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Parshah Shemini
by Julie Zhuk on 2023-04-15

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This parshah is split into two parts. The first part starts out talking about Aaron and his sons becoming kohanim. For the not so gifted speakers of Hebrew, it means they were officiating as kohanim. Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, offered a strange fire before G-d, that He didn't want them to do so. Aaron's sons were at a very high level, they were pretty much considered to be tzaddikim. This was the main reason why G-d disciplined them strongly. For this act of giving out an unwanted fire, both ended up dying. There are some commentators that propose different reasons for why this happened. The parshah doesn't want to focus on the why so much as lessons that can be learned from the response Aaron gave after this tragedy happened. Moses passed on a message that G-d said. That message was, "I will be sanctified through those who are close to me, and before all the people I will be glorified."

Aaron heard the news about his sons and he was devastated. Yet standing in front of Moses and G-d, he remained silent. He was showing how much faith in G-d he had. Aaron didn't complain to G-d or Moses about what happened to his sons. With the large amount of faith that he had, he accepted the decision G-d made. The parshah tells us that the action Aaron took was by showing his faith in G-d. Faith in G-d means so much more than just believing. It expresses an allegiance to what we know. For Aaron having a sense of faith it only enriched his resilience in the struggle he was going through. Moses told Aaron and the remaining sons, Elazara and Itamar to continue doing the service in the Mishkan. The rest of the Jews were mourning the loss of Nadav. Since the death of Nadav and Avihu, G-d shares a law with Aaron. The law is there should be no drinking of wine while they are providing a service in the Mishkan.

Not only are they not to drink wine, but getting drunk while being in the Mishkan itself is not prohibited. The second part of the Parsha focuses on the laws of keeping kosher. There is a heavy focus for the Jewish people to stay away from animals such as pigs. When it comes to animals living in the sea, we need to look for fins and scales. These kinds of fish are considered kosher. Other animals such as land ones, need to have split hooves and chew their cud. Examples of kosher animals are salmon, trout, carp, and pike. Examples of land animals are cows, goats, and lamb. In this week's Parsha, the Kabbalah shares a story about an Ox Jew and a Fish Jew. First the Kabbalah asks if there is a difference between a fish and an ox. The fish lives in water and the ox lives on land. There are many different variables this single distinction produces. One of these is related to how they travel. The fish uses one powerful stroke of her fins.

The fish can glide easily in the water. The other animal we are talking about is the one living on land. An ox has to work with each step to cover ground. At any meaningful pace, the ox is huffing and puffing as they are gaining speed. The distinction symbolizes two different kinds of Jews. It is referencing how religious a Jew chooses to be. This source is saying that a "Fish Jew" easily glides through how religious they are. They pray, boom they feel inspired, they study Torah and immediately they love Judaism. They feel that Judaism is natural and enjoyable and

they are always ready to be in love with their Creator. As a fish glides in the water easily, this Jew also with one stroke propels themselves forward with ease.

The ox Jew has to work really hard, they are not easily inspired. Praying doesn't come naturally and studying the Torah is not a piece of cake for them. If anyone was to think about who is better, one may say the fish Jew. In reality, G-d wants us to be both. So regardless if you are a "Fish Jew" or an "Ox Jew", keep on the path that you are on. G-d treasures both kinds of Jews, the fish and the ox kind.