

Leviticus 10

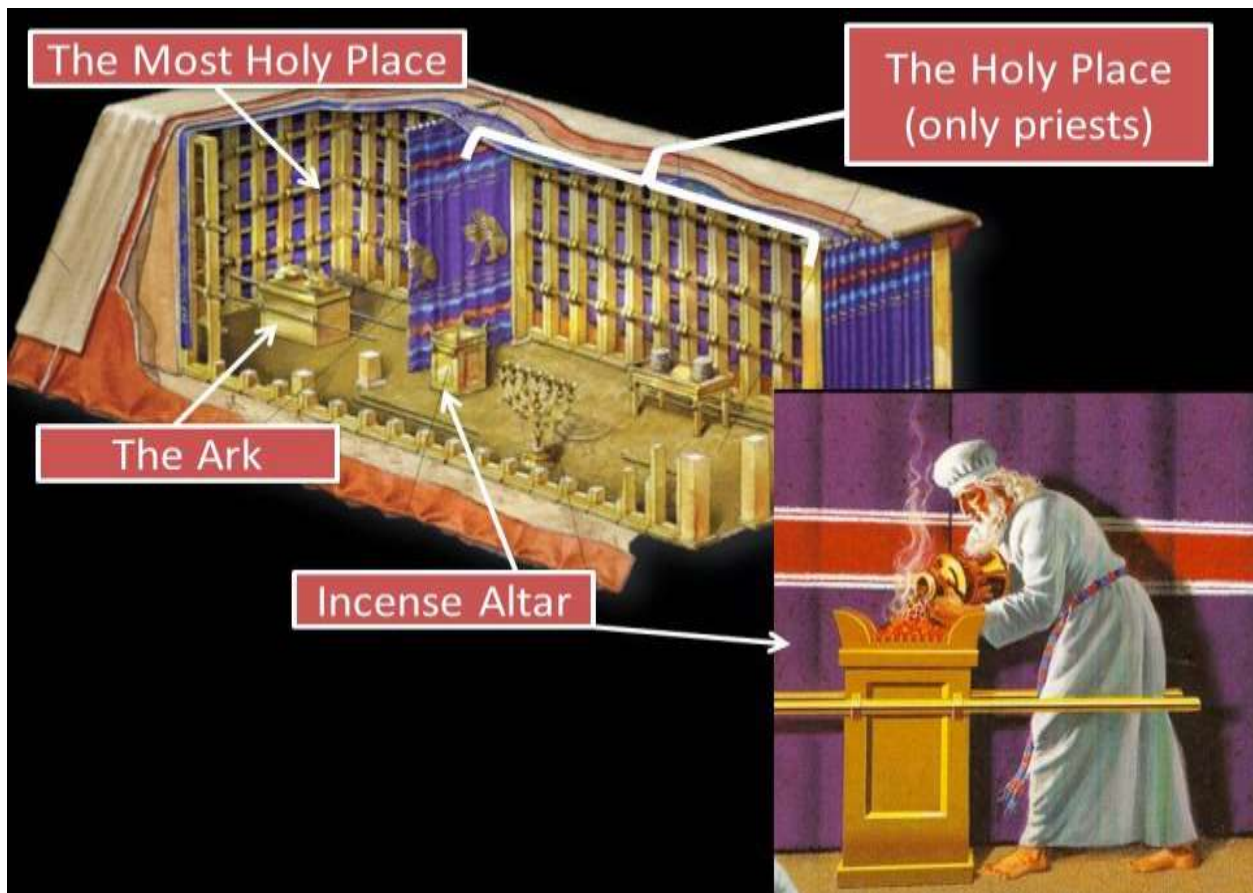
Verses 1-3

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. ² And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 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.

Now Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord

Since incense was used, we can assume it was at the altar of incense

See Pic 1005



What made this fire strange?

Did they use firepans that were not part of the tabernacle equipment?

Did they take coals of fire from some place other than the brazen altar?

Did they put incense on the firepans, instead of sprinkling it on the altar?

Some commentators have suggested that they may have entered the Holy of Holies.

See Lev. 16:1- 2

Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the Lord and died. ² The Lord said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the atoning cover which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the atoning cover.

However, verse 1 seems to imply that the strange fire was the problem.

If they had entered the Holy of Holies it seems like that would have been mentioned here, since it seems like the greater of these two sins.

However, in scripture, it is not uncommon for additional details of a past event to be revealed at a later point in time.

Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them

The translation here seems a bit odd when they use the word “consumed”.

Neither their bodies nor their ceremonial dress were consumed. See Verse 5

However, we do know that the two men were killed instantaneously.

We should not assume that their punishment meant they were lost.

See 1 Corinthians 11:27 - 32

Because of their disrespect for the Lord's Supper some Corinthians died but the judgment was sent in order that they might not perish.

This is also probably true in the case of Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:7-8.

