

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT SHEMINI

Q-1. (a) (1) What was the date of “*yom ha-shemini*” (the 8th day) (2 views)? (2) What were 10 “firsts” on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*? **(b)** Why does the *parasha* begin with the word, “*va-yehi*” (It was) (3 views)? **(c)** Why did *Moshe* call *Yisrael’s* elders when telling *Aharon* about the *korbanot* (4 views)? **(d)** After *Moshe* had assembled and disassembled the *Mishkan* for 7 days and had acted as the *Kohen Gadol* by offering all of the *korbanot*, why did *Hashem* not appoint him as the permanent *Kohen Gadol*? (*Vayikra* 9:1-2)

A-1. (a) (1) (i) *Rosh Chodesh Nisan (Rashi)* – the 7 *miluim* days began on 23 *Adar*, which was the first of 7 days on which *Moshe* erected, disassembled and did the *avoda* in the *Mishkan*, and *Aharon* started doing the *avoda* on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan (Peirush Yonatan)*. (ii) 8 *Nisan* – *Moshe* first erected the *Mishkan* on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* and did the *avoda* through 7 *Nisan* – *Nadav* and *Avihu* died on 8 *Nisan*, and *Mishael* and *Eltzaphan* became *tamay* by removing their corpses. Since they were still *tamay* on 14 *Nisan* when the *korban Pesach* was slaughtered, *Hashem* gave the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini*, so that they could offer the *korban Pesach (ibn Ezra)*. (2) It was the 1st day (i) of the week, a Sunday, corresponding, per one view, to the start of Creation; (ii) that the *kohanim* began doing the *avoda*; (iii) that the *nesi'im* began to offer their consecration *korbanot*; (iv) on which communal *korbanot* were offered; (v) on which the Heavenly fire consumed the *korbanot*; (vi) that the *kohanim* ate *korbanot* in the *Torah*-designated area; (vii) that the *Shechina* settled in the *Mishkan*; (viii) that the *kohanim* blessed *Bnei Yisrael* with *Birchat Kohanim*; (ix) on which offering *korbanot* on *bamot* (private altars) was banned; (x) on which *Nisan* became the first month of the year (*Shabbat* 87b). **(b)** (1) *Hashem* “rejoiced” on this day, as He did at Creation, when *Parashat Bereishit* says, “*va-yehi erev, va-yehi bokef*” (*Torat Kohanim*). (2) “*Va-yehi*” indicates sadness – before the *cheit ha'eigel*, each Jew was close to *Hashem* without the need for the *Mishkan* – its erection demonstrated the loss of their closeness to *Hashem (Yisroel of Rizhin)*. (3) “*Va-yehi*” unhappily points to *Nadav’s* and *Avihu’s* deaths (*Shlomo Kluger*). **(c)** *Moshe* wanted (1) the elders to hear that *Hashem* had chosen *Aharon* as the *Kohen Gadol (Rashi)*. (2) to inform *Bnei Yisrael’s* representatives that they had to offer the *korbanot* described in 9:3 (*Ramban*). (3) to show *Bnei Yisrael* that *Aharon* would start the *avoda* only when *Hashem* commanded him to (*Gur Aryeh*). (4) 3 elders to lean on the communal *korbanot (Kli Yakar)*. **(d)** After *Moshe*, at the burning bush, refused to lead *Bnei Yisrael (Shemot* 4:13), *Hashem* punished him by removing his *Kohen Gadol* status and transferring the *kehuna* to *Aharon (Rokeach)*.

