

17.

MESSAGE 13

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 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:

	<u>Pages</u>
4. The deviation of Moses, Eleazar, and Ithamar excused (10:12-20)	2-8
a. Moses instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to complete the offerings that had been begun before Nadab and Abihu’s offense (10:12-15)	2-4
b. Moses discovered their deviation (10:16-18)	4-7
c. Moses accepted Aaron’s explanation (10:19-20)	7-8

Interpretation

CHAPTER 10

- a. Moses instructed Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar to complete the offerings that had been begun before Nadab and Abihu’s sin (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 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 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; MESSAGE 10). It continued with the first offerings over which the new priests officiated (Lev. 9:1-21; MESSAGE 10), the blessing of the people by the new priests (Lev. 9:22-23a; 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; 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; MESSAGE 12). Immediately after returning from the burial, Moses gave Moses and his sons the instructions that are contained in this MESSAGE. Thus, MESSAGES 10, 11, 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 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 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.

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 in MESSAGE 5 under the heading The Holy Place; concerning the meaning of "fire-offerings," see comments on Lev. 1:9 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 (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.

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). 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 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 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 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 and on Lev. 5:2,3 in MESSAGE 2, on Lev. 6:11; in MESSAGE 5, on Lev. 7:19-21 in MESSAGE 7, on Lev. 10:10 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 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 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings).

Verse 15. **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 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 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 assigned them to the priests.

b. Moses discovered their deviation
(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 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 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 rededication-offering and a bull and a ram for a slaughter-offering (see comments on Lev. 9:3 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 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 in MESSAGE 2) and the meat was eaten by the priests (see comments on Lev. 6:26 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 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 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.

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 (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 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading [It is] a holiness of holiness and on Lev. 6:16-17 in MESSAGE 5).

and He gave it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation. In Leviticus 5:1,17; 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 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 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading to cover over him).

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, 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 and on Lev. 4:16-18 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 rededication-offering, and pour the remainder at the base of the altar (see comments on Lev. 4:25 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 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 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 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.

- c. Moses accepted Aaron's explanation (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. 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 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 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.

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.