

Leviticus 10 Commentary

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[Another Overview Chart of Leviticus](#) - Charles Swindoll
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LEVITICUS THE BOOK OF SANCTIFICATION AND WORSHIP Adapted and modified from C. Swindoll	
Leviticus 1-17	Leviticus 18-27
The Way to God Access	The Walk with God Lifestyle
The Approach: Offerings	Practical Guidelines
The Representative: Priest	Chronological Observances
The Laws: Cleansing Physically & Spiritually	Severe Consequences Verbal promises
Ritual for Worship Worshipping a Holy God	Practical for Walking Living a Holy Life
Location: Mt Sinai for one full year	
Theme: How sinful humanity can approach and worship a holy God	
Key Verses: Lev 17:11, 19:2, 20:7-8	
Christ in Leviticus: In every sacrifice, every ritual, every feast	
Time: about 1446BC	

**THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS
SUMMARIZED**

	BURNT OFFERING	GRAIN OFFERING	PEACE OFFERING	SIN OFFERING	TRESPASS OFFERING
Description	1) Sweet aroma 2) Voluntary Heb = 'olah	1) Sweet aroma 2) Voluntary Heb = minchah	1) Sweet aroma 2) Voluntary Heb = selemim	1) Non-sweet aroma 2) Compulsory Heb = chattath <i>Aka-Purification Offering</i> Atoning sacrifice of animals with no physical defects. The required offering varied with the situation and station of the person receiving its benefits	1) Non-sweet aroma 2) Compulsory Heb = asam <i>Aka - Reparation or Guilt Offering</i> Atoning sacrifice of a ram or lamb with no physical defects
Scripture	Lv 1:3-17- note Lv 6:8-13- note Cp Nu 15:1-16	Lv 2:1-16- note Lv 6:14-18- note Lv 7:12-13- note Cp Nu 15:17-21	Lv 3:1-17- note Lv 7:11-21- note , Lv 7:28-34- note Cp Deut 12:20-28	Lv 4:1-5:13- note Lv 6:24-30- note Cp Nu 15:22-31	Lv 5:14-6:7- note Lv 7:1-7- note
Purpose Summarized	IN COMMUNION WITH GOD			FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD	
Purpose Detailed	1) To propitiate for sin in general -Lv 1:4- note 2) To signify complete dedication & consecration to God hence called the whole burnt offering. Acceptance before God for worship & service Maintenance of fellowship with God Recognition of the sovereignty of God	This offering accompanied all burnt offerings. Signified homage & thanksgiving to God. Recognition of God's bountiful provision Expression of dedication, praise & thanksgiving to God Acknowledging God as the source of provision and prosperity.	Celebration of peace & of God's covenant faithfulness... Generally expressed peace & fellowship between the offerer & God & thus culminated in a community meal. 1) Thank offering: express thanks for unexpected blessing or deliverance 2) Votive Offering: to express gratitude for a blessing or deliverance granted when a vow had accompanied the petition. 3) Freewill Offering: to express gratitude to God without regard to any specific blessing or deliverance.	To atone for sins committed unknowingly, especially where no restitution was possible. Note Nu 15:30, 31: The sin offering was of no avail in cases of defiant rebellion against God. Confession to God for impurities and offenses Recognition of the effects of one's sins on others in the covenant community Restoration of fellowship with God	To atone for sins committed in ignorance, esp where restitution was possible Confession to men for impurities and deceptions Willingness of the repentant believer to make proper restitution

<p style="text-align: center;">Consists of</p>	<p>According to wealth:</p> <p>1) Bull without blemish-Lv 1:3-9-note</p> <p>2) Male sheep or goat without blemish-Lv 1:10-13-note); 3 Turtledoves or young pigeons-Lv 1:14-17-note</p> <p>3) Turtledoves or young pigeons-Lv 1:14-17-note</p>	<p>Three Types:</p> <p>1) Fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense-Lv 2:1-3-note</p> <p>2) Cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and baked an oven Lv 2:4-note, in a pan Lv 2:5-note or in a covered pan Lv 2:7-note</p> <p>3) Green heads of roasted grain mixed with oil and frankincense-Lv 2:14, 15-note</p>	<p>According to wealth:</p> <p>1) From the herd, a male or female without blemish-Lv 3:1-5-note</p> <p>2) From the flock, a male or female without blemish-Lv 3:6-11-note</p> <p>3) From the goats-Lv 3:12-17-note</p> <p>Note: Minor imperfections were permitted when the peace offering was a freewill offering of a bull or a lamb-Lv 22:23</p>	<p>1) For the high priest, a bull without blemish-Lv 4:3-12-note</p> <p>2) For the congregation, a bull without blemish-Lv 4:13-21-note</p> <p>3) For a ruler, a male goat without blemish-Lv 4:22-26-note</p> <p>4) For a commoner, a female goat or lamb without blemish-Lv 4:27-35-note</p> <p>5) In cases of poverty, two turtledoves or two young pigeons (one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering) could be substituted-Lv 5:7-10-note</p> <p>6) In cases of extreme poverty, fine flour could be substituted-Lv 5:11-13-note; cp Heb. 9:22-note</p>	<p>1) If the offense was against the Lord (tithes, offerings, etc), a ram w/o blemish was offered; restitution was reckoned according to the priest's estimate of the value of the trespass + 20% (Lv 5:15-16-note)</p> <p>2) If the offense were against man, a ram w/o blemish was offered, restitution reckoned according to the priest's estimate + 20% (Lv 6:4-6-note)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">God's Portion</p>	<p>Entirety burned on the altar of burnt offering-Lv 1:9-note except the skin-Lv 7:8-note</p>	<p>Memorial portion burned on the altar of burnt offering-Lv 2:2, 9, 16-note</p>	<p>Fatty portions burned on the altar of burnt offering-Lv 3:3-5-note</p>	<p>1) Fatty portions to be burned on the altar of burnt offering Lv 4:8-10-note, Lv 4:19, 26-note, Lev 4:31, 35-note</p> <p>2) When the sin offering was for the high priest or congregation, the remainder of the bull was to be burned outside the camp-Lv 4:11, 12-note, Lev 4:20, 21-note</p>	<p>Fat burned on altar of burnt offering-Lv 7:3-5-note</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Priests Portion</p>	<p>Skin only-Lv 7:8-note</p>	<p>Remainder eaten in court of tabernacle-Lv 2:3, 10-note, Lev 6:16-18-note, Lv 7:14-15-note</p>	<p>Breast (wave offering) & right thigh (heave offering)-Lv 7:30-34-note</p>		<p>Remainder eaten in holy place-Lv 7:6-7-note</p>

Offerer's Portion	None	None	Remainder to be eaten in the court by the offerer & family 1) Thank offering = eaten same day-Lv 7:15- note	None	None
The Christian	Consecration	Service	Fellowship	Redemption for the sinner that he is	Redemption for the sinner he commits
Christ	He presented Himself to the Father to do His will	He served His Father and men as Son of Man	He is the common bond of fellowship between God & man	He atoned for the guilt of sin	He atoned for the damage of sin.
Prophetic Significance	Signifies complete dedication of life to God 1) On part of Christ-Mt 26:39-44, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42, Php 2:5-11- note 2) On part of believer-Ro 12:1-2- note , Heb 13:15- note	Signifies perfect humanity of Christ: 1) Absence of leaven ~ sinlessness of Christ-He 4:15- note , 1Jn 3:5 2) The presence of oil is emblematic of the Holy Spirit-Lk 4:18; 1Jn 2:20- note , 1Jn 2:27- note	Shadow of the peace believer has through Christ-Ro 5:1-2- note , 1Cor 10:16-18, 11:17-34, Col 1:20- note NB: Only offering in which offerer shared Thank Offering: 1Th 5:18- note Heb 13:15- note	Prefigures fact that Christ's death... 1) Was made sin for us - 2Cor 5:20-21- note 2) He suffered outside the gate - Heb 13:11-13- note Cp Lv 4:3- note , 1Ti 5:20 Cp Lv 4:27- note , 1Cor 8:9-13 Cp Lv 5:5- note , 1Jn 1:9- note See Heb 9:22- note	Shadow of Christ as our Trespass offering - Col 2:13- note Cp Lv 5:15- note , Lv 22:14-16 Cp Lv 6:2-5- note , Eph 4:25-32, Jas 5:16 See Isa 53:10

Adapted from Believer's Bible Commentary & Irving Jensen

Leviticus 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

- **Nadab:** Lev 16:1 22:9 Ex 6:23 Ex 24:1,9 28:1 Nu 3:3,4 26:61
- **Firepans:** Lev 16:12 Ex 27:3 38:3 Nu 16:6,7,16,17,46 Heb 9:4
- **Placed incense:** Ex 30:1-9,34-36 31:11 37:29 40:27 1Ki 13:1,2 2Ch 26:16-20 Ps 141:2 Jer 44:8,15,19-21 Lk 1:9-11 Rev 8:3-5
- **Strange:** Le 9:24, 16:12. Nu 16:18, 46. 2Ki 15:1-7. 2Ch 26:16-23. Ps 50:16. Mk 1:24, 25. Ep 5:18. Ph 3:3
- **Which:** Ex 30:9 Dt 4:2 12:32 17:3 Jer 7:31 19:5 32:35
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

**A HOLY CALLING WILL NOT
SAVE UNHOLY MEN
- J C Ryle**

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them

Leon Hyatt - THE SIN OF NADAB AND ABIHU PUNISHED WITH DEATH Leviticus 10:1-7

Introduction - Right in the midst of the joyous and moving experience that came when the priests officiated

over their first fire-offerings, tragedy struck. The tragedy came because two of the priests, seemingly overenthusiastic over their new authority, misused that authority and offered an unauthorized offering. The two priests were Nadab and Abihu, the two oldest sons of Aaron. Their unauthorized offering could not be ignored, especially at the institution of the system of worship they were to supervise. Nadab and Abihu were struck dead for their offense. The punishment did not come without warning, because Moses on orders from Jehovah had told Aaron and his sons, "You must remain at the entrance to The Tent of Meeting day and night [for] seven days, and you shall watch the watch of Jehovah; and you will not die because thus I have been commanded" (Lev. 8:34). Aaron and his sons should have drawn two conclusions from those words: (1) The command did not originate with Moses, but came from God. (2) Any departure from God's commands would result in death. Obviously, Nadab and Abihu were not listening carefully and proceeded to act according to their own ideas instead of God's. In the very beginning of the service of the priests, the principle needed to be established that such actions could not be tolerated. Otherwise, all of the carefully constructed rituals of Israel that Jehovah had designed to teach divine truths would be corrupted and their meaning destroyed. Therefore, Jehovah's response was sudden and drastic. Nadab and Abihu died.

The death of the two oldest sons in the priestly family severely tested their father and brothers. They passed that test, in that they did not rebel against God's punishment, as severe as it was. They remained loyal to their responsibilities, even in the midst of their sorrow. Thus the false priests were eliminated, and the true priests were tested and strengthened at the very outset of their priestly careers.

It might be questioned as to whether this passage should be called a message from God. The answer is found in that the central thought in the passage is the lesson Jehovah taught by the death of Nadab and Abihu. By fire from The Tabernacle, Jehovah spoke as surely and plainly as He ever spoke by words. The point of the whole experience was to teach that the offerings of Jehovah had to be kept inviolate and that those who would not keep them in their purity would suffer the stark consequences.

This message may be outlined as follows:

- a. The sin of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1)
- b. The consequences of their sin (Lev 10:2-5)
- c. The loyalty of the other priests in the face of the tragedy (Lev 10:6-7) ([Lev 10:1-7 Commentary](#))

GOD CONSUMES THE OFFERERS WITH FIRE

What a dramatic contrast! God had just consumed the offering with fire in Leviticus 9:24 note.

See Dr. Barrick's nice chart (on page 2) [A Comparative Study of Three Biblical Priesthoods](#)

Now - This seems to be their very first day of priestly service after their seven days of consecration. A spiritual high in Lev 9:22-24 (blessing of the people, God's dramatic acceptance of the offering by bringing about divine fire) is followed by a spiritual disaster!

After times of spiritual high (Lev 9:22-23), of "mountain top experiences," be on guard lest you fall, for your mortal enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil know that you are vulnerable and that too often your spiritual guard is down!

Net Note on "now" - Although it has been used elsewhere in this translation as an English variation from the ubiquitous use of vav in Hebrew, in this instance "then" as a rendering for vav is intended to show that the Nadab and Abihu catastrophe took place on the inauguration day described in Lev 9. The tragic incident in Lev 10 happened in close temporal connection to the LORD's fire that consumed the offerings at the end of Lev 9. Thus, for example, the "sin offering" male goat referred to in Lev 10:16-19 is the very one referred to in Lev 9:15. ([Leviticus 10 Commentary](#))

Nadab and Abihu - These are the two eldest sons of Aaron. (Ex 6:23). Previously they had enjoyed the incredible privilege of worshipping God with Moses and the Seventy elders at a distance on Mt Sinai (Ex 24:1,9). One would have thought this experience would have etched in their minds a sense of holy fear of God. This makes the point that "mountain top" experiences are no guarantee of sinful decisions in the valley!

Guzik - We don't know what their motivation was. Perhaps it was pride, perhaps it was ambition, perhaps it was jealousy, perhaps it was impatience that motivated them. Whatever their exact motivation, it wasn't holiness unto the LORD. Nadab and Abihu had a legacy of great spiritual experiences. They saw first-hand: All the miracles God did in bringing the nation out of Egypt. The voice of God and saw the fire, lightning, smoke, and felt the thunder and the earthquake with the rest of the nation at Mount Sinai. They went up with Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders for a special meeting with God on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:1-2), where they saw the God of Israel ... so they saw God, and they ate and drank (Ex 24:9-11). **This shows that even a legacy of great spiritual experiences**

can't keep us right with God - only an abiding relationship grounded in the truth of God's word can.

Strange fire (NAB "profane fire"; NIV "unauthorized fire"; NRSV "unholy fire"; NLT "a different kind of fire")

It is notable that the next section warns Aaron "Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die." (Lev 10:9) This warning at least raises the possibility that Nadab and Abihu may have been inebriated which cause them to lose the self-control and sound judgment that accompany drunkenness.

Before the LORD - The idea is that of "face to face." This phrase even goes so far as to suggest they actually went into the Holy of holies **behind the Veil**, which was only to entered by the high priest and only once per year on the Day of Atonement.

Which He had not commanded them - They came to God in a way He did not authorize. They came in their own way (and their own will), which was profane.

Bishop Hall - It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his institutions; we have to do with a God, Who is wise to prescribe His Own worship--just to require what He has prescribed--and powerful to avenge what He has not prescribed.

Related Resources:

- [Who were Nadab and Abihu?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the strange fire in Leviticus 10:1?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the strange fire in Leviticus 10:1?](#)

WHAT WAS STRANGE ABOUT THEIR FIRE?

What was the nature of the **strange fire**? The **Net Note** says...

The infraction may have involved any of the following or a combination thereof:

- (1) using coals from someplace other than the burnt offering altar (i.e., "unauthorized coals" according to J. Milgrom, Leviticus [AB], 1:598; cf. Lev 16:12 and cf. "unauthorized person" אִישׁ זָר ('ish zar) in Num 16:40 [17:5 HT], NASB "layman"),
- (2) using the wrong kind of incense (cf. the Ex 30:9 regulation against "strange incense" קֶטֶרֶת זָרָה (qétoreh zarah) on the incense altar and the possible connection to Ex 30:34–38),
- (3) performing an incense offering at an unprescribed time (B. A. Levine, Leviticus [JPSTC], 59), or
- (4) entering the Holy of Holies at an inappropriate time (Lev 16:1–2). [Leviticus 10 Commentary](#))

John Hartley summarizes the **strange fire** interpretations:

Because the nature of their transgression is obscure, there have been numerous suggestions. Snaith (58–59), taking זרה to mean "laity," posits that their sin was that of laymen trying to act as priests. But these men are listed as priests elsewhere, as in Ex 28:1 and Nu 3:1–3.

Another view is that they offered an unauthorized incense offering (Keil and Delitzsch, 351). Levine (59) points out that if there is a connection between this phrase and קֶטֶרֶת זָרָה, "strange incense," as forbidden in Ex 30:9, these men broke that decree. But their transgression concerns illicit fire, not illicit incense.

The use of the phrase אִשׁ זָרָה strongly indicates that a key element of their transgression is the source of their fire. They must have taken it from some place other than the altar of the whole offering (Laughlin, JBL 95 [1976] 560–61).

Their transgression, though, may have been more involved. They may have been trying to introduce a pagan ritualistic practice into the worship of Yahweh, possibly connecting that ritual with the appearance of Yahweh.

Furthermore, it is possible that these priests attempted to enter the Holy of Holies, which they were not allowed to enter, or, if they were allowed, they did not take the proper precautions (cf. Lev 16:12–13; Gradwohl, ZAW 75 [1963] 288–96). By taking such a step they might have been seeking to usurp the high priest's privilege of offering incense in the Holy Place (Ex 30:7–9; cf. Noordtjiz, 108).

Kiuchi (Purification Offering, 78–81) argues from the reference to this incident in Lev 16:1–2, which gives the background for the instructions to Aaron about entering the Holy of Holies to make atonement for himself and his house on the Day of Atonement, that the restrictions placed on Aaron in those verses confirm that the sin of Nadab and Abihu involved an untimely attempt to enter the Holy of Holies and that in their attempt they

usurped the privilege of Aaron. If these two priests had succeeded in exalting themselves over their father and brothers, they would have created a deep rift in the priesthood that would have tarnished the true worship of Yahweh at its very inception. ([Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 4, Leviticus 593pp- John E. Hartley](#))

Leon Hyatt - The sin of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1)

Lev 10:1. Then Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put in it fire and laid on it incense and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.

Then Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put in it fire and laid on it incense. Nadab and Abihu were the two older sons of Aaron (Ex. 6:23). They had been mentioned by name three other times previously (Ex. 24:1,9; 28:1). They had surely been fully informed of all of Jehovah's instructions concerning the fire-offerings, and they had heard the repeated emphasis that the offerings were to be performed exactly as Jehovah had commanded. They had also heard the stern warning that departing from Jehovah's instructions would result in death (see comments on Lev. 8:35-note in [MESSAGE 10](#); see also Ex. 19:22). Yet, none of those instructions seem to have impressed them. Somehow, they still did not understand the seriousness of their responsibilities. While the people were still on their faces in awe over the appearance of The Glory fire (see comments on Lev. 9:24-note in [MESSAGE 10](#)), Nadab and Abihu rushed to use the holy articles that had been delivered to their charge like they were play things. The very fact that they were busy with anything at that holy moment shows that they missed the spiritual significance of the occasion. It seems that they were more impressed with themselves and their new authority than they were with Jehovah's majesty. They may have rationalized in their minds that they were expressing their joy and gratitude to God by designing their own offering. However, if they truly wanted to express joy over God's gift to them, they would have been careful to offer an offering that Jehovah had authorized.

Nadab and Abihu took their censers and put fire and incense on them. The censers of the priests had been mentioned previously only in listings of vessels to be used in The Tabernacle (Ex. 25:38; 37:23; 27:3; 38:3). The only authorization for burning incense on a censer is found in Leviticus 16:12-13-note, and that instruction was not given until later for a very different purpose (see comments on those verses in [MESSAGE 20](#)). What Nadab and Abihu did was entirely their own invention.

and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them. "Offered strange fire before Jehovah," means that they stood before The Tabernacle with the burning incense in their censers, because standing before The Tabernacle was understood to be standing before Jehovah (Lev. 1:3,5,11; 3:1,7,12; 4:4,6,15,17,24). Probably they waved their censers to obtain Jehovah's attention. They got His attention, but not as they intended. The word translated "strange" is an active participle. When used alone, it is equivalent to a noun and means "one who is an outsider." It was used to refer to people outside the family or outside of an authorized group. With regard to the Israelites, it referred to a foreigner (Ex. 29:33; 30:33; Lev. 22:10,13; Num. 1:31; 3:10,38; 16:40; 18:4,7; Deut. 25:5). When the word was used in connection with a noun, as it is here, it described an item that was "outside" the authorized norm. "Strange fire" then means burning an offering that had not been authorized by Jehovah. In this case, the offering was incense smoldering in their censers. This conclusion is further confirmed by the words "which He had not commanded them."

Four suggestions have been offered as to why this action was displeasing to Jehovah: (1) The incense was not prepared according to the authorized formula (Ex. 30:34-38; compare Ex. 30:9). (2) The fire did not come from the altar (Lev. 16:12). (3) The incense was burned at the wrong time of day (Ex. 30:7-8). (4) The incense was burned in the wrong place (Ex. 30:1,7). The real reason their action was so displeasing to Jehovah is that Jehovah had given no provision for a ceremony in which a priest stood before The Tabernacle waving a censer that contained smoldering incense. This action was extremely serious, because if the priests were to feel free to innovate offerings as they saw fit, the pure and spiritual meanings that Jehovah had poured into His offerings would soon be lost. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Question: [What is the meaning of the strange fire in Leviticus 10:1?](#)

Answer: In order to understand the phrase "strange fire," we must review the story in Leviticus in which it appears. The first tabernacle had been erected, and Aaron was doing a lot of sacrificing per God's instructions (Leviticus 8—9). One day, two of Aaron's sons, [Nadab and Abihu](#), came along and offered incense with "strange fire." The Hebrew word translated "strange" means "unauthorized, foreign, or profane." God not only rejected their sacrifice; He found it so offensive that He consumed the two men with fire.

After Nadab and Abihu were killed, Moses explained to Aaron why God had done such a harsh thing: "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: 'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored'" (Leviticus 10:3). The exact nature of the profane fire isn't known, but, since it was the fire that was unauthorized, it could be that Nadab and Abihu were burning the incense with fire of their own making rather than taking fire from the altar, as specified in Leviticus 16:12+. Or

it could have been that the two men came into the tabernacle drunk and therefore could not remember what was a violation and what was not (Leviticus 10:8–9). Whatever it was the men did to render the offering profane, it was a sign of their disregard for the utter holiness of God and the need to honor and obey Him in solemn and holy fear. Their carelessness and irreverence were their downfall.