Q-2. (a) For the *Mishkan’s* consecration, why did *Hashem* tell (1) *Aharon* to offer a calf as a *chataf*? (2) *Bnei Yisrael* to offer (i) a goat as a *chataf*? (ii) an calf as an *olah*? (3) Why did *Hashem* choose the *Mishkan’s* inauguration as the proper time for offering a *korban* to atone for the sale of *Yosef*? **(b)** Why did *Aharon* have to burn the flesh and hide of his *chataf* completely? **(c)** (1) After doing the 1st day’s *avoda*, what blessing did *Aharon* give *Bnei Yisrael*? (2) Why did he bless them? (3) Why does 9:22 say, “*Aharon* raised his ‘hand’ (*yado* – singular) [to bless *Bnei Yisrael*], but we read it “*yadav*” (“his hands” – plural)? **(d)** Why did both *Moshe* and *Aharon* then enter the *Mishkan* (2 views)? (*Vayikra* 9:3,11,22-23)

A-2. (a) (1) To atone for his role in the *cheit ha'eigel (Rashi)*. (2) To atone for (i) the sale of *Yosef*, when his brothers dipped his coat in the blood of a goat; (ii) *Bnei Yisrael’s* role the *cheit ha'eigel* – those who committed the *cheit* had been killed by the *levi'im* or the plague, but others of *Bnei Yisrael* sinned in thought by failing to protest the *cheit*, warranting an *olah (Torat Kohanim)*. (3) *Yosef’s* sale showed strife among the *shevatim* – since the *Mishkan* was to serve as the spiritual center to unify *Bnei Yisrael*, this *korban* marked the start of an era of strife-free unity and friendship among *Bnei Yisrael (Oznayim laTorah)*. **(b)** By commanding that everything be burnt, *Hashem* showed that He had completely forgiven *Aharon* for the *cheit ha'eigel (Siftei Kohan)*. **(c)** (1) The *Birchat Kohanim* (priestly blessings), as stated in *Bamidbar* 6:23-27 (*Imrei Emet*). (2) *Aharon* had an overwhelming desire to bless them – the *Torah* never commanded the *kohanim* to bless *Bnei Yisrael* – they were merely given the text for doing it (*Sfat Emet*). (3) It teaches that a *kohen* should raise both hands, but one hand (his right) should be slightly higher (*Hagahot Maymaniot – Nesiyat Kapayim* 14:3). **(d)** (1) *Moshe* taught *Aharon* how to burn the *ketoret* on the *mizbei'ach ha-zahav*; (2) since *Aharon* thought that the *Shechina* would not rest on the *Mishkan* due to his role in the *cheit ha'eigel*, *Moshe* and he entered the *Mishkan* to pray for mercy (*Rashi*).

Q-3. (a) What was *Nadav’s* and *Avihu’s* sin (10 views)? **(b)** When did *Hashem* say, “I will be sanctified through those nearest me” (3 views)? **(c)** Why did *Moshe* command *Misha’el* and *Eltzaphan*, *Nadav’s* and *Avihu’s* cousins, to remove their corpses from the *Mishkan*, but not their closest relatives, i.e., their father, *Aharon*, nor their brothers, *Elazar* and *Itamar*? **(d)** Why did *Elazar* and *Itamar* not mourn for their brothers (2 reasons)? **(e)** A *kohen* who has drunk wine is banned from doing the *avoda* for what 3 reasons? **(f)** (1) How do we know that (i) an *aveil* (mourner), prior to the end of *shiva*, may not have his hair cut? (ii) an *onein* (one, whose close relative has died but has not been buried) must tear his garment? (2) If a *kohen* went to the place of the *mizbei'ach* in the *Beit haMikdash* but did not *avoda*, did he do a violation if (i) his hair was not properly cut? (ii) his garment was torn? (iii) he had drunk wine? (3) (i) When was a *kohen* who was in the *Beit haMikdash* banned from leaving the *Mikdash*? (ii) Why is this law banning leaving the *Mikdash* repeated for a *Kohen Gadol* in 21:12 – if a *kohen* could not leave, certainly a *Kohen Gadol* could not leave? (*Vayikra* 10:1-9)

