

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
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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: ²וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַח-לָךְ עֵגֶל בֶּן-בָּקָר לְחֻטָּאת וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה תְּמִימִם וְהִקְרֵב לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ³וְאֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר קָחוּ שְׂעִיר-עִזִּים לְחֻטָּאת וְעֵגֶל וְכֶבֶשׂ בְּנֵי-שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם לְעֹלָה: ⁴וְשׁוֹר וְאַיִל לְשַׁלְמִים לְזִבְחֵי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וּמִנְחָה בְּלוֹלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן כִּי הַיּוֹם יִהְיֶה נִרְאָה אֵלֵיכֶם: ⁵וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה אֶל-פְּנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּקְרְבוּ כָל-הָעֵדָה וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ⁶וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֵלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד יְהוָה: ⁷וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קָרֵב 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.” ⁷Then 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

וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת־עֹלֹתְךָ וְכַפֵּר בְּעֹדֶךָ וּבְעֵד הָעָם וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־קָרְבַּן הָעָם וְכַפֵּר בְּעֵדָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

⁸ וַיִּקְרַב אֶהֱרֹן אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת־עֹגֶל הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ: ⁹ וַיִּקְרְבוּ בָנָיו אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־הַדָּם אֵלָיו וַיִּטְבֹּל אֶצְבָּעוֹ בַּדָּם וַיִּתֵּן עַל־קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת־הַדָּם יָצַק אֶל־יְסוֹד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ¹⁰ וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב וְאֶת־הַכִּלִּית וְאֶת־הַיִּתְרֹת מִן־הַכֶּבֶד מִן־הַחַטָּאת הַקֹּטֵר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ 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 הִמְצִיאוּ אֵלָיו לִנְתֻחֶיהָ וְאֶת־הָרֹאשׁ וַיִּקְטֹר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ¹⁴ וַיִּרְחֹץ אֶת־הַקֶּרֶב וְאֶת־הַפְּרָעִים וַיִּקְטֹר עַל־הָעֵלָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

¹⁵ וַיִּקְרַב אֶת קָרְבַּן הָעָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר לָעָם וַיִּשְׁחָטוּהוּ וַיַּחַטְּאוּהוּ 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 כַּמִּשְׁפָּט: ¹⁷וַיִּקְרַב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּמְלֵא כַּפּוֹ מִמִּנְחָה וַיִּקְטֹרַע עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלֶּבֶד עֲלֵת הַבֶּקֶר: ¹⁸וַיִּשְׁחֹט אֶת־הַשּׁוֹר וְאֶת־הָאֵילָן זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לָעָם וַיִּמָּצְאוּ בְנֵי אֹהֶרֶן אֶת־הַדָּם אֵלָיו וַיִּזְרְקֵהוּ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: ¹⁹וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים מִן־הַשּׁוֹר וּמִן־הָאֵילָן הָאֵלִיָּה וְהַמְכֶסֶה וְהַכְּלִיֹּת וְיִתְרֵת הַכֶּבֶד: ²⁰וַיִּשְׁימוּ אֶת־הַחֲלָבִים עַל־הַחֲזוֹת וַיִּקְטֹרַע הַחֲלָבִים הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ²¹וְאֶת־הַחֲזוֹת וְאֶת־שׁוֹק הַיָּמִין הֵנִיף אֹהֶרֶן תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה:

²²וַיִּשָּׂא אֹהֶרֶן אֶת־יָדָיו וַיְבָרֶכֶם וַיִּרְדּוּ מִעֲשֵׂת הַחֲטָאת וְהָעֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים: ²³וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאֹהֶרֶן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם: ²⁴וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּרְגְּזוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם:

10 וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אֹהֶרֶן 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 בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ
קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר
לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם: ²וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה
וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ³וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה
לֵאמֹר
בְּקִרְבִּי 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-פָּנֵי כָל-הָעָם אֶפְבֹּד
וַיִּדְם 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 וַיִּשָּׂאֻם בְּכַתְּנֵתָם אֶל-מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֶהֱרֹן וּלְאֶלְעָזָר וּלְאִיתָמָר | בְּנֵיךְ רָאשֵׁיכֶם אֶל-תִּפְרְעוּ | וּבִגְדֵיכֶם לֹא-תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמָּתוּ וְעַל כָּל-הָעֵדָה יִקְצֹף וְאֲחֵיכֶם כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכּוּ אֶת-הַשְּׂרִפָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יְהוָה: ⁷ וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ פֶן-תָּמָתוּ כִּי-שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת יְהוָה עָלֵיכֶם 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