In judging Nadab and Abihu for their strange fire, God was making a point to all the other priests who would serve in His tabernacle—and later, in His temple—and to us, as well. Since this was the first time sacrifices were being offered on the altar and Israel was getting to know the living God better, when Aaron's sons were disobedient and profane, God displayed His displeasure in no uncertain terms. God was not going to allow the disobedience of Aaron's sons to set a precedent for future disregard of His Law. A [similar story](#) occurs in Acts 5:1-11+, during the time of the early church. A husband and wife lie to Peter about some land given to the church, and they are judged with physical death because of their lie. As Peter puts it, "You have not lied just to human beings but to God" (Acts 5:4+).

God knows our hearts. He knows what we truly believe and our attitude toward Him. We cannot offer to Him proud "sacrifices" that are unworthy of Him. He seeks those who come to Him in humility, ready to sacrifice their pride and lay before Him humble and contrite hearts grieving for sin (Psalm 51:17+). Certainly, there is grace and forgiveness and plenty of "second chances" for those who belong to Him. But God wants us to know that He is serious when it comes to His honor and glory. If there is willful disobedience in the life of a believer, then God disciplines us out of His great love for us (Hebrews 12:7–11+). If such disobedience continues, God will take harsher measures until we understand how we are disappointing Him. If we continue in our disobedience even after that, then God has every right to remove us from this earth (see 1 Corinthians 11:29–30). [GotQuestions.org](#)

J J Knap - Strange Fire - Leviticus 10:1

It seems that Nadab and Abihu had transgressed the command to use the glowing coals of the burnt offering altar for the sacrifice of incense, because they brought strange fire before the Lord's countenance. This invoked the judgement of the Almighty One. A consuming fire went out from the Lord to destroy them, because, if anywhere, the Lord should be sanctified in those who approached Him as priests,—respect for His commands was required first of all here.

Let us place the hand in our own bosom, to examine, whether we in our service of the Lord, do not approach Him at times with strange fire, that provokes His disfavour, even if we think to honour Him with it. The apostle urges us to be fervent of spirit, to put off all slackness and deadness in the service of the Lord, to enter His courts with burning desires and to proclaim the praise of our God with fiery tongues. In truth, a cool obeisance, in which no loftier zeal is contained, is completely rejectable in God's sight. The glorified Messiah had it written to the lukewarm Laodiceans, that if they did not repent from their lukewarmness, He would spew them out of His mouth. On the other hand let us be on guard that it is not strange, but holy and heavenly fire that kindles us, because who would deny it that even now we can approach the altar with strange fire?

Strange fire—a false zeal—sometimes dishonours our prayer. When we stand before the throne of grace, we ought more than ever to pray as the Spirit gives us to pray, and the language of the Spirit is warm, respectful, humble, and trusting. Place over against this the excited and passionate prayers, the urgent and disrespectful petitions, in which an unholy glow shines, and, is it not true, then it falls upon us as a judgement upon the soul, that the Lord wants to be sanctified in those who approach Him.

Strange fire—deceitful enthusiasm—can also be in our zeal for the Name of the Lord. To fight for the church, for the mission, for the Bible, for the confession, in one word, for the Kingdom of God, but in such a manner that a reddish glow of fleshly passion alights in our innermost, and we seek more ourselves in our words and works than the glorification of God

Truly, something within us must burn. However, the zeal must come from above. All titillation that flares up from our own flesh, is an abomination to the Lord. We need the holy, clearly shining fire, the lofty, heavenly zeal, that the Holy Ghost kindles in the heart, so that before all our God be sanctified in those who approach Him to serve Him in a priestly manner.

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - NADAB AND ABIHU Leviticus 10:1–5

Miracles are not sufficient to convince men of sin, and to put them in a right attitude for worshipping God acceptably. Nadab and his priestly brother had just a little ago seen the glory of God, and the miraculous fire falling from Heaven consuming the sacrifice upon the altar, and would be among those who reverently bowed and worshipped (see chap. 9), yet because of their pride and irreverence they were smitten with judgment. Surely there is a solemn warning here for all the people of God. We notice—

1. A great privilege. They were the "sons of Aaron." They had a—

1. **GODLY FATHER.** To be the son of a saint is a priceless boon, but a man may be the son of a divine and yet be the servant of the devil.

2. RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING. From their infancy they were familiar with holy things, and had been trained up in the admonition of the Lord.

3. GOOD PROFESSION. They were recognised by others as the servants of God. It is possible to bear the name of Christian, to take part in Christian work, and yet in spirit to know not the holiness of God or the awfulness of sin.

2. A presumptuous act. "They offered strange fire before the Lord." They—

1. OFFERED FIRE OF THEIR OWN MAKING. This the Lord had forbidden (v. 1). Their offering was like the prayer of the Pharisee (Luke 18:11), or like the sacrifice of Cain. Only a manifestation of self-conceit and rebellion.

2. REJECTED THE GIFT OF GOD. The fire that burned on the altar was the gift of God. This they should have used, but this they despised (chap. 16:12). How much better are those who seek the favour of God on the ground of their own goodness, and utterly reject Christ as the gift of God? They seek to establish their own righteousness, but have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

3. An unexpected doom. "There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them." Waxen professors have need to beware of the fire. They—

1. PERISHED AT THE HAND OF HIM WHOM THEY PROFESSED TO SERVE. This is an early version of the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Not zeal without knowledge so much as presumption without fear.

2. PERISHED BY THAT WHICH THEY REJECTED. Fire from the Lord. The rejected stone shall grind to powder (Luke 20:17, 18). Christ Jesus, the gift of God, is now appointed Judge of all. To reject Him now as offered to us on the altar of the Cross will be to meet Him then as a consuming fire.

4. A solemn sight. They died before the Lord. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." They—

1. WERE CARRIED OUT. They were able of themselves to go in, but unable of themselves to come out. There is no atonement for the sin of presumption (Num. 15:30). He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall perish without remedy.

2. WERE CARRIED OUT IN THEIR COATS. Their priestly garbs did not protect them. Coats of profession will not save. "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy" (Eccles. 8:10). The man who builds his house on the sand is sure to perish on the ruin of it. If our religion is only in our coats it will certainly be buried with us.

5. An important lesson. It is the gracious purpose of God to be—

1. SANCTIFIED IN US. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me." Sanctify therefore the Lord in your heart, for He looketh not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The pure in heart shall see God.

2. GLORIFIED THROUGH US. "Before the people will I be glorified." It is ours to be still and know that He is God, that He may be exalted among the heathen (Psa. 46:10). Let us magnify the Lord together. Glorify Thou Thy Son in me.

Walter Kaiser - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - Note this discussion refers to "**Why Did God Destroy Uzzah?**" which is related to **Nadab and Abihu...**

Over the years, many have complained that God was unfair to kill Uzzah when he tried to protect the ark of God from damage or shame when the oxen stumbled and the ark slipped. Should not Uzzah have been praised for lunging forward to protect the ark of God?

There is no doubt that David's intentions in bringing the ark to Jerusalem were noble and good. Now that his kingdom was established, he did not forget his earlier vow to return the ark to its rightful place of prominence. But what began as a joyful day quickly became a day of national grief and shame. Why?

A significant omission in 2 Samuel 6:1–3 (COMMENTARY) sets the scene for failure. Previously when David needed counsel, for example when he was attacked by the Philistines, the text records that David "inquired of the Lord" (2 Sam 5:19, 23). But those words are sadly missing in 2 Samuel 6:1–3. Instead, we are told in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13:1–14 that David "conferred with each of his officers."

There was no need to consult these men. God had already given clear instructions in Numbers 4:5–6 as to how to move the ark. It should be covered with a veil, to shield the holiness of God from any kind of rash intrusion, and then carried on poles on the

shoulders of the Levites (Num 7:9).

God had plainly revealed his will, but David had a better idea—one he had learned from the pagan Philistines. He would put it on a “new cart” (2 Sam 6:3). However, God had never said anything about using a new cart. This was a human invention contrary to the will and law of God.

Thus David did things in the wrong way, following his own ideas or those of others instead of God’s ways. Surely this passage warns that it is not enough to have a worthy purpose and a proper spirit when we enter into the service of God; God’s work must also be performed in God’s way. Pursuing the right end does not automatically imply using the right means.

But why did God’s anger break out against Uzzah if David was at fault? The Lord had plainly taught that even the Kohathites, the Levite family designated to carry the ark, “must not touch the holy things or they will die” (Num 4:15+). Even if Uzzah were not a Kohathite or even a Levite, he still would know what the law taught in Numbers 4 and 7. God not only keeps his promises, but also fulfills his threats!

When the Philistines, who had no access to the special revelation of God, sinned by touching the ark and using a new cart to transport it, God’s anger did not burn against them (1 Sam 6). God is more merciful toward those less knowledgeable of his will than toward those who are more knowledgeable. This is why it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than it will be for those who personally witnessed the great acts of the Savior in Capernaum (Mt 11:23–24+).

Uzzah’s motive, like David’s, was pure, but he disregarded the written Word of God, just as David did. Thus one sin led to another. Consulting one’s peers is no substitute for obeying God when he has spoken. Good intentions, with unsanctified minds, interfere with the kingdom of God. This is especially true of the worship of God and the concept of his holiness.

Because God is holy, he is free of all moral imperfections. To help mortals understand this better, a sharp line of demarcation was drawn between holy things and the common or profane. Our word profane means “before” or “forth from the temple.” Thus all that was apart from the temple, where the holiness of God was linked, was by definition profane. However, Uzzah’s act made the holiness associated with the ark also profane and thereby brought disrepute to God as well.

It is unthinkable that God could condone a confusion or a diffusion of the sacred and the profane. To take something holy and inject into it the realm of the profane was to confuse the orders of God. Thus in 1 Samuel 6:19 seventy men of Beth Shemesh were killed for peering into the ark.

The situation with Uzzah can be contrasted with that of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 6:9. These uncircumcised Gentiles also handled the ark of God as they carted it from city to city in what is now called the Gaza Strip, as they did when they prepared to send the ark back home to Israel on a cart. But where the knowledge of holy things had not been taught, the responsibility to act differently was not as high as it was for Uzzah, who should have known better.

In fact, in order to determine if the calamities that had struck each of the cities where the ark had gone (a calamity that was almost certainly an outbreak of the bubonic plague) was merely a chance happening unrelated to any divine wrath from the God of Israel, the Philistines rigged up an experiment that was totally against the grain of nature. They took two cows that had just borne calves, penned up the calves, and hitched these cows, who had never previously been hitched to a cart, to a new cart, and watched to see if against every maternal instinct in the animal kingdom the cows would be directed back to the territory of the Philistines. They were. The Philistines were convinced that what happened to them in the outbreak in each city during the seven months when the ark of God was in their midst was no chance or freak accident at all: it was the hand of God! And they had better not harden their hearts as the Egyptians did years ago (1 Sam 6:6).

The Philistines had enough sense for the holiness of God to use a new cart and to send back offerings of reparation, to the degree that they had any knowledge, but they were not judged for what they did not know about the distinction between the sacred and the common.

Another case of trivializing that which is holy can be seen in the brief reference to Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire on the altar of God (Lev 10:1–3). It is impossible to say whether the two sons of Aaron, the high priest, erred in the manner in which they lighted their fire-pans, the timing, or in the place of the offering. The connection with strong drink and the possibility of intoxication cannot be ruled out, given the proximity and discussion of that matter in the same context (Lev 10:8–11). If that was the problem, then the drink may have impeded the sons’ ability to think and to act responsibly in a task that called for the highest degree of alertness, caution and sensitivity.

The offense, however, was no trivial matter. Nor was it accidental. There was some reversal of everything that had been taught, and what had been intended to be most holy and sacred was suddenly trivialized so as to make it common, trite and secular. Exodus 30:9 had warned that there was to be no “other incense” offered on the altar to the Lord. From the phrase at the end of Leviticus

10:1, "which he did not command them" (literal translation), what was done was a clear violation of God's command.

As a result fire comes from the presence of the Lord and consumed Nadab and Abihu. Again, the fact that they are ministers of God makes them doubly accountable and responsible. Moses then used this as an occasion to teach a powerful lesson on the holiness and worship of God (Lev 10:3).

See also comment on 1 SAMUEL 2:25.

William MacDonald Notes on Leviticus 10 - Nadab and Abihu burned incense before the Lord with "strange fire," perhaps fire that was not taken off the brazen altar (Lev 10:1). Since the altar speaks of Calvary, it was as if they tried to approach God in some way other than through the atoning work of Christ. Fire came out from the Most Holy Place and consumed them as they stood by the golden altar in the holy place (Lev 10:2). Moses warned Aaron, in effect, that any complaint would be rebellion against God's righteous dealings (Lev 10:3). After two men had carried the corpses from in front of the tabernacle to a place outside the camp, Moses told Aaron and his two remaining sons that they must not mourn but remain within the tabernacle while the people mourned the flaring forth of God's wrath (Lev 10:4-7). Some have inferred from the reference to drinking in Lev 10:8-11 that Nadab and Abihu may have been intoxicated when they offered the strange fire.

Moses commanded Aaron and his sons to eat the meal offering (Lev 10:12, 15) and the flesh of the wave offering (Lev 10:14, 15). When he looked for the goat that had been used as a sin offering for the people, he found that Eleazar and Ithamar, sons of Aaron, had burned the sacrifice instead of eating it in the holy place. (Perhaps they feared God's wrath which had just fallen on their brothers.) The rule was that if the blood of the sin offering was brought into the holy place, then the sacrifice was to be burned (Lev 8:30). But if not, it was to be eaten (Lev 6:28). Moses reminded them that, in this case, the blood had not been brought into the holy place; therefore, they should have eaten the meat (Lev 10:16-18).

In reply to Moses' reprimand, Aaron explained that they had carried out the sin and burnt offerings, as required, but, in view of the Lord's severe chastisement on Nadab and Abihu, he wondered if his eating the sin offering would have been acceptable to the Lord. Moses accepted the excuse (Lev 10:19, 20).

This chapter concludes the section on the priesthood.

Leviticus 10:2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD

- **fire:** Lev 9:24 16:1 Nu 3:3,4 16:35 26:61 2Sa 6:7 2Ki 1:10,12 1Ch 24:2
- **They died:** Nu 3:3,4 Nu 16:32,33,49 Nu 26:61 1Sa 6:19 1Ch 13:10 15:13 Ac 5:5,10 1Co 10:11
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

SUPERNATURAL FIRE FROM HEAVEN CONSUMED STRANGE FIRE OFFERERS

Fire - The tragic irony is that the fire that consumed the sacrifice and showed God's glory in Lev 9:24-**note** consumed the errant priests and demonstrated God's wrath! "By fire they sinned, and by fire they perished." (Trapp)

This dramatic event reminds me of the warning in Hebrews 12...

Therefore (**term of conclusion**), since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken (context Heb 12:25-27), let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with **reverence** (NLT = "HOLY FEAR") and **awe** (KJV = "GODLY FEAR"); **for (term of explanation)** our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:28-29-**note**, quoting Dt 4:24, 9:3)

They died - They died but their body was not consumed as when "the fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering." (Lev 9:24 uses the same verb "consumed").

This is a picture that was apparently not recalled by Korah, who against God's clear decree, sought the priesthood and also were removed from God's presence when "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them (Korah and those with him and their families) up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly." (Num 16:32-33).

Fire came out from the presence of the LORD - That is the fire came from the Tent of Meeting (the Tabernacle) which is where God's presence (the "Shekinah Glory Cloud") was manifest.

Leon Hyatt - The consequences of their sin (Lev 10:2-5)

Lev 10:2. **And fire came forth from the face of Jehovah and devoured them, and they died at the face of Jehovah.** Suddenly fire burst forth from Jehovah, that is, out of The Tabernacle. For the second time in a few minutes fire burst forth from The Tabernacle. The first time, it showed Jehovah's acceptance of the offerings He had commanded. This time it showed His wrath on an offering He had not commanded. God's fire could either approve or disapprove. It could either empower or destroy. The use of Jehovah's power depended on the relationship the worshiper had to Him. The fire did not completely consume the bodies of the priests (vs. 4), as it did the offerings (Lev 9:24-note), but it killed the disobedient priests. The force that is known to us that most nearly resembles this fire is lightning, which can kindle a consuming flame as in Leviticus 9:24-note or can kill without a flame as in this verse. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Guzik comments that " Fire is a figure of searching judgment and purification. Our works for Jesus will be judged by fire (1Corinthians 3:13-15), and Jesus is described as having eyes like a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14). He has eyes of searching judgment and discernment. Many of those who cry out to God, "send your fire among us" think only of a Leviticus 9:24 fire, without considering the same fire is present to purify and cleanse in Leviticus 10:2. Truth be known, many of us desperately beg God not to send His fire, so the purity of His judgments will not be known among us. God reads our hearts and not only our pious prayers to send revival fire.

Consumed ([00398](#)) ('akal) means to eat, feed, consume, devour.

Gilbrant - The verb 'ākhal means "to consume." It is used of both humans and animals. Sometimes, it is used with the verb "to drink" in connection with the good life. Genesis 26:30 reads "and he made for them a feast and they 'ate' and drank." Judges 9:27 reads "They 'ate' and 'drank' and cursed Abimelech." First Kings 4:20 reads "Judah and Israel were many 'eating' and 'drinking' and making merry." In Job 1:4, Job's sons and daughters met regularly "to eat and drink."

Generally, the noun is used in the context of to "eat food" (Gen. 3:19). "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou 'eat' bread." The same is true of Gen. 37:25, "They sat down to 'eat' bread."

It is used of birds and beasts eating. Genesis 40:17 tells of the baker saying to Joseph, "The birds were 'eating' them out of the basket from on my head. In Gen. 37:20, Joseph's brothers said, "we will say some evil beast hath devoured him." In 1 Ki. 13:28, the lion did not eat the carcass of the slain prophet. The verb connotes "consumption," as fires consume material. In Lev. 10:2, we read of a fire coming out from the Lord and devouring Nadab and Abihu.

In the story of the parable of Jotham in Judg. 9:15, the bramble warned if its advice was not heeded: "let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of the Lebanon."

Second Samuel 18:8 says that the forest "devoured" more people that day than the sword "devoured." More persons perished by being lost in the woods than died of wounds on the battlefield.

In Deut. 32:42, Moses says that the sword of the Lord devours flesh. Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14 speaks of a divine fire consuming major kingdoms. This would be through the devouring of the sword.

Other inanimate forces devour. In Gen. 31:40, Jacob complained to Laban that the heat and dry weather consumed him by day as well as did the chilly weather by night. Famine and pestilence will devour those in the city; the sword will do likewise to those in the country, according to Ezek. 7:15. Proverbs 30:14 speaks of a social system that oppresses the poor and the needy. It devours them. David, in Ps. 27:2, speaks of his enemies and foes approaching him to devour his flesh. The enmity of the enemy consumes a person. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

W E Vine on **akal** - "to eat, feed, consume, devour." This verb occurs in all Semitic languages (except Ethiopic) and in all periods, from the early Akkadian to the latest Hebrew. The word occurs about 810 times in Old Testament Hebrew and 9 times in Aramaic. Essentially, this root refers to the "consumption of food by man or animals." In Gen. 3:6, we read that Eve took of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and "ate" it.

The function of eating is presented along with seeing, hearing, and smelling as one of the basic functions of living, (Deut. 4:28). "Eating," as every other act of life, is under God's control; He stipulates what may or may not be eaten (Gen. 1:29). After the Flood, man was allowed to "eat" meat (Gen. 9:3). But under the Mosaic covenant, God stipulated that certain foods were not to be "eaten" (Lev. 11; Deut. 14), while others were permissible. This distinction is certainly not new, inasmuch as it is mentioned prior to the Flood (Gen. 7:2; cf.

Gen. 6:19). A comparison of these two passages demonstrates how the Bible can speak in general terms, with the understanding that certain limitations are included. Hence, Noah was commanded to bring into the ark two of every kind (Gen. 6:19), while the Bible tells us that this meant two of every unclean and fourteen of every clean animal (Gen. 7:2). Thus, Gen. 9:3 implies that man could "eat" only the clean animals.

This verb is often used figuratively with overtones of destroying something or someone. So the sword, fire, and forest are said to "consume" men. The things "consumed" may include such various things as land (Gen. 3:17), fields (Isa. 1:7), offerings (Deut. 18:1), and a bride's purchase price (Gen. 31:15). 'Ākal might also connote bearing the results of an action (Isa. 3:10).

The word can refer not only to "eating" but to the entire concept "room and board" (2 Sam. 9:11, 13), the special act of "feasting" (Eccl. 10:16), or the entire activity of "earning a living" (Amos 7:12; cf. Gen. 3:19). In Dan. 3:8 and Dan. 6:24, "to eat one's pieces" is to charge someone maliciously. "To eat another's flesh," used figuratively, refers to tearing him to pieces or "killing him" (Psa. 27:2), although 'ākal may also be used literally, as when one "eats" human beings in times of serious famine (Lev. 26:29). Eccl. 4:5 uses the expression, "eat one's own flesh," for allowing oneself to waste away. Abstinence from eating may indicate deep emotional upset, like that which overcame Hannah before the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:7). It may also indicate the religious self-denial seen in fasting.

Unlike the pagan deities (Deut. 32:37-38), God "eats" no food (Psa. 50:13); although as a "consuming" fire (Deut. 4:24), He is ready to defend His own honor and glory. He "consumes" evil and the sinner. He will also "consume" the wicked like a lion (Hos. 13:8). There is one case in which God literally "consumed" food, when He appeared to Abraham in the form of three "strangers" (Gen. 18:8).

God provides many good things to eat, such as manna to the Israelites (Exod. 16:32) and all manner of food to those who delight in the Lord (Isa. 58:14), even the finest food (Psa. 81:16). He puts the Word of God into one's mouth; by "consuming" it, it is taken into one's very being (Ezek. 3:2). (Online [Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

The Hebrew verb akal is used 701 x with 81 uses in Leviticus ([Click here and scroll down to "Frequency Lists" to see all the uses in 6 different translations - including ESV, KJV, NASB](#) - note all the uses in Genesis 3!) - Lev 3:17; 6:10, 16, 18, 23, 26, 29f; 7:6, 15f, 18ff, 23ff; 8:31; 9:24; 10:2, 12ff, 17ff; 11:2ff, 8f, 11, 13, 21f, 34, 40ff, 47; 14:47; 17:10, 12ff; 19:6ff, 23, 25f; 21:22; 22:4, 6ff, 10ff, 16, 30; 23:6, 14; 24:9; 25:7, 12, 19f, 22; 26:5, 10, 16, 26, 29, 38 ate(76), certainly have eaten(1), certainly not eat(1), consume(30), consumed(30), consumes(9), consuming(9), devour(38), devour you will be devoured(1), devoured(30), devourer(2), devouring(3), devours(7), dine(1), eat(398), eat freely(1), eaten(66), eaten at all(2), eaten freely(1), eater(2), eater's(1), eating(25), eats(29), edible(2), enjoys(2), entirely consumed(1), feast(1), fed(8), feed(10), food(4), give him to eat(1), had(2), has enough(1), lived off(1), meal*(1), moth-eaten*(1), plenty to eat(1), reduces(1), shared*(1), tasting(1), took space away(1), use(1).

