

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel and the fallen soldiers of the IDF. Praying for the safe return of all the hostages.

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VOLUME 37 | #31

DAF HASHAVUA

שְׁמִינִי | SHEMINI

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 8.31pm
 Birmingham 8.39pm
 Cardiff 8.47pm
 Dublin 8.59pm
 Edinburgh 8.57pm
 Glasgow 9.01pm
 Hull 8.42pm
 Leeds 8.41pm
 Liverpool 8.50pm
 Manchester 8.46pm
 Nottingham 8.43pm
 Sheffield 8.45pm
 Southend 8.27pm
 Southport 8.53pm
 Jerusalem 7.40pm

Parashat Hachodesh

Shabbat Mevarachim
 Rosh Chodesh Nisan
 is on Tuesday

 The
 United
 Synagogue

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – VAYIKRA 9:1-16

The sidra begins almost a year after the Exodus from Egypt, on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. After seven days of inaugurating the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), Moshe instructs Aharon to bring two special offerings, an elevation offering (*olah*) and a sin offering (*chatat*). The people are also told to bring a *chatat*, two *olah* offerings and two peace offerings (*shelamim*). Aharon approaches the altar (*mizbeach*), together with his sons, and they begin the process of bringing these offerings.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 9:17-23

Aharon and his sons finish the offerings, after which Aharon blesses the people with the priestly blessing (Rashi). Moshe and Aharon then bless the people that the Divine presence will rest upon them (Rashi).

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 9:24-10:11

A fire comes from heaven and consumes the offerings on the *mizbeach*. The people fall to the ground in awe of God. Nadav and Avihu, two of Aharon's sons, bring an incense offering (*ketoret*) in a pan, which they had not been commanded to do. A fire descends from God, killing them instantly. Aharon is silent. Moshe asks two of their cousins to remove the bodies. Moshe tells Aharon and his two surviving sons, Elazar and Itamar, not to display any mourning in public. God says to Aharon that no one is allowed to perform the service in the *Mishkan* when drunk.

Point to Consider: *What reward did Aharon receive for his silence? (see Rashi to 10:3)*

4TH ALIYA (REVI') – 10:12-15

Moshe tells Aharon and his sons to eat the remaining parts of a special meal offering (*mincha*) that they themselves had brought that day, as well as parts of the *shelamim* offering which they had also brought.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 10:16-19

Moshe criticises Elazar and Itamar (Aharon's other sons) for burning one of the *chatat* offerings instead of eating parts of it. Aharon defends their actions, based on their status as mourners (Rashi). Moshe accepts Aharon's justification.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 11:1-32

God teaches Moshe and Aharon some of the laws of *kashrut*. Only an animal with completely split hooves and which chews the cud is kosher. Therefore, animals like the camel and pig, which have only one of these characteristics, are forbidden. Fish are only kosher if they have both fins and scales. The Torah lists forbidden birds by name. Flying insects are also prohibited food, with limited exceptions (that are today difficult to identify). Kosher animals which die without proper slaughter (*shechitah*), as well as dead non-kosher animals, transmit ritual impurity (*tumah*) to one who touches them.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI') – 11:33-47

The Torah lists some basic laws of how certain utensils can become impure (*tameh*) and how they need to be treated thereafter. All creeping insects are forbidden to eat. Keeping these laws allows a person to become sanctified and holy.

MAFTIR (SHEMOT 12:1-20)

The special reading for Shabbat HaChodesh is taken from parashat Bo, declaring Nisan as the first of the months and introducing the Jewish calendar and the laws of Pesach.

HAFTARAH (YEchezkel 45:16-46:18)

The haftarah for Shabbat Hachodesh is from Yechezkel (Ezekiel), detailing the different weekly, monthly and festival offerings that the prince (*Nasi*) will be obligated to bring in the Third Temple.



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis

Editorial and Production Team:

Rabbi Daniel Sturgess
Rabbi Michael Laitner
Rebbetzen Nechama Davis
Joanna Rose
Laurie Maurer
Richard Herman
Tatiana Krupiniina

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please contact

education@theus.org.uk

Wine and Service of God



**RABBI
SAM
FROMSON**

Community Rabbi
at Golders Green
Synagogue

On the eighth day of intense joy, celebrating the consecration of the *Mishkan* (portable Sanctuary), tragedy strikes. Nadav and Avihu "offered before God alien fire which had not been commanded to them. Fire came forth before God and consumed them and they died before God" (Vayikra 10:1-2). The intensity and suddenness of this punishment is incredibly jarring. Why does God punish them so abruptly?