A-3. (a) They (1) lit an alien fire on the *mizbei'ach*; (2) issued a *halachic* ruling in their teacher’s, *Moshe’s*, presence; (3) entered the *Mishkan* after having drunk wine; (4) entered with uncovered heads, lacking the proper *bigdei kehuna*; (5) entered the *Kodesh Kadashim*, a place only *Aharon* could enter on *Yom Kippur*; (6) deliberately stayed unmarried, waiting for *Elazar’s* and *Itamar’s* daughters to grow up; (7) sought leadership positions too soon – while *Moshe* and *Aharon* were alive; (8) thought that they had achieved such a high level of spiritual greatness that *Hashem* could judge them with the attribute of justice only, without mercy; (9) did not seek *Moshe’s* or *Aharon’s* advice, (10) nor each other’s advice (*Torat Kohanim*). **(b)** (1) In *Shemot* 29:43, *Hashem* had said, “and it [the *Mishkan*] shall be sanctified through My honor”, meaning, “through My honored ones” – *Moshe* told *Aharon* that he knew that the *Mishkan* would be sanctified through those close to *Hashem*, and he thought it would be one of them – now, seeing that it was sanctified though *Nadav* and *Avihu*, he realized that they were holier, i.e., nearer to *Hashem*, than he or *Aharon (Rashi)*. (2) *Hashem* had told *Moshe*, although not previously stated in the *Torah*, that those closest to Him are held to a higher standard and are punished more severely for sins, as were *Nadav* and *Avihu (ibn Ezra)*. (3) *Hashem* said to Himself that through *Nadav* and *Avihu’s* deaths, (i) those closest to Him – the *kohanim* – will learn not to “break through” the *Mishkan’s* boundaries that He set, and (ii) *Bnei Yisrael*, who are close to Him, will regard the *Mishkan* with great honor (*Ramban*). **(c)** *Moshe* asked *Mishael* and *Eltzaphan* since relatives must take care of the burial – while *Aharon*, as *Kohen Gadol*, was banned from becoming *tamay* by a close relatives’ death, *Elazar* and *Itamar* – regular *kohanim* – could have become *tamay*, but *Hashem* banned them since they had been inaugurated as *kohanim* on that very day, and He did not want any tuma to interfere with the inauguration (*Ramban*). **(d)** (1) It would have marred the inauguration celebration (*Rashi*). (2) On this day, *Elazar* and *Itamar*, anointed with *shemen ha-mishcha*, had the status of *Kohanim Gedolim*,

who may not engage in mourning (*Ramban*). **(e)** A *kohen* doing the *avoda* must be alert and humble – alcohol causes (1) sleepiness; (2) excessively bold behavior; and (3) diminished mental sharpness (*R. Bechaya*). **(f)** (1) 10:6 commands that *Aharon's* son (i) may not to let their hair grow as a sign of mourning, teaching that other mourners are banned from cutting their hair and must let it grow; (ii) may not tear their clothes as a sign of mourning, teaching that other mourners must tear their clothes; (2) (i) yes; (ii) yes; (iii) yes (*Rambam – Hilchot Aveil* 5:2; 8:1,15). (3) (i) If it was the time of the *avoda*, a *kohen* was not allowed to leave; (ii) if a *kohen* who was doing the *avoda*, learned that he had become an *onein*, he could not continue to do the *avoda* but could not leave the *Mikdash* – however, a *Kohen Gadol* who became an *onein* also could not leave, but he could continue to do the *avoda* (*Rambam – Hilchot Biyat haMikdash* 2:5-6).