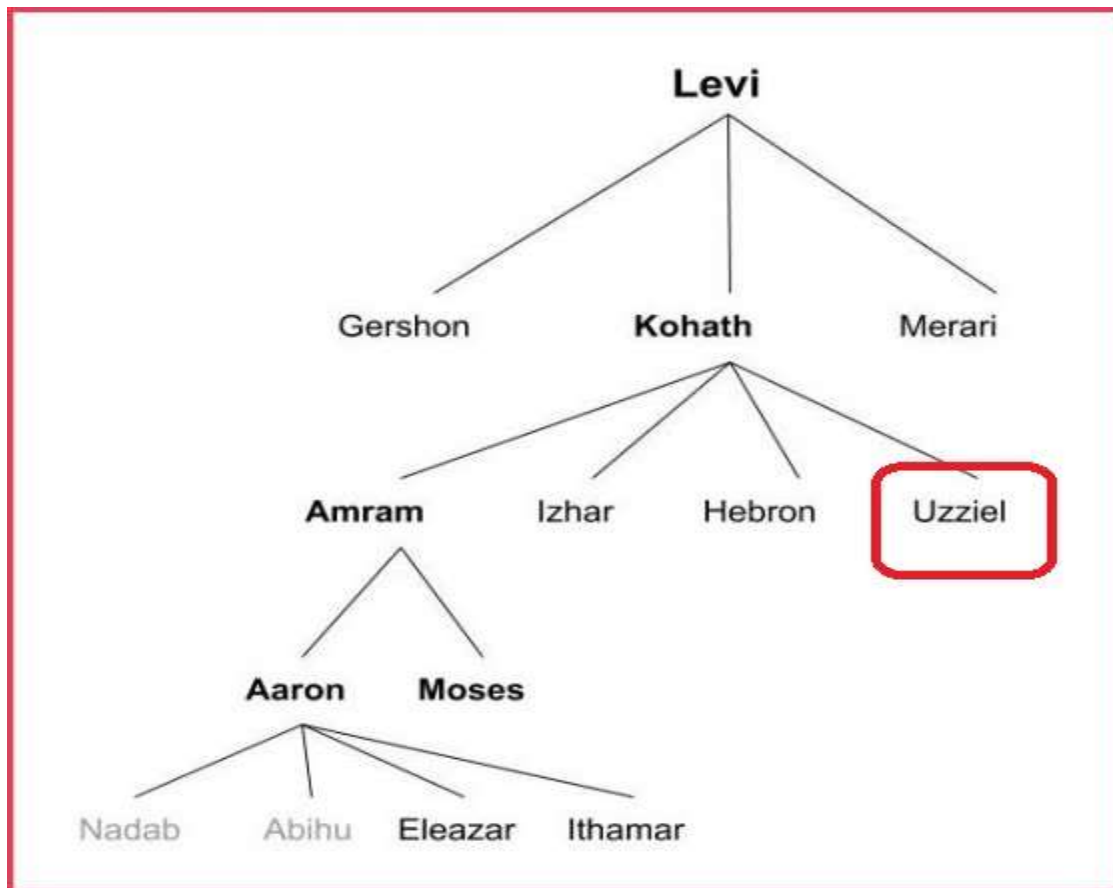
Verses 4-7

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

Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel

They were Levites (but not priests) and cousins of the stricken brothers.

See pic 1010



The Levites who were not priests were given various duties in the caretaking of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

But only the priests could offer sacrifices in the Tabernacle.

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

This fire that killed them did not destroy their garments. It seems the Lord may have used some strange fire on them.

It should also be noted that Nadab and Abihu were put to death on the first day after they officially became priests.

At first glance this may appear unfair, but this took place at the very beginning of the new priesthood and God had to set an example.

This also happened at the beginning of the church, when Ananias and Sapphira lied about their gift to the church.

See Acts 5:1-11

Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, Do not uncover your heads

This may mean do not shave your head. The practice of Jewish men covering their head did not appear until the 5th century AD

Nor tear your clothes

This prohibition may have been limited to this situation and/or this kind of sin.

Verses 8-11

The Lord then spoke to Aaron, saying, 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—¹⁰ and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.”

Do not drink wine or strong drink when you come into the tent of meeting

The priests had a position of authority and influence in the Jewish community.

1. They offered sacrifices for the only True God
2. They were to be teachers to the people:

They taught the distinction between what was holy and unholy and between what was clean and unclean.

They also had the duty to teach the people all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them through Moses.

God had to state the obvious since some people lack common sense.

Verses 12-15

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. 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. 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. 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.”

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

Aaron and his two sons were told to eat part of the grain offering

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.

The breast and thigh went to Aaron and his immediate family.

Verses 16-20

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, 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. 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." 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?" ²⁰ When Moses heard *that*, it seemed good in his sight.

So Moses was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar. Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place?

Aaron's sons were told not to grieve for their dead brothers but the circumstances of that day caused them to decline the portion that was due to them from their sin offering.

They must have paused in answering Moses so Aaron spoke.

But Aaron spoke to Moses.....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?

Aaron said he would have done the same thing.

They had shown respect for their departed brothers by not eating the portion of the sin offering that they had a right to eat.

But what about following the law? Isn't that important?

Yes it is, but showing mercy is also part of the law, and mercy triumphs over judgment.

If Aaron and his sons were wrong about this matter, God would have told them so.