

The Lost Diary of Nadab and Abihu Found! By W. Frank Walton

The following satire should help us learn a Biblical lesson on respecting the limits of divine authority in our faith and practice: “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2; Rom. 15:4).

PRESS RELEASE: The world of archaeology was giddy with the sensational discovery in the Sinai desert of the long lost and previously unknown diary of two ancient Jewish priests – Nadab and Abihu. These sons of Aaron had a short-lived career in Leviticus but managed to secretly record their enlightened spiritual aspirations. The compact papyrus diary was in remarkably excellent shape, except for the edges of the scroll having been singed by fire all around.

Here are some excerpts from Abihu’s deep, soul-searching spirituality: “As spiritual leaders, Nadab and I are excited about the possibility of bringing about positive change in our repressive, narrow legalistic sect. While we owe much to our religious heritage of belief in a covenant-keeping God that sustained us in Egypt, the legalistic prohibitions of Moses chafe our loins from making strides into greater spirituality, self-actualization, emotional fulfillment, and knowledge of spiritual mysteries. In this new age, brethren must learn to think outside of the tent.

Who are we, as Jews, to be so narrow-minded and exclusive that God has only one way? How arrogant for Aaron and Moses to say we alone have the truth of God. How odd for our little group to stand apart from the world and say we alone can know the true way of God.

Legalistic rules will kill this movement, like this ridiculous rule that we are only authorized to get fire from only one place to offer incense! How superstitious! It’s like this so-called “law of silence” that our forefather Noah was only authorized to build the ark out of gopher wood, since God was silent about any other wood. How silly! True worship for us is not about keeping trivial rules but feeling the awesome presence of God. Rigid patternism is so deadening.

How sad that we Jews began, when God called Abraham, as a unifying movement of mankind. Did not God say to the founder of our movement, “Through you Jews all the families of the earth shall be blessed”? Somehow this movement has gone awry into sectarian narrowness. Instead of simplistic faith, we need a fresh wind from the Spirit of change to breathe new life into our movement. Now it is so emotionally stifling and rigid!

We need to send a delegation to grovel before the Canaanite God Convention to apologize for our intolerant narrowness and exclusive religion, so we’ll be accepted into the Land of Promise with open arms. God is the God of all men, not just Jews. How arrogant to say that God only spoke to us and gave His blessings only to us.

We are all sons of Noah. Who is to say that the sincerity of our estranged fleshly brethren descended from Noah who approach God, as they understand Him, is any better than ours? In fact, they seem to be so sincere and wise, like the gracious wisdom of the insightful Egyptians, Ptahhote and Amenemope, or Hammurabi of Mesopotamia, and Ahikar of Assyria. We can’t bring ourselves to say they are wrong and hurt their

feelings – but we sure know our narrow-minded brethren are wrong and who cares how they feel!

We need to apologize to the Edomites, our brothers, for excluding them and being so arrogant as to say that God's covenant with us excludes them from the table of fellowship in Yahweh. God has surely been working through the wise men of Edom, who are world renown for their insightful spirituality.

Since Moses said at Mount Sinai that all Israel is a priestly nation to minister to the nations, we take this as a paradigm to broaden our fellowship. Don't the elders of Israel know that to broaden the appeal of the covenant that they must adopt the spirit of the age? Pluralism is the only thing that will work in our ministry before the world. We can no more believe and practice alike than look alike.

Monotheism makes us a laughing stock in the universities of Egypt. Nobody in the religious world believes this stuff except our own little group!

We feel led by God's Spirit to lead our fellowship of God's people into greater liberty of conscience and belief, as was done by the patriarchs.

Today, we will bravely experiment with offering a new and exciting type of fire in worship. We feel we will experience an overwhelming moving of the power of God."

And so they did, when they offered "unauthorized fire" (NIV) in worship (Lev. 10:1-4)!

So, we must remember "to not exceed what is written" (1Cor. 4:6) in our religious service to God. The New Testament is a complete and perfect pattern for "life and godliness" (2Peter 1:3; 2Tim. 1:13, 3:16-17). Let's remember this OT warning of Nadab and Abihu's unauthorized worship (1Cor 10:6). It is both spiritually safe and satisfying to abide only in Christ's Word (John 8:31-32), to respect the limit of God's revelation (Isa. 66:2), and not to presume upon His silence as permissive (Heb. 7:14; 1Peter 4:11; Rev. 22:18-19)!

Learning from the Pharisees

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matt. 23:25-26).

The Queen Mary was the largest ship to cross the oceans when it was launched in 1936. Through four decades and a world war she served until she was retired, anchored as a floating hotel and museum in Long Beach, California. During its conversion, the ship's three massive smokestacks were taken off to be scraped down and repainted. However, when they were placed on the dock, they crumbled. Nothing was left of the 3/4 inch steel plate from which the stacks had been formed. All that remained were more than thirty coats of paint that had been applied over the years. The steel had rusted away. (From Illustrations for Preach and Teaching, p. 107).

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who were corrupt inwardly, but appeared righteous outwardly. Let us cleanse ourselves inwardly that we might also be clean outwardly.

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that

observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do” (Matt. 23:1-3).

A certain fountain pen salesman persuaded a merchant to order 500 dozen pens. He was writing the order in his notebook when suddenly the merchant exclaimed, "Hold on! I'm canceling that order!" Then he turned to wait on a customer. The salesman left the store perplexed and angry. Later, the merchant's bookkeeper asked, "Why did you cancel that fountain pen order?" "Why?" responded the merchant, "because he talked fountain pens to me for half an hour, using a number of forcible arguments, and then booked my order with a lead pencil. His practice did not agree with his instruction." Let us practice what we preach.