THOUGHT - One lesson for all of us who are **'priests'** (every believer is a member of the "royal priesthood" = 1Pe 2:9+, cf Rev 5:10+) in the modern church is that we dare not draw near to God with a casual or careless attitude! Indeed "the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." (Deut 4:24+) Yahweh is a holy and jealous God, and has the righteous right to consume those who profane His glory. This truth makes it that much more incredible that Aaron was not consumed in Ex 32:1-5+! Confess - Repent - Draw Near. James 4:7-8+ says it this way "**Submit** therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you. **Draw near** to God and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse** your hands, you sinners; and **purify** your hearts, you double-minded." (Note all red words are [aorist imperative](#) and call on us [to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) See - [Is the priesthood of all believers biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#); [What does it mean that we are a royal priesthood \(1 Peter 2:9\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

John Hartley says God's "power might be compared to electricity. Electricity is a useful, wonderful source of energy, but in order to work with it safely one must be very careful and astute. Whoever touches uninsulated, hot wires is severely shocked, burned, or, depending on the voltage, instantly killed. When a person approaches God properly, his holiness imparts life (cf. Isa 57:15) and inspires wonder (cf. Ex 3:3-4). But should anything that is profane or unclean enter God's presence, it is consumed. (Word Biblical Commentary)

Henry Morris - Exactly what the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu may have been is not explained. This sudden judgment upon Aaron's sons, however, stresses the critical importance of adherence to God's Word, especially by those called to special service on behalf of the LORD. In some way, they had failed to obey God's commands in connection with their priestly service. Therefore, God judged them as an example and warning against spiritual presumption on the part of any of His people (Leviticus

16:1,2-note). ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

Before the LORD - They may well have been struck down in the Most Holy Place itself.

Before (06440)(panim/paniym/pane) occurs over 2000x and is a masculine plural (it always occurs in plural in OT) noun which literally means face (Ge 43:31; Lev. 13:41; 1Kgs. 19:13).

Definbaugh makes an excellent point - Israel would be painfully aware of the limitations of this Aaronic Priesthood. Thus they would be prepared for and looking forward to a "better Priest and priesthood" which would be the result of the New Covenant and of the coming of the Christ. The Aaronic priesthood was shown to have failed at its very outset. It is as though an unsinkable ship was launched, and at the first instant it struck the water it sank. If these two priests, Nadab and Abihu were so sinful as to be struck dead by God, how could anything they or any other sinful priest did bring people to perfection? Any system which had an imperfect priesthood could surely not bring the people to perfection. The flaws of the old covenant and its Aaronic priesthood pointed to the need for a new and better covenant, with a better priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood was only a provisional, imperfect priesthood. A sinner was the high priest, and his sinful sons were priests as well. There was no basis for unbridled optimism in the Aaronic order. ([Leviticus 8-10 Principles of Priesthood-excellent contrast w/ Jesus' High Priesthood](#))

OUR DAILY BREAD - Sometimes God seems to overreact. In Leviticus 10 we read about people who dropped dead simply because they didn't worship correctly. Priests were threatened with death if they didn't stay well-groomed or if they wandered away from the tabernacle. To modern readers who like to dress casual and live free, all of this sounds a bit stifling.

But the aim of this instruction is not to tell us how to dress for church. It tells us about God. It reminds us that God is holy, and He is not to be trifled with. God is not a buddy who just wants us to feel comfortable around Him.

The Scriptures do not merely educate us in morality. God didn't give us the Bible to teach us how to be good little boys and girls. Instead, Scripture demands that we live respectfully and worshipfully in the awesome presence of the holy God. Without God's holiness, our faith loses its meaning. British theologian P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921) wrote, "Sin is but the defiance of God's holiness, grace is but its action upon sin, the cross is but its victory, and faith is but its worship."

Angels in the presence of God call to one another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" (Rev. 4:8). If we are believers in Christ, we can join them in that chant. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The holiness of God reveals
Our insufficiency;
But when His Spirit fills our hearts,
His work in us we'll see.
-Sper

**To refrain from sin doesn't make us holy,
but holiness makes us refrain from sin.**

Leviticus 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.' " So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

- **said.** Lev 10:6. 1Sa 3:18.
- **I will be.** Lev 8:35, 21:6, 8, 15, 17, 21, 22:9, Ex 14:4, 19:22, 29:43, 44, Nu 20:12, Dt 32:51, 1Sa 6:20, 1Ch 15:12, 13, 2Ch 26:16-21, Ps 89:7, 119:120, Is 52:11, Ezk 20:41, 42:13, He 12:28, 29,
- **before,** 1Sa 2:30, Is 49:3, Ezk 28:22, Jn 12:28, 13:31, 32, 14:13, Ac 5:11-13, 2Th 1:10, 1Pe 4:17,
- **Aaron,** Ge 18:25, Dt 26:14, 1Sa 3:18, Jb 1:20, 21, 2:10, Ps 39:9, 46:10, Is 39:8, Mt 10:37, Ac 21:14)
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

MOSES "SPOKE HIS PIECE"

Then - What a strategic **expression of time!**

While we cannot be dogmatic about the identity of the "strange fire," it is clear that it did not treat God as holy and did not honor Him.

Verse 3. **Then Moses said to Aaron, This is the word of Jehovah, saying, Through the one near me, I will be hallowed, and before the face of all the people I will be glorified, so Aaron kept quiet.**

Then Moses said to Aaron, This is the word of Jehovah, saying, Through the one near me, I will be hallowed, and before the face of all the people I will be glorified. Moses immediately interpreted these events by a quotation from Jehovah. The words are not found elsewhere in the Record. Evidently they were words that Jehovah had spoken to him in the mountain but that he had not recorded in Exodus (see comments on Lev. 9:1 and on Lev. 9:10 in MESSAGE 10). The words he quoted mean that one way or another Jehovah would be "hallowed" and glorified through His priests, who were chosen to be near Him. He would be honored either by their obedience or by their punishment for disobedience.

Only one previous reference referred to Jehovah's being "hallowed" (Ex. 15:11). It means that He was to be "set apart" from all other persons and objects (see comments on Lev. 1:3-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses). Jehovah was not to be treated as a man, because He was completely set apart from men in power and moral character. His priests would either honor Him for His great "otherness," or they would suffer the consequences. Either way, the people would see the greatness, power, and glory of Jehovah.

so Aaron kept quiet. As painful as was the death of his two sons, Aaron understood that their punishment was sent to glorify God; so he did not object. He remained silent. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

John Calvin comments on **then Moses said to Aaron** - Moses restrains his brother from giving way to excessive grief; for this was a very bitter stroke after their recent joy to see himself at once deprived of two sons on the same day, and at the same moment, he might, too, have been disposed to murmur against God for the cause of their death. Lest, therefore, He should give way to such want of self-control, Moses reminds him that he must submit to the just judgment of God. We shall, however, seek in vain for what is here referred to, "I will be glorified in them that come nigh me." **He had often threatened the priests with death if they departed in the least degree from the prescribed rule: He had often set before them the sacredness of their office, lest they should defile themselves by any sacrilegious act; in a word, He had chosen them to be His ministers in holy things,** on the condition that they should know themselves to be subject to greater guilt and punishment than the rest of the people. By this consolation, then, Aaron's grief is quieted, that God had not dealt cruelly with his sons, but had shown forth in them a just and profitable example, in order that their successors might be more attentive in their duties; for thus should the sentence be paraphrased: *In order that I may be glorified before the whole people, I must be sanctified by those of the highest degree and consequence; or, When I shall have been sanctified by the priests themselves, whose dignity is the highest, my glory will shine forth before the whole people.* And, in point of fact, although God may punish whole bodies of obscure persons, such lessons have but little effect; but the punishment of men of more noble and illustrious condition draws almost all eyes to the judgments of God. For God is said to be sanctified in us in many ways, whether He shows Himself to be a merciful or a severe (albeit righteous) Judge. **This declaration, then, is an exhortation to those whom he has dignified with peculiar honor, to walk in fear and trembling; for, since "judgment begins at the house of God,"** 1Pe 4:17-note) **the greater are the gifts and the higher the pre-eminence is with which any one is blessed, the greater is his obligation to God, and his ingratitude worthy of severer punishment.**

THE REQUIREMENT FOR PRIESTS

Those who come near to me I will be treated as holy - This clearly refers to the Levitical priests, but the principle applies to EVERY NT believer, because EVERY believer is a PRIEST! As Peter teaches all believers "are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR [God's] OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1Pe 2:9-note, cp Rev 1:6-note, Rev 5:10-note, Rev 20:6-note). Tony Garland has an intriguing comment on the Priesthood of Believers...

Both now and in the future, our function is primarily priestly. That is, **we are to minister to God.** Here we run into an extremely important distinction which has not been adequately appreciated among many who lead God's people. Our primary responsibility is to minister to God and not to men. Our focus is to be God-ward rather than man-ward. We are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ" (1Pe. 2:5-note). As we take care to minister to God, He will minister to men through us. The focus of our ministry is the New Covenant (2Cor 3:6-note), not the Law of Moses, and is characterized by a series of contrasts and seeming contradictions (2Cor 6:4-10). Our lives should evidence a consistency of living whether with the people of God or with unbelievers: "God intends the eventual abolition of all distinctions between holy and profane, sanctified and common (Zec 14:20-21)."... (Joseph Seiss adds) "Though believers are currently viewed as a royal priesthood (1Pe. 2:5, 9; cf. Ex. 19:6), this is only preliminary to the fullness of the way they will function

alongside Christ in the Millennial Kingdom."... The priestly duties of some will include service in the Temple: "I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD." (Isa. 66:19-21) (Merrill Unger adds) What the prophet has in mind here [Isa. 66:21] is a completely new order of things: the inclusion of Gentiles in the service of the Lord, without regard to race or descent. (Compiled from Garland's notes on Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:6)

As **Jamieson** says the priests "had received repeated and solemn warnings as to the cautious and reverent manner of their approach into the divine presence." As in Exodus 19:22 "And also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, **lest the LORD break out against them**" And in Lev 8:35-note "At the doorway of the tent of meeting, moreover, you shall remain day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, **that you may not die, for so I have been commanded**" Forewarned is usually forearmed, but apparently not in the case of Nadab and Abihu!

"The souls of priests must be purer than the sunbeams" - Chrysostom.

Guzik - Make no mistake: We can come to God just as we are, but we may not come to Him our own way. We must come the way He has provided, the way made in Jesus Christ. (Jn 14:6 = "the [definitive, only] way")

Matthew Henry - The most quieting considerations under affliction are fetched from the word of God. What was it that God spoke? Though Aaron's heart must have been filled with anguish and dismay, **yet with silent submission he revered the justice of the stroke**. When God corrects us or ours (our loved ones) for sin, it is our duty to accept the punishment, and say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." **Whenever we worship God, we come nigh unto Him, as spiritual priests. This ought to make us very serious in all acts of devotion.** (Ed: Would this not affect our personal Sunday Morning worship experience if we approached it with a holy fear?! And what about our quiet time? And our time in His holy Word?, etc, etc) It concerns us all, when we come nigh to God, to do every religious exercise, as those who believe that the God with Whom we have to do (Heb 4:13-note), is a holy God. He will take vengeance on those that profane his sacred name by trifling with him (Dt 32:35, 43, Ro 12:19-note).

F B Meyer warns us to "take care lest you ever introduce strange fire into your worship-i. e., the fire of your own emotions, enthusiasm and excitement. Ponder those mighty words in Leviticus 10:3. We must not rush carelessly into the divine presence, though by the blood of Jesus we have been made nigh, Ephesians 2:13-note."

Richard Hawker - Reader! observe what effect grace had upon the mind of Moses. No doubt the awful event struck terror and dismay in every beholder, but while some trembled Moses adored. It is sweet in our afflictions to eye the LORD'S appointment, and depend upon it, as long as we are enabled to keep in view divine wisdom, we shall not become despondent in our human sufferings.

Treated as holy (KJV = will be sanctified) ([06942](#))(**qadash**) means to be set apart, to be holy, to show oneself holy, to be treated as holy, to consecrate, to treat as holy, to dedicate, to be made holy, to declare holy or consecrated, to behave, to act holy, to dedicate oneself. In the simple form qadash describes the act of setting apart, being holy, the act of withdrawing someone or something from profane or ordinary use. Here in Lev 10:3 the Lxx translates **qadash** with the verb **hagiazo** (**see word study**).

John Trapp - Sanctified (treated as holy) He will be, either in the sincerity of men's conversation, or else in the severity of their condemnation. Singular things are expected of all that draw nigh to God in any duty, but especially in the office of the ministry. Those that stand in the presence of princes must be exact in their carriages. God appointed both the weights and measures of the sanctuary to be twice as large as those of the commonwealth; to show, that he expects much more of those that serve him there, than he doth of others. The souls of priests must be purer than the sunbeams, saith Chrysostom.

The **Net Note** comments that "They had not treated the LORD as holy, so the LORD acted on his own behalf to show that he was indeed holy."

Before all the people I will be honored - As discussed below **honored** is the verb **kabad** which means to be "heavy." The Lxx translated kabad with **doxazo** which means to be glorified, to be given or shown a proper opinion.

Honored ([03513](#))(**kabad**) is a verb which means to weigh heavily, to be heavy (weighty, burdensome), to be honored, to be wealthy, to get honor, to make dull, to make hard, to multiply or make numerous. There are 2 literal uses of **kabad** describing Eli as **heavy** (1Sa 4:18) and Absalom's hair as **heavy** (2Sa 14:26). Most of the uses of **kabad** are figurative and most of these figurative uses in turn convey the sense of **honor** or **glory** (e.g., a "weighty" person in society is one who is honored or worthy of respect ["respected" = Ge 24:19].)

Honor (Webster) - To revere; to show or regard with respect or esteem; to treat with deference and submission, To reverence; to manifest the highest veneration for, in words and actions; to entertain the most exalted thoughts of; to worship; to adore. to raise to distinction or notice; to elevate in rank or station; to exalt.

God says He "will be **honored** (ESV = glorified) through Pharaoh." (Ex 14:4, 17, 18 - Lxx in all 3 verses = endoxazo = to be held in high esteem, glorified, honored). In other words, Yahweh would gain glory by His final and great victory over the strength of Pharaoh.

Twice God commands children to honor parents **Honor** (command; Lxx = timao = to ascribe worth or honor) your father and your mother." (Ex 20:12, Dt 5:16) "**Honor** (Lxx = timao) the LORD from your wealth." (Pr 3:9) Wisdom "will **honor** (Lxx = timao) you if you embrace her." "He who regards reproof will be **honored** (Lxx = doxazo)." (Pr 13:18) "He who is gracious to the needy **honors** (Lxx = timao)" God (Pr 14:31). "He who cares for his master will be **honored** (Lxx = timao)" (Pr 27:18) A prophet received honor - "the man is held in **honor** (Lxx = endoxos = distinguished); all that he says surely comes true." (1Sa 9:6). Honor is improper if it exceeds that given to God (1Sa 2:29-30) or is directed to one's self (Pr 12:9).

Kabad describes sin. The first use in the Bible in fact is Ge 18:20 which describes the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as **heavy**" (Indeed, sins are "weighty" and slow us down spiritually and thus are to be laid aside - Heb 12:1!). When David sinned with Bathsheba and failed to confess his sins, God's hand was "**heavy** (Lxx = talaioria = miserableness [Jas 5:1] or wretchedness that arises from torment, inner or outer) upon" him (Ps 32:4). In Ps 38:4 David said his iniquities "**weigh** (Lxx = baruno = weigh down) too much for me."

The godly man "**honors** (Lxx = doxazo) those who fear the LORD." (Ps 15:4) God **honors** (Lxx = doxazo) those who call on Him in the day of trouble (Ps 50:15, Ps 91:15). The one who "offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving **honors** (Lxx = doxazo)" God (Ps 50:23) In Ps 86:9, 12 **kabad** means to "**glorify** (Lxx = doxazo) Your (God's) Name."

"Heavy labor" is burdensome labor - "Let the labor **be heavier** [Lxx = baruno - causing pressure thru weightiness] on the men" (Ex. 5:9) **Kabad** is used with this same sense in (1Ki 12:10, 14) - "Your father made our yoke **heavy** (kabad, Lxx - baruno)."

God's "**heavy hand**" is a powerful hand. - "The hand of the LORD **was heavy** [Lxx = baruno - causing pressure thru something weighty] on the Ashdodites." (1Sa 5:6)

Kabad is used figuratively to describe the senses of sight and hearing. In Ge 48:10 kabad describes Jacob's eyes as **'dim**." In Isaiah 6:10, Isaiah is told to "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears **dull** (Lxx = barus = heavy)." "Heavy ears" are **dull** (Lxx = barus = heavy) ears (Isa 6:10). In contrast God's ear is not **dull** (Kabad - heavy; Lxx - baruno = weighed down).

In Exodus five times **kabad** describes Pharaoh's heart as **hardened** (heavy, weighted down,, expressing sluggishness or unresponsiveness) (All uses translated in Lxx = skleruno = hardened) (Ex 8:15, 32, 9:7, 9:34, 10:1). Balak says he will "**honor**" (in the sense of reward) the prophet Balaam (Nu 22:17, 37, 24:11).

Complete Biblical Library summarizes **kabad** - The core idea of this verb is "weight" and "heaviness." The idea of quantity is sometimes seen in the use of the adjective (03515) in the sense of a "heavy" amount. Then, it may be used in an extended sense of being rich as a result of possessing much, as in Ge 13:2, "Abram was very **rich** (Lxx = plousios)" From the thought of the weight of quantity, the various figurative meanings seem to flow. The major concept is "**weightiness of who a person is, his dignity, the respect and recognition he receives**. This could have been because of the weight or amount of wealth the person had. This concept of associating heaviness with wealth is common in a number of cultures... Thus, the verb often means "to ascribe weight," "to ascribe importance" or "to ascribe impressiveness to a person." In between being heavy and being honored are other figurative uses. **Something may be heavy in the sense of difficult to move or stiff** Thus, the verb is used of unresponsiveness or insensitivity of a person. This is expressed in terms of parts of the body such as the tongue, ears, eyes or heart (Ge 48:10; Ex. 9:7; Isa. 59:1). A **heavy load**, in a broad sense, refers to the very difficult labor it requires, such as the oppressive work Pharaoh made Israel do (Ex 5:9). The Lord's **hand on the people may be heavy** in judgment (1Sa 5:11). Circumstances may weigh heavily on people (Neh. 5:18). Thus, another figurative or abstract idea of weightiness is intensity or seriousness, e.g., "The battle **became fierce**" (Jdg. 20:34). People's sin can also be "very heavy," "grievous" or "serious" (Ge 18:20). The concept of honor is only used a few times in the Qal and Hiphil stems, which usually refer to "making heavy" in the sense of "grievous," "intense," "oppressive" or of "hardening one's heart." **The Niphal and Piel stems, on the other hand, deal almost solely with the meaning of being "honored" or "glorious" and "giving honor" or "glorifying," respectively**. A person may behave in a dignified or distinguished way (2Sa 6:20, used sarcastically). A person's reputation is one's weightiness, one's honor or glory (1Sa 9:6). People honor other people for various reasons, whether for their position or their accomplishments (Num. 22:17; 2Sa 6:22). God commands us to **honor** our parents with the implication that they are his delegated representatives with his authority and responsibility over the children (Ex 20:12). People certainly are to **honor (glorify)** God (Ps. 22:23). To do so overlaps with the concept of praise (Ps. 50:23). We are to recognize and be in awe of Him for Who He is and what He has done, also being grateful. He does mighty judging and saving acts that bring Him honor and glory (Ex. 14:4), as well as benefiting the world. This verb, then, involves giving the Lord

all the highest honor and praise, ascribing to Him the most awesome power and greatness, as well as purity and perfection, imaginable. A person honors God and gives Him glory by confessing sin and telling the truth, which acknowledges his sovereignty over us, that He knows all, and that He is the perfect righteous Judge of all (cf. Josh. 7:19). Another way to glorify God is through obedience and worship that give our best to Him, what is befitting the king of the universe (Hag. 1:8). To truly give God glory or glorify Him is to respond to Him with our total being.

Kabad is translated in NAS -

abounding(1), achieve honor(1), became fierce(1), became heavy(1), boasting(1), burdensome(1), dim(1), distinguished(3), dull(2), enjoy your glory(1), **glorified(4), glorify(7), glorious(2), glorious things(1)**, grave(1), grew strong(1), harden(1), hardened(6), **heavier(2), heavy(6), held in honor(1), honor(17), honor you greatly(1), honorable(4), honored(19), honoring(2), honors(5), indeed honor(1)**, laid burdens(1), made my heavy(1), made our heavy(2), made your heavy(3), make(1), make it glorious(1), makes himself rich(1), multiply(2), nobles(1), respected(1), stopped(1), weigh(1), weigh heavily(1), went heavily(1).

Kabad - 106x in the NAS -

Ge 18:20; 34:19; 48:10; Ex 5:9; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34; 10:1; 14:4, 17f; 20:12; Lev 10:3; Num 22:15, 17, 37; 24:11; Deut 5:16; 28:58; Jdg 1:35; 9:9; 13:17; 20:34; 1Sa 2:29f; 5:6, 11; 6:6; 9:6; 15:30; 22:14; 31:3; 2Sa 6:20, 22; 10:3; 13:25; 23:19, 23; 1Kgs 12:10, 14; 2Ki 14:10; 1Chr 4:9; 10:3; 11:21, 25; 19:3; 2Chr 10:10, 14; 25:19; Neh 5:15, 18; Job 6:3; 14:21; 23:2; 33:7; Ps 15:4; 22:23; 32:4; 38:4; 50:15, 23; 86:9, 12; 87:3; 91:15; 149:8; Pr 3:9; 4:8; 8:24; 12:9; 13:18; 14:31; 27:18; Isa 3:5; 6:10; 9:1; 23:8f; 24:15, 20; 25:3; 26:15; 29:13; 43:4, 20, 23; 47:6; 49:5; 58:13; 59:1; 60:13; 66:5; Jer 30:19; Lam 1:8; 3:7; Ezek 27:25; 28:22; 39:13; Da 11:38; Nah 3:10, 15; Hab 2:6; Hag 1:8; Zech 7:11; Mal 1:6.