⁸וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ⁹וְשָׁכַר אֶל-תַּשְׁתֵּי אֶתָּה | אֶתָּה | וּבְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תָמְתוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: ¹⁰וְלִהְבִּדִיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר: ¹¹וְלִהְיוֹת אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל-הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה: פ

רביעי ¹²וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל אֲלֻעֶזֶר וְאֶל-אִיתָמָר | בְּנָיו הַנּוֹתָרִים קָחוּ אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה הַנּוֹתָרֶת מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה וְאִכְלוּהָ מִצֹּת אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קִדָּשִׁים הוּא: ¹³וְאִכְלֹתֶם אֹתָהּ בְּמָקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ כִּי חֻקָּה וְחֻק־בְּנֶיךָ הוּא מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה כִּי-כֵן צֻוֵּיתִי: ¹⁴וְאֵת חֵזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת | שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה תֹאכְלוּ בְּמָקוֹם טָהוֹר אֶתָּה וּבְנֶיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ אִתְּךָ כִּי-חֻקָּה וְחֻק־בְּנֶיךָ נִתְּנוּ מִזִּבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹⁵שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְחֵזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה עַל אֲשֵׁי הַחֲלָבִים יָבִיאוּ לַהֲנִיף תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהָיָה לָךְ וּלְבְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ לְחֻק-עוֹלָם בְּאֶשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

חמישי ¹⁶וְאֵת | שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ* דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהִנֵּה שָׂרָף וַיִּקְצַף עַל-אֲלֻעֶזֶר

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.

ועל־אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַנּוֹתָרִם לֵאמֹר:
¹⁷ מִדּוּעַ לֹא־אָכַלְתֶּם אֶת־הַחֻטָּאת
 בַּמָּקוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא
 וְאַתָּה נָתַן לָכֶם לִשְׂאֵת אֶת־עוֹן הָעֵדָה
 לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹⁸ הֵן לֹא־הוּבָא
 אֶת־דָּמָהּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ פְּנִימָה אָכּוּל
 תֹּאכְלוּ אֹתָהּ בַּקֹּדֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר צֻוֵּיתִי:
¹⁹ וַיֹּדֹבֶר אֶהֱרֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הֵן הַיּוֹם הַקָּרִיבוּ
 אֶת־חֻטָּאתָם וְאֶת־עֹלֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
 וְתִקְרָאנָה אֹתִי כְּאֵלֶּה וְאָכַלְתִּי חֻטָּאת
 הַיּוֹם הַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: ²⁰ וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה
 וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו: פ

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron,

יא וַיֹּדֹבֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אֶהֱרֹן שִׁשִּׁי

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 אֱלֹהִים: ²דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר
זֹאת הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה
אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ: ³כָּל אִ מִפְּרֹסֶת פְּרֹסָה
וְשֹׁסֶעַת שֹׁסֵעַ פְּרֹסֶת מַעֲלַת גֵּרָה בְּבֵהֶמָה
אֹתָהּ תֹּאכְלוּ: ⁴אֲךָ אֵת-זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ
מִמֶּעַלֵי הַגֵּרָה וּמִמִּפְרִיטֵי הַפְּרֹסָה אֵת-

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־מַעֲלָה גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה אֵינָנּוּ מִפְּרִי־טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ⁵וְאֶת־הַשָּׁפָן כִּי־מַעֲלָה גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה לֹא יִפְרִי־טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ⁶וְאֶת־הָאֲרֻנֶּבֶת כִּי־מַעֲלָה גֵרָה הוּא וּפְרָסָה לֹא הִפְרִיָּסָה טָמֵאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ⁷וְאֶת־הַחֲזִיר כִּי־מִפְּרִי־פְרָסָה הוּא וְשֹׁסֶעַ שֹׁסֶעַ פְּרָסָה וְהוּא גֵרָה לֹא־יִגַּר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ⁸מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגָּעוּ טָמְאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

