

PARSHAT SHEMINI
LEVITICUS 9:1-11:47
HAFTARAH II SAMUEL 6:1-7:17
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Ad Marginem
Watercolor on paper by Paul Klee

GENESIS ETERNAL!

1. Nadav and Abihu offered strange fire before Adonai...and fire came forth from Adonai and consumed them. (Leviticus 10:1-2)
2. They put the Ark of God on a new cart and took it out of the house of Abinadab...while David and the rest of the Israelites were dancing before God to the sound of instruments of cedar wood – harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals. (II Samuel 6:3-5)

But when they got to the threshing-floor of Nachon, the oxen nearly upset the cart, and Uzzah reached out for and seized hold of the Ark of God, and the Eternal grew furious with Uzzah and God struck him down on the spot. (II Samuel 6:6-7)

David diverted the Ark to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The Ark of the Eternal remained at the house of Obed-Edom for three months, and the Eternal blessed Obed-Edom and all his family. (Samuel II 6:10-11)

3. Overwhelmed by joy on perceiving the new fire, they sought to redouble their love; whereupon they “took each one his censer...” (Midrash, Sifra 24)

Nadav and Abihu did not maliciously transgress the word of God. But in their superabundant joy they lost judgment and entered the Holy of Holies to burn fire incense although this had not been commanded. In their excessive love they were eager to minister before God with new incense, in addition to the dedicatory offerings of the day. (Moses Mendelssohn, Biur)

4. ...and Aaron was silent. (Leviticus 10:3)
5. Jewish ways of reading yield fragments. The God in this tradition leaves traces....This is a text and a God and a people and a reading habit that give their due to fissure....The rich textual witness to that dislocation [exile] is sufficient evidence that Israel did not know what to say, any more than we do in our moment of fissure. (Walter Brueggemann, “A Fissure Always Uncontained”)

1. Art recalls the memory
of his true existence
to whoever has forgotten
that Being is the one thing
all the universe shouts

Only return of thought to
Its source will complete thought.
Only return of activity
To its source will complete
Activity. Listen to that.

(Allen Ginsberg, “This Is About Death”)