

SH'MINI (EIGHTH)

I know I say this a lot, but this week's Torah portion is one of my favorites to talk about. This is the portion that's all about something new. Adam lost the priesthood when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. Since then, every historical event of the Bible led up to the inaugural moment found in this Torah portion. During it, the priesthood would be reestablished. The first part of the portion is the drum-roll moment where "**Adam**" begins the process of coming back to life. And not only does scripture detail opening day at the Levitical "ball park" for us, it also holds the pattern for our own inaugural moments where we, too, can experience the glory of God. Let's dive in.



The portion starts with Leviticus 9:1:

"It came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel."

The eighth day. Numbers have meaning in Hebrew culture, and the *number eight is the number of new beginnings*. For instance, the eighth day of the week is our Sunday, which is actually the first day of a new week. Take a look at some of the amazing things that the Bible declares happened on the eighth day. Yahweh told His people to circumcise all their male children on the eighth day, which, coincidentally, is the time at which the blood starts to coagulate (Gen. 17:10-12). King David was the eighth son of Jesse (1 Sam 17:12). Josiah became king when he was only eight years old (2 Kings 22:1). There were only eight people on Noah's ark which itself was a new beginning for mankind (2 Peter 2:5). The second appearance of Christ after the resurrection happened eight days after He rose from the grave (John 20:26). And after the seventh millennium, where the Messiah will rule and reign for one thousand years, the eighth **"day"** will start when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And those are just a few.

Throughout the Scripture the number eight is the number of new beginnings, and it's definitely highlighted here in this chapter. After spending seven days in preparation for their calling, the levitical priests are about to go into service for the very first time. And it all starts from the top down. **Look for patterns.** First Yahweh brings Moses up on the mountain to deal with him and gives him a vision. Then Moses transfers the vision to his elders, including Aaron, who will lead the priests. Once Aaron becomes justified before Yahweh the priests can become justified and then the people. This same pattern is true for a family. Once the husband gets right with God, he can lead his wife who then works together with her husband to lead the children. Let's take a closer look at this process and see what we can discover.

Leviticus 9:2: *"And he said to Aaron, 'Take for yourself a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before the LORD.'"*

Remember, this is Aaron's inauguration into his role as high priest, but it's not the first time he's led Israel in a sacrificial offering. Can you think of when that first time was? You got it! **The golden calf.** Aaron was the one who facilitated that entire ordeal. How ironic that Yahweh makes him offer a "young bull," a calf, as his very first offering to counter his unauthorized sacrifice of the golden calf back on Sinai. This is the moment where Aaron's sin is finally made right and he's given a second chance.

The God of Israel is an Elohim (Judge) of second chances. Although He hates sin, He loves to promote and qualify people in His school of second chances. I can tell you firsthand that this school is not fun but what it produces is far beyond the original call of the first chance. For example, David committed murder and adultery and ended up being the greatest king of all time, the only man who Yahweh said was after His heart. Peter denied Yeshua three times but ended up being THE apostle to the Jews and one of the most powerful and influential followers of Christ. And here we have Aaron, who makes a golden calf, something Yahweh calls idolatry, and God gives him a second chance? Humans love to condemn and say *"oh, he's washed up now,"* but Yahweh smiles and blows into the ashes to bring a brand-new Adam from the dust. **Resurrection is His specialty!**

So, if you have committed murder, adultery, denied Christ, or made a golden calf that you worship as an idol then you're at **LEAST** as good as the patriarchs we all look up to! And if you

haven't? Well, then your hope should be multiplied! Bottom line? If you've made mistakes, get back up and make it right. Because the Elohim of Israel is a God of mercy and compassion and loves to offer a helping hand to anyone who calls upon His great name. But how do we make it right so we can see His glory in our lives? We're about to find out.