The Midrash in *Vayikra Rabba*, quoted by Rashi (1040-1105), explains that they died because of wine - they were drunk and disgraced God with their actions.

This is not the first time we have a bad experience with wine in the Torah. The Talmud in *Sanhedrin* (70a) suggests that wine was the cause of the downfall of Adam in Gan Eden, saying that "the Tree of Knowledge was the grape vine... for there is nothing that brings as much misery to human beings as wine". Wine was the cause of disaster on the day where Noah (Noah) first re-dedicated the world following the flood, when Noah fell into a drunken stupor and his "nakedness is uncovered" by his son Ham. And

the Midrash describes that for the seven years when Solomon was building the Temple, he drank no wine. However, on the night of the inauguration he drank wine and married Pharaoh's daughter, and it was then that God resolved that the Temple would ultimately be destroyed.

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch (1808-1888) explains that Nadav and Avihu lost all sense of boundaries, they drank and assumed that they could approach God on their own terms. In their drunken state they sought to embellish the service of the *Mishkan*, to serve God as they saw fit and ignore what Moshe (Moses) had instructed. Breaching boundaries is the common thread between all these stories above. Adam breached the only fundamental boundary God had commanded in Gan Eden, not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Noah's son breached all boundaries of the parent-child relationship, and Solomon breached the boundaries of

marital holiness by bringing a non-Jewish Egyptian into his bed.

Drinking wine is not intrinsically bad. We usher in Shabbat over wine, use wine to say *Havdalah*, and say the *berachot* (blessings) in the wedding ceremony over wine. These are times when we are trying to break down boundaries in a positive way and open ourselves up to spirituality. There is a great power to this, and it must be treated with care.

Breaking boundaries is one of the most dangerous things in a relationship and Nadav and Avihu overstepped those boundaries.

They crossed from worship of God to worship of the self. Boundaries create security and sanctity, whether in a marriage, parent-child relationships or in our connection with God. We must know how to let down our guard to remain open to new influences and experiences, but sometimes when boundaries are breached, it can lead to devastation. Our task is to tread that line carefully - to remain open, yet at the same time to respect the boundaries in our relationships, both interpersonally and with God.



The Diasporan Threat to the Spiritual Centrality of the Land of Israel

Tannaim and their Cities: Part 33 | Rabbi Yehoshua / Rabbi Chananya

This series of articles takes a closer look at the Tannaim (Sages of the Mishnaic era) mentioned in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 32b) and the locations which served as their Torah centres.



**DAVID
FREI**

US Director of External
and Legal Services and
Registrar of the London
Beth Din

The Talmudic passage in *Sanhedrin 32b* on which this series is based, lists prominent Rabbinic scholars and the cities in which their academies were situated. One such academy is the yeshiva of "Rabbi Yehoshua in Golah". This identification is questionable given that earlier in the passage, we were told to follow Rabbi Yehoshua to Peki'in (see our previous article on this subject). Parallel texts quoting this passage (*Ein Yaakov Sanhedrin 32b*, *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Remez 611* and *Sefer HaYuchasin*) state that it was Rabbi Yehoshua's nephew, Rabbi Chananya, whose yeshiva was in Golah. The simple meaning of Golah is 'Diaspora' and in this case is a reference to Rabbi Chananya having moved to Babylonia from Israel, where he was raised.

Scholars believe that he spent two separate periods in Babylonia. The first was after an incident where heretics had, through witchcraft, caused him public embarrassment and his paternal uncle, Rabbi Yehoshua, had advised him to leave the country (*Midrash Rabba: Kohelet 1:8*).

The second time he left Israel was in the wake of the Bar Kochba

Revolt (132-136 CE), after which Emperor Hadrian imposed harsh decrees against the learning of Torah and mitzvah observance. Rabbi Chananya apparently took the view that the continuation of Jewish tradition would thenceforth be impossible in Israel, and he sought to set up an alternative Torah centre in Babylonia.

The Talmud (*Berachot 63*) reports how Rabbi Chananya began to determine when a Jewish calendar year should be a leap year by the addition of a second Adar. This process had, according to *Halacha*, been the exclusive right of the Sages in the Land of Israel and two rabbis were dispatched from Israel to Babylonia to challenge Rabbi Chananya's presumption to determine the Jewish calendar outside Israel.

When they arrived, Rabbi Chananya asked why they had come, and on their responding that they had travelled to learn Torah

... all those in Babylonia accepted the need to preserve national unity and accepted that they would only accept the rulings of the Sages of the Land of Israel in all matters.

from him, he praised them as Torah sages whose fathers had served in the Temple before its destruction.