AARON HELD HIS PEACE

So Aaron, therefore, kept silent - Because he wanted to be treated the LORD as holy and to honor Him. Allegiance to God trumps every human relationship, be in spouse, children, friends, etc. Our highest loyalty and greatest responsibility is first to the Lord God Almighty! A corollary idea is that we must stand with God even if that means we must stand against even members of our own family!

Does Aaron's response (silent as it was) not remind us of **Job** after being made aware of his great personal losses, at which news we read "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:20-21) And to his wife's query and suggestion "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die! But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. **Shall we indeed accept** (Lxx = **dechomai** = receive with a deliberate and ready reception what is offered!) **good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.**" (Job 2:9-10)

John Trapp - He bridled his passions, and submitted to the divine justice as did David in Ps 39:9.

David Guzik - More important than Aaron's right to grieve was the respect of God's holiness... To mourn might have implied - even in the slightest way - that God was wrong in bringing this fire upon Nadab and Abihu, and Aaron or Moses could not communicate this. Aaron must also have thought, "I did worse than this at the golden calf incident; why did God take them?" But Aaron did that before his consecration as a priest. After his consecration, he and his sons had a greater accountability.

So Aaron, therefore, kept silent (ESV = "held his peace") - He "grew dumb!" The Septuagint puts a slightly different spin on Aaron's reaction - "And Aaron was shocked." (NETS Lxx) Brenton's version has "And Aaron was pricked ["in his heart" is implied]." The verb is **katanussomai** which is used in Acts 2:37 "they were pierced in their heart." BDAG says this verb means "to be pierced, stabbed figuratively of the feeling of sharp pain connected with anxiety, remorse, etc." Liddell-Scott's entry says **katanussomai** means "be silenced."

Adam Clarke says "Aaron was dumb. How elegantly expressive is this of his parental affection, his deep sense of the presumption of his sons, and his own submission to the justice of God! The flower and hope of his family was nipped in the bud and blasted; and while he exquisitely feels as a father, he submits without murmuring to this awful dispensation of Divine justice."

John Gill - Aaron was in a stupor, as the Septuagint, quite amazed, thunderstruck, as we say; he was silent, said not one word against what was done; murmured not at the providence, nor complained of any severity, but was patient under the hand of God, and resigned to His will; and since God was **sanctified and glorified**, he was contented.

John Calvin has a good application - Much is this silence of Aaron to be applauded, whereby he confessed that his sons were slain

by the just judgment of God; for Moses indicates that he yielded to his admonition, and was thus restrained from complaining against God. Thus Paul teaches us that Scripture is given to teach us patience. (Romans 15:4.) **Wherefore, whenever our passions are too much excited, let us learn that this is the best remedy for quieting and repressing them, to submit ourselves to God, and to humble ourselves beneath his mighty hand.** David invites us to this by his own example in Ps 39:9.

Richard Hawker - Observe also the pious frame of Aaron's mind. No doubt his soul was convulsed with agony. It must have been visible in his very appearance: yet Aaron held his peace. **Dear LORD! Grant both to him that writes, and to him that reads, grace, in all our lesser sorrows, to bend in holy submission to Thy will.** Ps 39:9 (David says "I have become dumb [Heb = alam = to be bound, to be speechless from awe or fright, even as was the Messiah in Isa 53:7, as was Daniel in Da 10:15], I do not open my mouth, Because it is Thou who hast done [it.]"). Observe also, how GOD enjoins (instructs with authority, admonishes with urgency) a sanctification of soul in all that approach him. Read Exodus 19:22

Kept silent (01826)(damam) is a verb meaning to be silent or be still. To stand still, in a state of motionlessness (1Sa 14:9; Jer 47:6). Joshua spoke to the sun to "stand still" and it did (Josh. 10:12, 13). Here in Lev 10:3 the idea is primarily to refrain from speech. "The prudent person keeps silent." (Amos 5:13). **Damam** can refer to persons being traumatized or frozen from fear (Ex 15:16 = "as **motionless** as a stone", Jer. 8:14; 48:2; 49:26; 50:30). **Damam** can also describe the absence of emotional distress, instead describing the ability to be quiet and relax (Job 30:27; Ps. 4:4; 30:12; 131:2).

In most uses of **damam** there is a context of upheaval or great distress (Lam 2:10). In the first use we read "Terror and dread fall upon them (Israel's enemies - Ex 15:15); By the greatness of Thine arm they are **motionless** (Heb = damam; Lxx = apolithoo = to become petrified, "turn into stone") as stone; Until Thy people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom Thou hast purchased." (Ex 15:16) In Ezek 24:17 Ezekiel was forbidden by Yahweh to show the normal signs of mourning in face of the death of his wife. He could groan but he was to "groan silently" which is an interesting description. In the Psalms damam often conveys the sense of a holy or reverential stillness in the presence of Yahweh (Ps 4:4, Ps 37:7, Ps 62:5) And in Ps 30:12 the psalmist says there is a time NOT to be silent (See Spurgeon's note below).

Brown-Driver-Briggs' summary - to be silent, be still, wait, be dumb, grow dumb (Qal) = to be silent, to be still, die, to be struck dumb; (Niphal) to be silenced, be made silent, destroyed; (Poal) to make quiet; (Hiphil) to make silent (cause to die)

TWOT - dāmam is often found in a context of catastrophe and mourning. Aaron and Ezekiel had to keep quiet in spite of the death of loved ones (Lev 10:3; Ezk 24:17). The elders of Judah sit silently with dust on their heads (Lam 2:10).

Damam in **NAS** - ceasing(1), destroyed(1), doomed(1), have... rest(1), keeps silent(1), kept silent(3), made silent(1), motionless(1), perish(1), quieted(1), relax(1), rest(1), silenced(4), silent(5), silently(1), stand still(1), stay still(1), still(1), stood still(1), wait(1), wait in silence(1).

Damam - 29v -

Ex 15:16; Lev 10:3; Josh 10:12-13; 1Sam 2:9; 14:9; Job 29:21; 30:27; 31:34; Ps 4:4; Ps 30:12; Ps 31:17; 35:15; 37:7; 62:5; 131:2; Isa 23:2; Jer 8:14; 25:37; 47:6; 48:2; 49:26; 50:30; 51:6; Lam 2:10, 18; 3:28; Ezek 24:17; Amos 5:13 (Lxx = siopao = be silent, make no sound).

Here are all the uses of **daman** in the Psalms (book with most uses)

Ps 4:4 Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and **be still** (Lxx = katanussomai = be pierced, be pains sharply in one's mind). Selah.

Spurgeon - How many reverse this counsel and sin but tremble not. O that men would take the advice of this verse and commune with their own hearts. Surely a want of thought must be one reason why men are so mad as to despise Christ and hate their own mercies. O that for once their passions would be quiet and let them be still, that so in solemn silence they might review the past, and meditate upon their inevitable doom. Surely a thinking man might have enough sense to discover the vanity of sin and the worthlessness of the world. Stay, rash sinner, stay, ere thou take the last leap. Go to thy bed and think upon thy ways. Ask counsel of thy pillow, and let the quietude of night instruct thee! Throw not away thy soul for nought! Let reason speak! Let the clamorous world be still awhile, and let thy poor soul plead with thee to bethink thyself before thou seal its fate, and ruin it for ever! Selah.

Ps 30:12 That [my] soul may sing praise to Thee, and not **be silent** (Lxx = katanussomai = be pierced, be pains sharply in one's mind). O LORD my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever.

Spurgeon - It would be a shameful crime, if, after receiving God's mercies, we should forget to praise him. God would not have our tongues lie idle while so many themes for gratitude are spread on every hand. He would have no dumb children in the house. They are all to sing in heaven, and therefore they should all sing

on earth.

Ps 31:17-[note](#) Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon Thee; Let the wicked be put to shame, let them **be silent** in Sheol.

Ps 35:15 But at my stumbling they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me, They slandered me without **ceasing**.

Ps 37:7 **Rest** (A command. Lxx = **hupotasso** = command to be in subjection to) in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

Spurgeon - This fifth is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—that is what every gracious heart should aim at. "Aaron held his peace:" "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." **A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart**

Ps 62:5 My soul, **wait in silence** (A command; Lxx = **hupotasso** = command to be in subjection to) for God only, For my hope is from Him.

Spurgeon - When we have already practised a virtue, it is yet needful that we bind ourselves to a continuance in it. The soul is apt to be dragged away from its anchorage, or is readily tempted to add a second confidence to the one sole and sure ground of reliance; we must, therefore, stir ourselves up to maintain the holy position which we were at first able to assume. Be still silent, O my soul! submit thyself completely, trust immovably, wait patiently. Let none of thy enemies' imaginings, consultings, flatteries, or maledictions cause thee to break the King's peace. Be like the sheep before her shearers, and like thy Lord, conquer by the passive resistance of victorious patience: thou canst only achieve this as thou shalt be inwardly persuaded of God's presence, and as you wait solely and alone on him. Unmingled faith is undismayed. Faith with a single eye sees herself secure, but if her eye be darkened by two confidences, she is blind and useless.

Ps 131:2 Surely I have composed and **quieted** my soul; Like a weaned child [rests] against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me.

Bishop Hall on Aaron's silence - He might have had a silent tongue, and a clamorous heart. There is no voice louder in the ears of God, than a speechless repining of the soul. There is no greater proof of grace, than to smart patiently, and humbly and contentedly to rest the heart in the justice and wisdom of God's proceeding.

Joseph Seiss (Lutheran Pastor from 1800's author of a literal interpretation of the Revelation - see [The Apocalypse](#)) has an interesting analysis of **Aaron's reaction** in the face of this dramatic divine judgment - Serious people sometimes wonder how it shall be at the last day--how godly parents shall be able to bear the sight of their Christless children given over to everlasting death; whether the knowledge or sight of near and beloved relatives in perdition will not interrupt and destroy the peace Of heaven. But, if such persons would reason upon the subject from a standpoint higher than the mere sympathies of nature, they would have less trouble concerning it. Aaron looking upon his slain sons, is a picture of how it shall be. **When God's ultimate judgments shall go into effect, their justice shall be so conspicuous, and the goodness and glory of God in them shall be so luminous and manifest, that it will not be in the power of any ransomed soul to think of demurring, or indulging one tearful regret.** When we come to see things in the light of heaven, every enemy of God will appear so essentially an enemy to ourselves and our peace, that, however otherwise related to us, we will be glad to see them shut up in the dreadful prison-house for ever and for ever. (**Ed:** Compare "*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*" Ro 2:5-[note](#)) What are domestic ties and sympathies in comparison with the glorious will of our blessed Lord? Jesus says, "He that loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Every saint is fully wrapped up in the righteousness, wisdom, and goodness of his Lord. Everything that God does carries the heart of the ransomed ones so completely with it, and so overwhelms and swallows up all other affections, that they are as utter nothing. **Nadab and Abihu may die for ever under Aaron's very eyes, and yet God's honor and glory in it leave him not a tear to shed, and not a word of lamentation to utter.**

Biblical Illustrator - The broken heart is like a broken harp. The harp is either absolutely silent, or sends forth discordant sounds. Human grief is so deep that it is either speechless or gives expression to bitter complaints and hard thoughts. Whatever human ministries may accomplish by way of modifying it, they do not heal. Here is the superiority of Christ Jesus in His treatment. He "heals" the broken-hearted.

F B Meyer (Our Daily Homily) writes that **Aaron held his peace.**

His heart must have been rent with paroxysms of grief, as he beheld the bodies of his beloved sons on the

floor of the Tabernacle, stretched out in death. He repressed the cry, choked back the sob, stanching the flowing tear, and continued to perform the holy duties with which he was charged. He was no stoic, and tears are not wrong for our dead; but his relationship to God was so overmastering as to still the expressions of nature.

He saw the wrong from God's standpoint. — It was of great importance that the Divine regulations and enactments should be maintained, and that the ministering priests should always prefer God's work and service above their own ideas. Aaron was able to appreciate that position, and saw the sin of which his children were guilty. They had forgotten the voice which said, Sanctify thou Me. Obedience is the foundation of reverence, honor, and service; and if it were relaxed with the priests, how for the people! How careful they should be who bear the vessels of the Lord! With what fear and trembling must they work, who work with God!

He acquiesced in the Divine dealings. — To take the yoke, and meekly bear it; to put the hand on the mouth, and bow in the dust — this is rest and peace. In this way we drink Christ's cup and become partakers of his sufferings.

He felt that his work as priest must take precedence. — It was a solemn and awful thing to be God's anointed priest, and the office must come first, even to the denial of the dues of nature, if that were necessary: so always with us, there must be the subordination of everything to our service and work for God.

Aaron; or, the disturbing and tranquilizing influences of life (Biblical Illustrator)

I. The disturbing influences. Physical sufferings, secular anxieties, social grievances, moral remorse, heart bereavements. To the last of these Aaron was now the victim.

1. He has lost two sons. A double trial.
2. He had lost two sons after they had reached maturity.
3. After they had entered upon the most important and honourable office in life. What a disappointment!
4. In the most sudden way.
5. With no hope for their future blessedness. They were struck down by offended justice, without a moment for repentance.

II. The tranquilizing influences of human life. "He held his peace."

1. There are three kinds of calming influences that are resorted to by men under trial--the carnal, the stoical, and the Christian.
2. The last of these is the only true tranquilising force. It contains at least four doctrines that tend to pacify the human spirit under the most trying circumstances of life.

Lesson: The closer a man is to God the stricter the standard he will be judged by God.

Luke writes "the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:48).

Peter adds "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1Pe 4:17).

James warns "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment."

The story of Nadab and Abihu vividly illustrates these NT warnings.

TODAY IN THE WORD - A Far Side cartoon pictures God as a white-bearded old man seated at his computer. On the screen we see a hapless young man walking down the street. A piano is suspended by a rope over his head. God's finger is poised over a button labeled "Smite."

All too often, this caricature is how many people, even including some Christians, picture the judgment of God. But as we see in today's reading, the judgment of God is never arbitrary or cruel, but always just and holy. Aaron's two eldest sons dishonored God and their priestly calling, and were punished by Him with instant death.

Why did Nadab and Abihu's action merit such an extreme penalty? It was not because they made a small mistake about some ritualistic detail, but because they did what they pleased how and when they pleased, publicly defiling the act of worship. Their blatant disobedience in the holiest of places and with the holiest of tasks called for swift and public justice: God had sworn to show Himself to be an utterly pure and holy God. Aaron's silence indicated sad agreement with His justice (Leviticus 10:3).

It may have been that the two men were drunk, which would have made God's follow-up instructions a corrective measure (Leviticus 10:9). Excessive alcohol works against the faculty of reason, underscoring the irrationality of disobeying God.

No doubt Israel was shocked by this event, and the people were allowed to mourn for the two men. Aaron and his two remaining sons, however, were not permitted to participate, because their service before the Lord took precedence over family concerns (Leviticus 10:6, 7).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - As we see from the fate of Nadab and Abihu, disobedience and disrespectful worship are serious business. Ask God to examine your heart on these same questions today. Have you ever entered a worship service with your focus on self, your thoughts distracted, or something else at the top of your priority list? Do you think God was pleased with your worship on that day?

J J Knapp - And Aaron Held His Peace Lev. 10:3

Already in the old dispensation the Lord our God wanted to be sanctified in those who approached Him to serve on the altars. The eyes of all were upon them, and so a heavy responsibility rested upon them as spiritual leaders of the people. The two sons of the High Priest Aaron could not bear the weight of this responsibility. They ignored the Lord's command to fill the censers with the holy fire from the altar of sacrifices, but came with strange fire before the Lord. Then a consuming glow went out from God's countenance. As if hit by lightning they fell down and tumbled into eternity,—an awesome judgement that could not have been avoided lest the whole congregation were spoiled; if the priests desecrated the Name of the Lord, what would the congregation of Israel have done? Aaron saw it, but put his hand upon the mouth, ... Aaron held his peace.

How should we take this quietness of the servant of the Lord?

It was not a quietness because of insensitivity like we sometimes see in gruff natures. Aaron's father-heart, no doubt, suffered bitterly to lose in one day in one moment two sons. A priestly heart like his was tender, it did not harden itself against suffering, but it cringed under the strokes of the rod.

It was also not a quietness of impotence to which a person may come by the conviction that it does not help to resist the Almighty; such a quietness is not an act of faith and it requires no heart that says respectfully amen upon all God's ways, even though these ways are unsearchable and painful for our flesh and heart.

It was rather the peace of quiet surrender, the quietness of a heart that does not murmur when it pleases the Lord to take from us the dearest of what we possess; when He makes it empty and barren in our house and especially in our heart; and when He sends us into life at large as loners, so that we would learn to cleave more and more closely to Him in that loneliness and to experience in this way that His grace is always sufficient.

This was the hardest thing for Aaron.

He saw his sons fall under the avenging righteousness of the Lord, ... and yet, he did not open his mouth and not even a complaint came across his lips. What about us,—when we see our dearest depart in peace because they lay down their tired head in peace upon the promises of the Lord, that in Jesus their sins have been covered and their guilt has been satisfied; would we murmur about the ungrasped disposals of the Lord? Is it not better to bow the head in humble adoration, so that it may also be written in the book of our life: "He sorrowed greatly, yet he held his peace."

James Butler - Sermon Starters - NOBLE ATTITUDE Leviticus 10:3

"Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace." (Leviticus 10:3).

It had been a very bad day for Aaron. His two sons had died because of offering strange fire in the Tabernacle. Sorrow surely gripped his heart when he beheld his boys dead on the Tabernacle floor. Then Moses told Aaron that the judgment emphasized the necessity of coming to God in the right way (his boys did not come the right way and some preachers believe his boys were drunk as the context strongly suggests it). After Moses statement which could be construed as also a rebuke, Aaron "held his peace." This was a very noble reaction, and it showed that Aaron recognized what his sons had done was sin, that the judgment was just and that He should continue to serve God.

FIRST—THE RECOGNITION OF SIN

It is easy to recognize sin in others, but when it comes home to your own family, it is often a different story. We often argue against the facts in order to justify the conduct of our children. Parents are especially this way if their child gets in trouble at school. However, Aaron did not argue with Moses but “held his peace.” He did not argue to justify his boys or discredit their condemnation. He recognized that his two boys, Nadab and Abihu, were wrong that their conduct was indeed sinful in the Tabernacle. In all of this trouble, Aaron did not pervert the standard of right and wrong.

SECOND—THE RESPECT OF THE SENTENCE

The sentence of death upon his two boys was indeed very strong. Many would argue that God was cruel and lacked compassion. But Aaron did not question the sentence. Rather he submitted to it without argument. This is not usual, but it is very commendable. Sin must be duly punished and our courts are failing to do this. The government makes many laws that do more to protect the victim than the criminal. This attitude of leniency is especially strong when a child is punished by the school or society. Folk protest and complain at church if the pastor preaches against sin but at church, they can be very cruel in ousting the pastor and think nothing of their gross hypocrisy.

THIRD—THE REMAINING IN SERVICE

Aaron did not quit, he kept serving the Lord. In spite of his troubles, he did not let grief control his life. He did not become bitter at God and quit because God struck down his boys. He did not heap blame upon God and try to justify his sons before the people. Sometimes God may shake us up a bit in our service for Him. He would remind us to have a holy motivation for our service. He would emphasize that service requires us to be clean and consecrated. Aaron did not let family troubles hinder his service. And Aaron did not complain about the holy regulations of service. We would all serve better if we practiced Aaron’s attitude of “held his peace” during a great crisis.

Leviticus 10:4 Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp."

- **Uzziel:** Ex 6:18,22 Nu 3:19,30 1Ch 6:2
- **carry:** Luke 7:12 Acts 5:6,9,10 8:2
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Mishael... Elzaphan - Why choose the first cousins? Why not Eleazar and Ithamar? Because touching a dead body would make them unclean or defiled (Lev 21:1-note).

Outside of the camp - As this was done with the ashes of sacrificed animals (Lev 6:11-note), so it was done with the remains of these two priests who received God’s wrath.

Outside the camp - several of the following notes discuss this topic (this exact phrase 28x in 27v in NAS) - Ex 29:14; 33:7; Lev 4:12, 21-note; Lev 6:11-note.; Lev 8:17-note.; Lev 9:11; Lev 13:46-note.; Lev 16:27-note (good note by Richard Phillips).; Lev 17:3-note.; Lev 24:14, 23-note.; Nu 5:3-4; 12:14-15; 15:35-36; 19:3, 9; 31:13, 19; Dt 23:10, 12; Josh 6:23; Heb 13:11-note Heb 13:13-note. and "outside the gate" in Heb 13:12-note.

Leon Hyatt -

Verse 4. **And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel, an uncle of Aaron, and he said to them, Come near! Carry your brothers from the face of The Holy [Place] toward the outside of the camp.**

Moses then called on Mishael and Elzaphan to carry out the bodies of Nadab and Abihu. They were cousins to the slain men (Ex. 6:18,22), and thus they were members of the tribe of Levi. This sad duty was a foreshadowing of responsibilities that were later to be assigned to the Levites (Num. 3:5-13). They were commanded to carry the dead bodies, not just outside of The Tabernacle but also outside of the camp. This command showed that Nadab and Abihu’s sin not only made them unworthy of serving as priests but also of belonging to the people of God. They were not truly God’s people because their sin amounted to rejecting Jehovah’s covenant and open rebellion against God. This incident was the first evidence that, even after the renewal of the covenant that followed the rebellion of the Golden Calf (Ex. 34:10-27), not all the Israelites truly

committed themselves to God. It was a sad commentary on how many in Israel only gave lip-service to the covenant, when two out of the first five priests were rebellious and still not truly believing.

