

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
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Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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9 On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel. ²He said to Aaron: “Take a calf of the herd for a purification offering and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and bring them before the LORD. ³And speak to the Israelites, saying: Take a he-goat for a purification offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering; ⁴and an ox and a ram for an offering of well-being to sacrifice before the LORD; and a grain offering with oil mixed in. For today the LORD will appear to you.”

⁵They brought to the front of the Tent of Meeting the things that Moses had commanded, and the whole community came forward and stood before the LORD. ⁶Moses said: “This is what the LORD has commanded that you do, that the Presence of the LORD may ap-

ט וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קח-לָךְ עֵגֶל בֶּן-בָּקָר לְחֻטָּאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה תְּמִימִם וְהִקְרַב לְפָנַי יְהוָה: ³ וְאֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר קחוּ שְׁעִיר-עִזִּים לְחֻטָּאת וְעֵגֶל וְכֶבֶשׂ בְּנֵי-שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם לְעֹלָה: ⁴ וְשׂוֹר וְאֵיל לְשַׁלְמִים לְזִבְחֹן לְפָנַי יְהוָה וּמִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְשֶׁמֶן כִּי הַיּוֹם יִהְיֶה נִרְאָה אֵלֵיכֶם: ⁵ וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה אֶל-פְּנֵי אֱהֹל מוֹעֵד וַיִּקְרְבוּ כָל-הָעֵדָה וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ לְפָנַי יְהוָה: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְהִדְבַּר אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֵלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד יְהוָה: ⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַרֵב אֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

THE INITIATION OF FORMAL WORSHIP (continued)

THE FIRST CELEBRATION OF SACRIFICE (9:1–24)

This chapter describes what took place after the seven days of ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests.

1. elders of Israel The “elders” (*z’kenim*) represented the people. See Comment to 4:15.

2. He said to Aaron: “Take a calf” See Comments to 8:14–18, where only the priest-

hood is involved. Here all of the people are involved. The sequence of purification offering and burnt offering was ordained both for the priesthood and for the people.

4. For today the LORD will appear to you The main purpose of the celebrations (v. 6).

5. that Moses had commanded Moses had an enhanced role in this celebration as the transmitter of God’s commands. In Leviticus, it is usually God who commands, not Moses.

CHAPTER 9

This *parashah* begins by recalling a tragic incident that marred the installation ceremony of Aaron and his sons as *kohanim*. The focus of the text then shifts to the second of the major concerns of Leviticus, the avoidance of ritual impurity (*tum-ah*), which would separate the Israelite from contact with God and God’s sanctuary.

1. eighth day The seven-day week symbolizes a complete unit, and an eighth day represents starting over at a new level, concluding an octave and leading to “a higher

octave” (Hirsch). Thus a baby boy is circumcised and brought into the Covenant on the eighth day, beginning the second week of his life as a member of the Covenant. The Talmud compares the first seven days of celebrating the construction of the tabernacle to the seven days of Creation (BT Meg. 10b). On the eighth day, we are challenged to begin living in the day-to-day world of ordinary events.

6. All of our activities in the synagogue, not only at prayer but in classes and at meetings, should have a goal of experiencing the presence of God.

pear to you.”⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron: “Come forward to the altar and sacrifice your purification offering and your burnt offering, making expiation for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the people’s offering and make expiation for them, as the LORD has commanded.”

⁸Aaron came forward to the altar and slaughtered his calf of purification offering. ⁹Aaron’s sons brought the blood to him; he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; and he poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ¹⁰The fat, the kidneys, and the protuberance of the liver from the purification offering he turned into smoke on the altar—as the LORD had commanded Moses; ¹¹and the flesh and the skin were consumed in fire outside the camp. ¹²Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. Aaron’s sons passed the blood to him, and he dashed it against all sides of the altar. ¹³They passed the burnt offering to him in sections, as well as the head, and he turned it into smoke on the altar. ¹⁴He washed the entrails and the legs, and turned them into smoke on the altar with the burnt offering.

¹⁵Next he brought forward the people’s offering. He took the goat for the people’s purification offering, and slaughtered it, and presented it as a purification offering like the previous one. ¹⁶He brought forward the burnt

וְעִשָּׂה אֶת־חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת־עֹלֹתְךָ וְכִפֵּר
בְּעֹדֶךָ וּבְעֵד הָעַם וְעִשָּׂה אֶת־קָרְבַּן הָעַם
וְכִפֵּר בְּעֵדָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

⁸ וַיִּקְרַב אֶהֱרֹן אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת־
עֹגֶל הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ: ⁹ וַיִּקְרְבוּ בָנָיו
אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־הַדָּם אֵלָיו וַיִּטְבֵּל אֶצְבְּעוֹ בְּדָם
וַיִּתֵּן עַל־קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת־הַדָּם יִצַּק
אֶל־יְסוֹד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ¹⁰ וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב וְאֶת־
הַכְּלִיֹּת וְאֶת־הַיִּתְרֹת מִן־הַכֶּבֶד מִן־
הַחַטָּאת הַקָּטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: ¹¹ וְאֶת־הַבֶּשֶׂר וְאֶת־
הָעוֹר שָׂרָף בָּאֵשׁ מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה:
¹² וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת־הָעֵלָה וַיִּמְצְאוּ בָנָיו אֶהֱרֹן
אֵלָיו אֶת־הַדָּם וַיִּזְרְקוּהוּ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
סָבִיב: ¹³ וְאֶת־הָעֵלָה הַמְצִיאוּ אֵלָיו
לְנִתְחִיהָ וְאֶת־הָרֹאשׁ וַיִּקְטֵר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
¹⁴ וַיִּרְחֹץ אֶת־הַקָּרֶב וְאֶת־הַפְּרָעִים וַיִּקְטֵר
עַל־הָעֵלָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַה:

¹⁵ וַיִּקְרַב אֶת קָרְבַּן הָעַם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׂעִיר
הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר לָעַם וַיִּשְׁחָטוּהוּ וַיַּחְטְאוּהוּ
כְּרֹאשׁוֹן: ¹⁶ וַיִּקְרַב אֶת־הָעֵלָה וַיַּעֲשֶׂה

7. Come forward to the altar Moses turned over the conduct of the ritual to Aaron by inviting him to officiate at the altar for the first time.

making expiation for yourself and for the people The purification offering of the priesthood indirectly served the people as well; never-

theless, an additional purification offering on their behalf was required.

9. Aaron’s sons brought the blood to him This procedural detail is missing elsewhere. Practically speaking, the officiant needed the assistance of another priest.

7. Moses said to Aaron: “Come forward” There is a tradition that Aaron had to be urged to bring his purification offering, a calf, because he was embarrassed. It reminded him of his role in fashioning the Golden Calf. Moses, however, assured him: “Your sin has been forgiven because you were ashamed” (*M’norat*

Ha-Ma-or). The ability to feel shame is one of the defining characteristics of a moral human being. It arises from an awareness of the gap between who we are and who we might be. Furthermore, it recognizes the authority of God and the right of other people to judge us.

offering and sacrificed it according to regulation. ¹⁷He then brought forward the grain offering and, taking a handful of it, he turned it into smoke on the altar—in addition to the burnt offering of the morning. ¹⁸He slaughtered the ox and the ram, the people's sacrifice of well-being. Aaron's sons passed the blood to him—which he dashed against every side of the altar—¹⁹and the fat parts of the ox and the ram: the broad tail, the covering [fat], the kidneys, and the protuberances of the livers. ²⁰They laid these fat parts over the breasts; and Aaron turned the fat parts into smoke on the altar, ²¹and elevated the breasts and the right thighs as an elevation offering before the LORD—as Moses had commanded.

²²Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after offering the purification offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. ²³Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴Fire came forth from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces.

שני כַּמִּשְׁפֵּט: ¹⁷וַיִּקְרַב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּמְלֵא כַּפּוֹ מִמִּנְחָה וַיִּקְטֹר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלֶּבֶד עַל־תְּ הַבֶּקֶר: ¹⁸וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת־הַשּׁוֹר וְאֶת־הָאֵילָנִי וּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לָעָם וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַדָּם אֵלָיו וַיִּזְרְקוּהוּ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: ¹⁹וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים מִן־הַשּׁוֹר וּמִן־הָאֵילָנִי וְהַמְכֹסֶה וְהַכְּלִיֹּת וַיִּתְּרֵת הַכֶּבֶד: ²⁰וַיִּשְׂימוּ אֶת־הַחֲלָבִים עַל־הַחֲזוֹת וַיִּקְטֹר הַחֲלָבִים הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ²¹וְאֵת־הַחֲזוֹת וְאֵת שׁוֹק הַיָּמִין הַנִּיף אַהֲרֹן תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה:

²²וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדָיו אֶל־הָעָם וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיֵּרֶד מֵעֲשֵׂת הַחֲטָאת וְהָעֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים: ²³וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם: ²⁴וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהֹאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּרְגְּזוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם:

10 Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ

- 18. The extent of the sacrifice was greater than usual on this occasion, requiring both an ox and a ram.
- 22. *Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them* Raising the hands toward God was a characteristic gesture of prayer. Here, Aaron faced the people and raised his hands over them as he blessed them.
- 23. *Moses and Aaron then went inside the*

Tent of Meeting Perhaps they went in to pray for the anticipated appearance of God's Presence (*Sifra*) or for the miraculous ignition of the altar fire (Ibn Ezra).
 24. *Fire came forth from before the LORD* The fire issued from God's Presence (the *Kavod*), which itself was a fire enveloped in a thick cloud that pervaded the tent.