However, when they attended his lectures and he pronounced the *Halacha* on different questions, they always took the opposite view. When he challenged them for this contrary approach, they complained about his determination of the Jewish calendar outside Israel.

He responded that Rabbi Akiva had also declared a Jewish leap year whilst outside Israel.

The rabbis retorted that, at the time, Rabbi Akiva did not leave behind him in Israel anyone as great as him in Torah learning. Rabbi Chananya's response was that he too had not left anyone behind in Israel as great as him. The rabbis disagreed, asserting "the kids (young goats) you left behind are now mature goats with horns", namely, there are now rabbis in Israel even greater than you. They added that their mission was to warn him to desist from further secession from the rabbis in Israel and if he failed to do so, he would be ostracised. Their concern was that Rabbi Chananya would construct an altar outside Israel and would split the nation.

On hearing this, all those in Babylonia accepted the need to preserve national unity and accepted that they would only accept the rulings of the Sages of the Land of Israel in all matters.

THE US CHESED APPEAL TRANSFORMING LIVES



THIS WEEK!

Pesach is approaching and we know that thousands of our members find this time of year particularly challenging. This is just the tip of the iceberg for US Chesed and our wonderful volunteers, who provide crucial support to thousands of people in our community and beyond, all year long.

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Finally, the House is Built!

Sefer Melachim (Kings) I: Chapter 8



**PNINA
SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and
US Educator

This chapter outlines the dedication ceremony of the newly-built *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple) in Jerusalem. It takes place in front of the entire Jewish people, who are gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Succot. This is the first time the *Aliyah le'regel* (pilgrimage) is to be celebrated in the *Beit Hamikdash*. Imagine the excitement at this monumental point in Jewish history! There are so many people present that the offerings are "too abundant to be numbered or counted" (*I Melachim 8:5*).

We are told that a "cloud" filled the *Beit Hamikdash*, representing God's presence (vv.10-11). This shows the final realisation of King David's dream: to build a palace for God on earth. The *Beit Hamikdash* has the ultimate stamp of approval

– God has allowed His *Shechina*, the Divine presence, to rest there.

Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) delivers a rousing and heartfelt prayer to God. He beseeches God to always listen to the prayers of the Jewish people and forgive their wrongdoings. In fact, some of what he says seems to be out of place at a joyous celebration. For example, Shlomo talks about how future generations will sin and be exiled from the land. He asks God to accept their repentance (vv.46-50). This shows two interesting elements. Firstly, it is human nature that sin is inevitable. Secondly, even at this early stage, Shlomo is warning the people that, in order to retain this holy site, we will need to keep the Torah and serve God properly. This is an important message.

Future prophets, such as Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah), will refer back to it when urging the people to repent and avoid exile.

The celebrations last 14 days. The chapter ends with the

statement that people returned home "happy and good-hearted for all the good that God had done for David His servant and all of Israel" (v.66). It is interesting that the text mentions David instead of Shlomo. I would like to suggest that this is because the building of the *Beit Hamikdash* was David's plan, even though Shlomo actually did the building.

An interesting Midrash states that, during the dedication of the *Beit Hamikdash*, the gates refused to open, preventing Shlomo from bringing in the *Aron* (Ark). Only once Shlomo invoked the memory of his father, David, did they open¹. The Midrash explains that this was due to Shlomo's growing arrogance over the fact that he was the one who finally managed to build the *Beit Hamikdash*.

In the end, it is not the building itself that matters but rather what it represents. David was always the one who remained humble and focused on God. Thus, the project is attributed to him.

In the end, it is not the building itself that matters but rather what it represents. David was always the one who remained humble and focused on God. Thus, the project is attributed to him.

¹ *Bamidbar Rabba, Nasso, Chapter 14, part 3.*

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT SHEMINI

5-6 APRIL | 27 ADAR II

Selfish Service



HARRISON COHEN

Tribe
Madrich

A standout moment from Parashat Shemini is the death of Nadav and Avihu, two of Aharon's sons. The Torah explains that they brought an incense offering with a "strange fire", which they had not been commanded to bring. A flame of God emerges, consumes them and they die.

What was it that they did wrong? They just offered a *korban* (offering) out of longing to serve God. So why did they die?

There are multiple explanations brought by Torah commentators.

One idea is that they entered the Holy of Holies, where even the High Priest may only enter on Yom Kippur.

Rashi (1040-1105) references Rabbi

Eliezer in the *Midrash Sifra*, who says that they died because they made the offering without consulting Moshe (Moses), their teacher. On the other hand, Rabbi Yishmael claimed they died because they were intoxicated with wine whilst inside the *Mishkan*.