In this verse, The Tabernacle is called "The Holy [Place]," one of the nineteen names used for The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 1:1-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading out of The Tent of Meeting and on Lev. 4:6-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading of The Holy [Place]). The Tabernacle was holy because it was set apart to God's service. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Leviticus 10:5 So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said

- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Still in their tunics - The fire did not destroy the tunics, just their life, another clear indicator of the supernatural aspect of this fire of judgment. This aspect also reminds us of the eternal fire of hell (gehenna) which Jesus described as a place "where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED." (Mk 9:46) Henry Morris said "The undying worm indicates never-ending disintegration and the unquenchable fire indicates eternal suffering, however they may be implemented. The contemplation of such a future ought to drive men to "flee from the wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7), but instead it often impels them to even more adamant unbelief. Nevertheless, it was their very Creator Who was here issuing the warning." Elsewhere Jesus described the fire of hell as "eternal." (Mt 18:8, 25:41, cp Jude 1:7).

John Trapp - These were not burnt, as neither were their bodies: the fire, being of a celestial and subtle nature, might pierce their inward parts, not touching their outward; as lightning kills by piercing, not by burning.

Leon Hyatt -

Verse 5. **So they came near and carried them in their coats toward the outside of the camp, according to the word of Moses.**

Nadab and Abihu were carried out of the camp while still dressed in their priestly garments. The priestly garments were to be worn only inside The Tabernacle (Ex. 28:43); however, these garments had been defiled by being worn in unauthorized ceremonies. They had to be discarded, even as the priests had to be cast out. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Leviticus 10:6 Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so that you will not die and that He will not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the LORD has brought about.

- **Uncover:** Lev 13:45 Lev 21:1-15 Ex 33:5 Nu 5:18 Nu 6:6,7 Nu 14:6 Dt 33:9 Jer 7:29 Ezek 24:16,17 Mic 1:16
- **Become wrathful:** Nu 16:22,41-47 Jos 7:1,11 22:18,20 2Sa 24:1,15-17

Then - An **expression of time** which marks sequence of events.

Constable on Eleazar and Ithamar - Eleazar and Ithamar replaced their older brothers, Nadab and Abihu, in a way similar to the way Judah and Levi replaced their older brothers, Reuben and Simeon (Genesis 49:2-7). In both families, Jacob's and Aaron's, the sins of the firstborn and secondborn resulted in God passing over them for blessing. They disqualified themselves from some of the inheritance that could have been theirs had they remained faithful. ([Leviticus 10 Commentary](#))

Do not uncover your heads - This is more literally "let not the hair of your heads hang loose." In Lev 21:10 we read that "the priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, **shall not uncover his head, nor tear his clothes**"

NET Note - "do not let free your heads." Some have taken this to mean, "do not take off your headgear" (cf. NAB, NASB), but it probably also involves leaving one's hair unkempt as a sign of mourning.

Tear your clothes (Lev 21:10) - Tearing or pulling garments apart, often as a sign of mourning (Ge 37:34; Lev 10:6; 21:10; 1Sa 4:12; 2Sa 3:31), repentance (Ge 37:29; Josh. 7:6; 2Chr 34:27; Joel 2:13), or as a response to the rejection of God's plan (Nu 14:6) or (perceived) blasphemy (Mt. 26:65; Mk 14:63; Acts 14:14). ([Rending of Garments - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

See also [Rending of garments - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)

Grief and Mourning - Practices and emotions associated with the experience of the death of a loved one or of another catastrophe or tragedy. When death is mentioned in the Bible, frequently it relates to the experience of the bereaved, who always respond immediately, outwardly, and without reserve. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

So that - This is a **term of purpose or result** (so that, in order that, that, as a result) which is always worthwhile pausing to query.

But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the LORD has brought about- NIV "may mourn for those the Lord has destroyed by fire."

Bewail (01058)(**bakah**) means to weep, bemoan, lament or wail, because of grief, pain, humiliation or even joy (Ge. 42:24; 43:30; Dt 21:13, Joel 1:5). **Bakah** can describe weeping as a response of contrition before the Lord (Dt. 1:45 - but see context as to why they were weeping and why it was too little, too late! = Dt 1:43-44; 2Ki 22:19 = King Josiah after discovery of Book of the Law in the House of God [2Ki 22:8] the reading of which caused Josiah to tear his clothes-2Ki 22:11). Weeping is often mentioned with fasting indicative of mourning (2Sa 12:21, 22 = David at loss of Bathsheba's child). There is a veritable "flood" of tears in Genesis, a reflection of the pathos that accompanied the entry of sin into the perfect creation (cp Ro 5:12). The first Biblical use of **bakah** is when Hagar **wept** for fear her boy (Ishmael) would die (Ge 21:16 - Lxx = **klaio** = weeping, wailing, lamenting). And so we see Abraham mourned and wept at Sarah's passing (Ge 23:2 - Lxx = **pentheo** = loud mourning as an outward expression of sorrow). Esau wept when he realized he had sold his blessing to Jacob (Ge 27:38 Lxx = **klaio**). Jacob wept for Joseph who he thought had died (Ge 37:35). Joseph wept (probably weeping for joy) when he saw his brothers (Ge 42:24, 43:30, 46:29 - Lxx = **klaio**). Even the Egyptians wept for 70 days in mourning Joseph's father's (Jacob's) death! (Ge 50:3 - Lxx = **pentheo**). When Jonathan and David (who had cut a covenant - see **Symbolism of the Covenant between Jonathan and David**) parted company, they wept (1Sa 20:41). After their wives and children were captured by the Amalekites in a raid on Ziklag, David and his men "lifted their voices and **wept (bakah)** until there was no strength in them to **weep (bakah)**." (1Sa 30:4) In Ezekiel 24:16 Ezekiel was instructed by Jehovah NOT to **weep (bakah)** when God took his wife from him. In 2Ki 20:3 Hezekiah was mortally ill and prayed to the Lord with weeping - "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah **wept** bitterly." In response Jehovah said "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you." (2Ki 20:5)

In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" 2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3 "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah **wept** bitterly. 4 And it came about before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, that the word of the LORD **came** to him, saying, 5 "Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 "And I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" (2Ki 20:1-6)

Weeping is also used in somewhat of a **negative** context - For example, Israel wept because they missed the luxuries (meat) from Egypt and questioned even leaving, a weeping which showed they had rejected Jehovah (Nu 11:4, 10, 11:13, 18, 20). The women in apostate Judah were "weeping for [Tammuz](#). (See [Fertility Cults](#))" (see also notes on Ezek 8:14)

In Judges 2 we see **bakah** (Jdg 2:4) used to describe national weeping which occurred when they were made aware of their disobedience to Jehovah and the painful consequences. "The Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to **Bochim** (meaning "the weepers" and derived from **bakah**). And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, 2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' **But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?** 3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them (the Canaanite pagans) out before you; but they shall become [as thorns] in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" 4 And it came about when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and **wept** (Heb = **bakah**; Lxx = **klaio** = weeping, wailing, lamenting)." (**Judges 2 Commentary**)

Jeremiah 50:4 describes **weeping** by Israel in the last days of this present evil age (Notice context = **everlasting covenant** Jer 50:5 - this is the covenant the Deliverer will make with them when He returns - Ro 11:26-27-note) "In those days and at that time," declares the LORD, "the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along **weeping** (Lxx = **klaio** = weeping, wailing, lamenting - cp what happens when Spirit of Grace and supplication is poured on them in Zech 12:10!) as they go, and it will be the LORD their God (the Messiah) they will seek." (Compare **bakah** in Isa 30:19 where we read that the people of

Zion "will weep no longer," surely also pointing to the "golden era" of the Messiah's one thousand year reign.)

When I was a teenager (the 1960's) there was a popular song that quoted Eccl 3:4 "A time to **weep** (Lxx = **klaio**) and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance." (For you nostalgic folks, here it is - [Turn! Turn! Turn!](#) - and it's actually not bad theology either! Boy, how times have "turned, turned, turned!")

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Summary - (1) to weep, bewail, cry, shed tears - (Qal) to weep (in grief, humiliation, or joy), to weep bitterly (with cognate acc.), to weep upon (embrace and weep), to bewail (2) (Piel) participle - lamenting, bewailing

The verb **bakah** refers to the oral and vocal aspects of weeping, a distinction which is made because Orientals generally do not weep quietly, but are inclined to loud weeping and lamenting. In addition, weeping can also refer to the excitement of an individual or to the feeling and anxiety about the future. This weeping can also be in the context of meeting someone never seen before or at least not in a long time. However, **bakah** usually refers to emotional grief, such as mourning over the dead for the purpose of emotion rather than consolation. Weeping can also refer to lament over individual distress, or even a public lament (Jdg 2:4). It can also be used in connection with acts of repentance (, or even out of awe (although the latter is not common in the OT). This root can also refer to cultic wailing over a deity.

John Oswalt - Throughout the OT weeping is the natural and spontaneous expression of strong emotion... The root is used in five different ways. Although weeping is usually associated with distress or sorrow, it is also a sign of joy. Interestingly enough, all occurrences of this usage appear in the Jacob narrative. Jacob wept for joy when he met Rachel after his journey from Canaan (Gen 29:11). So did Jacob and Esau when they met again after the long separation (Gen 33:4). Joseph and Jacob wept with each other when they met in Egypt (Gen 46:29), etc. A much more frequent usage is crying in distress. Thus the baby Moses began to cry in the Pharaoh's daughter's presence (Ex 2:6). Similarly Esau wept in bitterness and frustration at the discovery of Jacob's fraud (Gen 27:38). Job says that he deserves punishment if he has committed any of a number of sins, among which is causing the "furrows of the land" to weep through abuse (Job 31:38). Israel wept because of the threat of the enemy (I Sam 11:4; 30:4; etc.); they wept in the exile (Ps 137:1; cf. Jer 31:15); and the Psalmist wept for those who despised God's law (Ps 119:136). The distress need not be one's own, for weeping may be a sympathetic reaction at the distress of another (cf. Job 2:12; 30:25; Isa 16:9; Jer 48:5; Ezk 27:31).

A specific form of distress is that which is on account of death. The form of the lament is seen clearly in I Sam 1 where David weeps for the slain Saul and Jonathon. The magnanimity of David which is shown in his weeping for Saul is seen again when he weeps for Abner, the enemy general (I Sam 3:32). It is evident at several points that the time of lament was carefully prescribed (Gen 50:4; Deut 34:8; etc.). Professional mourners were called to weep at times of death (II Sam 1:24; Jer 49:3; Ps 78:64; Job 27:15). This served the twofold purpose of insuring that the dead person was mourned properly and also that the mourning did not continue interminably. **This lamentation for the dead formed a specific part of the fertility cult, wherein the dead vegetation god was mourned in the fall of the year.** Numerous references to this rite are found in the Ugaritic literature (e.g. texts 62; 67:VI, and cf. I Kgs 18:26–29 where a similar ritual was evidently performed). Ezekiel was horrified when he discovered that such practices were being carried on within the temple itself (8:14). **Another type of weeping would be that which is associated with pleading or complaint.** Hannah wept with bitter tears as she pleaded with God for a son (1Sa1:7–10). So also, Esther wept before the Persian emperor begging for her people's life (Esther 8:3). Cf. also Hezekiah (2Ki 20:3). This type of weeping can quickly become whining, as witness Samson's wife importuning him for the answer to his riddle (Jud 14:16) and the crying of the Israelites for meat (Nu 11:4–20). The final usage of "weeping" is unique to the OT. It is the weeping of repentance. In other cultures of the ancient near east weeping out of remorse or sorrow for punishment is known, but never sheer sorrow over having offended the deity. Both of these occur in the OT. An example of the former would be found in Jud 21:2 where the Israelites weep because of their folly in decimating Benjamin. On the other hand is the weeping of Josiah at the reading of the Law (II Kgs 22:19), or the weeping of Israel when she returns to her God (Jer 31:9; 50:4). When the Law was read to the returned exiles and they saw how far short they had fallen, they had to be reminded that a holy day was not for mourning (Neh 8:9; cf. also Ezr 10:1; Hos 12:4 [H 5]). Such weeping was that of Peter when he realized how he had denied his Lord (Mt 26:75). It may be said that there is no genuine repentance apart from a bitter sense of sorrow over one's sins, a sorrow so deep that it may quite properly issue in weeping. In the eschaton God will make an end to all weeping (Isa 65:19; cf. 25:8). ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament- R Laird Harris, Gleason L Archer Jr., Bruce K Waltke- excellent resource](#))

See Related Topic - Mourning:

- [Mourn - Easton's Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Mourn - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature - Thorough Article](#)

Bakah in **NAS** - bewail(1), crying(1), mourn(1), sob(1), weep(27), weep not at all(1), weep continually(1), weep... longer(1), weeping(12), weeps bitterly(1), wept(60), wept bitterly(1).

Bakah - 99v (most often in Genesis = 14x, 1/2Samuel = 20x) -

Gen 21:16; 23:2; 27:38; 29:11; 33:4; 37:35; 42:24; 43:30; 45:14f; 46:29; 50:1, 3, 17; Ex 2:6; Lev 10:6; Num 11:4, 10, 13, 18, 20; 14:1; 20:29; 25:6; Deut 1:45; 21:13; 34:8; Jdg 2:4; 11:37f; 14:16f; 20:23, 26; 21:2; Ruth 1:9, 14; 1 Sam 1:7f, 10; 11:4f; 20:41; 24:16; 30:4; 2 Sam 1:12, 24; 3:16, 32, 34; 12:21f; 13:36; 15:23, 30; 18:33; 19:1; 2 Kgs 8:11f; 13:14; 20:3; 22:19; 2 Chr 34:27; Ezra 3:12; 10:1; Neh 1:4; 8:9; Esth 8:3; Job 2:12; 27:15; 30:25, 31; 31:38; Ps 69:10; 78:64; 126:6; 137:1; Eccl 3:4; Isa 16:9; 30:19; 33:7; 38:3; Jer 9:1; 13:17; 22:10; 41:6; 48:32; 50:4; Lam 1:2, 16; Ezek 8:14; 24:16, 23; 27:31; Hos 12:4; Joel 1:5; 2:17; Mic 1:10; Zech 7:3

Lesson - The disciple of Christ who says he loves God must keep His commandments (Jn 14:15) and at times must put allegiance to Christ before family obligations (Lev 10:6–7). Jesus our Great High Priest said

And another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus *said to him, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead. (Mt 8:21-22)

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Mt 10:37)

Leon Hyatt - The loyalty of the other priests in the face of the tragedy (Lev 10:6-7)

Verse 6. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleasar and to Ithamar, his sons, You must not loosen [the hair of] your heads, and you must not tear your clothes; then you will not die, and He will not be angry toward all the congregation. And your brothers, all the house of Israel, will mourn the incineration that Jehovah kindled.

And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, "You must not loosen [the hair of] your heads, and you must not tear your clothes; then you will not die. Moses urged Aaron and his two remaining sons not to leave their duties in The Tabernacle to participate in the ceremonies of mourning and of the funeral for Nadab and Abihu. They were not to go out of The Tabernacle, or to tear their garments for sorrow, or even to dishevel their hair. Moses gave this command, not because it would have been wrong to mourn for men who had rebelled or because expressing sorrow would have shown dissatisfaction with God's judgment, as Keil suggested. It was because they were in the midst of completing the offerings that God had commanded (see comments on Lev. 10:12-20-note in [MESSAGE 13](#)), a task too important to leave for any purpose. Service to God at the altar took precedence over everything else, even over mourning for loved ones (see comments on Lev. 21:1-4,10-12-note) in [MESSAGE 25](#)). A priest had to put Jehovah first above everything else, or he was not worthy of his holy calling. It was especially important for the new priests to demonstrate that kind of loyalty at a time when two priests had already rebelled. Therefore, Moses told them to remain at the job or die (see Introduction to Chapter 20 and comments on Lev. 20:2-note in [MESSAGE 24](#)),

and He will not be angry toward all the congregation. Moses also told them that failure to remain loyal to their holy duties would bring wrath on the whole congregation. This statement did not mean that the people would be punished for the sins of the priests but that, if the remaining priests rebelled, the people could not remain loyal. They too would desert and be destroyed by God's wrath.

And your brothers, all the house of Israel, will mourn the incineration that Jehovah kindled Moses told Aaron and his sons to let the people do the mourning for them. The mourning of the people was approved, not because they were less dedicated to God and, therefore, could mourn for sinful men without being punished, as Keil suggested. It was because they could do so without deserting a duty to God.

All the Israelites were called "brothers" to Aaron and his sons. This family spirit was most comforting to them in their sorrow. It was a deep satisfaction for them to know that their loved ones were being honorably mourned by their brothers, even in spite of what the sons had done. This knowledge helped them pass the test of loyalty and complete the holy task that was theirs.

The word translated "**incineration**" is a noun related to the verb used in Leviticus 4:12, which refers to fire that either strengthens or destroys but does not totally consume (see comments on Lev. 4:12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading And he shall incinerate it). Jehovah's fire had killed Nadab and Abihu, but it had not consumed them. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Leviticus 10:7 "You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the LORD'S anointing oil is upon you." So they did according to the word of Moses.

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- **shall:** Lev 21:12 Mt 8:21,22 Luke 9:60
 - **anointing:** Lev 8:12,30 Ex 28:41 30:30 40:13-15 Acts 10:38 2Co 1:21
 - [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Lev 21:10 'And the priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his clothes; 11 nor shall he approach any dead person, nor defile himself [even] for his father or his mother; 12 **nor shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him:** I am the LORD.

You shall not even go out - The point is that their mission was to minister in the Tent of Meeting, and they were not to be side-tracked even by this tragic loss. He does not say they cannot grieve, but because (notice the "for" which is a **term of explanation**) they had "**the LORD's anointing oil**" they should be about the Lord's business of priestly ministry to which they had just been ordained seven plus days prior.

Keil and Delitzsch remarks that "They were not to go away from the door (the entrance or court of the tabernacle) to take part in the burial of the dead, lest they should die, for the anointing oil of Jehovah was upon them. The anointing oil was the symbol of the Spirit of God, which is a Spirit of life, and therefore has nothing in common with death, but rather conquers death, and sin, which is the source of death (cf. Leviticus 21:12)." ([Leviticus 10 Commentary](#))

New Testament parallel for the LORD's **anointing oil** on them. Believers have been anointed with the Holy Spirit (but we are to **'go out'** and spread the good news of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit!)

1Jn 2:20, 27-**note** But you have an **anointing (chrisma)** from the Holy One, and you all know. 27 And as for you, the **anointing** which you received from Him abides in you (**Note:** This refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, Who enables us to discern truth from error), and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His **anointing** teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

2Cor 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and **anointed** us is God

So they did according to the Word of Moses - Would it be true that all God's priests would obey without hesitation or procrastination (I'm applying this especially to all of us NT believer priests!) Given the severity of the punishment, they could have reasoned "This job is not for me! It is way too dangerous!" But they remained steadfast, immovable, abiding, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their toil for His Name's sake would not be in vain. (cp 1Cor 15:58-**note**).

Leon Hyatt - The loyalty of the other priests in the face of the tragedy (Lev 10:6-7)

Verse 7. And do not go out from the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the oil of the anointing of Jehovah [is] on you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

And do not go out from the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the oil of the anointing of Jehovah [is] on you. Moses warned them not to depart from The Tabernacle because the anointing oil was on them, which set them apart to God's service, and that responsibility had to come ahead of everything else. They were in the midst of ceremonies that were their first responsibility, and it was urgent that they not desert that responsibility. If they left the holy ceremonies, they would show that their service to God was not first in their lives; and they would die. And they did according to the word of Moses. Moses, Ithamar, and Abiathar did as Moses commanded them and proved that loyalty to God was first in their lives, even above their family.

Application Absolute loyalty to God is a necessity for Christian ministers. They must put God above all other interests and responsibilities. To put Him first, they must obey His commands completely. They must not allow the privilege of handling holy objects to lead them to believe they can handle those holy articles according to their own ideas. They have no more right to tamper with baptism or the Lord's Supper than Aaron's sons had the right to tamper with the fire-offerings. They must take care to see that familiarity with holy responsibilities does not breed in them contempt for those holy duties. They must take care to avoid getting so accustomed to their holy obligations so that they begin to take a light and frivolous attitude toward them. Leadership in worship must not become a mere habit or a commonplace task. They must always consider holy service to God to be an awesome and thrilling challenge. They must keep their service to God fresh and exciting, by being sure that every responsibility to God is bathed in a continually renewing experience with God Himself.

Family responsibilities, and especially death in the family, will at some time or other severely test the loyalty of every minister; but he will serve his family best if he will put God first at all times. If he fails to do so, he may not lose his life as Nadab and Abihu did; but he will surely lose his power, his influence, and perhaps his position in the ministry. If he succeeds in putting God first in all things, God will comfort him in sorrow and strengthen him in service. In recent years, a high sounding but mistaken piece of advice has often been given to ministers. In overzealous desire to encourage ministers not to neglect their families, ministers have been told, "Put your family first. Too many ministers have neglected their families and lost their children. To honor your family and save your children, your family must come ahead of your ministry." The truth is that a minister's family is a part of his ministry. He must lead and serve his family not because they are first but because that responsibility is part of His service to God. They will not be first, but neither will God let him neglect them. When I proposed to my wife and she accepted, we talked for a time about our hope for our life together. Among many other statements, I said to her, "I feel guilty is asking you to marry me, because you will never be first in my life." She said, "If you put God first, I know you will treat me better than any other man in the world who would put me first." To date, that approach has produced 59 wonderful years of togetherness in ministry. I believe it is Scriptural, and I heartily commend it. ([Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#))

Leviticus 10:8 The LORD then spoke to Aaron, saying,

- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Note that here Jehovah does not go through Moses to give the instructions, but speaks directly to the consecrated high priest Aaron. Of the 36 times we encounter the phrase "The LORD (then) spoke" every one is to Moses with the exception of this time!

