

Leviticus Chapter 10 Continued

Verses 8-11: The tabernacle priests were not to “drink wine or strong drink” before conducting their sacred duties, because they were more likely to make serious errors that might lead to their death, as Nadab and Abihu had done (Prov. 20:1).

Taken in its context, this prohibition suggests that intoxication led Nadab and Abihu to perform their blasphemous act (compare Prov. 23:20-35; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

Leviticus 10:8 "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,"

Because he was a prophet, Aben Ezra says. But the reason rather seems to be, because he was the High-Priest, and now invested with his office, and in the execution of it. And therefore, the following law respecting the priest's drinking of wine was given. Some say, as the same writer observes, that God spake to him by Moses; but it rather seems that he spoke to Aaron immediately. According to Jarchi, this order was delivered to him as a reward for his silence, and to do honor to him on that account.

"Saying": As follows.

Notice the change in who the LORD speaks to here. We have been reading over and over (the LORD spoke to Moses), but here He speaks directly to Aaron. This is because Aaron is the anointed High-Priest. Now God would speak to the people through Aaron the High-Priest.

Leviticus 10:9 "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations:"

As the command that the priests are to abstain from any intoxicating liquors when performing their sacred functions follows so closely upon the death of Nadab and Abihu. The opinion obtained as early at least as the time of Christ that there is a connection between the specific sin and the general law. That the two sons of Aaron drank wine to excess when they offered strange fire, and that the present prohibition is based upon that circumstance. Accordingly, the Apostle enjoins that a bishop “must not be given to wine,” that “deacons must not be given to much wine” (1 Tim. 3:2-3). A similar law existed among the ancient Greeks and Persians, enjoining the priests to abstain from wine.

"Nor strong drink": The word (shēchār) here rendered strong drink, is the general name of intoxicating drinks, whether made of wheat, barley, millet, apples, dates, honey, or other fruits.

"When ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation": Better, when ye go into the tent of meeting. The Palestinian Chaldee adds here, “as thy sons did who died by the burning fire.” The same precept is repeated in (Ezek. 44:21), “Neither shall any priest drink wine when they enter into the inner court.” The injunction that on these particular occasions the priests are to abstain from taking it clearly implies that, ordinarily, when not going into the tent of meeting. That is,

when not performing their sacred functions in the sanctuary, they were not forbidden to use it if required.

This is the Scripture that makes many believe that Nadab and Abihu were drinking in the sanctuary when God struck them dead. They had been eating their part of the offering, and it is not too wild a speculation that they were probably washing it down with a little wine. The truth of the matter is that most people cannot stop with just a glass of wine and usually become intoxicated. The best way not to get drunk, is not to take the first drink. The entire sanctuary was a very holy place. No drinking at all should have taken place here. All strong drink was forbidden to the priests while they were serving in the sanctuary. God tells Aaron directly, here, that (strong drink will never be allowed), in the sanctuary. There are several instances in the Bible when strong drink brings disaster. Lot got drunk, and each of his daughters slept with him and committed incest. The families these 2 girls had from these babies were always at odds with God.

Genesis 19:33-36 "And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose." "And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, [and] lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father." "And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose." "Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father."

In a drunken stupor, Lot had done what he would have never done had he known what he was doing. Alcohol harms those who get involved in its use then, or now. Most all the ordinances God has placed on man are for man's benefit.

Leviticus 10:10 "And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;"

That being sober they might be able to distinguish between the one and the other. Which a drunken man, having his mind and senses disturbed, is not capable of. As between holy and unholy persons, and between holy and unholy things. Particularly, as Aben Ezra interprets it, between a sacred place and one that is common, and between a holy day and a common week day. The knowledge and memory of which may be lost through intemperance. And so, that may be done in a place and on a day which ought not to be done, or that omitted on a day and in a place which ought to be done.

"And between unclean and clean": Between unclean men and women, beasts and fowls, and clean ones. And between unclean things in a ceremonial sense. And those that are clean, which a man drinking liquor may be no judge of. Hence, as the above writer observes, after this section follow laws concerning fowls clean and unclean, the purification of a woman after childbirth, the leprosy in men, garments and houses, and concerning menstruous persons. All which the priests were to be judges of, and therefore ought to be sober.

