

Parshat Shemini

The Importance of the Mesorah

Rabbi Duvie Zeidel

In this week's Parsha, we learn about the tragic death of two of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu. During the inauguration of the Mishkan, Nadav and Avihu passed away from offering an incense that they should not have brought either because they were supposed to ask permission from their teacher, Moshe, or because they were intoxicated. The Zohar points out that this tragedy was so great that one who mourns the death of Nadav and Avihu, will be rewarded by predeceasing their children. The question arises: What makes this tragedy so great? The answer is because we lost a link in the Mesorah. Nadav and Avihu were the great scholars of the generation and the Jewish people suffered by not having them as leaders of the generation. In this week's Parsha, we also learn about the rules of Kosher and non-Kosher animals. Rabbi Moshe Iserlis (the Rama) points out that in order for a bird to be kosher, it must have a mesorah from generation to generation. Even though a bird may have the proper kosher signs, it also requires a tradition from generation to generation. During most years, (non leap years), Parshat Shemini is read after Pesach and during Sefirat HaOmer. During that time, we lost Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students who were the great leaders of the generation. During leap years such as this year, we read Parshat Shemini before Pesach. Pesach is a time where we teach our children about Hashem taking the Jewish people out of the land of Egypt. May we merit to continue to give over this wonderful Mesorah!

Parsha Questions

- 1) Which sons of Aharon passed away? (Nadav and Avihu)

- 2) How did Aharon react to their death? (He was silent and accepted the decree)
- 3) What day did they pass away? (Rosh Chodesh Nissan)
- 4) What are the signs of a kosher animal? (Split hooves and chews its cud)
- 5) Give examples of kosher animals (Cow, goat, sheep, deer)
- 6) Which animal has a split hoof but does not chew its cud? (Pig)
- 7) Give examples of non-kosher animals? (Pig, horse, camel)
- 8) What are the signs of a kosher fish? (Fins and scales)
- 9) What do we read about in this week's Haftorah and from which Parsha? (Parah Adumah in Parshat Chukat)
- 10) What Holiday is coming up in a few weeks? (Pesach)