⁹אֶת־זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם כָּל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ סִנְפִיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם בַּיָּמִים וּבְנִחָלִים אֵתֶם תֹאכְלוּ: ¹⁰וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ סִנְפִיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת בַּיָּמִים וּבְנִחָלִים מִכֹּל שָׂרֵץ הַמַּיִם וּמִכֹּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם שָׂקָץ הֵם לָכֶם: ¹¹וְשָׂקָץ יִהְיוּ

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

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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. ¹²Everything 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

לכם מבשרם לא תאכלו ואת־נבלתם תשקצו: ¹²כל אשר אין־לו סנפיר וקשקשת במים שקץ הוא לכם: ¹³ואת־אלה תשקצו מן־העוף לא יאכלו שקץ הם את־הנשר ואת־הפֶּרֶס ואת־העֵנְנִיָּה: ¹⁴ואת־הַדָּאָה ואת־הַאֵיָּה לַמִּינֶה: ¹⁵את כל־עֶרֶב לַמִּינֹו: ¹⁶ואת־בת הַיַּעֲנָה ואת־הַתְּחֹמֶס ואת־הַשֹּׁחַף ואת־הַנֶּץ לַמִּינֶהוּ: ¹⁷ואת־הַכּוֹס ואת־הַשֹּׁלֶף ואת־הַיִּנְשׁוּף: ¹⁸ואת־הַתְּנִשְׁמַת ואת־הַקָּאֵת ואת־הַרְחֹם: ¹⁹ואת־הַחֲסִידָה הָאֲנָפָה לַמִּינֶה ואת־הַדּוֹכִיפַת ואת־הָעֵטְלָף:

²⁰כל שָׂרֵץ הָעוֹף הַהֶלֶף עַל־אַרְבַּע שָׂקָץ הוא לכם: ²¹ס אף את־זוּה תאכלו מכל שָׂרֵץ הָעוֹף הַהֶלֶף עַל־אַרְבַּע אֲשֶׁר־לא לוֹ כְּרָעִים מִמַּעַל לְרַגְלָיו לִנְתֵר בָּהֶן עַל־הָאָרֶץ: ²²את־אלה מהם תאכלו

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-ḥasidah*) 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

את־הָאַרְבֶּה לְמִינּוֹ וְאֶת־הַסֹּלֶעַם לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַחֲרָגָל לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַחֲגָב לְמִינֵהוּ: ²³וְכָל־שָׂרָץ הָעוֹף אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אַרְבַּע רַגְלִים שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לָכֶם:

²⁴וְלֹא־אֵלֶּה תִטְמְאוּ כָּל־הַנִּגָּע בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁵וְכָל־הַנֶּשֶׂא מִנִּבְלָתָם יִכְבֹּס בְּגָדָיו וְיִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁶לְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר הוּא מִפְּרִסֵּת פֶּרֶסָה וְשֹׁסֵעַ אֵינָנָה שֹׁסֵעַת וְגֵרָה אֵינָנָה מַעֲלָה טְמָאִים הֵם לָכֶם כָּל־הַנִּגָּע בָּהֶם יִטְמָא: ²⁷וְכָל־הוֹלֵךְ עַל־כַּפָּיו בְּכָל־הַחַיָּה הַהֹלֶכֶת עַל־אַרְבַּע טְמָאִים הֵם לָכֶם כָּל־הַנִּגָּע בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁸וְהַנֶּשֶׂא אֶת־נִבְלָתָם יִכְבֹּס בְּגָדָיו וְיִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב טְמָאִים הֵמָּה לָכֶם: ס

²⁹וְזֶה לָכֶם הַטְּמָא בְּשָׂרָץ הַשָּׂרָץ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַחֹלֵד וְהָעֶכְבֹּר וְהָצָב לְמִינֵהוּ: ³⁰וְהָאֲנָקָה וְהַכֹּחַ וְהַלְטָאָה וְהַחֲמָט וְהַתְּנַשְׁמֹת: ³¹אֵלֶּה הַטְּמָאִים לָכֶם בְּכָל־הַשָּׂרָץ כָּל־הַנִּגָּע בָּהֶם בְּמָתָם יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ³²וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־יִפֹּל־עָלָיו מֵהֶם בְּמָתָם יִטְמָא מִכָּל־כְּלִי־עֵץ אוֹ בָּגֶד 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 בנבלתם יטמא: ³⁷ וכי יפל מנבלתם על-כל-זרע זרע 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 בנבלתה 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 כל הולך על-גחון*
וכל | הולך על-ארבע עד כל-מרב
רגלים לכל-השרץ השרץ על-הארץ לא
תאכלום כי-שקץ הם: 43 אל-תשקצו
את-נפשתיכם בכל-השרץ השרץ ולא
תטמאו בהם ונטמתם* בם: 44 כי אני
יהוה אלהיכם והתקדשתם והייתם
קדשים כי קדוש אני ולא תטמאו את-
נפשתיכם בכל-השרץ הרמש על-
הארץ: 45 כי | אני יהוה המעלה אתכם
מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים
והייתם קדשים כי קדוש אני:
46 זאת תורת הבהמה והעוף וכל נפש
החיה הרמשת במים ולכל-נפש
השרצת על-הארץ: 47 להבדיל בין
הטמא ובין הטהור ובין החיה הנאכלת
ובין החיה אשר לא תאכל: פ