Stedman - Leviticus is the book of the priesthood. God is teaching us by means of these types, these pictures and shadows of the Old Testament, what our priesthood means for us today. You remember that in our last study we looked at the opening part of Chapter 10 and saw that this priesthood is no joke, that God takes it very seriously. He has given us careful instructions as to how to live and act as priests. He especially wants us to avoid the things that he says are dangerous. This is what is brought out so clearly in the story of Nadab and Abihu, the two older sons of Aaron, who carelessly assumed that as priests they could do whatever they wanted to do, that since they were priests they could interject their own ideas of how a priest ought to function. And when they did this, we are told, there flashed forth out of that cloud of Shekinah glory which was the symbol of the presence of God a flame of fire which consumed them in their tracks and destroyed them, and thus they died suddenly before God in the sanctuary. This stunned and sobered the people of Israel. It was God's way of impressing upon them the fact that the priesthood is extremely important. I wonder if we, here today, have any idea at all of how terribly important this priesthood is which God has committed to us as believers. This world is going through terrible struggle and is in a critical state, as we well know. I don't have to describe it to you. You know how confused and horribly broken it is. And the reason that we are going through such desperate conditions, and that society is literally falling apart at the seams, is the lack of a priesthood. The church has not been what it ought to be. Individual Christians have neglected this priesthood which is committed to them. As a result there has been no salt with savor in society and so it is corrupting at a fearful rate. ([Ray C. Stedman's Expository Studies](#))

Leon Hyatt - DRINKING OF WINE AND OTHER INTOXICATING BEVERAGES FORBIDDEN TO PRIESTS ON DUTY Leviticus 10:8-11

Introduction - Jehovah spoke this message directly to Aaron. He did not speak it to Moses with instructions that Moses tell it to Aaron and his sons, as he had in previous messages (Lev. 6:9,20,25). Probably Jehovah spoke directly to Aaron as he remained behind in The Holy [Place] while Moses and the rest of the people went out to bury Nadab and Abihu. It was a comfort to him to hear the voice of Jehovah while he and his sons remained behind alone. God had not turned His back on them or deserted them. However, the message was not one of comfort. It was a message of warning. It was a command to the priests not to drink wine or other intoxicating beverages while on duty. The question arises as to whether drinking may have been involved in the sin of Nadab and Abihu. If they had been drinking, it could explain their frivolous attitude and their unauthorized offering. However, the Scripture does not state that they had been drinking; and we should not be too quick to add that accusation to the sin the Scripture records. Perhaps Jehovah gave Aaron this warning simply because drinking of intoxicating beverages was one evil that could lead a priest to commit a sin similar to Nadab and Abihu's. So, whether or not Nadab and Abihu had been under the influence of liquor, the warning in this message was appropriate for the occasion.

Verse 8. Then Jehovah spoke to Aaron, saying,

These words are the familiar words used to introduce a new message from Jehovah; however, they were addressed to Aaron instead of to Moses. Jehovah was able and willing to speak directly to Aaron or others when it was appropriate, even though ordinarily He gave His messages through Moses, because the people had requested it. (Ex. 20:18-20). ([Leviticus 16 - Message 12 - Lev. 10:8-11](#))

Leviticus 10:9 "Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die--it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations--"

- **Do not drink wine:** Nu 6:3,20 Pr 31:4,5 Isa 28:7 Jer 35:5,6 Eze 44:21 Luke 1:15 Eph 5:18 1Ti 3:3,8 5:23 Titus 1:7
- **Perpetual:** Lev 3:17
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Strong drink (07941) (**shekar** from **shakar** which means become tipsy) refers to an intoxicating drink, thought to be some type of beer. It is any drink made of fruit or grain which is potentially intoxicating, when drunk in excess.

Shekar - 20x in OT - Lev 10:9; Nu 6:3; 28:7; Dt 14:26; 29:6; Jdg 13:4, 7, 14; 1Sa 1:15; Ps 69:12; Pr 20:1; 31:4, 6; Isa 5:11, 22; 24:9; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12; Mic 2:11. **Translated in NAS** as drink(2), drink of strong(1), drink or strong(1), drunkards*(1), liquor(1), strong(2), strong drink(18).

So that - Learn to pause and ponder this **term of purpose or result** .

Perpetual statute (NAB "a perpetual ordinance"; NRSV "a statute forever"; NLT "a permanent law.")

NET Note: it was a "perpetual statute" to not drink alcoholic beverages when ministering in the tabernacle, but it was also a "perpetual statute" to distinguish between holy and profane and unclean and clean (v. 10) as well as to teach the children of Israel all such statutes (Lev 10:11).

Lesson: We are all priests and so like Aaronic priests, we all should be temperate. This charge is especially important for those who are leaders (1Ti 3:3, 8).

Maclaren - Nothing has more power to blur the sharpness of moral and religious insight than even a small amount of alcohol. God must be worshipped with clear brain and naturally beating heart. Not the fumes of wine, in which there lurks almost necessarily the tendency to 'excess,' but the being 'filled with the Spirit' supplies the only legitimate stimulus to devotion. Besides the personal reason for abstinence, there was another, -namely, that only so could the priests teach the people 'the statutes' of Jehovah. Lips stained from the wine-cup would not be fit to speak holy words. Words spoken by such would carry no power. God's servants can never impress on the sluggish conscience of society their solemn messages from God, unless they are conspicuously free from self-indulgence, and show by their example the gulf, wide as between heaven and hell, which parts cleanness from uncleanness. Our lives must witness to the eternal distinction between good and evil, if we are to draw men to 'abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.' ([Leviticus 10 Exposition](#))

Leon Hyatt - Verse 9. You must not drink wine or strong drink, you and your sons with you, when going to The Tent of Meeting, and you will not die. [This is] a statute [for] an age into your generations.

You must not drink. This command is not an imperative but an imperfect that should be understood as a subjunctive. It should be translated, "You must not drink." It was not a command, but it was an obligation. It would bring tragic consequences if they disregarded it.

wine or strong drink. The word translated "wine" means fermented wine. The Hebrews had another word for "new wine" or the fresh juice of the grape. To the Hebrews, the word "wine" usually connoted a drink of very light alcoholic content, since they were accustomed to drinking wine diluted with water. Their purpose was as much to make the water safe from causing illness as it was to provide a beverage. On the other hand, the word translated "strong drink" means any drink that intoxicates. It includes strong wines and other intoxicating beverages besides wine. Both words were used in this verse to indicate that all form of alcoholic beverages were forbidden to priests while they were performing their holy duties, from wines with the smallest alcoholic content to beverages with the highest alcohol content.

you and your sons with you. Though the message was spoken to Aaron, the prohibition applied to ordinary

priests as well as the high priest.

when going to The Tent of Meeting. The verb form in this clause is an infinitive and can most literally be translated into English as “in your going.” The preposition following the infinitive strictly means “toward.” It can be understood to mean “when you go into,” but its strictest meaning is “when you go toward.” The literal meaning best describes what Jehovah intended. The priests were forbidden to drink intoxicating beverages, not only after they entered The Tabernacle complex, but also when they prepared to go to The Tabernacle to serve in their official capacity. They were not to be under the influence of alcohol at all when serving at The Tabernacle.

and you will not die. Obeying this command would assure that they would not die for performing their duties incorrectly, but that assurance definitely implies that they would die if they disobeyed the command. The same stern penalty would result from disobedience to this command as from any other deviation from the instructions of Jehovah to the priests (see comments on Lev. 8:35-note in [MESSAGE 10](#) under the heading And you will not die, and on Lev. 10:2-note in [MESSAGE 11](#); see also Lev. 20:2-note and Introduction to Chap. 20 in [MESSAGE 24](#)). Any deliberate deviation was rebellion, deserving of death.

[This is] a statute [for] an age into your generations. This prohibition was not only for Aaron and his sons but also for all the priests of the future, as long as the Aaronic priesthood lasted. The words translated “statute [for] an age” are the same words that are found in Lev. 3:17-note (see comments on that verse in [MESSAGE 1](#)). ([Leviticus 16 - Message 12 - Lev. 10:8-11](#))

Leviticus 10:10 and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean

- Lev 11:47 20:25,26 Jer 15:19 Eze 22:26 44:23 Tit 1:15 1Pe 1:14-16

So as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane - This is another way of saying in essence the priests (and us as NT priests) are to be holy as God is holy.

Leon Hyatt - Verse 10. Both to make a distinction between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the clean.

Both to make a distinction between. Jehovah gave Aaron two reasons for the prohibition against drinking intoxicating beverages. The first was to enable the priests to make the spiritual and moral distinctions that are important in the worship of Jehovah. A priest needed his mental faculties at their peak of perfection when he served Jehovah. He could not afford to dull them with even the smallest amount of an intoxicating beverage. Jehovah mentioned two kinds of distinctions that were important to a priest. Those distinctions were between holy and common and between clean and unclean.

the holy and the common. The meaning of the word translated “holy” has been discussed in Lev. 2:3-note (see comments on that verse in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses). It means any person or object devoted to God. This statement contains the first occurrence of the word translated “common,” though the verb related to it was used in Genesis 49:4 and in Exodus 20:25; 31:14. The word in this verse is a noun and refers to objects and persons who were not set apart to the Jehovah’s service. The translation “common” or “secular” is nearer to its meaning than “unholy.” “Secular” actions or objects were not necessarily evil. They simply were not “holy” in the sense of being set aside to Jehovah’s service.¹ The priests were not to cloud their minds with alcohol, so that they could clearly distinguish between objects and persons who were set apart to Jehovah’s service and those who were not.

and between the unclean and the clean. . “Unclean” persons, objects, or conditions were symbols of sins. Contact with them made a person ceremonially unclean (concerning the concept of “cleanness,” see comments on Leviticus 4:12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading he shall take out to the outside of the camp to a clean place and on Leviticus 6:11-note in [MESSAGE 5](#); concerning the concept of “uncleanness,” see comments on Leviticus 5:2 in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading that it was unclean, on Leviticus 5:3-note in [MESSAGE 2](#), and on Leviticus 7:19-21-note in [MESSAGE 7](#)). The purpose of the symbolism of clean and unclean in objects and persons was to teach the Israelites that contact with sinful person or deeds contaminated and damaged a person morally. “Clean” and

¹ In this verse, ASV, RSV, and HCSB translate the word as “common”; SGV, NASB, NEB, JB as “profane”;

DRV as “unholy”; LB as “ordinary”; and ABV as “common [or] unholy.”

“unclean” were symbols of moral concepts, in distinction to “holy” and “common,” which were spiritual concepts themselves. It was important for Israel’s religious leaders to be able to make clear distinctions in both realms if they were to be true servants of Jehovah. Even the smallest amount of alcohol that might dull the ability of a priest to make clear moral and spiritual judgments was dangerous and deadly in the lives of men who led Israel morally and spiritually. It was not only dangerous for their clear understanding of spiritual matters. It was also dangerous for all Israel because the priests taught Israel and set an example before them. If the priests went astray in their understanding of spiritual matters, the whole nation in time would also go astray. ([Leviticus 16 - Message 12 - Lev. 10:8-11](#))

OUR DAILY BREAD - (Lev 10:8-11, 1Cor 2:13-16) - **Dirty Laundry** - Whenever my husband and I leave the house, our dog Maggie goes sniffing for old shoes and dirty laundry. She surrounds herself with what she finds and then sleeps with it near her nose. The familiar smells comfort her until we return. Of course Maggie doesn’t realize she’s following a Levitical command to “distinguish between ... unclean and clean” (Leviticus 10:10). Nor does she know she’s violating it.

In a world still swirling in sin long after its catastrophic collision with evil, God commanded His followers to live holy lives (Leviticus 11:45). Distinguishing between clean and unclean is essential to that task.

Such discernment requires more than finely tuned physical senses. The apostle Paul wrote that the “natural man”—that is, a human being in his sinful state—“does not receive the things of the Spirit of God ... ; they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). It is the Holy Spirit who provides this wisdom (1Cor 2:13).

Just as Maggie finds comfort in old shoes and socks, many people seek comfort in old dirty sins. We must be mindful that our comfort and consolation come from God, who loves us and who establishes us in “every good word and work” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. -Orr
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**There is no true happiness apart from holiness,
and no holiness apart from Christ.**

Leviticus 10:11 and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses!

- Dt 24:8 33:10 2Ch 17:9 30:22 Ne 8:2,8 9:13,14 Jer 2:8 18:18 Mal 2:7 Mt 28:20 Ac 20:27 1Th 4:2
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

And so to teach - What were they to teach? Yes, all the statutes, but in context the distinction between holy and unholy (profane), clean and unclean. It was essential that alcohol not hinder the clarity of their minds, since the priests were to teach God’s law to all of Israel. They were the expositors of the Scripture (cf Dt. 33:10; Mal. 2:7), along with the prophets who generally received the Word directly from the Lord. Ezra would become the supreme example of a commendable priest who taught God’s “statutes and ordinances in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10).

Disciple Study Bible - Priests were to make God’s will known through the teaching of the laws God had spoken through Moses. Aaron and his sons were told not to drink wine or strong drink when they were to enter the tabernacle to perform their priestly services, in order to be able to discern between the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean. This also is an obvious word of moral guidance for all who serve God today. Those who serve God always should be at their best. See Ex 28:29-30.

Leon Hyatt - Verse 11. **And to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes that Jehovah has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.**

A second purpose for the prohibition against drinking alcoholic beverages was to enable the priests to clearly teach the people the commandments of Jehovah. The word translated “statutes” is the same word used in

Leviticus 6:18-note (see comments on that verse in [MESSAGE 5](#) under the heading [It is] a statute [for] and age through your generations concerning Jehovah's fire- offerings). This verse shows that the priests were to be more than leaders of ceremonies at The Tabernacle. They were to be responsible for teaching the people to understand the ceremonies, but their teaching responsibilities went far beyond teaching the meaning of the ceremonies. They also were responsible for teaching the Israelites the great spiritual and moral truths that Jehovah revealed to the Israelites for all the world. Teaching the pure truths of God is impossible to a mind clouded with alcohol. Since the priests were commanded not to drink intoxicating beverages when going toward The Tabernacle, it follows that this verse contemplates that teaching the people was an activity that would be done in or at The Tabernacle. No doubt, The Tabernacle was an adequate place for teaching under the circumstances of the wilderness. When the Israelites later settled in the Land, the priests spread across the Land with the people. Teaching was done in all the villages and towns. Under those conditions, priests were to understand not to drink intoxicating beverages when engaged in teaching anywhere. The priests were to totally avoid drinking intoxicating beverages when serving in the duties to which Jehovah had called them.

Application - A Christian minister is always on duty. His every action and word is an example that either teaches truth about God or misinterprets God and His truth. Every move that he makes either points people to God or away from God. A minister must be at his spiritual and moral best all the time. Since modern scientific tests have shown that the first effects of alcohol are on the center of judgment in the brain, a minister cannot afford to dull his spiritual and moral judgment with alcohol at any time, even to the smallest extent. When a minister does dull his spiritual and moral insight through imbibing alcohol, he is in great danger of teaching erroneous insights to others. The result is that God's people are led to darkness and defeat.

In addition, abstinence from all alcoholic beverages is a necessity not only for Christian ministers but also for all Christians. All Christians are representatives of Christ every hour of every day. We must be at our spiritual and moral best all of the time. We cannot be at our best with their minds clouded with even the smallest amount of alcohol. Total abstinence is the only acceptable course of action for a Christian who wants to be faithful to his high calling to be a servant of and witness to Jesus the Christ. This principle applies not only to alcoholic beverages but also to mind-changing drugs. ([Leviticus 16 - Message 12 - Lev. 10:8-11](#))

Leviticus 10:12 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering that is left over from the LORD'S offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy.

- **Take:** Lev 2:1-16 Lev 6:15-18 Lev 7:9 Lev 21:22 Ex 29:2 Nu 18:9,10 Eze 44:29
- **for it is most holy:** Lev 21:22
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Grain (meat - KJV) offering - (sweet aroma, voluntary, accompanied burnt offerings) Recall that the grain offering was the only Levitical offering which was not a blood sacrifice (except the sin offering for the extremely poor, Lev 5:11-13) and was brought to show thanksgiving to God. The **Grain offering** normally accompanied the **burnt offering**, which involved the shedding of blood (Ex. 29:39, 40; Nu 28; 29).

Grain offering ([04503](#))(minchah - word study)

Criswell - Three types of grain offerings are specified: (1) fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense (Lev 2:1, 2); (2) cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and baked in an oven (v. 4), on a griddle (v. 5), or in a covered pan (Lev 2:7); and (3) fresh heads of roasted grain mixed with oil and frankincense (Lev 2:14, 15). The fine flour, coupled with the absence of leaven, foreshadowed the perfect humanity of Christ. The oil is emblematic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4:18). The frankincense added a special fragrance to the memorial part of the offering burned on the altar (cf. Ex. 30:34-38). (Believer's Study Bible)

C I Scofield on Leaven - It was common practice to retain a lump of leavened or fermented dough from a former baking and use it to leaven new dough. Under the Mosaic law, however, yeast was forbidden in bread used in the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover (Ex 12:8,15-20; Lev 23:6 - 8), and similar exclusion of yeast applied to offerings placed on the altar (Ex 23:18; 34:25; Lev 2:11; 6:17). The only exceptions were the use of yeast in the **two wave loaves offered as firstfruits** (Lev 23:17) and **some of the cakes of bread offered with the fellowship offerings** (Lev 7:13). Yeast, which brings about fermentation, is uniformly regarded in Scripture as typifying the presence of impurity or evil (Ex 12:15,19; 13:7; Lev 2:11; Deut 16:4; Mat 16:6,12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor 5:6-9; Gal 5:9). The two wave loaves, representing Israel and the Gentiles as forming the Church, contained yeast in recognition of imperfections in the believers (see Lev 23:17). The use of yeast in the flour seems intended likewise to represent evil within the

kingdom of heaven. The teaching that yeast in this parable represents the beneficent influence of the Gospel pervading the world has no Scriptural justification. Nowhere in Scripture does yeast represent good; the idea of a converted world at the end of the age is contradicted by the presence of weeds among the wheat and bad fish among the good in the kingdom itself. Although Biblical truth has a beneficial moral influence on the world, the mingling of yeast is not the method of divine salvation or enlargement of the kingdom. Weeds never become wheat. The parable is, therefore, a warning that true doctrine, represented by the flour, would be corrupted by false doctrine (cp. 1Ti 4:1-3; 2Ti 2:17-18; 4:3 - 4; 2Pet 2:1-3). Summary: (1) Yeast, as a symbolic or typical substance, is always mentioned in the OT in an evil sense (Gen 19:3). (2) The use of the word in the NT explains its symbolic meaning. It is "malice and wickedness" as contrasted with "sincerity and truth" (1Cor 5:6 - 8). It is evil doctrine (Mt 16:12) in its threefold form of Pharisaism, Sadduceism, and Herodianism (Mt 16:6; Mk 8:15). The yeast of the Pharisees was externalism in religion (Mt 23:14 - 16,23 - 28); of the Sadducees, skepticism as to the supernatural and as to the Scriptures (Mat 22:23,29); of the Herodians, worldliness - a Herod party among the Jews (Mt 22:16 - 21; Mark 3:6). And (3) the use of the word in Mt 13:33 is congruous with its meaning elsewhere in the Scriptures, as denoted in the paragraphs above.

Leon Hyatt - THE DEVIATION OF AARON, ELEAZAR, AND ITHAMAR EXCUSED Leviticus 10:12-20

Introduction - The events of these verses occurred when Moses and other family members returned from mourning over Nadab and Abihu. It was the custom in those days to bury deceased people almost immediately after their deaths, because of the rapidity with which bodies began to decay in the warm climate. As soon as Moses returned, he instructed Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu to complete their part of the offerings that had been offered by the people just before Nadab and Abihu sinned. The fat of the offerings had already been placed on the altar for roasting (Lev. 9:19-20), but the priests had not eaten their portions of those offerings.

The message came as a response to a deviation that Aaron and his two remaining sons had already committed from the prescribed ceremony of the sin-offering while Moses was away at the funeral. Moses was deeply disturbed by their deviation, because Nadab and Abihu had already suffered so severely for offering an unauthorized offering. However, Aaron's response to Moses' concern led both Moses to agree that Jehovah would excuse the deviation because of the circumstances of that day. Jehovah showed His agreement by not killing Eleazar and Ithamar as He had Nadab and Abihu. The difference in the way the two situations were handled shows that certain circumstances could allow for a departure from the strict fulfillment of every detail of the offering ceremonies. The difference between the sin of Nadab and Abihu and the deviation of Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar was the intent of their hearts. Nadab and Abihu were disrespectful and frivolous in their attitude. Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar were respectful and earnest and had a serious reason for their action. The lesson was that the Lord would overlook small departures from the prescribed ceremonies if the heart of the worshiper was right. The reason Jehovah could forgive departures from His instructions if the worshiper's heart was right was that the purpose of the offerings was to express what was in the heart. They were not performed for their own sakes alone, but to express the heart of the worshiper. Therefore, if the worshiper's heart was right, a reasonable deviation from the prescribed ceremony could be excused.

This message was not given by a voice from The Tabernacle. It came through an interpretation made by Aaron and accepted by Moses. It should be understood, however, as a message from Jehovah, which Jehovah communicated through the discernment of His spokesman. This message as well as [MESSAGE 11](#) and [MESSAGE 12](#) illustrate that God has different ways of revealing His truth at different times. He is not bound by any certain method or routine. He adjusts His methods, but not His message, to the circumstances and the needs.

As mentioned in INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS under the heading Theme and in Introduction to MESSAGES 10, 11, 12, 13, these messages were all given on the same day (see also comments on Lev. 10:12 below). This message not only completes the messages for that day but also completes the section of the book that deals with message related to the hallowing of the priests and The Tabernacle. The next section (Lev. 11-15) deals with another important aspect of the religious systems of Israel--the concepts of clean and unclean persons, objects, and conditions.

This message can be outlined as follows:

- a. Moses instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to complete the offerings
- b. Moses discovered their deviation
- c. Moses accepted Aaron's explanation

Interpretation - Moses instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to complete the complete the offerings that had been begun before Nadab and Abihu's sin (Lev 10:12-16)

Verse 12. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, Take the homage-offering that is left from the fire-offerings to Jehovah, and eat it unleavened beside the altar; for it [is] a holiness of holinesses.

And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, Take the homage-offering that is left from the fire-offerings to Jehovah. When Moses returned from the burial of Nadab and Abihu, he instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to complete the ceremony of the fire-offerings that had been begun before the tragedy struck. The portion of the offerings that had not been completed was eating the portions of the flesh and of the bread that belonged to the priests.

Moses first instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to eat the portion of the homage-offering of the congregation that was left after Jehovah's representative portion had been roasted on the altar (see comments on Lev. 9:17-note in [MESSAGE 10](#)). This homage-offering was described in Leviticus. 9:4, and its form identified it as one that accompanied a slaughter-offering of thanksgiving (see comments on that verse in MESSAGE 10). Slaughter-offerings of thanksgiving had to be eaten on the day of the offering (see comments on Lev. 7:15-note in [MESSAGE 7](#)). Since the homage-offering of thanksgiving had been begun before Nadab and Abihu's offense and Moses was just back from their burial, these instructions to Aaron and his sons were given on the same day as their offense and their burial. The completion of the ceremonies had to be carried out quickly.

