



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 17 | Shmini | Sichah 2

**Removing the bodies of Nadav and Avihu is part of the service in the *Mishkan* and therefore must be done by Levites. The offering of sacrifices is “G-d’s joy”; the consumption of sacrificial meat is the “joy of the bride.”**

### **Vayikra 10:4**

*Moshe called Mishael and Eltzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aharon, and said to them, “Come forward and carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp.”*

**Rashi:** *Carry your relatives* — Like one who says to his fellow, “Remove the corpse from before the bride in order not to disturb the joy.”

The commentators explain that the seemingly unnecessary phrase, “from the front of the sanctuary,” indicates to Rashi that the purpose of removing the corpses was not simply in order to bury them, but rather, for the sake of preserving the joy of the *Mishkan*’s dedication.

If so, why does Rashi not cite these critical words in his introductory quote from the verse?

Furthermore, why does Rashi add the metaphor of the bride? “In order not to disturb the joy” seems self-understood and sufficient.

Rashi addresses a fundamental, general difficulty in this verse, as well as a particular problem. The fundamental difficulty: Why would Moshe need to

issue a command to remove Nadav and Avihu's corpses? Wouldn't the Jews have done so regardless?

And the particular difficulty: Why does Moshe stress the fact that Nadav and Avihu are Mishael and Elzaphan's "relatives"? We already know this from the beginning of this verse ("sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aharon"). Even more curious — why does the task of burying the corpses "outside the camp" fall to the Levites, whose job is to serve inside the *Mishkan*, rather than to an Israelite?

To resolve this, Rashi explains that this command was more than just about burial; it was part of the service of the *Mishkan*. Namely, the intent of this command was to ensure that the joy of the dedication would not be marred by a reminder of death. Therefore, it had to be done by a family member of the deceased, a Levite.

But Rashi adds the metaphor of the bride because this clarifies who would have been disturbed by the presence of the corpses. Clearly, it cannot be said that G-d's sees these deaths as spoiling the dedication, because He is the one who punished Nadav and Avihu in the midst of the celebration! Moshe's command is not based on G-d's instruction; it was Moshe's own human response, "like one who says to his friend" to remove a corpse so as not to disturb the "bride's joy." In the marriage metaphor, G-d is the groom and the Jewish people are the bride. With this addition, Rashi clarifies that Moshe is concerned for the Jewish people's discomfort with the corpses rather than G-d's discomfort.

This is in contrast to Moshe's command to Aharon and his sons to refrain from expressing their mourning in the *Mishkan*, regarding which Rashi comments, "you shall not disturb G-d's happiness." (*Vayikra* 10:6) When it comes to the *kohanim* themselves, whose job is to orchestrate the dedication, their mourning would dampen G-d's "joy." The corpses, however, affect the joy of the people.

This distinction between G-d's joy and the people's joy also sheds light on the conversation between Moshe and Aharon regarding the burning of the Rosh Chodesh sin-offering. Moshe felt it should have been eaten by Aharon and his sons, despite their mourning, just as they ate the meal offering, so as not to disturb G-d's joy in the dedication. Aharon answered that G-d's joy is only relevant regarding the service at the altar, namely, the offering and burning of sacrifices. Eating sacrifices, however, is the joy of the people, "the bride." That sin offering had to be offered despite their mourning in deference to G-d's joy, but abstaining from eating was an expression of their own private mourning that did not take place in the manifest presence of G-d, at the altar. As for eating the *mincha* offering in a state of mourning — this, Aharon argued, was an exception made for a one-time offering in honor of the dedication of the *Mishkan*.

The lesson: The removal of death, of negativity, is an integral part of creating a dwelling place for G-d in the world and must be done by all who consider themselves to be "servants of G-d."