An approach that resonates with me, brought in a book of Nechama Liebowitz's thoughts on the parasha, is that men of high stature such as Nadav and Avihu should have been more modest, as it says in Micah 6:8, "walk modestly with your God". They should have dreaded entering the *Mishkan* unless summoned and avoided bringing a fire offering on their own initiative.

Although these prominent leaders might not have explicitly broken the law, but merely exceeded the limits set by discipline and modesty, this was a major sin, given their rank and their need to act as role models, so they perished.

Evidently, Nadav and Avihu sinned by reaching for God through the desires of their own hearts rather than through the path set by God. Submission to the 'yoke of Heaven' - the ultimate aim of the Torah - was here replaced by uncontrolled religious passion, hence their punishment. This means that Nadav and Avihu were serving themselves, as they were chasing the pleasure of serving God and offering the sacrifice, not out of love for Him, but out of the desire for personal benefit.

There are rules for offerings in the *Mishkan*. Precise limits are prescribed, even for the free-will offerings, which must be strictly adhered to. The closeness to God which we seek with every offering may only be found through acceptance of God's will.

May we all merit to have the humility and dedication to keep God's mitzvot with accuracy and pure, selfless intention.

Parasha Wordsearch

Words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

AHARON
NADAV
AVIHU
FIRE
OFFERING
WINE
SHEMINI
CUD
HOOVES
GRASSHOPPER
INSECTS
KOSHER
FINS
SCALES

S	W	A	D	C	M	T	V	U	W	G	V
R	E	U	H	I	V	A	I	J	T	R	V
E	C	V	H	A	M	K	T	N	J	A	E
H	H	Q	O	E	R	I	F	M	D	S	M
S	Y	R	J	O	S	O	G	A	X	S	M
O	T	G	O	H	H	N	N	F	N	H	N
K	S	C	A	L	E	S	I	A	F	O	D
A	D	Y	E	M	M	F	R	F	G	P	E
S	D	J	G	S	I	C	E	N	V	P	V
L	A	H	K	M	N	N	F	J	V	E	I
W	G	T	R	R	I	I	F	Z	R	R	Y
X	I	D	A	W	F	Y	O	S	O	O	P
X	I	D	A	W	F	Y	O	S	O	O	P



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

SHEMINI: WITH PLEASURE!

THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA** IS FULL OF **MITZVOT** THAT GIVE US THE STRUCTURE OF **JEWISH LIFE**, INCLUDING THE ALL IMPORTANT **FOODIE MITZVAH** - THE **KASHRUT LAWS!**

IT'S NOT FAIR. ALL THESE ANNOYING RULES TAKE ALL THE FUN AWAY!

NOT SO FAST **TSORIS!** YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT! THE **KOSHER LAWS** ARE THERE TO ENABLE US TO ENJOY YUMMY FOOD - IN A WAY THAT IS BEST FOR US.



JUDAISM IS NOT ABOUT SAYING NO ALL THE TIME. WE ARE MEANT TO DELIGHT IN WHAT THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER - IN THE RIGHT WAY OF COURSE! THE RULES PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR US TO ENJOY MOST OF THE THINGS WE LIKE IN A HEALTHY WAY.



IT'S NOT JUST THAT WE'RE ALLOWED TO ENJOY THIS FABULOUS WORLD - IT'S ACTUALLY A **MITZVAH** TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES THAT ARE PERMITTED TO US. WANT TO GO PRO? CHECK OUT WHAT **RABBI HIRSCH** HAD TO SAY...



Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 1808-1888) was an intellectual giant and one of the leading rabbis of his generation.

Towards the end of his life, **Rabbi Hirsch** surprised his students with his plans for a trip to Switzerland.

BUT **RABBI**, YOU ARE NOT A YOUNG MAN. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO EXERT YOURSELF WITH SUCH A STRENUOUS TRIP?



SOON I WILL FACE THE **ALMIGHTY** AT THE END OF MY LIFE. I WILL BE ASKED MANY QUESTIONS, MOST OF WHICH I WILL HAVE GOOD ANSWERS TO. BUT WHAT WILL I RESPOND WHEN **GOD** ASKS: **'SHIMSHON MY SON, IT IS TRUE YOU DID MANY MITZVOT, BUT I CREATED THE MOST GLORIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL ALPS, WHICH WERE WITHIN YOUR REACH TO VISIT - DID YOU MAKE THE EFFORT TO SEE THEM?'**



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.