Q-4. **(a)** Why does 10:12 pointedly call *Elazar* and *Itamar*, “*banav ha-notarim*” ([*Aharon's*] remaining sons) – we already know that they were his sons who survived? **(b)** Why did *Moshe* err about the *korban chatat* that *Aharon* had offered? **(c)** What error did *Moshe* think that *Aharon* had made? **(d)** Why does the 10:16 say, “*darosh, darash*” ([*Moshe*] “inquired”), twice (2 views)? **(e)** Since *Moshe* was upset that *Aharon* had burned the *korban*, why was he angry with *Elazar* and *Itamar*, not with *Aharon*? (*Vayikra* 10:12-20)

A-4. **(a)** As punishment for *Aharon's* role in the *cheit ha'eigel*, *Hashem* decreed that all of his sons would die (*Devarim* 9:20) – *Moshe* prayed for them, and He annulled half the decree (*Rashi*). **(b)** Anger leads to mistaken *Torah* learning – *Moshe's* anger toward *Elazar* and *Itamar* caused his error (*Malbim*). **(c)** A *kohen* who is an *onein* is disqualified from doing *avoda*, but an *onein Kohen Gadol* must do the *avoda* – *Moshe* was upset that while *Aharon* offered the *chatat*, as he was supposed to, he erroneously did not eat it – *Aharon* explained correctly that while he was allowed to offer the *korban*, he and his sons, as *onenim*, were banned from eating it – he burned it because there was no one who could eat it; **(d)** (1) *Moshe* had 2 questions – (i) why did *Aharon* burn, rather than eat, the *Rosh Chodesh chatat*? (ii) why did he eat the other *chatat's*? – contradictory actions (*Rashi*). (2) “*Darosh, darash*” are the midpoint of words in the *Torah*, intimating that one must never stop inquiring into the *Torah* to achieve even a halfway understanding of it (*Degel Machane Efrayim*). **(e)** To maintain *Aharon's* honor, *Moshe* chastised his sons, not him (*Rashi*).

Q-5. **(a)** Why do the *kashrut* laws follow *Nadav's* and *Avihu's* deaths? **(b)** How do the *kashrut* laws relate to the *cheit ha'eigel*? **(c)** Since most non-Jews who eat non-*kosher* food are quite healthy, why does the *Torah* ban Jews from eating *tereifa* and *neveila* foods? (*Vayikra* 11:2)

A-5. **(a)** *Nadav's* and *Avihu's* mistaken judgment led to a grave punishment – the *Torah* is teaching that we will avoid mistakes by eating the right foods, making us a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (*Hirsch*). **(b)** *Hashem* intended to dwell among *Bnei Yisrael* without a *Mishkan*, but after the *cheit ha'eigel*, the *Shechina* left *Bnei Yisrael* – He required *Bnei Yisrael* to observe these *kashrut* laws and the *tahara* laws in *Parshi'ot Tazria-Metzora*, which refined the nation's collective character, so that He could dwell among them (*Sforno*). **(c)** Non-*kosher* food may not hurt people physically but does spiritually, impairing their souls' purity (*Abarbanel*).

Q-6. **(a)** (1) What is the only animal (i) with a split hoof that does not chew its cud? (ii) that chews its cud but does not have a split hoof? (2) Which fish has fins but not scales? **(b)** (1) Why does the *Torah* list the 20 species of non-*kosher* birds, not the *kosher* birds, as it does for the *kosher* animals? (2) What are the 4 signs of a *kosher* bird? (3) How many of these signs make it *kosher* (4 rules)? (4) Since the *Torah* tells us the signs of a *kosher* bird, why do we eat only birds with a *mesora* (tradition) of *kashrut*? (5) What are the 3 signs of a *kosher* locust? (6) How do we know that for any non-*kosher* animal, its eggs and milk are also non-*kosher*? **(c)** (1) Why may we not eat *sheratzim* (creeping things)? (2) Why is “*gachon*” (belly) spelled with a large *vav* (3 reasons)? (3) When the *Torah* says that *sheratzim* will make you *tamay*, why is “*veni-tamaytem*” (will make you *tamay*) spelled without an *alef*? **(d)** (1) Which 7 liquids render a food *tamay*? (2) (i) Which kind of *tamay* vessel cannot be rendered *tahor* in a *mikvah*? (ii) How can such a vessel become *tahor*? (3) Why does 11:45 mention *yetziat Mitzrayim* when banning eating *sheratzim* and other non-*kosher* foods (2 reasons)? (*Vayikra* 11:2-9,13-18,22, 33-45)