If drinking is bad for the world, then it is terrible for those who are the called of God. Alcohol causes confused thought. A person who has been drinking does not have full control of himself and would probably make the wrong decision many times. Holiness requires separation from all worldly things. Alcohol is very definitely worldly.

Leviticus 10:11 "And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses."

“Teach the children of Israel”: 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, alongside the prophets who generally received the Word directly from the Lord. Ezra would become the supreme example of a commendable priest (Ezra 7:10).

We see that the responsibility to teach the people the things of God has been taken off Moses, and is now on Aaron. It is Aaron's responsibility to teach the congregation the way to live day to day in a way pleasing unto God. We have spoken before about the difference in an evangelist and a pastor. One of the pastor's duties is to teach the people to live daily lives pleasing unto God. We see from this that Aaron is to do the job of a pastor of the church now. God gave them these statutes through Moses. Moses gave them the instructions, but Aaron is to see that they keep them from day to day. In this, you can see the role of the evangelist in Moses and the role of pastor in Aaron.

Leviticus 10:12 "And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it [is] most holy:"

Of the burning, as the Targum of Jonathan. Who survived his other two sons that were burnt, who remained alive. Not being concerned with them in their sin, and so shared not in their punishment.

"Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the Lord made by fire": For all but the handful that was burnt of that kind of offerings belonged to the priests (see Lev. 6:14). This meat offering, according to Jarchi, was the meat offering of the eighth day. That is, of the consecration, or the day after it was finished, on which the above awful case happened (Lev. 9:17). And also the meat offering of Naashon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah, who offered his offering first at the dedication of the altar, on the day the tabernacle was set up. Which he supposes was on this day (see Num. 7:1). Now these meat offerings were not as yet eaten, and which may be true of the first of them, wherefore Aaron and his sons, notwithstanding their mourning, are bid to take it.

"And eat it without leaven beside the altar": The altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle, as directed (see notes on Lev. 6:16).

"For it is most holy": And so might be eaten by none but holy persons, such as were devoted to sacred services, and only in the holy place, as follows. Within hangings, where the most holy

things were eaten, as Jarchi. That is, within the court of the tabernacle, which was made of hangings.

In this message, Moses continues the service that had been interrupted by the death of Aaron's 2 sons. Notice, Moses reminds them not to sin in the eating of the meat offering, lest they too might die. In other words, he says do it exactly the way you were instructed and do not add to or take away from the instructions. We see from the verse above, Aaron has 2 more sons Eleazar and Ithamar.

Leviticus 10:13 "And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it [is] thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the LORD made by fire: for so I am commanded."

Not in that which was properly so called, but in the court of the tabernacle. At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, as Aben Ezra. In some apartment there; for it was not to be carried out of the sanctuary, and eaten in their own houses or tents, as others might, after mentioned.

"Because it is thy due, and thy sons' due, of the offerings of the Lord made by fire": And not any others. Neither his wife nor his daughters, nor any other related to him, or whom he might invite, as in other cases, might eat of it. This none but he and his sons might eat of, and nowhere else but in the sanctuary.

"For so I am commanded": To make known and declare this as the will of God.

We remember from the earlier lessons that this was the part Aaron and his sons were to eat of the offering. They were to live of the things of the sanctuary.

Leviticus 10:14 "And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for [they be] thy due, and thy sons' due, [which] are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel."

The breast of the peace offerings that was waved, and the shoulder of them that was heaved before the Lord. These were given by him to the priests, towards the maintenance of their families (Lev. 7:34). And they might be eaten anywhere, provided the place was clean from all ceremonial pollution, and in which there were no polluted persons, as leprous ones. They were to be eaten within the camp, as Jarchi observes, where lepers came not. For, as he adds, the light holy things, such as these were, might be eaten in every city. And so it is said in the Misnah, and by the commentators on it.

"Thou and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee": These were not restrained to him and his sons only. As the meat offerings, and the flesh of the sin offerings were, but were common to the whole family.

"For they be thy due, and thy sons' due": For their service of the sanctuary, and by the appointment and direction of the Lord.

"Which are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel": Of which (see Lev. 7:1). These are said to be "given out" of them, for the whole was not given, only the breast and shoulder. And after the fat was burnt, the rest belonged to the owners, with which they kept a feast of joy and thankfulness.

The quarters that the family lived in is the place intended, but even in this place there must not be anything or anyone that would cause it to be unclean. As we said before, the priest's family was to live of the things of the tabernacle.