ADMONITIONS ON PRIESTLY CONDUCT (10:1–20)

To emphasize the necessity of precise compliance with all the ritual laws and regulations for priestly conduct, this chapter begins with the

untimely death of two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, who made an improper incense offering.

each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them. ²And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the LORD. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said:

Through those near to Me I show Myself holy,

THE DEATH OF NADAB AND ABIHU:
A DRAMATIC PRECEDENT (vv. 1–7)

1. put fire in it Each placed coals or embers on his fire pan.

alien fire Hebrew: *esh zarah*, the incense itself. They brought "an alien [incense offering by] fire," one that had not been specifically ordained.

2. fire came forth from the LORD This may

מִחֲתָתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בְּהֵן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ
קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר
לֹא צִוָּה אַתֶּם: ² וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה
וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה |
לֵאמֹר
בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדֹּשׁ

refer to the fire mentioned in 9:24, which came forth from inside the Tent of Meeting and consumed the sacrifices offered at the dedication of the tabernacle (Rashbam).

3. Through those near to Me I show Myself holy Priests who adhere to the regulations of their office and protect the purity of the sanctuary are "near" to and sanctify God; in turn, the sanctuary is favored by God's Presence. When, as in

CHAPTER 10

The Torah narrates the death of Nadab and Abihu very briefly, never telling us explicitly what they did to cause them to be struck down. Therefore, commentators over the generations have used their imaginations to speculate about what grave sin they might have committed. One explanation is that they brought the instruments for making a fire into the Tent, not realizing that on this special occasion God was going to send fire miraculously from heaven (9:24). Because they were too close to that fire, they were killed. Their sin, if any, was a lack of faith, trying to help God in a situation in which God did not need their help (Mekh.).

Most of the Sages, however, judge them less charitably. Some find them guilty of egotism (each took his own fire pan, consulting neither with each other nor with their father, Aaron) or of entering the sanctuary drunk (for which reason priests are told in verse 9 not to drink wine before entering the sanctuary, Lev. R. 12:1) or of entering so casually dressed that they showed disrespect for their surroundings (*ibidem*). Others accuse them of impatience to succeed Moses and Aaron as leaders of the people. The "strange fire" they bore was the fire of ambition, which prompted them to say, "When will these old men, our father and our uncle, die already so that we can take their place?" Based on the comment of the *Sifra* that their sin was not consulting with their father, Hirsch, champion of modern Orthodoxy, iden-

tifies their sin as making themselves the highest authority and disregarding the tradition of their elders.

One intriguing interpretation sees them as motivated by excessive piety. Out of their love for the divine, they tried to come too close to God who is like a raging fire (*Or Ha-Hayyim*). They were motivated by a passion for closeness to God that God did not command because it was too dangerous. [Nadab means "willing," and Abihu means "[God] is my Father."] They could not be satisfied with rituals and sacrifices but had to draw so close to God that they were consumed by the strange fire in their souls. Perhaps Aaron is warned so often and so sternly about when and how to enter the tabernacle lest he too be struck down in his desire to be one with God.

A homiletic interpretation fastens on the rabbinic legend (BT Sanh. 52a) that the fire consumed their souls but left their bodies intact. (Thus they could be removed from the site by dragging them by their garments, verse 5.) It suggests that their fate was to suffer a spiritual death in their lifetime. In direct contrast to the previous interpretation, it sees them as no longer feeling reverence or holiness in carrying out their sacred tasks. They were emotionally burned out. Their souls had shriveled even as they continued to go through the motions of religious ritual.

3. Through those near to Me I show Myself holy Hirsch pictures God as saying, "The more a person stands out from among the peo-

And gain glory before all the people.”
And Aaron was silent.

⁴Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, “Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp.” ⁵They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered. ⁶And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. But your kinsmen, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that the LORD has wrought. ⁷And so do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die, for the LORD’s anointing oil is upon you.” And they did as Moses had bidden.

וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָעָם אָפַבְדּוּ
וַיִּדְמּוּ אֶהֱרֹן :

⁴ וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־מִישָׁאֵל וְאֶל אֶלְצָפָן
בְּנֵי עֲזִיזֵאל דָּד אֶהֱרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קִרְבוּ*
שָׂאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־
מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה: ⁵ וַיִּקְרְבוּ וַיִּשָּׂאֵם בְּכַתְּנֹתָם
אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה:
⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן וְלְאֶלְעָזָר
וְלִיִּתְמָר | בְּנָיו רְאִשֵׁיכֶם אֶל־תִּפְרְעוּ |
וּבְגְדֵיכֶם לֹא־תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ וְעַל
כָּל־הָעֵדָה יִקְצֹף וְאֲחֵיכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
יִבְכּוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂרִפָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יְהוָה:
⁷ וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ פֶן־תִּמְתּוּ
כִּי־שִׁמֹן מִשְׁחַת יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
כַּדְּבַר מֹשֶׁה: פ

v. 4. שני טעמים

this case, priests flout the divine will, God exercises punitive power, compelling all to recognize God’s authority.

Aaron was silent Hebrew: *va-yiddom Aharon*. The traditional interpretation has it that Aaron accepted God’s harsh judgment and did not cry out or complain at his painful loss.

4. from the front of the sanctuary The two priests had entered the Tent of Meeting. They probably were struck down as they were departing, when they were already in the courtyard outside the tent.

to a place outside the camp The corpses had to be removed from the camp, a requirement for any ritually impure object. Relatively little is known of ancient Israelite burial customs, except that the dead were buried away from the settled areas, because their bodies were deemed ritually impure.

5. by their tunics Apparently, the bodies of

the two priests were not completely consumed by God’s fire. The flame that killed them probably blasted their faces and left their clothing intact.

6. bare Hebrew: *para*, “to dishevel” the hair, which involves baring the head as well.

lest you die At the hand of God, as a punishment.

and anger strike the whole community The circumstances surrounding the deaths of Nadab and Abihu—occurring at the time of their consecration and purification—prevented, indeed forbade, their father and brothers from mourning for them, because their sanctification took precedence over their bereavement. The rest of the people, however, were to mourn.

7. do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting The priests were forbidden to leave the sacred precinct of the inner court.

ple as a teacher and a leader, the less will I show indulgence when that person does wrong.” Prominence leads not to privilege but to responsibility.

Aaron was silent The Torah usually does not call attention to someone’s not speaking. What, then, is the unusual significance of Aaron’s silence? That he accepted God’s decree

without protest? That his anguish was too great for him to put into words? That he was tempted to burst out in anger at the unfairness of what had happened to his family but was able to restrain himself? Perhaps the text is suggesting that there are more possibilities—and more power—in silence than in any words.

⁸And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: ⁹Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages, ¹⁰for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the impure and the pure; ¹¹and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the LORD has imparted to them through Moses.

¹²Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: Take the grain offering that is left over from the LORD's gifts and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. ¹³You shall eat it in the sacred precinct, inasmuch as it is your due, and that of your children, from the LORD's gifts; for so I have been commanded. ¹⁴But the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering you, and your sons and daughters with you, may eat in any pure place, for they have been assigned as a due to you and your children from the Israelites' sacrifices of well-being. ¹⁵Together with the fat of fire offering, they must present the thigh of gift offering and the breast of elevation offering, which are to be elevated as an elevation offering before the LORD, and which are to be your due and that of your children with you for all time—as the LORD has commanded.

¹⁶Then Moses inquired about the goat of purification offering, and it had already been

8 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: 9 יֵינְךָ וְשִׁכְרָר אֶל-תְּשֻׁבָתְךָ אֶתְּךָ וְאֶת-בְּנֵיֶיךָ אֲתָךְ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תָמְתוּ חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: 10 וְלִהְבְּדִיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר וּבֵין הַטְּמֵא אֶת כָּל-וְלֵהוֹרֹת אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל-הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה: פ

רביעי ¹² וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶל-אִיתָמָר אֶת-בְּנָיו הַנּוֹתָרִים קָחוּ אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה הַנּוֹתָרֶת מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה וְאֶכְלוּהָ מִצִּדּוֹת אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא: 13 וְאֶכְלֹתֶם אֹתָהּ בְּמָקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ כִּי חֻקְךָ וְחֻקְ-בְּנֵיֶיךָ הוּא מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה כִּי-כֵן צִוִּיתִי: 14 וְאֵת חֵזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה תֹאכְלוּ בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר אֶתְּךָ וּבְנֵיֶיךָ אֲתָךְ כִּי-חֻקְךָ וְחֻקְ-בְּנֵיֶיךָ נִתְּנוּ מִזִּבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 15 שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְחֵזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה עַל אֲשֵׁי הַחֻלָּבִים יָבִיאוּ לְהִנְיֹף תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהָיָה לָךְ וּלְבְנֵיֶיךָ אֲתָךְ לְחֻק-עוֹלָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

חמישי ¹⁶ וְאֵת שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ* דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהִגִּיד שָׂרָף וַיִּקְצַף עַל-אֶלְעָזָר

v. 16. במסורה מסומנת "חצי התורה בתיבות", ולא אמת היא אבל יש ב"דרש דרש" רמז על אופן קריאה של התורה

RULES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD (vv. 8–15)

9–10. Drinking intoxicants would impair the faculties of the priests, who would then be unable to distinguish between the sacred and the profane.