v. 42. ר' 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.

הפטרת שמיני

HAFTARAH FOR SH'MINI

2 SAMUEL 6:1–7:17 (*Ashk'nazim*)

2 SAMUEL 6:1–19 (*S'fardim*)

This *haftarah* introduces a new phase in ancient Israelite religion and culture. King David decided to consolidate his national authority after his coronation (in about 1000 B.C.E.) in Hebron (2 Sam. 5:1–5), his conquest of Jerusalem (5:6–10), and his defeat of the Philistines. As a symbolic act, he brought the Ark up to Jerusalem from the home of Abinadav in Baalim, where it had been kept after earlier wars against the Philistines in the time of Samuel (1 Sam. 6:21–7:1). The transfer of the holy Ark to the ancient site of Jebus (Jerusalem) was designed to unify the tribes of Israel and Judea (in the north and in the south) around a sacred center. The transfer also marked a new moment of religious centralization, in distinct contrast to the time when the Ark had circulated among the tribes.

The ceremonious portage of the Ark to Jerusalem with David at the helm (and its unexpected disruption) constitutes the first part of the *haftarah* (2 Sam. 6:1–19). The king's desire to build a permanent shrine for the Ark (together with a postponement of fulfilling this request to one of his descendants) makes up the second part of the reading (2 Sam. 7:1–17). Among *S'fardim*, only the first part is recited; *Ashk'nazim* read both sections.

The *haftarah*, with its principal focus on the “Ark of the LORD,” oscillates between two poles: stability and movement. Moving the Ark to Jerusalem, from a site where apparently it had been at rest for nearly two generations, was abruptly postponed when Uzza was struck dead after reaching out to steady the Ark when it seemed to be toppling. After three months, the transfer was reinitiated, and the Ark was brought to Jerusalem.

God initially deflected David's desire for a more fitting and permanent site for the Ark, not-

ing (in chapter 7) that from the Exodus until now He always had “moved about” in a portable shrine and never had requested a stable “house.” With these words, idealizing the ancient tabernacle—tent as the suitable site for God's earthly dwelling, movement is portrayed as the very core of the people's life with God, on their journeys in the wilderness and in the rotation of the Ark from shrine to shrine in the Promised Land. Thus the desire for a permanent temple constitutes a radical break, exchanging older nomadic ideals (the “tent”) for the opulence of a monarchy (the “house”).

A similar social-ideologic tension underlay Samuel's early rejection of the people's desire for a king (1 Sam. 8), which he believed to be a rejection of the older ideals of divine rule. God, however, overruled Samuel and gave permission for a monarchy to be established. In this *haftarah*, too, the initial insistence on maintaining older practices is subsequently compromised when God announces that a permanent dynasty should have a permanent shrine.

God promises the king that He will provide the people a place in which they will dwell in security (2 Sam. 7:10–11). Wandering and fear will cease. Security and permanence are also stressed for the royal dynasty of David. God promises that a covenant bond will forever link Him with the Davidic line (v. 13). All subsequent beliefs and hopes in the dynasty of David and its restoration derive from this source. This heavenly guarantee echoes David's reference to the fall of Saul's line earlier in the *haftarah*, during his sarcastic response to Michal's taunts about his behavior during the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:21). This failure of Saul's dynasty serves here as the negative counterpoint to the positive promise to David.

The overall movement toward stability (for the Ark and for the dynasty) is potentially endangered at two points. The first involves the holy Ark itself. As the seat of divine Presence among the people, the Ark was a source of blessing and power for the nation—especially in war (1 Sam. 4:5–9). But if it fell into the wrong hands, disaster could result. This was certainly the case when the Ark was hijacked by the Philistines in the days of Samuel (4:11).