Leviticus 10:15 "The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave [it for] a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the LORD hath commanded."

Not the priests, but the owners to the priests (Lev. 7:29). With the offerings made by fire of the fat. Upon the inwards, kidneys, and caul of the liver, which was all burnt.

"To wave it for a wave offering before the Lord": The shoulder was lifted up, and the breast waved to and fro before the Lord of the whole earth. And towards the several parts of it, to show and own his right to all they had. And then they were given to the priests as a token of it.

"And it shall be thine, and thy sons with thee": Both the shoulder and the breast.

"By a statute for ever": To be observed as long as the ceremonial law and Levitical priesthood lasted. Even to the end of the Jewish age and economy, and the coming of the Messiah.

"As the Lord hath commanded (Lev. 7:33).

We will remember one thing in particular about this offering, which we have covered in other lessons. The heaving and waving of this before the Lord was thanking God for this and other blessings He had provided.

Verses 16-20: "Moses" was initially "angry" with Eleazar and Ithamar when he discovered they had "burnt" the entire carcass of the people's sin offering (9:15), instead of eating it as prescribed (6:26), until Aaron explained that the tragic events of the day had eradicated their hunger. God had mercy on them because they had done everything else properly.

Leviticus 10:16 "And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron [which were] left [alive], saying,"

The Targum of Jonathan says, "three goats were offered on that day. The goat of the new moon; of the sin offering for the people; and of the sin offering. Which Naashon the son of Amminadab offered at the dedication of the altar. Aaron and his sons, it adds, went and burnt these three.

Moses came and sought, etc. "Jarchi also speaks of three goats offered, but says that only one was burnt, the goat of the new moon. And so Ben Gersom, who gives this reason for the diligent search after it, because it was always to be offered up, and was not a temporary affair, as the others were. But it rather seems to be the goat of the sin offering for the people, for it is not certain that the other goats were offered on this day, but this was (see Lev. 9:15). Now according to the law, the flesh of this goat was not to be burnt, but to be eaten by the priests in the holy place (see Lev. 6:25). Moses now suspecting that Aaron and his sons, through their grief for the death of Nadab and Abihu, had neglected the eating of it, sought diligently after it, and so it proved.

"And, behold, it was burnt": As they had no appetite to it themselves, they burnt it, that it might not be eaten by any others, for none but they might eat it, and that it might not corrupt.

"And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, which were left alive": When their two elder brothers were killed with lightning for doing what was not commanded, which should have made them more observant of the laws of God, to do that which was commanded them. And though they were spared, and survived their brethren, yet they transgressed, in burning the sin offering of the people, when they should have eaten it. Jarchi observes, that he expressed his anger not to Aaron, but to his sons. Which he did for the honor of Aaron, laying the blame not on him, who was overwhelmed with grief, but on his sons.

"Saying": As follows.

In the confusion, when the 2 sons of Aaron had been killed of God, a grave error had been made in the offering Aaron had made. The sin offering which should have been eaten by the priest, had been burned. The error was, that Aaron had not eaten the meat of this offering for the congregation. Possibly in the commotion that followed the death of 2 of Aaron's sons there was a mistake made. Aaron took the blame upon himself for not seeing this done properly. He was so disturbed about his sons defiling the sanctuary, that he just overlooked this detail.

Leviticus 10:17 "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it [is] most holy, and [God] hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?"

The sin offering was one of the most holy things, and therefore to be eaten only in the sanctuary. Though this was not the fault they are here charged with that they had eat it, but not in the Holy Place. For they had not eaten it at all, but burnt it, as appears from the preceding verse. This is what they are blamed for particularly, though they are reminded of the whole law concerning it, that it was to be eaten by them. And that it was to be eaten in the Holy Place, the reason of which is given. But they had not eaten it anywhere.

"And God hath given it to you, to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord?" For by eating the sin offering, or sin itself, as it is in the original text (see Hosea 4:8). They made the sins of the people, for whom the offering was, in some sense their own. And they bore them, and made a typical atonement for them. In which they were types of Christ, who was made sin for his people, took their sins upon him, and by imputation they were

made his own. And he bore them in his own body on the tree, and made full satisfaction and atonement for them. Now since the eating of the sin offering of the people was of so great importance and consequence, the neglect of it by the priests was very blameworthy.