MOSES MONITORS THE PRIESTS AND THE CULT (vv. 16–20)

16. Moses inquired about the goat of purification offering This refers to the purification offering provided by the people as part of the ded-

9. drink no wine This prohibition resulted not from Nadab and Abihu having been drunk but from the danger that the bereaved relatives would drown their sorrows in intoxicants and not be fit to carry on their responsibilities (Hoffman). Although wine "cheers the heart"

(Ps. 104:15), *kohanim* were to avoid it. When we come before God, our joy should stem from serving God, without the use of external stimulants (Simḥah Bunem).

16. Moses inquired The word translated as "inquired" (*darash*) is said to be the middle

burned! He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, ¹⁷“Why did you not eat the purification offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and He has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before the LORD. ¹⁸Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded.” ¹⁹And Aaron spoke to Moses, “See, this day they brought their purification offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and such things have befallen me! Had I eaten purification offering today, would the LORD have approved?” ²⁰And when Moses heard this, he approved.

וְעַל-אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַנוֹתָרִם לֵאמֹר:
¹⁷ מִדּוּעַ לֹא-אָכַלְתֶּם אֶת-הַחֻטָּאת
 בְּמָקוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא
 וְאַתֶּה | נָתַן לָכֶם לְשֵׂאת אֶת-עוֹן הָעֵדָה
 לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹⁸ הֲיֵן לֹא-הוּבָא
 אֶת-דְּמָמָה אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ פְּנִימָה אָכֹל
 תֹּאכְלוּ אֹתָהּ בַּקֹּדֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי:
¹⁹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶהֱרֹן אֶל-מֹשֶׁה הֲיֵן הַיּוֹם הַקְּרִיבוּ
 אֶת-חֻטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת-עֹלֹתְךָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
 וְתִקְרָאנָה אֹתִי כְּאֵלֶּה וְאָכַלְתִּי חֻטָּאת
 הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְיִטֵּב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: ²⁰ וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה
 וַיִּטֵּב בְּעֵינָיו: פ

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron,

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אֶהֱרֹן שׁ

ication rites in 9:3,15. Moses discovered that on this occasion the priestly portions of the purification offering had been burned on the altar—the priests had not eaten them as they were obliged to do. Having disobeyed instructions, they incurred Moses' anger. He spoke directly to Aaron's sons in deference to Aaron.

17. Although the blood rites incorporated in the purification offering (*hattat*) constituted the primary means of expiation, the sacred meals of

the priests were also essential. It was the duty of the priests to eat their assigned portions of the *hattat* brought by the people.

18. *Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary* This refers to the rule in 6:23.

19. Aaron sought to excuse the failure of the priests to eat their portions of the sacrifice by explaining to Moses that his sons thought they should not eat of the sacrifice because they were in mourning.

word of the Torah. The essence of the Torah is continued inquiry and study. “The ideal Jew is not so much a *learned Jew* as a *learning Jew*” (*Emet Ve-Emunah*).

He was angry The Midrash teaches: Look at what anger can do, even to a person as wise and pious as Moses. When Moses became angry, his knowledge of the law left him, and he forgot that a priest in mourning was not permitted to eat of the sacrifice (Lev. R. 13:1). It may be that Moses was speaking out of his own pain and sense of loss or perhaps even out of a sense of guilt at not having been able to prevent the calamity. What Aaron needed at that moment, however, were not words of rebuke but words of comfort, validating his feelings of loss, pain, and even outrage. Jewish law counsels us against trying to comfort people immediately after they have suffered a loss (“when the dead body is still before them”).

19. Had I eaten purification offering today Aaron responds that because his family had sinned and had been punished publicly, identifying them publicly as sinners, it was not appropriate for them to stand before God bearing the people's prayers for atonement.

20. Moses is not too proud to admit that he was wrong (Rashi). This exchange between Moses and Aaron reflects the conflict in the life of any person who must simultaneously be public servant, officiating at public ceremonies, and private individual with personal grief and concerns. Aaron must leave his public role temporarily to deal with his grief, whereas Moses, who sometimes seems to have compromised his personal life in favor of his public role (see Comments to Exod.18:6 and Num. 12:1), urges him to give his public responsibilities priority because people depend on him.

saying to them: ²Speak to the Israelite people thus:

These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals: ³any animal that has true hoofs, with clefts through the hoofs, and that chews the cud—such you may eat. ⁴The following, however, of those that either chew the cud or have true hoofs, you shall not eat:

לֵאמֹר אֲלֵהֶם: ²דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לֵאמֹר
זֹאת הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה
אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ: ³כָּל אִ מִפְּרֹטָת פְּרֹטָה
וְשִׁטְעַת שִׁטְעַת מְעַלְת גְּרָה בְּבֵהמָה
אֲתָה תֹאכְלוּ: ⁴אֲךָ אֶת-זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ
מִמְעַלֵּי הַגְּרָה וּמִמְפְּרִיטֵי הַפְּרֹטָה אֶת-

THE LAWS OF KASHRUT: PROPER FOODS AND VESSELS (11:1–47)

This chapter is one of two major collections of dietary laws in the Torah. The other collection is found in Deut. 14.

PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN FOOD SOURCES (vv. 1–23)

LAND ANIMALS (vv. 2–8)

2. creatures . . . land animals Hebrew: *hayyah . . . b'hemah*; here the former is used as a

general term, while the latter refers specifically to that which lives on the land.

3. any animal that has true hoofs To qualify as pure, an animal's hoofs must be split all the way through, producing two toes, of a sort, so that the animal in question does not walk on paws.

4. you shall not eat The list of four impure land animals comprises borderline cases, animals that exhibit one but not both of the required phys-

CHAPTER 11

The basis for one major pillar of the Jewish dietary code, the separation of meat and dairy products, is enunciated in Exod. 34:26. Now the Torah adds a second pillar, the distinction between the living creatures that may be eaten and those that are forbidden.

An attentive reading of this chapter clearly shows that the dietary laws are not based on considerations of health, neither in terms of the animals permitted or forbidden nor out of concern for meat spoiling in the desert heat. (Does one need a law that prohibits eating spoiled meat?) "There is nothing intrinsically 'impure' about pigs or camels, except that the Torah forbids them to Israelites" (Hoffman). There may be moral or aesthetic considerations for shunning some creatures because of undesirable traits, e.g., flesh-eating animals and birds of prey; if we are forbidden to ingest blood (Lev. 17), we should avoid the flesh of animals and fowl that ingest blood.

The overriding purpose of the dietary code is explicit: "You shall sanctify yourselves and be

holy, for I am holy" (v. 44). The dietary laws constitute a way of sanctifying the act of eating. The eating of meat requires killing a living creature, constantly seen by the Torah as a compromise. These laws elevate the eating of meat to a level of sanctity by introducing categories of permitted and forbidden. For animals, eating is a matter of instinct; only human beings can choose on moral or religious grounds not to eat something otherwise available.

The dietary laws are given incrementally in the Torah, forbidding boiling a kid in its mother's milk; then prohibiting the ingestion of blood; then declaring certain species of mammal, fish, and fowl unfit for consumption. Similarly, many Jews who begin from a position of limited observance can commit themselves to sanctifying their mealtimes in an incremental manner. They may begin by avoiding pork and shellfish, continue by separating meat and dairy products, and so on. No one need feel like a hypocrite for not keeping all of the commandments immediately. What is important is to be on the path of observance, to be, in the words of *Emet Ve-Emunah*, a "striving" Jew.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

11:3. any animal For meat to be *kasher* ("kosher," fit for consumption under Jewish law), it must not only come from the animals designated in this chapter (e.g., cows, sheep, goats, buffalos, and deer) but must also be slaughtered, soaked, salted, and prepared according to Jewish law. See Comments to Lev. 17:10; Deut. 12:21, 14:7.

the camel—although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is impure for you; ⁵the daman—although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is impure for you; ⁶the hare—although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is impure for you; ⁷and the swine—although it has true hoofs, with the hoofs cleft through, it does not chew the cud: it is impure for you. ⁸You shall not eat of their flesh or touch their carcasses; they are impure for you.