The trend toward stability for the Ark and dynasty was endangered on the road to Jerusalem in the incident with Uzza who was killed by God “for his indiscretion” in touching the holy object, which appeared to be toppling, and the journey was halted. The Ark was then placed in the house of Obed-edom, where it remained until the blessings that accrued to him convinced David that divine wrath had subsided. When the journey to Jerusalem was resumed, the Ark was carried forward by “bearers.” These individuals are not identified, but later biblical tradition believed that David had corrected his error of allowing laymen to transport the Ark. It reported this change in transport protocol by saying that “David gave orders that none but the Levites were to carry the Ark of God”—as was their duty according to the law (1 Chron. 15:2). Boundaries between the sacred and the profane are inviolable, and the old warnings in the Torah against lay encroachment upon the sacred were now dramatically confirmed. Holy objects are a source of both life and death, through God’s favor or fury. This point is underscored at the very moment when Jerusalem is transformed into a holy city.

The second source of danger evident in the *haftarah* lies within the dynasty itself. God offers a covenant of eternal commitment to David and his descendants (2 Sam. 7:13–14). This special bond, however, does not free the kings of responsibility. For if a king “does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of man and the affliction of mortals” (v. 14). Nevertheless, says God, “I will never withdraw My favor (*hasdi*) from him” (v. 15). Disobedience has its dangers, but it will never result in divine rejection. Later generations relied on this promise and recalled to God the “covenant”

sworn to David “for all generations” in times of danger (Ps. 89:4–5), reciting His commitment of a “steadfast love” or “favor” (*hasdi*) “for him always” (vv. 25,29,34).

The *haftarah* thus preserves the foundation document of the Davidic dynasty, which also came to serve as words of comfort and hope for future generations. The promise that a descendant of David would also build a temple (2 Sam. 7:13) gave the dynastic prophecy an added dimension. It not only legitimated a temple in the immediate future, but justified the hopes of later believers that the destroyed temple would be rebuilt by a descendant of David. The ideas of a new (or renewed) temple and Davidic kingship also became the twin pillars of biblical and Jewish messianic hope for centuries to come.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH* TO THE *PARASHAH*

The connection between the *haftarah* and the *parashah* derives from the striking symmetry of the two readings. The *parashah* first celebrates the dedication of the tabernacle (Lev. 9) and then records the deaths of Nadab and Abihu when they brought “alien fire” into the shrine (Lev. 10:1–2). Correspondingly, the *haftarah* initially describes the joyful transport of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:2–5) and then notes the abrupt death of Uzza when he reached out to grasp the holy object (vv. 6–7).

An old *midrash* observes that these two disasters caused the people to complain, because they assumed that both the smoky incense (which the priests offered) and the holy Ark (that Uzza touched) were objects of punishment and danger (Tanḥ. B’sallah 21). For that reason, the *midrash* states, scripture goes on to record that the incense could also bring the people atonement and protection (during the plague after Korah’s rebellion, Num. 17:12), and that the Ark could be the agent of great blessing (for the household of Obed-edom, 2 Sam. 6:11). Holy objects are presented as bivalent entities, affecting human life by the manner in which they are approached and used.

6 David again assembled all the picked men of Israel, thirty thousand strong. ²Then David and all the troops that were with him set out from Baalim of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God to which the Name was attached, the name LORD of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim.

³They loaded the Ark of God onto a new cart and conveyed it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Abinadab's sons, Uzza and Ahio, guided the new cart. ⁴They conveyed it from Abinadab's house on the hill, [Uzzah walking] alongside the Ark of God and Ahio walking in front of the Ark. ⁵Meanwhile, David and all the House of Israel danced before the LORD to [the sound of] all kinds of cypress wood [instruments], with lyres, harps, timbrels, sistrums, and cymbals.

⁶But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out for the Ark of God and grasped it, for the oxen had stumbled. ⁷The LORD was incensed at Uzzah. And God struck him down on the spot for his indiscretion, and he died there beside the Ark of God. ⁸David was distressed because the LORD had inflicted a breach upon Uzzah; and that place was named Perez-uzzah, as it is still called.

