

PROFANE FIRE MAKES CRISPY CRITTERS

This week's portion is called *Shemini*, which means "**eighth.**" It comes from the opening part of this parsha where it talks about the priests being inaugurated on the eighth day. And although there is much to be said about that and how it's connected to us being inaugurated as priests on the prophetic eighth day after the seventh millennium, today I'm going to focus on a different part of the section: the profane fire of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus chapter 10.



If you've been following along with me through the last several articles you've probably noticed a tremendous prophetic connection flowing through all the instructions for the tabernacle. First, the Creator gave instructions on how to build the tabernacle, which was prophetically connected to us as individual priests today. Then we made all kinds of connections with the actual garments the priests wore, most importantly the high priest. Then we went through all the offerings as Yahweh continued His instructions with the intent of putting His priests into full-time service on behalf of the people. In this portion, in chapter nine, the priests finally become ordained on the eighth day and their ministry is ready to begin. The tabernacle is built and ready. The garments have been made to fit each person. The instructions and classroom training are complete. Now it's time to begin. And what's the first thing that happens when they start? Aaron's two sons are killed. The Levitical ministry didn't exactly get a standing ovation from the people. Or from Yahweh.

So what happened? And what can we learn from it? Let's take a little closer look at the text and see what we can discover.

Leviticus 10:1-2

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Bingo. That's about all we need to know to understand what happened. Aaron's sons got cocky and believed that they had the right to approach the living God on their terms and when they wanted, even though Yahweh did not summon them. They chose to take the copper censers, which were like small round metal pans, fill them with incense and coals from the altar, and go before Yahweh. This bold act of independent thinking cost them their lives. So why did they do it if they'd been trained by Moses and knew they were not to come before Him unless they were commanded? Especially since every other king in every land had the same law: You **do not** come before the king unless you're summoned or you could be put to death. Remember Esther's situation? Mordecai asked her to go before the king unannounced. Her response in Esther 4:11 was, *"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds the golden scepter, that he may live."* Everyone knew this **"golden rule."** It is my contention, then, along with that of many other scholars, that the reason Nadab and Abihu did this was that they had had a bit too much wine to drink that night. This is taken from the fact that immediately following this tragedy, in Leviticus 10:9, Yahweh addresses the conduct of priests and tells them that they are to *"not drink wine or intoxicating drink"* when they go into the tabernacle. It is, therefore, logical to assume that this instruction did not just come out of thin air, but was given as a result of Aaron's sons' actions.

The Hebrew word for *profane* is **"chalal,"** which, according to Strong's Concordance, means to wound, to dissolve, to break one's word, and even to begin (as if by opening a wedge). All of these are excellent definitions that I want to explore. When we choose to do things our own way and compromise our faith, we are **"wounding"** the Almighty, dissolving and diluting the Covenant, "breaking" our word, and "opening up a wedge" for the enemy to gain a foothold in our life. As a verb, the word **"compromise"** – in Webster's dictionary – literally means "to put something in danger." It is *that* serious, my friends. When we compromise the Word of God in our lives by choosing to do things our way or choosing to sin, we are "putting something in danger." And that "something" is our very connection to and ultimate destiny with the Creator. In Revelation 3:15-16 He says to the Church of Laodicea that *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."* We're either all in or all out. Either we live inside the city wall or outside it. There's no camping on the top of the wall. Yahweh says that He is holy and must be treated as such. He is set apart from all other gods and so we must be set apart from all other people.

For far too long, God's people have been drunk on the idea that we can worship the Creator any old way we want. When the Israelites thought they'd lost Moses on the mountain they tried to

worship the LORD by making a golden calf to replace him as their mediator. And *that* didn't go too well for them; they lost their priesthood because of it. They tried mixing the worship of Baal and Ashteroth on the same hills that they worshiped Yahweh and got led into captivity because of it. Then the Jewish leadership from the southern kingdom decided to start mixing their own ideas about how to follow God's instructions when they were in Babylon and out came what today is called the Talmud: a giant set of books of commentary and rules about how to keep every law outlined in the Scriptures. Most of Yeshua's and Paul's ministries were spent fighting these man-made traditions and doctrines that put aside the clear mandate of the Father. But the Christians were not much better.