⁹These you may eat of all that live in water: anything in water, whether in the seas or in the streams, that has fins and scales—these you may eat. ¹⁰But anything in the seas or in the streams that has no fins and scales, among all the swarming things of the water and among all the other living creatures that are in the water—they are an abomination for you ¹¹and an abomination

הַגָּמֵל כִּי־מַעֲלֶה גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה אֵינָנּוּ מִפְּרִי־טֶמְאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ⁵ וְאֶת־הַשֹּׁפָן כִּי־מַעֲלֶה גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה לֹא יִפְרִי־טֶמְאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ⁶ וְאֶת־הָאַרְנָבֶת כִּי־מַעֲלֶת גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה לֹא הִפְרִי־טֶמְאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ⁷ וְאֶת־הַחֲזִיר כִּי־מִפְּרִי־טֶמְאָה הוּא וְשֹׁסֵעַ שֹׁסֵעַ פְּרָסָה: וְהוּא גֵרָה לֹא־יִגַּר טֶמְאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ⁸ מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגְעוּ טֶמְאִים הֵם לָכֶם: ⁹ אֵת־זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ סִנְפִיר וְקִשְׁקֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וּבְנִחָלִים וּבְנִחָלִים אֵין־לוֹ סִנְפִיר וְקִשְׁקֶשֶׁת בַּיַּמִּים וּבְנִחָלִים מִכֹּל שָׂרֵץ הַמַּיִם וּמִכֹּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם שָׂקָץ הֵם לָכֶם: ¹¹ וְשָׂקָץ יִהְיֶה

ical criteria. There was a likelihood of mistaking such creatures for pure animals.

camel The hoof of the camel (an English word that derives from the Semitic word *gamal*) is split in its upper part, but bound together in its lower part.

5. daman A small mammal, the Syrian hyrax. It does not actually chew its cud, but gives that impression because of the protrusions in its stomach, which suggest that its stomach might have compartments, as is characteristic of the ruminants (who chew their cud).

6. hare It gives the impression of being a ruminant because it munches its food noticeably.

7. swine Hebrew: *hazir* (pig, swine), widely domesticated in ancient Canaan and raised for food. It was the only domesticated animal used as food in biblical times that had a truly split hoof

but did not chew its cud. No distinction is made here between wild and domesticated species.

8. One is prohibited not only from eating the meat of forbidden animals but also from touching or handling any part of their bodies, which normally would occur when preparing meat as food. This rule probably was intended as a safeguard against any possible situation that might inadvertently lead to the consumption of meat from such prohibited animals.

WATER CREATURES (vv. 9–12)

10. all the swarming things of the water All water creatures that do not swim by the usual means of using fins, but crawl instead, are considered impure.

11. As in verse 8, the prohibition affects both eating and touching.

7. Only twice in the Torah are we commanded not to eat pork, yet every Jew knows that it is forbidden. The Torah commands us many more times to refrain from gossip and

hurtful speech, yet many observant Jews do not sense that they are violating the Torah when they speak ill of others (Salanter).

13. The forbidden seem to share certain

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

11:7. swine Based on this verse, bacon, ham, and all pork by-products are forbidden. This includes baked goods containing lard.

11:9. fins and scales This is the source for the ruling that only sea creatures with fins and scales may be eaten.

for you they shall remain: you shall not eat of their flesh and you shall abominate their carcasses.¹² Everything in water that has no fins and scales shall be an abomination for you.

¹³The following you shall abominate among the birds—they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture; ¹⁴the kite, falcons of every variety; ¹⁵all varieties of raven; ¹⁶the ostrich, the night-hawk, the sea gull; hawks of every variety; ¹⁷the little owl, the cormorant, and the great owl; ¹⁸the white owl, the pelican, and the bustard; ¹⁹the stork; herons of every variety; the hoopoe, and the bat.

²⁰All winged swarming things that walk on fours shall be an abomination for you. ²¹But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: all that have, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground—²²of these you may eat the following: locusts of every variety; all varieties of bald locust; crickets of every variety; and all varieties

לָכֶם מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וְאֶת־נִבְלָתָם תִּשְׁקָצוּ: ¹² כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶן-לוֹ סִנְפִיר וְקִשְׁקֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לָכֶם: ¹³ וְאֶת־אֵלֶּה תִשְׁקָצוּ מִן־הָעוֹף לֹא יֹאכְלוּ שֶׁקֶץ הֵם אֶת־הַנְּשָׁר וְאֶת־הַפֶּרֶס וְאֶת־הָעֲזֵנִיָּה: ¹⁴ וְאֶת־הַדָּדָה וְאֶת־הָאֵיָּה לְמִינָהּ: ¹⁵ אֵת כָּל־עֹרֵב לְמִינוֹ: ¹⁶ וְאֵת בַּת הַיַּעֲנָה וְאֶת־הַתַּחֲמֵס וְאֶת־הַשְּׁחָף וְאֶת־הַנֶּץ לְמִינָהּ: ¹⁷ וְאֶת־הַכּוֹס וְאֶת־הַשֶּׁלֶף וְאֶת־הַיַּנְשׁוּף: ¹⁸ וְאֶת־הַתְּנַשְׂמַת וְאֶת־הַקָּאֵת וְאֶת־הָרָחֵם: ¹⁹ וְאֵת הַחֲסִידָה הָאֲנָפָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת־הַדּוֹכִיפַת וְאֶת־הָעֵטֶלֶף:

²⁰ כָּל שָׂרֵץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל־אַרְבַּע שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לָכֶם: ²¹ ס אֵךְ אֶת־זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל שָׂרֵץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל־אַרְבַּע אֲשֶׁר־לֹא לוֹ כַרְעִים מִמַּעַל לְרַגְלָיו לְנֹתֵר בְּהֶן עַל־הָאָרֶץ: ²² אֶת־אֵלֶּה מֵהֶם תֹאכְלוּ

CREATURES OF THE SKY (vv. 13–19)

13. The following . . . among the birds No overall physical criteria distinguish pure birds from impure birds. Rather, a long list of prohibited birds is provided, implying that all others would be permitted. The list of prohibited birds given here is virtually identical with that in Deut. 14. It does not correspond exactly to zoologic classifications and even includes a winged rodent, the bat (*atallef*). Virtually all of the impure birds are birds of prey.

WINGED INSECTS (vv. 20–23)

20. The section begins with a general statement, repeated with only slight variations in verse 23. Both are prohibitive, whereas the intervening two verses (vv. 21–22) state exceptions to the overall prohibition.

21. Four types of locusts, each in turn comprising several varieties, are permitted.

characteristics, including a sharp talon on their feet for hunting and a tendency to prey on living creatures. Hoffman adds that, because the translation of some of these names is uncertain, “we may eat only fowl that are traditionally eaten in Jewish homes.”

16. The Sages offer homiletic explanations as to why certain birds are considered abominations. Thus the hawk is ruled out

because of its excellent eyesight. “It can live in Babylon and see everything that people are doing wrong in the Land of Israel.” The stork is called “the pious bird” (*ha-hasidah*) because it takes such solicitous care of its young. Why, then, is it listed among the abominations? Because it cares only for its own young and not for anyone else’s (BT Hul. 63a).

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11:12. no fins and scales Shark, catfish, and all shellfish, for example, are prohibited. Authorities disagree on the permissibility of eating sturgeon and swordfish.

of grasshopper. ²³But all other winged swarming things that have four legs shall be an abomination for you.

²⁴And the following shall make you impure—whoever touches their carcasses shall be impure until evening, ²⁵and whoever carries the carcasses of any of them shall wash his clothes and be impure until evening—²⁶every animal that has true hoofs but without clefts through the hoofs, or that does not chew the cud. They are impure for you; whoever touches them shall be impure. ²⁷Also all animals that walk on paws, among those that walk on fours, are impure for you; whoever touches their carcasses shall be impure until evening. ²⁸And anyone who carries their carcasses shall wash his clothes and remain impure until evening. They are impure for you.