⁹David was afraid of the LORD that day; he said, "How can I let the Ark of the LORD come to me?" ¹⁰So David would not bring the Ark of the LORD to his place in the City of David; instead, David diverted it to the house of

ו וַיִּסָּף עוֹד דָּוִד אֶת־כָּל־בְּחֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשִׁים אָלֶף: ²וַיֵּקֶם | וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ מִבְּעָלֵי יְהוּדָה לְהַעֲלוֹת מִשָּׁם אֶת אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִּים עָלָיו: ³וַיִּרְכְּבוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־עֶגְלָה חֲדָשָׁה וַיִּשְׁאָהוּ מִבֵּית אֲבִינָדָב אֲשֶׁר בְּגִבְעָה וְעֹזָא* וְאֶחָיו בְּנֵי אֲבִינָדָב נְהִיגִים אֶת־הָעֶגְלָה חֲדָשָׁה: ⁴וַיִּשְׁאָהוּ מִבֵּית אֲבִינָדָב אֲשֶׁר בְּגִבְעָה עִם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶחָיו הֵלֶךְ לִפְנֵי הָאֲרוֹן: ⁵וְדָוִד | וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשַׁחֲקִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּכָל עֲצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים וּבְכִנֹּרוֹת וּבִנְבָלִים וּבַתְּפִילִּים וּבַמִּנְעָנְעִים וּבַצִּלְצִלִּים: ⁶וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־גֶּרֶן נָכוֹן וַיִּשְׁלַח עֹזָא* אֶל־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בּוֹ כִּי שָׁמְטוּ הַבָּקָר: ⁷וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בְּעֹזָה* וַיִּפְּהוּ שָׁם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־הַשָּׁל וַיָּמָת שָׁם עִם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים: ⁸וַיַּחֲרֹ לְדָוִד עַל* אֲשֶׁר פָּרַץ יְהוָה פָּרֶץ בְּעֹזָה* וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא פָּרֶץ עֹזָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ⁹וַיֵּרָא דָוִד אֶת־יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיךְ יָבוֹא אֵלַי אֲרוֹן יְהוָה: ¹⁰וְלֹא־אָבִיחָה דָוִד לְהַסִּיר אֵלָיו אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה עַל־עֵיר דָּוִד וַיִּטְהֹר דָּוִד בֵּית עֶבֶד־אָדָם הַגִּתִּי:

3-8. vii. בכתבי היד כתוב שמו גם "עזא" וגם "עזזה"

2 Samuel 6:2. Baalim of Judah Baalim, a place also referred to as Baalah, is identified with Kiriath-jearim (Josh. 15:9, 1 Chron. 13:6). The Ark remained here after it had been retrieved from the Philistine city of Ashdod (1 Sam. 6:21).

The LORD of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim This is a fuller form of the title found in 1 Sam. 4:4. The divine epithet "LORD of Hosts" refers to God's majesty over the heavenly armies, with which He fights human ene-

mies. These "hosts" include the sun, moon, and stars as well as the atmospheric powers of nature (see Judg. 5:20-21; 2 Sam. 22:11-16). From heaven, the Lord of battles rides forth on cherub-like "wings of wind" (2 Sam. 22:11, cf. Ps. 68:5,19). On earth, the Ark represents His chariot of war. The Ark with cherubim on its cover was placed in the inner recesses of the tabernacle. It is from there that the divine Presence was manifest to Moses (Exod. 25:10-22).

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary

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Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹The Ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and his whole household.

¹²It was reported to King David: "The LORD has blessed Obed-edom's house and all that belongs to him because of the Ark of God." Thereupon David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David, amid rejoicing. ¹³When the bearers of the Ark of the LORD had moved forward six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴David whirled with all his might before the LORD; David was girt with a linen ephod. ¹⁵Thus David and all the House of Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouts and with blasts of the horn.

¹⁶As the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him for it.

¹⁷They brought in the Ark of the LORD and set it up in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. ¹⁸When David finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Hosts. ¹⁹And he distributed among all the people—the entire multitude of Israel, man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan, and a raisin cake. Then all the people left for their homes.