THE PROTOCOL

First, Aaron had to make things right before God through restitution. Once he was justified he made sacrifices for the people (his neighbors) and then all of them could take part in the fellowship offering. Do you see the two greatest commandments? First, you have to love God with all your heart, which is making things right with Him. Then you have to love your neighbor as yourself. And sometimes that means making a sacrifice for them whether you like them or not. Aaron's role was the prototype of Christ's. The pattern has always been the same. And this pattern is what causes relationships. The entire purpose of the sacrifices was to allow the people to draw near to Yahweh and fellowship with Him. Take a look:

Leviticus 9:5-6

(5) "So they brought what Moses commanded before the tabernacle of meeting. And all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. (6) Then Moses said, 'This is the thing which the LORD commanded you to do, and the glory of the LORD will appear to you.'"

Do you see it? When Aaron did what Yahweh commanded the people could draw near. And when they drew near, the glory of God was manifest in their midst. The formula for having the glory of God revealed in your life is the same as the protocol Aaron had to follow. And just like Aaron had to make sacrifices every day for the sins of the people and for fellowship, so we must make sacrifices every day, coming before Him, confessing our sins, and seeking His presence and glory in our lives. When we come into His presence complaining about others, our situation, or how upset we are about something we will never see the glory of God because we're not following the pattern. The pattern is that we must **FIRST** come to him for our own sins, bad attitudes, anger, selfishness, etc. **THEN** we come before Him with sacrifices (prayers) for those who have hurt us, (or whatever the situation may be). **THEN** we spend time with Him in fellowship and **THEN** the glory of God will show up in our lives. The formula is clear:

Love God + Love your neighbor = Open door for fellowship, which brings glory.

Lastly, when the glory of Yahweh showed up, *two things* happened: 1) the fire came down and lit the altar, and 2) the people shouted and fell on their faces (Lev. 9:24). Think about the significance of this event for a minute. This was the very first worship service with sacrifices from the priest. The animals were on the altar. Aaron had done his job. The priests behind him had done theirs. The rest of the Israelites were watching and were encircled around the tabernacle with great anticipation. And all of a sudden, the fire of God came out of the sky, consumed the animals, and lit the altar, the very altar where he said the fire is to never be put out.

Aaron could have lit the altar. He could have started a big bonfire and burnt the animals himself. But he didn't. He waited for God to do His part. He knew he was following the instruction

manual and now it was Yahweh's turn to bring the fireworks. When God lights the fire, it never goes out. It can't be manufactured. It can't be profane fire, like Nadab and Abihu bring in the very next chapter, costing them their lives before the throne of God. It must be **HIS** fire that lights our lives. If it is it will **always** be enough and His glory will **always** continue to change you and everything around you.

How do you know when the glory of God (His holy fire) is being manifest? Because just like fire, it takes something from one state and transforms it into another state. It takes regular earthbound objects, consumes them until they're unrecognizable, and transforms them into a completely different state where they're lifted up high into the atmosphere. Those sparks are the remnants of the glory of God in our lives. What appears to be the destruction is really a transformation. We just don't know how to recognize the glory of God when it comes. This is the very reason we are to consider it "**pure joy**" to face trials of many kinds. God uses them to elevate us. When we put our flesh on the altar, He will use the trial to "burn" it. This burning/cleansing is what creates a deeper fellowship and an elevation of your soul before Him.

When all is said and done, remember that Yeshua rose on the **eighth day** and brought new beginnings for all of us. But before He accomplished such a great feat, He first had to follow the pattern of what Aaron did right here in this Torah portion. He first had to get alone with God and kill His flesh (the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane where He asks for the cup to pass from Him but then says, "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*" (Mat. 26:39)). Then He had to atone for His neighbor (all of mankind) through the cross. When the fire of God came down and Yeshua was put in the grave, it looked as though Christ was dead. But the truth was He knew the formula. He knew what would happen if He followed the high priest formula. The final result would be the glory of God and His people finally falling on their faces in worship of their King. The One who died to Himself (in Gethsemane), who allowed the fire and judgment of His Father to fall upon Him (the cross), would be the same One who would rise from the dust and be elevated to the right hand of His Father.

Do you want the power of God to come in your life? Are you ready to be elevated to a whole new level? Are you ready to break free of your chains and experience the kind of fellowship and glory you really desire? **Then be the priest you are called to be.** Follow in the footsteps of your High Priest and then watch the tomb doors come flying off their hinges so the glory of the Most High can shine forth!

Shalom!
Jim Staley
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