²⁹The following shall be impure for you from among the things that swarm on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and great lizards of every variety; ³⁰the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. ³¹Those are for you the impure among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be impure until evening. ³²And anything on which one of them falls when dead shall be impure: be it any article of wood, or a

אֶת־הָאֲרָבָה לְמִינֹהוּ וְאֶת־הַסֹּלֶעַם לְמִינֵהוּ
וְאֶת־הַחֲרָגָל לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַחֲגָב
לְמִינֵהוּ: ²³ וְכֹל שֶׁרָץ הָעוֹף אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ
אַרְבַּע רַגְלִים שֶׁקָּץ הוּא לָכֶם:
²⁴ וְלֹא־אֵלֶּה תִטְמְאוּ כָּל־הַנִּגְעַת בְּנִבְלָתָם
יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁵ וְכֹל־הַנִּשְׂא מִנִּבְלָתָם
יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְיִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁶ לְכֹל־
הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר הוּא מִפְּרֹסֶת פְּרֹסָה וְשִׁסַּע |
אֵינְנָה שֹׁטֶעַת וְגֵרָה אֵינְנָה מַעֲלָה טְמֵאִים
הֵם לָכֶם כָּל־הַנִּגְעַת בָּהֶם יִטְמָא: ²⁷ וְכֹל |
הוֹלֵךְ עַל־כַּפָּיו בְּכֹל־הַחַיָּה הַהֹלֶכֶת עַל־
אַרְבַּע טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם כָּל־הַנִּגְעַת
בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁸ וְהַנִּשְׂא
אֶת־נִבְלָתָם יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְיִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב
טְמֵאִים הֵמָּה לָכֶם: ²⁹ וְזֶה לָכֶם הַטְּמֵא בַשֶּׁרָץ הַשֶּׁרָץ עַל־
הָאָרֶץ הַחֹלֵד וְהָעֹכֵבֵר וְהַצֵּב לְמִינֵהוּ:
³⁰ וְהָאֲנָקָה וְהַכַּח וְהַלְטָאָה וְהַחֲמֹט
וְהַתְּנַשְׂמֹת: ³¹ אֵלֶּה הַטְּמֵאִים לָכֶם בְּכֹל־
הַשֶּׁרָץ כָּל־הַנִּגְעַת בָּהֶם בְּמֹתָם יִטְמָא
עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ³² וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַפֹּל־עָלָיו מֵהֶם |
בְּמֹתָם יִטְמָא מִכָּל־כְּלִי־עֵץ אוֹ בְּגָד אוֹ־

THE CONDUCTIVITY OF IMPURITY
(vv. 24–40)

This part of chapter 11 deals with the impurity that results from several kinds of contact—such as touching, carrying, or containing—that render persons, vessels, and foodstuffs impure in varying degrees.

27. The body of a person who touches the carcass of an impure creature is rendered impure. The clothing of a person who carries something impure is rendered impure or contaminated as well.

29. The following Eight types of swarming

land creatures are listed, including four types of lizards.

32–38. Under priestly law, vessels made of wood, leather, and certain types of cloth become impure by means of exterior contact with a contaminating substance, whereas ceramic vessels (with the exception of stoves and ovens) become impure only if that substance enters their interior space. (This later developed into an elaborate system of ritual purity in ancient rabbinic Judaism, affecting vessels and foodstuffs.)

32. article Any vessel of wood, cloth, skin, or sackcloth. Such vessels may be cleansed in water, and they remain impure only until evening.

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11:23. swarming things that have four legs The commandment not to eat insects includes taking care not to inadvertently ingest insects in our food. A careful washing of all fruits and vegetables, with special attention to leafy greens such as romaine lettuce and broccoli, is sufficient. *Hashgahah* (kosher supervision) of fruits and vegetables is not required.

cloth, or a skin, or a sack—any such article that can be put to use shall be dipped in water, and it shall remain impure until evening; then it shall be pure. ³³And if any of those falls into an earthen vessel, everything inside it shall be impure and [the vessel] itself you shall break. ³⁴As to any food that may be eaten, it shall become impure if it came in contact with water; as to any liquid that may be drunk, it shall become impure if it was inside any vessel. ³⁵Everything on which the carcass of any of them falls shall be impure: an oven or stove shall be smashed. They are impure and impure they shall remain for you. ³⁶However, a spring or cistern in which water is collected shall be pure, but whoever touches such a carcass in it shall be impure. ³⁷If such a carcass falls upon seed grain that is to be sown, it is pure; ³⁸but if water is put on the seed and any part of a carcass falls upon it, it shall be impure for you.

³⁹If an animal that you may eat has died, anyone who touches its carcass shall be impure until evening; ⁴⁰anyone who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and remain impure until evening; and anyone who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and remain impure until evening.

Food contained in such contaminated vessels is also impure.

33. A ceramic vessel does not become impure until the dead swarming creatures are inside it; should this happen, there is no remedy but to smash the vessel.

34. Solid food that has been dampened by water and then comes into contact with dead swarming creatures becomes impure because water conducts impurity. Similarly, liquids inside contaminated vessels become impure.

35. Ceramic ovens and stoves—like vessels of wood, cloth, leather, and animal hair, but unlike ceramic vessels in general—become contaminated as soon as dead swarming creatures fall onto them. There is no remedy; impure stoves and ovens must be smashed. (Metal vessels may be purified in fire [Num. 31:22–23]. Stone vessels are not susceptible to impurity.)

עור או שק כל־כלי אשר־יעשה מלאכה בהם במים יובא וטמא עד־הערב וטהר: ³³ וכל־כלי־חרש אשר־יפל מהם אל־תוכו כל אשר בתוכו יטמא ואתו תשברו: ³⁴ מכל־האכל אשר יאכל אשר יבוא עליו מים יטמא וכל־משקה אשר ישתה בכל־כלי יטמא: ³⁵ וכל אשר־יפל מנבלתם עליו יטמא תנור וכירים יתץ טמאים הם וטמאים יהיו לכם: ³⁶ אף מעין ובור מקוה־מים יהיה טהור ונגע מנבלתם יטמא: ³⁷ וכי יפל מנבלתם על־פל־זרע זרוע אשר יזרע טהור הוא: ³⁸ וכי יתן־מים על־זרע ונפל מנבלתם עליו טמא הוא לכם: ³⁹ וכי ימות מן־הבהמה אשר־היא לכם לאכלה הנגע מנבלתה יטמא עד־הערב: ⁴⁰ והאכל מנבלתה יכבס בגדיו וטמא עד־הערב והנשא את־נבלתה יכבס בגדיו וטמא עד־הערב:

36. Water that comes from a vessel that is detached from the earth generally renders foodstuffs susceptible to impurity. By contrast, neither rainwater in a cistern nor natural bodies of water transmit impurity.

38. Water renders seed susceptible to impurity. Dampened seed—but not dry seed—becomes impure if the dead body of a forbidden swarming creature falls onto it.

39. Physical contact with the carcass of even a permitted animal, renders a person impure until evening.

40. This statement repeats the prohibition (v. 8) against eating meat of any animal, even a permitted one, that has died a natural death. Similarly, carrying the carcass or any part of it transmits impurity. In both cases the clothes of the person involved must be laundered.

⁴¹All the things that swarm upon the earth are an abomination; they shall not be eaten. ⁴²You shall not eat, among all things that swarm upon the earth, anything that crawls on its belly, or anything that walks on fours, or anything that has many legs; for they are an abomination. ⁴³You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves impure therewith and thus become impure. ⁴⁴For I the LORD am your God: you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make yourselves impure through any swarming thing that moves upon the earth. ⁴⁵For I the LORD am He who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall be holy, for I am holy.

⁴⁶These are the instructions concerning animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water, and all creatures that swarm on earth, ⁴⁷for distinguishing between the impure and the pure, between the living things that may be eaten and the living things that may not be eaten.

44. you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy See Comment to 19:2.

POSTSCRIPT (vv. 46–47)

46. These are the instructions This post-

41 וְכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ שֶׁקֶץ
 הוא לא יאכל: 42 כֹּל הַחַיָּה עַל-גַּחֲוֹן *
 וְכָל א הוֹלֵךְ עַל-אַרְבַּע עַד כָּל-מֵרֶבֶה
 רַגְלִים לְכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא
 תֹאכְלוּם כִּי-שֶׁקֶץ הֵם: 43 אֶל-תִּשְׁקְצוּ
 אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ וְלֹא
 תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם * בָּם: 44 כִּי אֲנִי
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְהִתְקַדְשַׁתֶּם וְהִיִּיתֶם
 קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת-
 נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-
 הָאָרֶץ: 45 כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה הַמַּעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם
 מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיֵּית לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים
 וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי:
 46 זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבְּהֵמָה וְהָעוֹף וְכָל נֶפֶשׁ
 הַחַיָּה הָרֹמֵשׁת בַּמַּיִם וְלְכָל-נֶפֶשׁ
 הַשָּׂרֶצַת עַל-הָאָרֶץ: 47 לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין
 הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר וּבֵין הַחַיָּה הַנְּאֻכֶּלֶת
 וּבֵין הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֹאכֵל: פ

v. 42. ו' רבתי, ובמסורה היא "חצי התורה באותיות"
 v. 43. חסר א'

script typically appears at the conclusion of a major code of law.

47. for distinguishing between the impure and the pure A similar admonition occurs in 20:25.

42. crawls on . . . belly In the word translated as "belly" (*gaḥon*), the letter *vav* is written large, for it is said to be the middle letter of the entire Torah. The large *vav* symbolizes the unique upright posture of a human being. There is something repugnant about a person who crawls instead of standing up for what he or she believes, foregoing the unique upright posture of a human being which is symbolized by the enlarged letter *vav*.

The Book of Leviticus is concerned with

our use of words (vows, false oaths, hurtful speech), teaching us to sanctify what goes forth from our mouths. In its exposition of the rules of *kashrut*, it teaches us to sanctify what goes into our mouths as well. It would also remind us that there is a moral difference between eating an apple and eating a slice of meat; the latter requires taking the life of one of God's creatures. The Jew who lives by the dietary laws is constantly kept aware of that.