²⁰David went home to greet his household. And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "Didn't the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!" ²¹David answered Michal, "It was before the LORD

¹¹ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בֵּית עֲבֹד אֲדָם הַגִּתִּי
שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת-עֲבֹד
אֲדָם וְאֶת-כָּל-בֵּיתוֹ:

¹² וַיִּגַּד לַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לֵאמֹר בָּרַךְ יְהוָה
אֶת-בֵּית עֲבֹד אֲדָם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ
בַּעֲבוּר אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וַיַּעַל
אֶת-אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית עֲבֹד אֲדָם עִיר
דָּוִד בְּשִׂמְחָה: ¹³ וַיְהִי כִּי צָעְדוּ נְשָׂאֵי
אֲרוֹן-יְהוָה שֹׁשָׁה צָעָדִים וַיִּזְבַּח שׁוֹר
וּמְרִיא: ¹⁴ וַדָּוִד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל-עֹז לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה וַדָּוִד חָגוּר אֶפֹּד בָּד: ¹⁵ וַדָּוִד וְכָל-
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מַעֲלִים אֶת-אֲרוֹן יְהוָה
בְּתִרוּעָה וּבְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר:

¹⁶ וַהֲיָה אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בָּא עִיר דָּוִד וּמִיכַל
בַּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה א בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַתֵּרָא
אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפָּנָיו וּמְכַרְכֵּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ בַּלְבָּה:

¹⁷ וַיָּבִאוּ אֶת-אֲרוֹן יְהוָה וַיִּצְגּוּ אֹתוֹ
בְּמִקְוָמוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל אֲשֶׁר נָטָה-לוֹ דָּוִד
וַיַּעַל דָּוִד עֲלוֹת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וּשְׁלָמִים:
¹⁸ וַיְכַל דָּוִד מִהַעֲלוֹת הָעוֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת-הָעָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
¹⁹ וַיַּחֲלֵק לְכָל-הָעָם לֶכֶל-הַמּוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְמֵאִישׁ וְעַד-אִשָּׁה לְאִישׁ חֶלֶת לֶחֶם
אֶחָת וְאַשְׁפָּר אֶחָד וְאַשִּׁישָׁה אֶחָת וַיֵּלֶךְ
כָּל-הָעָם אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ:

²⁰ וַיָּשֶׁב דָּוִד לְבָרֶךְ אֶת-בֵּיתוֹ וַתֵּצֵא מִיכַל
בַּת-שָׁאוּל לִקְרֹאת דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר מַה-נִּכְבֶּד
הַיּוֹם מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִגְלָה הַיּוֹם לְעֵינַי
אֲמָהוּת עֲבָדָיו כְּהַגְלוֹת נִגְלוֹת אֶחָד
הָרָקִים: ²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-מִיכַל לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר-בִּי מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמִכָּל-בֵּיתוֹ

who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel! I will dance before the LORD ²²and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored.” ²³So to her dying day Michal daughter of Saul had no children.

7 When the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had granted him safety from all the enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan: “Here I am dwelling in a house of cedar, while the Ark of the LORD abides in a tent!” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go and do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵“Go and say to My servant David: Thus said the LORD: Are you the one to build a house for Me to dwell in? ⁶From the day that I brought the people of Israel out of Egypt to this day I have not dwelt in a house, but have moved about in Tent and Tabernacle. ⁷As I moved about wherever the Israelites went, did I ever reproach any of the tribal leaders whom I appointed to care for My people Israel: Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?

⁸“Further, say thus to My servant David: Thus said the LORD of Hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be ruler of My people Israel, ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut down all your enemies before you. Moreover, I will give you great

לְצוֹת אֹתִי נָגִיד עַל-עַם יְהוָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁחַקְתִּי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ²²וְנִקְלָתִי עוֹד מִזֹּאת וְהִיִּיתִי שָׁפָל בְּעֵינַי וְעַם-הָאֲמָהוּת אֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתָּ עִמָּם אֶכְבֶּדָה: ²³וְלִמְיָכָל בַּת-שָׁאוּל לֹא-הָיָה לָהּ יֶלֶד עַד יוֹם מוֹתָהּ: פ

ז וַיְהִי כִּי-יָשָׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּבֵיתוֹ וַיְהִי הַנִּיחָלוֹ מִסָּבִיב מִכָּל-אִיָּבּוֹ: ²וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-נָתָן הַנָּבִיא רְאֵה נָא אֲנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵית אֲרָזִים וְאֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים יֹשֵׁב בְּתוֹךְ הִירֵעָה: ³וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְּךָ לָךְ עֲשֵׂה כִּי יְהוָה עִמָּךְ: ס