A-6. **(a)** (1) (i) Pig; (ii) camel – since they have only one *kashrut* sign, not both signs, they are non-*kosher*; (2) none – every *kosher* fish has both signs – there is no fish with only one sign (*Rambam – Hilchot Ma'achalot Asurot* 1:2,24). **(b)** (1) Only the species listed are non-*kosher* – all others, which are more numerous, are *kosher*, but for animals, the non-*kosher* ones are more numerous; (2) it (i) is not *dorais* (predatory); has (ii) an extra claw; (iii) a *zefek* (crop); (iv) a *kurkevan niklaf* (gizzard that can be peeled); (3) if it is not *dorais* and (i) has none of the other signs, it is *kosher*, except for the *peres* (bearded vulture) and *ozniya* (sea eagle), which are not *kosher*, but these 2 birds do not live in human habitations; (ii) has another one of the other signs, it is *kosher*, if it is not in the raven family, which has many of these signs but is not *kosher*; (iii) has 2 of the other signs, it is *kosher*, if it is not in crow family, which is not *kosher*; (iv) has all 3 of the other signs, it is not *kosher* (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 157). (4) Since we are unsure of the identities of the listed non-*kosher* birds, we need a *mesora* to be certain that a bird is *kosher* (*Yoreh De'ah* 82:2). (5) It has (i) 4 legs; (ii) 4 wings that cover most of its length and circumference; (iii) 2 additional legs with which it leaps (*Hilchot Ma'achalot Asurot* 1:22). (6) 11:16 says that an ostrich (*bat haya'ana*) is not *kosher* – calling the ostrich “daughter of the *ya'ana*” tells us its “daughter” i.e., its eggs, are not *kosher* – similarly, the produce of any other non-*kosher* animal is non-*kosher* (with the exception of honey, which is *kosher*, although bees are non-*kosher*, and the milk of a *kosher* animal is *kosher*, although its blood, from which milk is derived, is non-*kosher* (*Chulin* 64b). **(c)** (1) Since the *nachash* (snake) is a *sheretz*, not eating *sheratzim* reminds us of *Adam's* sin, which inflicted death on mankind (*Ba'al haTurim*). (2) This *vav* (i) is the *Torah's* middle letter (*Kiddushin* 30a). (ii) signifies the 6 curses inflicted on the *nachash* (*Peirush haRokeach*). (iii) was the shape of the *nachash's* arms and legs (*Rabbeinu Efrayim*). (3) Without the *alef*, it can be read “*veni-tamtem*” (you will be blocked) – eating *sheratzim* blocks one from achieving *kedusha* in *olam haba* (*Rashi*). **(d)** (1) (i) Water; (ii) dew; (iii) wine; (iv) oil; (v) blood; (vi) milk; (vii) honey (*Machshirim* 6:4). (2) (i) An earthenware vessel; (ii) by breaking it, it becomes *tahor* (*Rambam – Hilchot Mikva'ot* 1:3). (3) (i) The *Mitzrim's* immorality made it difficult for any person to determine who was a firstborn, but *Hashem* knew whom to slay – similarly, He will punish one who secretly sells non-*kosher* food to Jews, while pretending it is *kosher*; (ii) *Bnei Yisrael's* observance of just the *mitzvah* of not eating *sheratzim* and other non-*kosher* foods would have been sufficient merit for *Hashem's* redeeming them from *Mitzrayim* (*Bava Metzia* 61b).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, what was *Uzah's* fourfold sin for which *Hashem* killed him? (*II Shmuel* 6:7)

A-7. *Uzah* **(a)** transported the *aron* in a wagon, instead of on the shoulders; **(b)** touched the *aron*, not lifting it with the staves; **(c)** was a non-*Levi* – the *aron* had to be carried by *levi'im*; **(d)** feared the *aron's* falling, showing a lack of faith in *Hashem's* Providence over it (*Abarbanel*).