19 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ²This is the ritual law that the LORD has commanded:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן
 לֵאמֹר: ²זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה
 יְהוָה לֵאמֹר

The Generation of the Exodus: The March to Transjordan (continued)

PURIFICATION FROM CONTAMINATION BY A CORPSE (19:1–22)

Contamination that results from contact with a corpse is mentioned elsewhere in the Torah (see, e.g., Lev. 21:1–4; Num. 6:6–13). Here, the Torah prescribes the method of purification. In this rite, the blood of an all-brown (“red”) cow is not of-

fered on the altar; it is burned together with the cow’s body, so that the ashes may be used as an ongoing instrument of purification. As in all purification offerings, the man who burns the cow becomes impure himself.

In the course of this *parashah*, Miriam dies, Aaron dies, and Moses is sentenced to die without reaching the Promised Land. A transition of generations is taking place. The narrative’s center of gravity is moving farther from Sinai and closer to the challenge of conquering the Promised Land. Soon there will be no Israelites left who actually stood at Sinai, only Israelites who have heard about it from parents and grandparents.

CHAPTER 19

Before continuing with the narrative, the Torah offers us the strange ritual of the brown (“red”) cow. It is the classic example of a law that defies rational explanation. Indeed, the general tenor of the commentaries asks us to accept this law without understanding it, as a sign of love for and trust in God. The commentators hold that it would be almost unseemly to search for a rational explanation, implying that God’s word would be acceptable only if it fit our canons of reasoning. Human failure to understand a truth does not make it any less true. The Midrash pictures King Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, saying, “I have labored to understand the word of God and have understood it all, except for the ritual of the brown cow” (Num. R. 19:3). “These laws are decrees from God and we have no right to question them” (Num. R. 19:8). “It is more praiseworthy to do something solely because God commands it than because our own logic or sense of morality leads us to the same conclusion” (*Sifra K’doshim*). The Tosafot compare this commandment to a lover’s kiss which cannot be explained but can only be experienced (BT Av. Zar. 35a).

Yet there have been persistent efforts to uncover the lessons taught to us by this ritual. Although the Torah describes the ritual as purifying a person of contamination from contact with a dead body and nothing else, the Midrash widens the scope to include moral contamination, especially idolatry, viewing this special cow as the antidote for the sin of the Golden Calf. “Let the mother come and repair the damage the offspring has caused” (Num. R. 19:8). Ramban, noting that the passage comes immediately after the completion of the tabernacle and the challenge to Aaron’s priesthood, understands it as a way of preventing ritually unfit people from violating the sanctity of the tabernacle. Israel of Ruzhin points out that this cow purifies the impure but renders the pure impure; God similarly purifies those who approach the sanctuary in a spirit of humility with knowledge of their own inadequacies, but condemns those who come in a spirit of arrogance and a claim to perfection. A modern commentator suggests that the ritual’s purpose is psychological. To heal a person burdened by a sense of wrongdoing, who feels the purity of his or her soul has been compromised, we take an animal completely without blemish and sacrifice it, as if to imply that perfection does not belong in this world. Perfect creatures belong in heaven; this world is given to the inevitably flawed and compromised.

Because this rite is inoperative today, so that there is no way to purify the ritually contaminated, some halakhic authorities consider all Jews ritually unfit to enter the Temple Mount lest they inadvertently tread on the site where the holiest precincts of the temple once stood in Jerusalem.

Instruct the Israelite people to bring you a red cow without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which no yoke has been laid. ³You shall give it to Eleazar the priest. It shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. ⁴Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁵The cow shall be burned in his sight—its hide, flesh, and blood shall be burned, its dung included—⁶and the priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson stuff, and throw them into the fire consuming the cow. ⁷The priest shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; after that the priest may reenter the camp, but he shall be impure until evening. ⁸He who performed the burning shall also wash his garments in water, bathe his body in water, and be impure until evening. ⁹A man who is pure shall gather up the ashes of the cow and deposit them outside the camp in a pure place, to be kept for water of lustration for the Israelite community. It is for purification. ¹⁰He who gathers up the ashes of

דָּבַר | אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֵיךָ פָּרָה
אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין-בָּהּ מוֹם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עַל: ³ וַנִּתַּתָּם אֵתָהּ אֶל-
אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְהוֹצִיא אֵתָהּ אֶל-מַחוּץ
לַמַּחֲנֶה וְשָׁחַט אֵתָהּ לְפָנָיו: ⁴ וְלָקַח
אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן מִדְּמָהּ בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְהִזָּה אֶל-
נֹכַח פְּנֵי אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד מִדְּמָהּ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים:
⁵ וְשָׂרַף אֶת-הַפָּרָה לְעֵינָיו אֶת-עֹרָהּ וְאֶת-
בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת-דָּמָהּ עַל-פְּרִשָׁה יִשְׂרָף:
⁶ וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן עֵץ אַרְזוֹ וְאֵזוֹב וְשִׁנֵּי תוֹלַעַת
וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֶל-תוֹךְ שַׂרְפַּת הַפָּרָה: ⁷ וְכִבֵּס
בְּגָדָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאָחַר
יָבוֹא אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד-
הָעֶרֶב: ⁸ וְהִשְׂרַף אֵתָהּ יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו בַּמַּיִם
וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב:
⁹ וְאָסַף | אִישׁ טָהוֹר אֵת אַפְּרֵי הַפָּרָה
וְהִנִּיחַ מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה בְּמָקוֹם טָהוֹר
וְהִיתָה לְעֵדוּת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁמַרְתָּ לְמִי
נִדָּה חֲטָאת הוּא: ¹⁰ וְכִבֵּס הָאֶטָף אֶת-

THE BROWN ("RED") COW (vv. 1–13)

2. red Hebrew: *adom*, which here probably means "brown"—for which there is no word in the Bible. The idea is to increase, symbolically, the amount of blood in the ashes.

red . . . without blemish Better: "unblemished brown." A cow completely uniform in color, without specks of white or black or without even two black or white hairs, is extremely rare.

no yoke has been laid It must not have been used for profane purposes.

3. in his presence The cow will also be burned in the presence of Eleazar, indicating that it is imperative for the officiating priest to supervise the entire ritual.

4. sprinkle it seven times This act consecrates the cow as a purification offering.

6. priest Any priest, not just Eleazar.

hyssop, and crimson stuff Hyssop, an aromatic plant, is widespread in the land of Israel. Crimson yarn refers to the dye extracted from a "crimson worm," used in the weaving of the sa-

cred garments of the high priest and the inner curtains of the tabernacle.

7. wash his garments and bathe his body If he bathed first, his unwashed garments would recontaminate him.

until evening Whoever handles a burnt *hattat* offering may enter the camp as soon as he has laundered his clothing and bathed (see Lev. 16:26,28), provided he does not partake of sacred food until the evening.

8. He who performed the burning It is also presumed that he who gathers up the ashes remains outside the camp until after he has laundered and bathed, precisely as the contaminated priest has done.

9. A man Not necessarily a priest.

to be kept The ashes of the brown ("red") cow must be guarded scrupulously lest they become contaminated.

It is for purification These ashes mixed with water will be sprinkled on corpse-contaminated individuals to remove the impurity.

10. wash his clothes It is understood that he will also bathe his body.

the cow shall also wash his clothes and be impure until evening.

This shall be a permanent law for the Israelites and for the strangers who reside among you.

¹¹He who touches the corpse of any human being shall be impure for seven days. ¹²He shall purify himself with [the ashes] on the third day and on the seventh day, and then be pure; if he fails to purify himself on the third and seventh days, he shall not be pure. ¹³Whoever touches a corpse, the body of a person who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the LORD's Tabernacle; that person shall be cut off from Israel. Since the water of lustration was not dashed on him, he remains impure; his impurity is still upon him.

¹⁴This is the ritual: When a person dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be impure seven days; ¹⁵and every open vessel, with no lid fastened down, shall be impure. ¹⁶And in the open, anyone who touches a person who was killed or who died naturally, or human bone, or a grave, shall be impure seven days. ¹⁷Some of the ashes from the fire of purification shall be taken for the im-

אֶפֶר הַפָּרָה אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְטָמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב
וְהִיטָה לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגְר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם
לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם:

¹¹ הַנִּגְעַת בְּמַת לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְטָמָא
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ¹² הוּא יִתְחַטֵּא־בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהַר וְאִם־לֹא
יִתְחַטֵּא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
לֹא יִטְהַר: ¹³ כָּל־הַנִּגְעַת בְּמַת בְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם
אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת וְלֹא יִתְחַטֵּא אֶת־מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה
טָמָא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כִּי
מִי נָדָה לֹא־זָרַק עָלָיו טָמָא יְהִיָּה עוֹד
טָמְאָתוֹ בּוֹ:

¹⁴ זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אָדָם כִּי־יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל
כָּל־הַבָּא אֶל־הָאֹהֶל וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר בְּאֹהֶל
יִטָּמָא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ¹⁵ וְכָל כְּלִי פְתוּיָח
אֲשֶׁר אֵין־צְמִיד פְּתִיל עָלָיו טָמָא הוּא:
¹⁶ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יָגַע עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּחֻלָּל־
חָרֵב אִו בְּמַת אִו־בְּעֵצִים אָדָם אִו בְּקִבֹר
יִטָּמָא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ¹⁷ וְלִקְחוּ לְטָמָא

strangers All those who dwell in the Holy Land, Israelites and non-Israelites alike, must purify themselves of corpse contamination lest they defile the sanctuary by bearing their impurity within the community.