The more Gentiles that came into this new Jewish sect called "**The Way,**" the more compromise entered the Church. Before long, we had changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, exchanged Passover for Easter, began celebrating the December 25th birthday of the sun god and attached it to Messiah, and had made a whole host of other compromises. People hate picking a side. We like to have our cake and eat it, too.

Unfortunately, the problem goes farther than what happened to a Roman Emperor almost 1700 years ago. Today we have people who call themselves Christians but believe it's okay to curse, smoke, drink to excess, look at porn, vote for politicians who think it's okay to kill unborn babies, and flirt with the secretary at the office. And those are just a few of the sins of commission. I haven't even *touch*ed the sins of omission, those sins that have us not doing something we should. When a husband doesn't turn his head from a scantily-dressed woman and give all of himself to his wife, he is compromising his marriage vows and "**putting his marriage in danger.**" When that same husband doesn't get into the Word of God, learn it, and pursue Yahweh with all His heart, he is compromising and leaving his full potential on the table. When a wife chooses to usurp her husband and make decisions without consulting him, she is compromising and creating a "wedge" between them. The list goes on and on. Cheating a little bit here, not being 100% truthful there, here a little, there a little...the compromises add up to a billboard-sized invitation for the enemy to waltz in and steal our blessing.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are *dual-natured beings*. We are half divine and half human if you will. We were created as a Spirit with a soul that fits into a bodysuit called flesh. We were meant to be spiritual creatures, our souls led by the dictates of His Spirit. But the incident in the Garden compromised that unity of soul and spirit and now the enemy pits the two against each other. This is the war. Part of us wants to follow the Creator as it reaches for the divine, thirsting for the waters of Life that drip from His throne while the other part of us wants to eat from the forbidden fruit even though we know it leads to certain death. Paul exposes this supernatural war in Romans 7 when he says that he fights against the war of sin and death on the inside of him. The faster we recognize the significance of this war, the faster we will stop compromising. The second we choose to judge someone without all the information, let gossip affect us, take that second look at that woman, justify this and justify that, is the moment the enemy has infiltrated our system and caused us to put our entire relationship with the Creator in danger.

Every one of us has fallen in these areas and far more. ***I know I have.*** We are all sinners in need of a Savior. But I am convinced that we are so easily deceived into compromise because we don't understand the gravity of the spiritual war we're living in. We don't understand just how critical

every single decision we make really is and how many lives it affects. And the more influential you are the more exacting you need to be in those decisions. Lord knows I could write a book on how teachers are judged more strictly (James 3:1).

All of that to say this: the Father is looking for a spotless Bride, one who is chaste and perfectly sober. Wine mixes into our bodies and compromises every faculty we have. In the same way, when we choose, knowingly or unknowingly, to break His holy Word, we compromise every spiritual faculty we have, as well. The only way we can truly please Him and not allow the enemy to compromise us is to know His Word inside and out. For instance, if you have aught against your brother, you are to go directly to him with your feelings and accusations and give him a chance to either repent or fill in any missing information. Under no circumstance are you allowed to take action, spread rumors, or take matters into your own hands until that person is approached. If this step is skipped, the entire relationship is compromised and is in danger of utter destruction. As a pastor, I can tell you that just in this one example, destruction comes when people do not follow the Word of God. Period. And to follow it, one needs to know it. Just in this one area, I have seen marriages split, friendships split, and even churches split because people who claim to follow the Book choose to compromise and handle matters their own way. That "way" **always** leads to death.

It's time for God's people to grow up and refuse to compromise, even in the small areas where we think it's no big deal. It's time for us to **REALLY** do Bible things in Bible ways. It's easy to keep the Sabbath. It's not so easy to stop smoking, kill the addictions, annul the flesh, and love your fellow man. He calls us to be "holy," "blameless," and "perfect" before Him. Let's stop making excuses and saying we can't and start BEING the holy people He desires us to be. Let's be the people of "I ***CAN***" do all things through Christ that strengthens me. He says that "many are called but few are chosen." So you are called. But are you chosen? He invites many to the dinner table but very few qualify to come in the door because they never read the instructions on what to wear and don't have the proper attire on. Let us be real people of the Book. Let us learn the principles found in that Book, from front to back like our life depends on it....**because it does.**

Shalom,

Jim Staley

20 April 2017