⁴וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-נָתָן לֵאמֹר: ⁵לָךְ וְאֲמַרְתָּ אֶל-עַבְדִּי אֶל-דָּוִד כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הָאֵתָה תִּבְנֶה-לִּי בַּיִת לְשֹׁבְתִי: ⁶כִּי לֹא יֹשְׁבְתִי בְּבֵית לְמִיּוֹם הָעֹלָתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֶהְיֶה מִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאֵהָל וּבְמִשְׁכָּן: ⁷בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִדְבַּר דְּבַרְתִּי אֶת-אֶחָד שְׁבָטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי לְרַעוּת אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר לָמָּה לֹא-בְנִיתֶם לִי בַּיִת אֲרָזִים:

⁸וְעַתָּה כֹּה-תֹאמַר לְעַבְדִּי לְדָוִד כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת אֲנִי לִקְחָתִיךָ מִן-הַנֶּגֶז מֵאַחַר הֲצֵאֲנִי לַהֲיוֹת נָגִיד עַל-עַמִּי עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁹וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר הִלַּכְתָּ וְאֶכְרַתָּה אֶת-כָּל-אִיָּבֶיךָ מִפָּנֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתִי

2 Samuel 7:1. safety Literally, “rest” (cf. v. 11). This reference alludes to Deut. 12:10–11. There Moses tells the people that when they achieve rest from their enemies they must bring their burnt offerings to the place that the Lord will choose. Tradition understood this place to be Jerusalem.

5. Are you the one The reason for David's rejection is not indicated. Later biblical tradition explained this as due to David's military past, because he had “shed much blood” (1 Chron. 22:8).

renown like that of the greatest men on earth.

¹⁰I will establish a home for My people Israel and will plant them firm, so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more. Evil men shall not oppress them any more as in the past, ¹¹ever since I appointed chieftains over My people Israel. I will give you safety from all your enemies.

“The LORD declares to you that He, the LORD, will establish a house for you. ¹²When your days are done and you lie with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship. ¹³He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals; ¹⁵but I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed to make room for you. ¹⁶Your house and your kingship shall ever be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever.”

¹⁷Nathan spoke to David in accordance with all these words and all this prophecy.

14. I will be a father to him This formulation of a royal covenant is alluded to in Ps. 2:7 and 89:27 and gives the royal bond the intimacy of an adoption. Prophets regularly evoke a simi-

לְךָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל כְּשֵׁם הַגְּדֹלִים אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְץ :
¹⁰ וְשִׁמְתִּי מָקוֹם לְעַמִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִטְעֵתִיו
 וְשָׁכֵן תַּחְתָּיו וְלֹא יִרְגְּזוּ עוֹד וְלֹא־יִסְיִפוּ
 בְּנֵי־עוֹלָה לְעֲנוּתוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר בְּרֹאשׁוֹנָה :
¹¹ וּלְמֶן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי שְׂפָטִים עַל־
 עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִנֵּיחֹתִי לְךָ מִכָּל־אֹיְבֶיךָ
 וְהִגִּיד לְךָ יְהוָה כִּי־בֵית יַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ יְהוָה :
¹² כִּי אֶמְלֹא יוֹמֶיךָ וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אֶת־אֲבֹתֶיךָ
 וְהִקִּמֹתִי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא
 מִמֶּעֶיךָ וְהִכִּנֹתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ : ¹³ הוּא
 יִבְנֶה־בֵּית לְשִׁמִּי וְכֹנֵנֹתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא
 מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם : ¹⁴ אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לּוֹ
 לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן אֲשֶׁר בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ
 וְהִכַּחֲתִיו בְּשֹׁבֵט אֲנָשִׁים וּבִנְגָעֵי בְנֵי
 אָדָם : ¹⁵ וְחִסְדִּי לֹא־יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנּוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר
 הִסְרֹתִי מֵעַם שָׁאוּל אֲשֶׁר הִסְרֹתִי
 מִלְּפָנֶיךָ : ¹⁶ וְנָאֲמֵן בֵּיתְךָ וּמַמְלַכְתְּךָ עַד־
 עוֹלָם לְפָנֶיךָ כִּסֵּאֲךָ יִהְיֶה נָכוֹן עַד־
 עוֹלָם :
¹⁷ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְכָל־הַחֲזִיוֹן הַזֶּה
 כֵּן דִּבֶּר נָתָן אֶל־דָּוִד : ט

larly constructed formulation of marriage vows to give the national covenant a sense of familial commitment (see Hos. 2:18–22).