11. seven days Similarly, in ancient Babylonia, one who came into contact with dust from a place of mourning was required to offer sacrifices to the god Shamash, to bathe, change clothing, and remain inside the house for seven days.

13. defiles the LORD's Tabernacle Severe impurity is dynamic and can attack the sanctuary through the air. Corpse-contaminated individuals who prolong their impurity have defiled the sanctuary from afar, even without entering it.

shall be cut off If the neglect was deliberate

(see 15:30–31). (If the neglect was accidental, a purification offering is brought.)

PURIFICATION BY SPRINKLING (vv. 14–22)

14. enters the tent The impurity emitted by the body is trapped by the roof, so to speak, and cannot rise. Hence, every person and object under the roof is contaminated.

15. every open vessel A tightly closed vessel made entirely of earthenware, however, will not admit the “vapors” of impurity given off by the corpse; its contents remain pure.

fastened down The lid is attached by cords passing through holes in it and through the handles of the vessel. Such a lid would keep the vessel tightly closed and preserve it from defilement.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

19:14. When a person dies Once the Temple was destroyed, we could not purify ourselves from this type of ritual impurity. Now all but *kohanim* may attend funerals (see Lev. 21:2). We rinse our hands upon leaving the cemetery or upon entering a house of mourning after the funeral, in symbolic recollection of this law.

pure person, and fresh water shall be added to them in a vessel. ¹⁸A person who is pure shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle on the tent and on all the vessels and people who were there, or on him who touched the bones or the person who was killed or died naturally or the grave. ¹⁹The pure person shall sprinkle it upon the impure person on the third day and on the seventh day, thus purifying him by the seventh day. He shall then wash his clothes and bathe in water, and at nightfall he shall be pure. ²⁰If anyone who has become impure fails to purify himself, that person shall be cut off from the congregation, for he has defiled the LORD's sanctuary. The water of lustration was not dashed on him: he is impure.

²¹That shall be for them a law for all time. Further, he who sprinkled the water of lustration shall wash his clothes; and whoever touches the water of lustration shall be impure until evening. ²²Whatever that impure person touches shall be impure; and the person who touches him shall be impure until evening.

מֵעֵפֶר שְׂרֵפֶת הַחֲטָאֹת וְנָתַן עָלָיו מִיִּם שְׁנֵי חַיִּים אֶל-כֹּלֵי: ¹⁸ וְלָקַח אֶזּוֹב וְטָבַל בְּמֵיִם אִישׁ טָהוֹר וְהִזָּה עַל-הָאֹהֶל וְעַל-כָּל-הַכֵּלִים וְעַל-הַנְּפֹשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ-שָׁם וְעַל-הַנְּגַע בְּעַצֵּם אֹו בְּחֶלֶל אֹו בְּמֵת אֹו בְּקֶבֶר: ¹⁹ וְהִזָּה הַטָּהוֹר עַל-הַטָּמֵא בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְחֲטָאוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בְּמֵיִם וְטָהַר בְּעֶרְב: ²⁰ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִטְמָא וְלֹא יִתְחַטֵּא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִתּוֹךְ הַקָּהָל כִּי אֶת-מִקְדָּשׁ יְהוָה טָמָא מִי נִדָּה לֹא-זֹרֵק עָלָיו טָמָא הוּא:

²¹ וְהִיָּתָה לָהֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם וַיִּמְזָה מִי-הַנְּדָה יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְהַנְּגַע בְּמֵי הַנְּדָה יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ²² וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יִגְעֹבוּ הַטָּמֵא יִטְמָא וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ הַנִּגְעַת הַטָּמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: פ

20 The Israelites arrived in a body at the wilderness of Zin on the first new moon, and

כ וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל-הָעֵדָה מִדְּבַר-

shall be impure Open earthenware vessels are impure forever and must be broken.

18. A person who is pure This obvious condition is made explicit to bar those who had already handled the ashes and were thereby contaminated.

on all the vessels Afterward these must undergo washing, as people must.

19. Full purification comes only after laundering and bathing.

21. See Comment to 19:10.

22. Whatever That is, anything or anyone.

FROM KADESH TO THE STEPPES OF MOAB (20:1–22:1)

THE SIN OF MOSES AND AARON (20:1–13)
After Miriam's death, the people complain about the lack of water. Moses and Aaron are com-

manded to bring forth water from the rock. They produce the water but in so doing commit a sin akin to heresy and are condemned by God to die in the wilderness.

CHAPTER 20

1. The Talmud connects Miriam's death to the preceding passage. "Just as the ashes of the

brown cow atone for sin, the death of a righteous person does the same" (BT MK 28a). In the wake of a good person's death, we are moved to re-examine our own lives.

הַפְּטָרָה פְּרַשַׁת פָּרָה

HAFTARAH FOR PARASHAT PARAH

EZEKIEL 36:16–38 (*Ashk'nazim*)

EZEKIEL 36:16–36 (*S'fardim*)

This *haftarah* is one of the prophecies of hope and consolation that Ezekiel addressed to the Judean exiles in Babylon. These oracles, whose larger theme is the reversal of failures in Israelite history, begin in Ezek. 33 (dated *Tevet* 585 B.C.E., according to 33:21). Chapters 35 and 36:1–15 in particular provide consolation to the nation after the taunts of their enemies (see Ezek. 35:10–12, 36:2–3, 5, 13). The nations mocked Israel, saying: “These are the people of the LORD, yet they had to leave His land.” Because of this, God’s holy name was profaned among the nations (36:20–21). God determines to act for His own honor, promising the nation redemption from exile and restoration to its ancestral homeland (vv. 22–28). God is determined to sanctify His great name through a unilateral act of redemption, described in verses 22–32. As Eliezer of Beaugency noted, this entire unit is framed by a sharply worded statement of divine motivation: “Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel” (v. 22).

Ezekiel gives particular emphasis to issues of purification and spiritual renewal along with the theme of national redemption. Ritually purified by divine action, the people will dwell in their homeland and observe the Covenant (36:25–28). This topic heralds concern for the approaching festival of *Pesah*, because certain impurities could bar a worshiper from its celebration (see Num. 9:1–14). Echoing this matter, a special passage is added to the regular Torah portion for this *Shabbat*. In that selection, taken from Num. 19:1–22, in which the ashes of the so-called red heifer (*parah adumah*) are used in a priestly ceremony of ritual bathing and purification from defilement. Through these readings, the ongoing community of Israel is reminded that one must begin the holiday in a proper physical and spiritual state.

By custom, *S'fardim* conclude the *haftarah* at verse 36, thus ending on a positive note after the divine call to Israel to “Be ashamed and humiliated because of your ways” (v. 32). The practice for *Ashk'nazim* concludes the *haftarah* with the next oracle (vv. 37–38), comparing the vast throngs of people in the homeland to the multitude of sheep in Jerusalem on a festival day. This image was interpreted in antiquity as a reference to the flock of Israel “coming to Jerusalem at the time of the feast of Passover” (Targ. Jon.).

Part of the national transformation, unilaterally performed by God for His own sake, is a revivification of heart and spirit. God will give the people a new heart to know Him and will put His spirit within them as a concrete act of inspiration. Israel will thus be re-created, a new Adam to be restored to a land that “has become like the garden of Eden” (v. 35).

This re-creation is the core of national purification and the climax of the divine acts of sanctification. The destiny of God and Israel are thus mysteriously linked. The defilement of Israel leads to the profanation of God’s name, and the purification of Israel results in the sanctification of God’s name on earth. Their relationship is marked positively at the end of this prophetic passage by the forecast of a renewal of the Covenant. Reborn in heart and spirit, Israel will again serve God and His law: “Then you shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people and I will be your God” (v. 28). The return to the homeland is thus also a symbolic return to Mount Sinai and its spiritual demands.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

Parashat Parah (Num. 19:1–22) is the third of

four special Torah passages added to the regular *Shabbat* portion in the weeks before *Pesah*. The theme of each reading is different, yet rabbinic tradition correlated each of the four readings with prophetic selections that reinforce the main theme of purification. (For details on the scheduling of the special Torah portions, see the introduction to the *haftarah* for *parashat Sh'kalim*.)