That day had begun with the hallowing of the priests (Lev. 8:1-36-note; [MESSAGE 10](#)). It continued with the first offerings over which the new priests officiated (Lev. 9:1-21-note; [MESSAGE 10](#)), the blessing of the people by the new priests (Lev. 9:22-23a-note; [MESSAGE 10](#)), and the appearance of the Glory of Jehovah (Lev. 9:23b-24; [MESSAGE 10](#)). Sadly, immediately afterward Nadab and Abihu had committed their great offense, were struck dead, and buried immediately (Lev. 10:1-7-note; [MESSAGE 11](#)). While Moses and the Israelites buried Nadab and Abihu, Aaron and his two remaining sons remained at their posts of duty, and Jehovah gave Aaron the message about avoiding drinking alcoholic beverages (Lev. 10:8-11-note; [MESSAGE 12](#)). Immediately after returning from the burial, Moses gave Moses and his sons the instructions that are contained in this message. Thus, [MESSAGE 10](#), [MESSAGE 11](#), [MESSAGE 12](#), and 13 were all delivered on the same day. It was an eventful day indeed. Not much time was left for eating the priests' portions of the fire-offerings that had been offered before the funeral.

and eat it unleavened beside the altar. The major portion of homage-offerings belonged to the priests after a representative portion was offered to Jehovah on the altar. Homage-offerings were to be eaten unleavened, and they were to be eaten only by the priests and only near the altar in The Holy Place (see comments on Lev. 6:14-16-note in [MESSAGE 5](#)).

for it [is] a holiness of holinesses. The portions of the homage-offering that belonged to the priests were considered to be objects of special holiness. They had a holiness above other holy objects. Such an object was called "a holiness of holinesses" (see comments on Lev. 2:3-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses and on Lev. 6:17 in [MESSAGE 5](#)). The special holiness of the priests' portion of the homage-offering made the completion of this offering especially urgent.. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:13 "You shall eat it, moreover, in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due out of the LORD'S offerings by fire; for thus I have been commanded.

- **shall:** Nu 18:10
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

It is your due -

Lev 2:3 'And the remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire.

Lev 6:16 'And what is left of it Aaron and his sons are to eat. It shall be eaten as unleavened cakes in a holy place; they are to eat it in the court of the tent of meeting.

Leon Hyatt - 13 And you shall eat it in The Holy Place, because it is your assigned portion and your sons' assigned portion

from the fire-offerings of Jehovah, for thus I have commanded.

And you shall eat it in The Holy Place because it is your prescribed part and your sons' prescribed part from the fire-offerings of Jehovah. This statement lays additional stress on the place where the homage-offering was to be eaten and who was to eat it. Because of the special holiness of the portions of the homage-offering that belonged to the priests, they were to be eaten only in The Holy Place, which means in the courtyard of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 6:16-note in [MESSAGE 5](#) under the heading The Holy Place; concerning the meaning of "fire-offerings," see comments on Lev. 1:9-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading a fire-offering).

for thus I have commanded. Moses' instructions to Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to eat the homage-offering beside the altar were drawn from revelations Jehovah had already given to him in Leviticus 6:14-16-note (see comments on those verses in [MESSAGE 5](#)). Moses was simply instructing them to finish the homage-offering in the manner Jehovah had already commanded. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:14 "The breast of the wave offering, however, and the thigh of the offering you may eat in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for they have been given as your due and your sons' due out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the sons of Israel.

- Lev 7:29-34 Lev 9:21 Ex 29:24-28 Nu 18:11 John 4:34
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Wave offering ([08573](#))(tenupah - word study)

NET Note on wave offering - The "wave offering" is **tenupah**... In Lev 23:15, 17, 20 this seems to be a sacrificial gesture of things that are for the priests – but they present them first to Yahweh and then receive them back from Him. So the **waving** is not side to side, but forward to Yahweh and then back to the priest.

Smith's Dictionary - This rite, together with that of "heaving" or "raising" the offering was an inseparable accompaniment of peace offerings. In such the right shoulder, considered the choicest part of the victim, was to be ("heaved," and viewed as holy to the Lord, only eaten therefore by the priest: the breast was to be "waved," and eaten by the worshipper. The scriptural notices of these rites are to be found in (Exodus 29:24,28; Leviticus 7:30,34; 8:27; 9:21; 10:14,15; 23:10,15,20; Numbers 6:20; 18:11,18,26-29) etc. In conjecturing the meaning of this rite, regard must be had that it was the accompaniment of peace offerings, which were witnesses to a ratified covenant --an established communion between God and man.

Easton's Bible Dictionary - parts of peace-offerings were so called, because they were waved by the priests (Ex. 29:24, 26, 27; Lev. 7:20-34; 8:27; 9:21; 10:14, 15, etc.), in token of a solemn special presentation to God. They then became the property of the priests. The first-fruits, a sheaf of barley, offered at the feast of Pentecost (Lev. 23:17-20), and wheat-bread, the first-fruits of the second harvest, offered at the Passover (10-14), were wave-offerings.

Leon Hyatt - Verse 14. And you must eat the waved breast and the contributed leg in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you, because [it is] your assigned portion and your son's assigned portion. They have been given [to you] from the slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings of the sons of Israel.

And you must eat the waved breast and the contributed leg. Second, Moses instructed the priests to complete the two slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings that the people had offered (Lev. 9:19-note). From slaughter-offerings, the breasts and the right front quarter were assigned to the priests. The breast was waved over the altar before being delivered to the priests (see comments on Lev. 7:30-note in [MESSAGE 9](#) under the heading Regarding the breast, he must bring the breast to wave it as a wave-offering to Jehovah's face), and it is here called "the waved breast". The right front quarter was also waved over the altar, and it was considered to be a contribution to the priests. Here it is here called "the contributed leg." (see comments on Lev. 7:32-note in [MESSAGE 9](#)).

in a clean place. Moses summarized the instructions that had been given him concerning these offerings (see comments on Leviticus 7:28-36-note in [MESSAGE 9](#)). He also interpreted those instructions by describing more specifically than had been stated previously the place where the priests' portions of those offerings were to be eaten and the persons who were permitted to eat them. He described the place as "a clean place," which means a place that was ceremonially clean (see comments on Lev. 4:12-note and on Lev. 5:2,3-note in

[MESSAGE 2](#), on Lev. 6:11-note; in [MESSAGE 5](#), on Lev. 7:19-21 in [MESSAGE 7](#), on Lev. 10:10-note in 12; see also the whole section of the book on clean and unclean found in Lev. 11:1-15:32). These offerings did not have to be eaten in The Holy Place but could be eaten in any place that was ceremonially clean, including the homes of the priests.

you and your sons and your daughters with you. He specified that those who could eat of these portions of the offerings were not only the priests but also their sons and daughters. This instruction means that, in contrast to the most holy offerings, which had to be eaten by the priests only, these offerings were simply holy and could be eaten by any member of a priest's household (see comments on Lev. 22:10-13-note in [MESSAGE 27](#)).

because [it is] your assigned portion and your son's assigned portion. They have been given [to you] from the slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings of the sons of Israel. Moses left no doubt that the waved-breast and the contributed leg were the portions of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings that were assigned to the priests (concerning the name and significance of slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings, see comments on Lev. 3:1-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings). ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:15 "The thigh offered by lifting up and the breast offered by waving they shall bring along with the offerings by fire of the portions of fat, to present as a wave offering before the LORD; so it shall be a thing perpetually due you and your sons with you, just as the LORD has commanded."

- **The thigh** - Lev 7:29,30,34)
- **thing perpetually due you:** Lev 7:34 Ge 13:15 17:8,13,17 1 Co 9:13,14
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Leon Hyatt - They must bring the contributed leg and the waved breast that is waved over the fat portions of the fire-offerings to wave for a wave-offering at Jehovah's face, and it shall be yours and your sons with you as your assigned portion, just as Jehovah has commanded.

They must bring the contributed leg and the waved breast. The people represented by their elders were to present the portions of the fire offerings that belonged to the priests. Lev. 7:29-30-note had specified that those portions of a slaughter offering were to be personally presented to the priests by the hands of the worshiper (see comments on those verses in [MESSAGE 9](#)).

that is waved over the fat portions of the fire offerings to be waved as a wave-offering at Jehovah's face. All English versions known to this writer, by one wording or another make this statement say that the worshiper was to bring the fat with the waved breast and the contributed leg and that all three were to be waved together over the altar and then given to the priests. If that statement were correct, it would contradict the instructions that had been given in Leviticus 7:30-31, which specify that the fat of slaughter-offerings was to be handled just as it was in all other offerings by roasting it on the altar to Jehovah. Fortunately, that understanding of these words is not correct. The wave-breast was not to be waved with the fat but over the fat. The fat was placed on the altar, and then the worshiper was to present to the priests the wave-breast with his own hands to be waved over the fat that was already roasting on the altar. The fat of these offerings had been placed on the altar before the sin of Nadab and Abihu, and it was still roasting there (see comments on Lev. 9:19-20-note in [MESSAGE 10](#)).

and it shall be your and your sons' with you as your assigned portion. The wave breast and the contributed leg were the portions assigned to the priests and their families, not the fat. The fat was to be roasted on the altar to Jehovah.

just as Jehovah has commanded. Moses specified that these directions were to be carried out just as Jehovah had commanded. He would not have given instructions that contradicted the commands concerning these offerings that were given in Leviticus 7:30-32, so this statement confirms the conclusion already stated that the fat was roasted on the altar and the wave-breast and the contributed leg were to be waved over the altar, as a sign that they were given to God, who in turn assigned them to the priests..([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:16 But Moses searched carefully for the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned up! So he was angry with Aaron's surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, saying,

- **the goat:** Lev 6:26,30 9:3,15
- **angry:** Ex 32:19-22 Nu 12:3 Mt 5:22 Mk 3:5 10:14 Eph 4:26
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Criswell - Other than the fatty portions, which were to be consecrated to God (Lev 4:31; cf. Lev 3:3-4, note), the flesh of the regular sin offering was to be eaten by the priests in the court of the tabernacle (Lev 6:24-29). Aaron's sons, however, had burned the entirety of the goat instead. Aaron assumed responsibility for the mistake and offered a satisfactory explanation to Moses.

Searched ([01875](#)) (**darash**) means to seek with care, to inquire, to pursue or to search. The Septuagint translates darash here with the verb **ekzeteo** which would picture Moses as diligently investigating in an attempt to find the goat. Darash is used to describe Ezra studying (diligently seeking) the Law in Ezra 7:10 (**see commentary**).

Related Resource:

- [Why was it bad that Aaron and his sons burned the sin offering in Leviticus 10:16–20?](#)
- [Why was the fire in the altar to burn continuously \(Leviticus 6:13\)?](#)

Leon Hyatt - Moses discovered their deviation (Lev 10:16-18)

Verse 16. Then inquiring, Moses inquired about the goat of the sin-offering. And behold, it had been incinerated. And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons who were left, saying,

Then inquiring, Moses inquired about the goat of the sin-offering. It seems that Moses had given the priests instructions concerning eating the homage-offering and the slaughter-offering because he saw the portions of those offerings set out to be eaten. However, he did not see the portions of the sin-offering that also were to be eaten. He became disturbed, wondering if Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar also had brought wrath on themselves by mishandling the sin-offering. He earnestly inquired of them what had been done with the meat of the sin-offering.

and, behold, it had been incinerated. Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar told him that they had incinerated the sin-offering. The usual sin-offering for the congregation was a bull, (see comments on Lev. 4:14-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading then the congregation shall offer a son of the herd for a sin-offering, and they shall bring it to the face of The Tent of Meeting) and the proper procedure for a bull sin-offering was for the meat to be incinerated outside the camp in a clean place (see comments on Lev. 4:21-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading And he shall carry forth the bull outside the camp, and he shall incinerate it as he incinerated the first bull). However, on this occasion they had been instructed to offer a buck of the goats instead of a bull because they were also offering a calf and a lamb for a re-dedication-offering and a bull and a ram for a slaughter-offering (see comments on Lev. 9:3-note in [MESSAGE 10](#) under the heading "Take a buck of the goats for a sin-offering). Apparently,

when a goat was substituted for a bull, the procedure was changed to correspond to the procedure for a sin-offering of a ruler, whose proper offering was a buck of the goats (see comments on Lev. 4:22-23-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading he shall bring his offering, [which shall consist of] a buck of the goats, a pristine male). In the case of a ruler's sin-offering, which was a male goat, the blood was not splattered before the veil and smeared on the horns of the altar of incense; and the meat was not incinerated without the camp, as it was in a bull sin-offering of the congregation (see comments on Lev. 4:17-18,21 in [MESSAGE 2](#)). Instead the blood was smeared on the horns of the altar of rededication-offering (see comments Lev. 4:25-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)) and the meat was eaten by the priests (see comments on Lev. 6:26-note in [MESSAGE 7](#) under the heading will eat it in The Holy Place. It must be eaten in the court of The Tent of Meeting). The symbolism was the same in either case, which was that the forgiven person was accepted back into Jehovah's fellowship and service (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12,25-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). Since on this occasion the congregation had offered a buck of the goats for their sin-offering, the blood was not taken into The Tabernacle. In that case, the meat should have been eaten by the priests. Instead, Eleazar and Ithamar, with Aaron's approval, incinerated it in a clean place outside the camp (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). Leaving The Tabernacle to go to a clean place outside the camp was not an offense in itself, because that procedure was a part of the ceremony of the offering of a bull sin-offering. However, in this case it was an offense,

because the offering was a male goat and the meat should have been eaten instead of being incinerated outside the camp.

and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons the sons of Aaron who were left, saying Moses was angry that Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar had not followed the proper procedure for a goat sin-offering. Probably the reason his anger was directed especially toward the two sons was that they were the ones who actually had carried the meat outside the camp and incinerated it. However, obviously Aaron knew of their action and had approved it. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Question: [Why was it bad that Aaron and his sons burned the sin offering in Leviticus 10:16–20?](#)

Answer: Due to the disobedience of Aaron's sons [Nadab and Abihu](#), the Lord caused those two men to die. Later that day, Aaron and his remaining sons allowed the sin offering to burn up. Moses was angry with Aaron's other two sons, [Eleazar](#) and [Ithamar](#), as a result. This situation is hard to understand until we take a closer look at the context and the Law in general.

For one thing, Moses had just commanded Aaron and his remaining sons to eat the offering (Leviticus 10:12–14). When he discovered they had let it burn up, he was understandably upset.

Also, the chapter opens with the death of two of Aaron's sons: "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1–2). Likely due to their grief over the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar chose to let the sacrifice burn up rather than to eat it. Moses was upset because this was breaking the command God had given the priest to use this offering in part as their food.

Another reason Moses was upset was probably that he feared a fate similar to that of Nadab and Abihu would befall Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. He confronted Aaron, saying, "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? . . . You should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded" (Leviticus 10:17–18).

Aaron's response to Moses is full of pathos: "Today my sons presented both their sin offering and their burnt offering to the LORD. And yet this tragedy has happened to me. If I had eaten the people's sin offering on such a tragic day as this, would the LORD have been pleased?" (Leviticus 10:19NLT). These words satisfied Moses that Aaron was living in fear and obedience to God (verse 20).

Interestingly, this passage of Leviticus concludes the section in which Aaron and his sons are inducted as priests before the Lord (chapters 8–10). Occurring over an eight-day period, these events help delineate the important, sanctified role belonging to the Levitical priests. ([Gotquestions.org](#))

Leviticus 10:17 "Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear away the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD.

- Lev 6:26,29 7:6,7)
- **bear:** Lev 16:22 22:16 Ex 28:38,43 Nu 18:1 Isa 53:6-11 Eze 4:4-6 Eze 18:19,20 John 1:29 2Co 5:21 Heb 9:28 1Pe 2:24
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Earlier we learn the **sin offering** is to be eaten

Lev 6:26-**note** 'The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting.

Bear away the guilt - This clearly foreshadows Jesus' bearing our sins on the cross...

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Heb 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

1Pet 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Make atonement (03722)(**kapar** - **word study**) means to cover not just to conceal but suggests the imposing of something to

change its appearance or nature.

Baker - Kaphar is "employed to signify the cancellation or "writing over" of a contract (Isa. 28:18); the appeasing of anger (Gen. 32:20[21]; Pr. 16:14); and the overlaying of wood with pitch so as to make it waterproof (Gen. 6:14). The word also communicates God's covering of sin. Persons made reconciliation with God for their sins by imposing something that would appease the offended party (in this case the Lord) and cover the sinners with righteousness (Ex. 32:30; Ezek. 45:17; cf. Dan. 9:24). In the Old Testament, the blood of sacrifices was most notably imposed (Ex. 30:10)."

Leon Hyatt - Verse 17. Why have you not eaten the sin-offering in The Place of Holiness, since it is a holiness of holinesses, and He gave it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to cover over them at Jehovah's face?

Why have ye not eaten the sin offering in The Place of Holiness. Moses questioned Eleazar and Ithamar sternly as to why they had not eaten the sin-offering in The Place of Holiness. The name "The Place of Holiness" is a new term, appearing here for the first time in the law. It has exactly the same meaning as the term "The Holy Place," which is explained in comments on Leviticus 6:16-note (see comments on that verse in [MESSAGE 5](#) under the heading The Holy Place). Thus, it was a designation for the courtyard. Moses was concerned not only that the sin-offering had not been eaten, but also that it had not been eaten in the courtyard as it should have been.

since it is a holiness of holinesses. The reason the sin-offering should have been eaten in courtyard was that it was one of the objects that was considered to have a special holiness. Those objects were to be eaten only by the priests and only in the courtyard of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 2:3-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading [It is] a holiness of holiness and on Lev. 6:16-17-note in [MESSAGE 5](#)).

and He gave it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation In Leviticus 5:1,17; Lev 7:18, Jehovah had spoken of a sinner's bearing his own iniquity. However, this verse is the first reference in the Book of Leviticus that speaks of the priests' bearing the iniquity of others. Interpreters have struggled long and hard with these words. Generally, they have offered two interpretations. One is that sin was transferred to the priest, so that he bore it for the sinner in much the same way that Jesus took on Himself the sins of men. This view assigns an impossible task to the priests. The priests did nothing to even resemble paying for the sins of sinners, as Jesus did. It would have been foolish for them to try. Surely Jehovah had no such misleading intention. The other interpretation is that these words simply declare that the sins of the worshiper were taken away without meaning that the priests bore those sins. But, the words actually say that by eating the sin-offering the priests bore the sins of the congregation. The proper understanding of these words lies in the fact that the offerings of Israel were symbols and that the priests were part of the symbolism. When a priest officiated at the altar, he symbolized Jehovah. When He ate the sin-offering, he symbolized Jehovah's bearing away the sins of the sinner so that the sinner could be restored to Jehovah's service (see comments on Lev. 6:26-note in [MESSAGE 7](#) under the heading **will eat it in The Holy Place. It must be eaten in the court of The Tent of Meeting**). Only in the terms of symbolism can these words be meaningful and consistent with the whole of Scripture.

to cover over them at Jehovah's face. Eating the sin-offering also symbolized covering the congregation from the damage and loss of fellowship that their sins brought on them (see comments on Lev. 1:4-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading **to cover over him**). ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:18 "Behold, since its blood had not been brought inside, into the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, just as I commanded."

- **blood:** Lev 6:30
- **as I commanded:** Lev 6:26,30
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Lev 6:26 'The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting.

Lev 6:30 'But no sin offering of which any of the blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place shall be eaten; it shall be burned with fire.

Behold - This interjection is always given to arrest our attention! "Listen up" the Spirit is saying.

John Trapp comments on the fact that they **should... have eaten it** - Thus, by misreckoning a point, ye have missed the haven, and hazarded yourselves to the rocks of the divine displeasure, against which your brethren so lately split. God is usually most

Leon Hyatt - Verse 18. Behold, its blood was not brought inside The Holy [Place].

Behold, its blood was not brought inside The Holy [Place]. The word translated “The Holy [Place]” means literally “The Holiness.” It was used to refer to any holy place, that is, any part of The Tabernacle complex (see comments on Lev. 4:6-note, in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading of The Holy Place). In this clause, it refers to the tent portion of The Tabernacle because Moses spoke of “inside The Holy [Place].”

Moses noted that the blood of the sin-offering had not been taken inside The Tabernacle. Jehovah had specified that the blood of a bull sin-offering, which was the usual sin-offering for a priest or for the whole congregation, was to be taken inside the first room of the tent portion of The Tabernacle. Some of it was to be splattered seven times at the face of the veil that shielded the inner room, and some of it was to be smeared on the horns of the altar of incense (see comments on Lev. 4:6-7-note and on Lev. 4:16-18-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). On this occasion, the blood of the sin-offering of the congregation was not taken inside The Tabernacle. The reason was that a buck of the goats had been offered instead of a bull. In a goat sin-offering, the priest was to smear some of the blood on the horns of the altar of re-dedication-offering, and pour the remainder at the base of the altar (see comments on Lev. 4:25-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). Moses made no mention of any deviation from these instructions on the part of Eleazar and Ithamar, so they must have handled the blood properly for a goat sin-offering. Therefore, the meat of the offering should have been eaten by the priests.

Eating, you should have eaten it in The Holy [Place], as I commanded In this clause, the term “The Holy [Place]” referred, not to the tent portion of The Tabernacle, but to the courtyard. The word is exactly the same as that in the previous clause, but the two clauses refer to two different parts of The Tabernacle complex. The term could refer to any part of The Tabernacle. The difference in which part of The Tabernacle is referred to in these two clauses is made clear in that the previous clause spoke of “inside” The Holy [Place], whereas this clause speaks only of “in” The Holy [Place].

