divided in three parts. Eastern Germany is really Poland; middle Germany is what we call East Germany; and West Germany is West Germany. There is no way you can ultimately feel good if you violate the Ten Commandments.

There is no way that you can feel good if you violate the laws of morality. People take drugs and feel good only temporarily, but *later on* *when* they feel worse than *much* ~~ever~~ before. That is what happens when we violate morality for the sake of nationhood or for the sake of any cause. That is why we must always remember that in order to have a true spiritual experience, the spiritual experience must be based on morality and the Ten Commandments. Anybody who tries to rationalize evil, tries to make the doing of obscene things right and just ~~deserves~~ *will* to be struck down because he is destroying society. When the Ten Commandments are tottering it is better that they fall so everyone can see how evil the course is that these people have taken upon themselves than to try to pretend that everything is all right. Those in Germany who tried to justify the regime were doing as much evil as those perpetrating the evil. In life the only way we can have a true spiritual experience is by being good people and helping everyone

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~~and~~ ^{by} following the laws of the Ten Commandments and the laws of the Torah and not by just doing things that make us feel good. Let us hope and pray that there will never be another Holocaust. Let us hope and pray that people will judge things by whether or not they are harming others, and not by whether or not it makes them feel good.

omit

I am reminded of the story they tell about a preacher who got up and started to tell everybody how drugs were terrible, how the only people who benefitted from drugs were the drug pushers, that if you spent your life and money on drugs you would lose your life and money, that the only ones with big houses and fancy cars are the drug pushers, and that you should quit. A young man came up to the preacher and said, "You know, you convinced me." The preacher asked, "Did I convince you to get off drugs?" The young man replied, "No, you convinced me to be a drug pusher." We have to be careful that we preach the right values to our children. We have to be careful that we teach them that feeling good is not important. What is important is being good.

Credit is better than Debt
FIRST, GET THE JOB DONE. CREDIT WILL COME WITH A GOOD RATING

SHEMINI 2001
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

The Torah portion, Shemini, talks about the dedication of the Temple. ^{There and} ~~were eight~~ ^{the} days ~~that were~~ ^{devoted to} ~~the~~ ^{its} dedication ~~of the Temple~~. In the first seven days, Moshe officiated. On the eighth day, Aaron officiated. ^{The portion} ~~It is said~~ ^{proffer} that Aaron was to take a young bull for a sin offering for himself. He was also commanded to take a he goat for a sin offering for the people. Why the difference?

Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that the young bull, or Aigel, was brought to forgive the people and Aaron for the sin of the golden calf. What is the characteristic of a calf? It always follows around its mother. It is very submissive. The Jewish people ^{committed} ~~sinned with~~ the sin of the golden calf because they felt abandoned. Moshe was, so to speak, their mother. They felt they needed him to approach G-d. They were too submissive. They did not have any inner confidence.

Rabbi Soloveitchik goes on to say that the Jewish people had to bring a he goat to forgive themselves for the sin of selling Joseph. In this instance, the brothers of Joseph were rebellious. They were brazen. They did not want to accept the edict of their father that Joseph would be his heir. We always have to balance

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submissiveness with brazenness. We cannot be too submissive. We have to maintain a sense of our own dignity and self-worth. On the other hand, we cannot be too brazen, too rebellious.

We learn later on that Aaron came down from making the sin offering and the elevation offering and the peace offering. G-d's fire had still not come down from heaven to ignite them. Moshe and Aaron came into the tent of meeting, and they came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of G-d appeared to all the people, and a fire came out from G-d, and it consumed the elevation offering and the fat pieces on the altar.

The rabbis all ask, what does it mean, "And Aaron came down from making the sin offering...and Moshe and Aaron came into the tent of meeting?" They saw that Aaron was discouraged. When ^{Aaron} he saw that he had done all the sacrifices, and G-d's presence had not come down, ~~he~~ ^{he} said to Moshe, "It is because of me that G-d is angry." After all, Aaron had a part in the building of the golden calf. And he said to Moshe, "Moshe, my brother, this is what you did to me. I am embarrassed." Immediately, Moshe entered with him into the tent of

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meeting, and he asked G-d for forgiveness. We also read how Rashi comments that the Jewish people were ashamed, and they said to Moshe, "Moshe, all this work that we did so G-d's presence should be felt among us, and we should know that we are forgiven for the sin of the golden calf." Therefore, immediately it says, "And the glory of G-d appeared to all the people." Moshe, as it were, according to Rashi, told the people, "Aaron, my brother, is more worthy than I am because G-d appeared after his service." Moshe had conducted the services for seven days, and nothing happened. Moshe was telling the people, "Give Aaron credit for the successful dedication." Aaron, on the other hand, was giving credit to Moshe. It was Moshe who told him to go into the tent, and it was Moshe who told him to bless the people. Each of them was giving credit to the other. The truth of the matter is that it does not make any difference who gets credit. The important thing is that the job gets done.

In fact, a successful leader never takes credit; he always gives credit to others.

~~The important thing is that~~ ^{must} the job gets done, ^{e.g.)} ~~that~~ a synagogue ^{has to} runs smoothly without a lot of bickering and fighting. A leader should not be submissive, and say he cannot interfere when there are problems, but he should do it in a quiet

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way. He should not be brazen, and do it from the pulpit, if he is the rabbi.

Being in presenting problems even if rabbi is doing so
will
~~This~~ usually just exacerbates the situation, and gives attention to it, and causes people to be embarrassed. ~~It is not important who gets credit. The important thing is that the job gets done.~~

The same thing is true of the president of the synagogue. He does not have to bring everything up at the board meeting if the problem can be solved quietly. Nobody needs to take credit for anything in a leadership position. Moshe gave the credit to his brother, and Aaron gave credit to Moshe.

In the Talmud, many times we have arguments between rabbis. The object was not to win, but to get to the truth. Therefore, when one rabbi would stump another, he would say, "I can get you out of this difficulty. I can give you the correct answer." The object was not to win the argument, but to ascertain the truth. There is a story told about Rav and Shmuel. Rav found a deer limping in his front yard. He captured it, and slaughtered it, and cooked it so it would be rare. Shmuel saw this and said, "Maybe you should cook it well because perhaps the deer was limping because he had a snake bite. The snake bite

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would not kill the deer, but if we would eat the rare meat, we could become very sick." Rav listened to him, and, sure enough, they could see the poison come out. Shmuel then complimented Rav by saying, "See how G-d protects His righteous people," and Rav complimented Shmuel by saying, "See how G-d reveals His secrets to the righteous person." We all should always give credit to each other and not do things just to get credit. The important thing is that the job get done, not who gets credit.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a writer who passed away. She came to Gabriel, and Gabriel said, "Do you want to go to heaven or hell?" The writer said, "Show me hell." The writer saw writers chained to benches. It was very hot, and demons were whipping them. The writer then said, "This is terrible. Show me heaven." She saw writers chained to benches. It was very hot, and angels were whipping the writers. She asked, "What's the difference between heaven and hell?" Gabriel replied, "In heaven they get published."

It is important that the job get done. Let's not worry about who gets credit.

Let's worry that the job gets done so we have good families, good communities,

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and a good world so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.