Clear links exist between this special Torah reading and the *haftarah*. Thematically speaking, the Torah passage presents an ancient rite of detoxification whereby individuals who have become impure through contact with the dead are purified and restored to the community; the cor-

responding prophetic passage announces Israel's revivification (a new heart and a new spirit) as well as its purification by God. Meanwhile, both the technical language of purity–impurity and the terms for sacred ritual bathing (among others) connect these two texts verbally.

Parashat Parah was recited at this season from early Rabbinic times (M Meg. 3:4) and was understood to signal to the entire community that the *pesah* sacrifice should be performed in ritual purity (see Rashi on BT Meg. 29a). The *haftarah* invigorates the present preparations for *Pesah* by envisioning a new era of purification and of transformed religious consciousness.

36

¹⁶The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷O mortal, when the House of Israel dwelt on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their ways were in My sight like the impurity of a menstruous woman. ¹⁸So I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they shed upon their land, and for the fetishes with which they defiled it. ¹⁹I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: I punished them in accordance with their ways and their deeds. ²⁰But when they came to those nations, they caused My holy name to be profaned, in that it was said of them, “These are the people of the

לו

¹⁶ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: ¹⁷ בֶּן־אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם וַיִּטְמְאוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכֵם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתֵם כְּטִמְאַת הַנְּוֵדָה הַיְתֵה דַרְכֵם לִפְנֵי: ¹⁸ וְאַשְׁפָּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם עַל־הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפְכוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וּבִגְלוֹלֵיהֶם טִמְאוּהָ: ¹⁹ וְאַפִּיץ אֹתָם בְּגוֹיִם וַיִּזְרוּ בְּאֶרְצוֹת כְּדַרְכֵם וּכְעֲלִילוֹתֵם שְׁפֹטֵתִים: ²⁰ וַיָּבֹאוּ * אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם וַיַּחֲלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קֹדְשִׁי בְּאֹמַר לָהֶם עַם־

v. 20. סבירין ומטעין לשון רבים

Ezekiel 36:17–19. The prophet's priestly orientation shows through his presentation of moral sins as the cause of the Land's ritual impurity. Similarly, the purification of the nation in verse 25 is portrayed in cultic terms. (Likewise, the vocabulary of defilement, purification, sprinkling, and pure water is employed in connection with the rite of the heifer—the special Torah portion read on this *Shabbat*; see Num. 19:11–13, 17.) The punishment of exile is presented here as recompense for ritual and moral crimes.

O mortal Hebrew: *ben adam*; literally, “O son of man.” A common characterization in the vocabulary of this prophet. Ezekiel's mortal nature is emphasized, perhaps counterpointing his

humanity to the divinity of the beings he communes with; chapters 1, 8–11, 40–42).

like the impurity of a menstruous woman Refers to her ritual impurity (see Lev. 15:19ff.). Hebrew: *ha-niddah*; literally, “the menstruous woman.” The definite article personifies the simile, rather than indicating a general state of impurity. The link between ritual impurity in this verse and bloodshed in verse 18 suggests that the figure here alludes to moral and ritual crimes elsewhere denounced by the prophet (18:6, 22:3–13). For Ezekiel, the theme has real cultic consequences. As a result of its “menstrual impurity,” the nation is banished from the Land.

20. they caused My holy name to be profaned By referring to God in a demeaning way. The na-

LORD, yet they had to leave His land.”²¹ Therefore I am concerned for My holy name, which the House of Israel have caused to be profaned among the nations to which they have come.

²²Say to the House of Israel: Thus said the Lord God: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have caused to be profaned among the nations to which you have come. ²³I will sanctify My great name which has been profaned among the nations—among whom you have caused it to be profaned. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD—declares the Lord God—when I manifest My holiness before their eyes through you. ²⁴I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be pure: I will purify you from all your impurities and from all your fetishes. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit into you: I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh; ²⁷and I will put My spirit into you. Thus I will cause you to follow My laws and faithfully to observe My rules. ²⁸Then you shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people and I will be your God.

²⁹And when I have delivered you from all your impurity, I will summon the grain and make it abundant, and I will not bring famine upon you. ³⁰I will make the fruit of your trees and the crops of your fields abundant, so that you shall never again be humiliated before the nations because

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וּמֵאֲרָצוֹ יֵצְאוּ: ²¹וְאֶחְמַל עַל-שֵׁם קְדוֹשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חִלְּלוּהוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה: ²² לֵכֵן אֲמַר לְבֵית-יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אִם-לְשֵׁם-קְדוֹשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חִלְּלִתֶם בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאתֶם שָׁם: ²³ וְקִדְשֵׁנִי אֶת-שְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל הַמְּחֻלָּל בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר חִלְּלִיתֶם בְּתוֹכָם וַיְדַעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּהַקְדְּשֵׁי בְכֶם לְעֵינֵיהֶם: ²⁴ וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן-הַגּוֹיִם וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל-הָאֲרָצוֹת וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֲדַמְתְּכֶם: ²⁵ וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִים טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: ²⁶ וְנָתַתִּי לְכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לְכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר: ²⁷ וְאֶת-רוּחִי אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-בְּחַקִּי תֵּלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם: ²⁸ וַיִּשְׁבַּחְתֶּם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵייתֶם לִי לְעָם וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים: ²⁹ וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל טְמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וְקִרְאתִי אֶל-הַדָּגָן וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֹתוֹ וְלֹא-אֶתֶן עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב: ³⁰ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת-פְּרִי הָעֵץ וְתִנְיֹבַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִקְחוּ עוֹד חֲרַפַּת רָעָב בְּגוֹיִם: ³¹ וְזִכְרְתֶם

tions interpreted Israel’s exile as a sign of divine impotence, not as punishment (Rashi, Radak).

22. Not for your sake Or: “Not on account of your merits” (Abravanel). The motivation for divine action is regard for God’s own name alone.

26. I will give you a new heart Along with Ezek. 11:19, other prophecies contemplate a radical transformation of Israel’s religious spirit, after the exile, through sovereign and unilateral divine fiat (see Jer. 24:7, 31:32–33). In its focus on a

unilateral divine action, this image seems to reflect some of the despair in the exilic period over the independent incapacity of the human spirit to return faithfully to God, or at least a strong feeling that without divine initiative true repentance could not take place.

28. you shall be My people and I will be your God A technical covenant formula (see Jer. 11:4). Also in 16:60 and 37:26, Ezekiel anticipates a new covenant after the exile.

of famine. ³¹Then you shall recall your evil ways and your base conduct, and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abhorrent practices. ³²Not for your sake will I act—declares the Lord God—take good note! Be ashamed and humiliated because of your ways, O House of Israel!

³³Thus said the Lord God: When I have purified you of all your iniquities, I will people your settlements, and the ruined places shall be rebuilt; ³⁴and the desolate land, after lying waste in the sight of every passerby, shall again be tilled. ³⁵And men shall say, “That land, once desolate, has become like the garden of Eden; and the cities, once ruined, desolate, and ravaged, are now populated and fortified.” ³⁶And the nations that are left around you shall know that I the LORD have rebuilt the ravaged places and replanted the desolate land. I the LORD have spoken and will act.

³⁷Thus said the Lord God: Moreover, in this I will respond to the House of Israel and act for their sake: I will multiply their people like sheep. ³⁸As Jerusalem is filled with sacrificial sheep during her festivals, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. And they shall know that I am the LORD.

אֶת־דַּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וּמַעַלְלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־טוֹבִים וּנְקֻטָּתְכֶם בְּפָנֵיכֶם עַל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם
וְעַל תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיכֶם: ³² לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי־
עֹשֶׂה נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה יוֹדַע לְכֶם בּוֹשׁוּ
וְהִכְלַמוּ מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל: ^ס
³³ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּיוֹם טְהַרֵי אֶתְכֶם
מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־הָעָרִים
וּנְבִנוּ הַחֲרֻבוֹת: ³⁴ וְהָאָרֶץ הַנְּשֻׁמָּה תִּעֲבֹד
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה שְׂמֵמָה לְעֵינַי כָּל־
עוֹבֵר: ³⁵ וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַלְּזוּ הַנְּשֻׁמָּה
הִיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן וְהָעָרִים הַחֲרֻבוֹת
וְהַנְּשֻׁמוֹת וְהַנְּהַרְסוֹת בְּצוּרוֹת יִשְׁבוּ:
³⁶ וַיִּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׂאָרוּ סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם
כִּי אֲנִי יְהוִה בְּנִיתִי הַנְּהַרְסוֹת נְטַעְתִּי
הַנְּשֻׁמָּה אֲנִי יְהוִה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי: ^ס
³⁷ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עוֹד זֹאת אֲדַרְשׁ
לְבַיִת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם אַרְבֵּה אֲתֶם
כְּצֹאן אָדָם: ³⁸ כְּצֹאן קִדְשִׁים כְּצֹאן
יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּמוֹעֲדֶיהָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶינָה הָעָרִים
הַחֲרֻבוֹת מְלֵאוֹת צֹאן אָדָם וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי
יְהוִה: ^ס