We see from this that, the ceremonial value of the priest eating this is what is concerning Moses. The minister of the congregation certainly does take the sins of the people on themselves as this states here. The main thing I see in this, however, is that Jesus the High Priest, has born the iniquity of us all. Jesus our High Priest is our atonement.

Leviticus 10:18 "Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy [place]: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy [place], as I commanded."

When that was the case, indeed, the flesh of the sin offering was not to be eaten, but burnt (see Lev. 6:30). But this was not the case now, and therefore its flesh should have been eaten, and not burnt.

"Ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded (Lev. 6:26).

Moses has seen the wrath of God devour two of Aaron's sons this day, and he is reminding Aaron of the seriousness of what he has done.

Verses 19-20: Aaron's explanation for their failure to eat their portion of the offering was grief rather than defiance; thus, Moses' anger was relieved. Good leaders learn to balance fault and penalty; some mistakes merit grace than severe consequences.

Leviticus 10:19 "And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and [if] I had eaten the sin offering today, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?"

For what Moses had said was said in his presence, though not addressed to him directly, but to his sons. And he was sensible that he was pointed at, and that if there was any blame in this affair, it lay as much or more on him than on his sons. And therefore, he takes it upon him to give an answer, and to excuse the fact as well as he could.

"Behold, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord": That is, the people of Israel had brought a kid of the goats for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb for burnt offering. And he and his sons assisting him, had offered them for them. Even on the very day his two eldest sons were removed by death in an awful manner.

"And such things have befallen me": At this very time, soon after the above sacrifices were offered, happened the death of his two sons. Which occasioned great anguish and distress, grief and sorrow, so that he could not eat of the sin offering. He had no appetite for it, and if he had, he thought in his present circumstances it would not have been right, as follows.

"And if I had eaten the sin offering today, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord? He being a mourner. The Jews say a high priest may offer, being a mourner, but not eat. A common priest may neither offer nor eat. And which they illustrate by this passage, that Aaron offered and did not eat, but his sons did neither.

Aaron gives his excuse for his actions here. He first defends the 2 remaining sons, by saying they have offered their sin offering. Then Aaron says, that because his other 2 sons sinned so great a sin in the sanctuary, he was not sure God still wanted him to eat the flesh of the offering. All of these statements are understandable under the circumstances.

Leviticus 10:20 "And when Moses heard [that], he was content."

He rested satisfied with his answer, either because he thought it reasonable, seeing the letter of the law often times yields to necessities or great accidents (2 Chron. 30:18; Matt. 12:3-4). Or at least because the things alleged were mitigations of his fault, and he would not add affliction to the afflicted, but rather defer the debate of it to a fitter opportunity.

In this we see that Moses accepts Aaron's excuses. Moses, it seems, was still in the position of authority over Aaron. It was in his (Moses' power), to excuse the oversight.

Leviticus Chapter 10 Continued Questions

1. What is different about verse 8 and the previous times God had sent a message?
2. Why does God speak to Aaron here?
3. Do not drink _____ or _____, thou, nor thy sons with thee.
4. Where was this ordinance from God for?
5. If Aaron or his sons disobeyed this ordinance, what would happen to them?
6. Most people who drink at all soon become _____.
7. Name an Old Testament person who did terrible things under the influence of strong drink.
8. Who was just as much to blame for the sin as he was?
9. What are most of the ordinances that God has made for?
10. Alcohol causes _____ thought.
11. Holiness requires separation from what?
12. Who was to teach God's statutes to the children of Israel?

13. What is the role of an evangelist?
14. What is the role of a pastor?
15. Which of these do Moses and Aaron remind us of?
16. Who did Moses tell to take of the meat offering and eat?
17. What did Moses warn them about eating this offering?
18. This most holy offering was to be eaten where?
19. What are the names of the two remaining sons of Aaron?
20. Where were they to eat of the wave breast and the heave shoulder?
21. Who were added to the list of people that could eat of this offering?
22. What was the one regulation placed on the eating of the peace offering?
23. What were the heaving and the waving of this offering symbolic of?
24. In the confusion when the 2 sons of Aaron were killed what did Aaron do that he should not have done?
25. Who was Moses angry with for this oversight?
26. What excuses did Aaron give for the error?
27. What had really concerned Moses in this?
28. What effect did this have on Moses?