Moses found fault with the way Eleazar and Ithamar had handled the meat of the sin-offering. Jehovah had given instructions in [MESSAGE 7](#) concerning a difference in the eating ceremony between the two types of the sin-offering. The meat of a sin-offering whose blood was not taken inside The Tabernacle was to be eaten by the priests in the courtyard of The Tent of Meeting (see comments on Lev. 6:26-note in [MESSAGE 7](#)), but the meat of a sin-offering whose blood was taken inside The Tabernacle was to be incinerated in a clean place outside the camp (see comments on Lev. 6:29-note in [MESSAGE 7](#)). Moses stressed that, since the blood of the sin-offering had not been taken inside The Tabernacle, the priests should have eaten its meat in the courtyard. Instead they had incinerated it. We must suppose that they incinerated it properly in a clean place outside the camp (see comments on Lev. 4:12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading and he shall incinerate it . . .). Incinerating the meat in a clean place outside the camp was proper for a bull sin-offering, but not for a goat sin-offering, which the congregation had offered on this occasion. Moses’ reprimand was appropriate, because the priests had improperly mixed the ceremonies of the two types of the sin-offering. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:19 But Aaron spoke to Moses, "Behold, this very day they presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD. When things like these happened to me, if I had eaten a sin offering today, would it have been good in the sight of the LORD?"

- **this very day:** Lev 9:8,12 Heb 7:27 9:8
- **would it have been good:** Dt 12:7 26:14 1Sa 1:7,8 Isa 1:11,15 Jer 6:20 14:12 Ho 9:4 Mal 1:10,13 2:13 Php 4:4

NIV - Aaron replied to Moses, "Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?"

Deffinbaugh - As I follow Aaron’s logic, he is saying that it was probably on this very day that Nadab and Abihu were stuck down by God for their sin, and it was also on this day when Eleazar and Ithamar were required to offer a sin offering for themselves, just as Aaron and his two oldest sons had done as recorded in chapter 9. Because of the tragic events of the day and the inauguration of his two younger sons, Aaron felt that eating of the sin offering of the people would have been inappropriate. Thus, the meat which could have been eaten was burned up, just as the uneaten portion would have been anyway. Aaron’s actions and those of his two

younger sons were not normal, but then this was no typical day in the lives of the priests. In the light of this, Moses was satisfied that they had not done something forbidden, but had only declined from exercising their priestly privileges, for higher considerations. The significant fact here is that Aaron has come into his own, and that even Moses had to recognize his position and his wisdom in the decision he had reached and the actions which followed it.

John Trapp - God loves a cheerful server. {Deut 12:7; Deut 26:14} Mourners' bread is polluted bread, {Hos 9:4} and those unkind husbands are blamed for causing their wives, when they should have been cheerful in God's service, to cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and with crying out, so that he regarded not the offering any more. {Mal 2:13} This Aaron knew, and allegeth for himself.

Leon Hyatt - Moses accepted Aaron's explanation (Lev 10:19-20)

Verse 19. And Aaron said to Moses, Behold, today they offered their sin-offering and their rededication-offering at Jehovah's face when [events] like these have happened to me. So [if] I had eaten the sin-offering today, would it have been pleasing in the eyes of Jehovah?

And Aaron said unto Moses. Aaron spoke in defense of Eleazar and Ithamar and also of himself. He assumed responsibility for the action, showing that he was aware of what they had done and had approved it.

Behold, today they offered their sin offering and their rededication-offering at Jehovah's face. Most interpreters assume that "they" refers to Eleazar and Ithamar and to the offering Moses had commanded in Leviticus 9:2-note. This assumption is not warranted for two reasons: (1) The offering Moses commanded in Leviticus 9:2 was offered by all the priests, not just Eleazar and Ithamar. (2) A priest's bull sin-offering was to be incinerated in a clean place outside the camp, not eaten in The Holy Place, as Moses was demanding (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). Others think that "they" refers to Nadab and Abihu, because Moses referred to their deaths immediately afterward. However, Nadab and Abihu did not die for offering a sin-offering and a rededication-offering, but for offerings incense on a censer in front of The Tabernacle, a ceremony Jehovah had in no way authorized. Most surely, the sin-offering and the rededication-offering to which Aaron referred were offerings offered by the congregation. Their offerings were the ones Moses was asking Aaron and his sons to complete.

when [events] like these have happened to me. The point Aaron was making was that on the same day that the congregation had offered their offerings that he needed to complete, he had lost two sons under tragic circumstances. He meant his heart was not in eating while his sons were being buried. If he had eaten the meat of the sin-offering, he would have done it perfunctorily and not with feeling. Every part of the offerings had a spiritual meaning and was to be performed with understanding and sincerity. Aaron could not eat the meat of the sin-offering with the sincerity that God expected. His heart was too full of sadness to perform the duty in the proper spirit.

So [if] I had eaten the sin-offering today, would it have been pleasing in the eyes of Jehovah? Aaron asked what good it would have done for him to eat the sin-offering just for the mere performance of the ceremony if his heart was not in it. Would God have been pleased just because Aaron and his sons went through the ceremony, if the right attitude was not in their hearts when they did it? Even though Aaron and his two remaining sons had remained in The Tabernacle to put their duty to God ahead of even the burial of their own family members, it was scarcely possible for them to feel like eating while the oldest sons of the family were being buried. Aaron implied that Jehovah, who puts the main emphasis on the heart, would surely see their hearts and interpret their failure to eat for what it was—not rebellion but natural human sorrow.

Keil rejected this explanation, taking the position that Aaron and his sons refused to eat because they sad and therefore did not feel sufficiently holy on this occasion. Keil took the position he did because he insisted that it was wrong for Aaron and his sons to sorrow over Nadab and Abihu. The text does not support that idea. They were human, and Jehovah understands and accepts human sorrow. The action that would have been wrong for them to do that day would have been for them to desert their duty because of their sorrow. But, even in doing their duty, their sorrow was real; and it kept them from being able to eat with a joyful attitude over forgiveness for the congregation. Under such circumstances, Aaron was convinced that a reasonable substitute for eating the meat would be acceptable to God. In a bull sin-offerings for a priest and in a bull sin-offering for the congregation, incinerating the sin-offering in a clean place outside the camp was the authorized substitute for eating the meat in The Holy [Place] (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading **he shall take out to the outside of the camp to a clean place**). Aaron was sure it was also an acceptable substitute on this occasion. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

Leviticus 10:20 When Moses heard that, it seemed good in his sight.

- 2Ch 30:18-20 Zec 7:8,9 Mt 12:3-7,20
- [Leviticus 10 Resources](#)

Why did what had seemed bad, now seem good to Moses? If you recall the warning of Lev 7:19-21, it is reasonable to propose that Aaron had taken this teaching to heart and thus felt "unworthy" (? unclean), as suggested by his statement "When things like these happened to me." The New Living Translation tends to support this thought - "Then Aaron answered Moses on behalf of his sons. "Today my sons presented both their sin offering and their burnt offering to the LORD," he said. "This kind of thing has also happened to me. Would the LORD have approved if I had eaten the sin offering today?"

Ryrie explains Moses change of heart this way - When Moses asked why the sin offering had not been eaten (cf. Lev 6:26), Aaron replied that, because of the death of his two sons, he and his remaining sons had felt unworthy. Moses accepted the explanation.

C K Mackintosh has a slightly different explanation...

Thus, then, Leviticus 10:1-20 opens with positive sin, and closes with negative failure. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire;" and Eleazar and Ithamar were unable to eat the sin offering. The former was met by divine judgment; the latter, by divine forbearance. There could be no allowance for "strange fire." It was positively flying in the face of God's plain commandment. There is, obviously, a wide difference between a deliberate rejection of a plain command, and mere inability to rise to the height of a divine privilege. The former is open dishonor done to God; the latter is a forfeiture of one's own blessing. There should be neither the one nor the other, but the difference between the two is easily traced.

Old John Trapp has an interesting remark regarding Moses' change of heart - For that time at least. It is not good sowing in a high wind. To choose a fit time to admonish an offender, is a singular skill, and a very great advantage. The mildest medicine is troublesome to an eye that is inflamed.

Wenham ties Leviticus 10 to the NT - Nowhere in the NT is this particular episode referred to, though there are a number of lines of theological continuity linking this passage with NT teaching. The disciple must put allegiance to Christ before family obligations (Lev 10:6-7; Mt 8:21-22). Ministers, like Aaronic priests, should be temperate (Lev 10:9; 1Tim. 3:3, 8). But the most striking principle endorsed by the NT is that the closer a man is to God the stricter the standard he will be judged by (v. 3). Our Lord said: "Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required" (Luke 12:48). Peter: "Judgment begins with the household of God" (1Pet. 4:17). James (3:1): "We who teach shall be judged with greater strictness." The story of Nadab and Abihu vividly illustrates these NT sayings. (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament).

Leon Hyatt - Verse 20. When Moses heard [Aaron's explanation], it was pleasing in his eyes.

Moses understood the correctness of Aaron's position and accepted it without the necessity of a spoken revelation from Jehovah. Enough had already been revealed to show that Aaron was correct. Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar had not repeated the sin of Nadab and Abihu. What they had done was within the scope of what Jehovah had revealed and was not an unauthorized action that they had devised for themselves. Jehovah showed that he agreed with Aaron's interpretation, because he did not kill Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, as he had Nadab and Abihu.

Application. Two wonderful truths of great significance for Christians shine forth from this passage like bright rays of light. First, God is primarily interested in the hearts of men. Offerings and ceremonies of worship are important only if they genuinely express the feelings and intentions of the heart. What God looks for most when people worship Him is a sincere and devoted heart. The intent of the heart is the factor God uses to judge the reality and acceptableness of people's worship of Him.

Second, God will overlook lapses in the outward performance of worship if the heart is sincere. God will extend no patience to the person who alters the worship taught in the Bible in a spirit of glibness or rebellion, as Nadab and Abihu did. But, He will have infinite patience with a person who falters in the outward performance of worship because of human weakness. If the heart is sincere, God will forgive the weakness and the deviation and will accept the act of worship as fully as if it had been perfectly performed. ([Leviticus Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#))

STRANGE FIRE

Leviticus 10

Rob Morgan

When I was growing up in the mountains, some of the preachers on the Tennessee / North Carolina border were known as “Hellfire and Brimstone” preachers because every time they took to the pulpit, their sermons scorched and singed whoever heard them. They preached very hard against sin, and to them almost everything was a sin. Some of these preachers were so negative they became the butt of jokes. I remember how amused my father was on one occasion when my grandmother went to a revival meeting one night only to hear the preacher thunder away at her particular hairstyle, which was in vogue at the time. She stormed home as mad as a hornet, much to my dad’s amusement.

But now things have gone to the opposite extreme. Sermons are so market-driven and positive in nature that one seldom hears anything at all about “Hellfire and Brimstone.” There is little preaching against sin, and almost nothing is said about the subjects of judgment and hell. I think one of the great benefits in preaching through a book in the Bible such as we’re doing with Leviticus is it allows a minister and a congregation to study the whole counsel of God. An expositional pulpit ministry that preaches through the Scriptures covers everything that God covers in His Word. And today, in our study through Leviticus, we’re coming to a story that is so rarely used in a message that I don’t ever remember having heard a sermon about it in all my fifty-two years.

Instead of jumping right into the book of Leviticus, I’d like to ask you to turn with me to the book of Exodus, to do a little advance work. The story of the book of Exodus, as you might know, tells how the twelve sons of Jacob, having gone down to Egypt during a time of famine, multiplied until they became a mighty nation. The authorities in Egypt became alarmed at their numbers and they enslaved them and placed them under bitter bondage.

But God raised up two men to deliver them. Two brothers. Moses and his brother Aaron. We always focus on Moses and we frequently neglect Aaron. But look at what the Bible says about Aaron’s family in Exodus 6:23: Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as wife; and she bore him (four sons)—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Almost every week we have a child born into our church family, and what a joy it is to see those little roly-polys, to hold those children. What love there is between mother and child, and between father and child. I’m sure it was no less in biblical times. Aaron must have loved his four sons very much.

Well, these boys grew up. The two oldest ones took their place alongside their father and helped him in the work. Look at what happened when the Children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:1: Now He (God) said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.”

And Ex 24:9: Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.

Out of all the millions of Israel, these seventy-four men saw the glory of the Lord on Sinai and had a vision of God hovering over His throne.

And it was on that mountain—Mount Sinai—that God explained to Moses that in developing these masses of people into a great nation, He had chosen Aaron and his sons to be the religious leaders for the entire nation.

Look at Exodus 28: Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The last several chapters of the book of Exodus are devoted to the instructions God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai for the building of a worship center—the Tabernacle—and the instituting of the priesthood under Aaron and his sons.

And then we come to Leviticus. The first seven chapters tell us about the five great sacrifices that were to be offered on the Tabernacle altars—every one of them designed in advance to teach us a different aspect of our Lord’s sacrifice on Calvary. And then in chapters 8 and 9, Aaron and his sons are set aside to be the priests of Israel. Look at Leviticus 8:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; and gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting...

And the story goes on to tell about the great and glorious initiation and inauguration of the priesthood in ancient Israel. It was all pointing toward our Lord Jesus Christ, as we saw last week. And the sacrifices were offered, and look at the way Lev 9 ends:

And Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Notice what happened. Aaron and his sons offered the first sacrifices ever offered on that huge, bronze Tabernacle altar. The priesthood was inaugurated. And in token of the wisdom and wonder of these very first offerings, fire fell from heaven like a bolt of lightening, and the sacrifices were supernaturally consumed in the flames. It was so dramatic that the entire nation instantly fell on their faces in worship and wonder.

None of them could have imagined that this powerful supernatural fire—this divine lightening bolt—was about to fall again. Let's turn the page and continue now our series of studies in the book of Leviticus as we come today to Leviticus 10:

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. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace. Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp." So they went near and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had said. And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. You shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses. (Lev 10:1-7)

This is one of the greatest tragedies in the history of ancient Israel. On the very day that the priesthood of Israel was inaugurated, the two oldest sons of Aaron—Nadab and Abihu—offered strange fire upon the altar and were stuck dead in a flash of divine judgment.

What was the nature of their sin? What was this strange fire? We aren't sure. As I studied this passage in the commentaries, I found several theories.

Some Bible scholars believe they offered cultic fire; that is, they inserted some worship ritual they had learned from a neighboring pagan religion. We know they were acquainted with the pagan worship practices of the surrounding nations, because Aaron himself had previously fashioned a golden calf to be worshipped. So some think they were introducing some element of cultic ritual into the worship of Jehovah.

Others believe that they were drunk. They were trying to lead the Israelites in worship but they were too drunk to do it correctly. What indication is there of that? Well, look at the very next verses—Leviticus 10:8ff: Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean, that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.

From this point on, the priests were always forbidden from drinking wine when they were on duty in the temple, and drunkenness was always prohibited for everyone.

A third theory is that these boys had attempted to go into the Holy of holies. Look at Leviticus 16: Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the Lord, and died; and the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

These two men were ministering with fire and incense, and the incense altar stood in the holy place inside the Tabernacle tent, just in front of the veil that separated off the Most Holy Place. So perhaps they grew curious and careless, and decided to enter the Most Holy Place with their fire of incense in a way that God had not prescribed.

A fourth theory is just that they were reckless and indifferent when it came to the things of God. Here they were, on the very first day of the inauguration of the priesthood, and they were to be the spiritual models for all the Israelites. They were to be types of Christ, pointing toward Christ. They were to be God's priests, representing Him to the people and the people before Him.

But they were indifferent, insouciant, flippant, reckless. They didn't go about things as God had demanded. They were careless and unthinking. They were capricious. Rash. Hasty. They did not take seriously the holiness of the great God whom they were representing. And the Lord would have none of it. Just as the fire had fallen to consume the burnt offerings on the Temple altar, so it fell again to consume the two sons of Aaron who had handled the things of God disrespectfully and carelessly.

The principle is laid down in Lev 10:3, and it really serves as the theme for the whole book of Leviticus: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.

My question today is this: Is it possible that you and I could offer strange fire before the Lord. Is there anything about Nadab and Abihu that should be instructive to us? Well, yes. I've said several times that the books of Leviticus and Hebrews are interrelated. You can't really understand Leviticus without studying it through the lens of the book of Hebrews, and you can't study really understand Hebrews without knowing something of Leviticus. So, does the writer of the book of Hebrews have any commentary on this story in Leviticus?

I think he does. Look at Hebrews 12:28-29: Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

Let me briefly give you some ways in which it may be possible for you and me to offer "strange fire," as it were.

When We Treat the Word of God Disrespectfully

We can offer strange fire when we treat the Word of God disrespectfully. God had given very specific instructions about the way He intended for the priests to go about their duties. He had given inspired and authoritative instructions to Nadab and Abihu, but those two men did not show a real respect and reverence for God's Word. They took what God said with a grain of salt. They didn't really treat His commands with seriousness. And it's very easy for us to do the same.

The old Scottish Christians had a habit of never letting anything be placed on top of their Bibles. They never sat another book or a cup of tea or so much as a handkerchief on top of their Bibles. They revered and respected their Scriptures greatly.

But our Bibles tend to be buried under the abundance of the things we have to do. After our necessary work is done, we give our best time to our video games and movies, and we can go for days without opening God's Word. We're prone to become so busy or so distracted that we just don't have time for the Word of God at all. This book is our rule of life, our standard of living, our daily bread.

But what disturbs me today is how carelessly the Scripture is treated in many churches and by many preachers. There are nearly a thousand churches in this city. You could go to very many of them today and not find a truly biblical sermon. And even in our own denomination and in many others like it, we have a tendency to take a verse or two of Scripture and to use it as a diving board from which to preach our own opinions.

My favorite definition of preaching is found in Nehemiah 8:8 where it says that Ezra read from the book of the law distinctly, he gave the sense, and he caused the people to understand the reading. In our personal lives and in our churches, we must read this book distinctly, correctly interpret the sense of it, and apply its meaning to our own lives.

Pursue in the Worship of God Irreverently

Second, these two men pursued the worship of God irreverently. They were careless and haphazard when it came to worshipping the God of gods, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

It's possible for us to worship God in an irreverent way, too. It bothers me when I see people mingling around and talking around the periphery of our Celebration Center, waiting until the music is finished because they don't get anything out of singing; they just want to come in to hear the sermon. It bothers me when people are chattering away with their neighbors as we're singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" or some other such hymn or song of praise. It bothers me people complain they didn't get anything out of the service as though they were the ones for whom the worship was prepared and to whom the worship was rendered.

I don't think corporate worship should be stiff and somber and severe, but neither should it be careless and irreverent. We serve a very great King. We have a very holy God, and we should worship Him with reverence and awe.

Regard the Holiness of God Lightly

The third implication of this strange fire is that these two priests regarded the holiness of God lightly. This is at the crux of the matter, for the Lord drew a lesson for us: By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.

I think we may be in danger of offering strange fire on the altar when we regard the holiness of God lightly in our personal lives, and one of the ways we do this is by tolerating little sins on our lives.

There's an interesting word that comes into play here. Desensitization. There was an article this week in USA Today about this as it relates to the violence in some video games. After awhile, children and teens and others become desensitized to the violence. We

become used to it. It bothers us less and less, and we can tolerate more and more. As a society and as Christians in this society, we're in danger of becoming desensitized. We become very tolerate of the things that used to shock us. We become accustomed to sin. We get used to it in our own lives.

In my research for this sermon, I came across a message that Charles Spurgeon once had preached on the subject of "little sins," in which he said that the best of men are always afraid of the smallest of sins.

He told the story of a noble warrior for Christ, Martin Arethusa, a bishop in the days of the Roman Empire. He had led the people of his city to pull down the pagan temple, but when the apostate emperor Julian came to power, he commanded the people to rebuild the temple.

The city fathers were bound to obey and rebuild this center of paganism on pain of death. But Arethusa cried out against the evil until Emperor Julian had him arrested. The emperor then made an offer. If Martin Arethusa would offer just a single half-penny toward the building of this pagan temple, he would be freed. Otherwise he would be tortured to death. Just a tiny half-penny. But he refused. He would not commit the tiniest sin to save his life. As a result, he was disrobed, pricked with knives, smeared with honey, and exposed to wasps until he was stung to death. But he would not sell his soul for a half-penny.

A half-penny might seem like a little thing. A censor of profane fire might seem like a small indiscretion. But it violates the holiness of God, and the Bible teaches that our God is a consuming fire. I wonder if there is a little sin in your life that you've tolerated until it has desensitized your soul.

This week I noticed that one of the tires on my car was flat, and I took it down to the service station. The young man sprayed a mixture of water and soap onto my tire and studied it very carefully. There was a tiny, tiny nail that had become embedded in my tire. It was so small he could hardly find it. But it had punctured my tire and was letting the air escape.

We're supposed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but there might be a tiny, tiny sin that you're tolerating in your life. It has punctured your soul and all the air is escaping. As a result, your Christian experience is going flat.

The Lord says: By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.

Our God is a God of love and a God of grace, but the Bible teaches that He is also a consuming fire. We think too infrequently about His holiness and about His divine judgment. But there is coming a day of judgment on all the earth when the secrets of men will be revealed and all will be laid open and the wrath of God will burst forth against those who disregard our Lord Jesus Christ.

Recently as I did some research into 19th century hymnology, I came across a poem by a man named Bert Shadduck who wrote this hymn in 1894. It's one of the few poems we find on the subject of the judgment of God. It says:

I dreamed that the great judgment morning
Had dawned, and the trumpet had blown;
I dreamed that the nations had gathered
To judgment before the white throne;
From the throne came a bright shining angel,
And he stood on the land and the sea,
And he swore with his hand raised to Heaven,
That time was no longer to be.

And O, what a weeping and wailing,
As the lost were told of their fate;
They cried for the rocks and the mountains,
They prayed, but their prayer was too late.

The rich man was there, but his money
Had melted and vanished away;
A pauper he stood in the judgment,
His debts were too heavy to pay;
The great man was there, but his greatness,
When death came, was left far behind!
The angel that opened the records,
Not a trace of his greatness could find.

The widow was there with the orphans,
God heard and remembered their cries;
 No sorrow in heaven forever,
God wiped all the tears from their eyes;
The gambler was there and the drunkard,
And the man that had sold them the drink,
With the people who gave him the license,
 Together in hell they did sink.

The moral man came to the judgment,
But self righteous rags would not do;
 The men who had crucified Jesus
 Had passed off as moral men, too;
 The soul that had put off salvation,
 "Not tonight; I'll get saved by and by,
 No time now to think of religion!"
 At last they had found time to die.

 And O, what a weeping and wailing,
 As the lost were told of their fate;
They cried for the rocks and the mountains,
They prayed, but their prayer was too late.

Today I'd like to ask you to regard the God of our Fathers and our Lord Jesus Christ with great reverence and seriousness. Recognize His holiness, and let us serve Him as we should.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.