

Too Late to Turn Back Now: Inaugural Missteps

The famous story of the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu is placed in the middle of the Inauguration Ceremonies for the Priesthood. Priests must, of course, always follow orders strictly and the punishments for them can be severe. But the occurrence of Nadab and Abihu's deviation at the very outset of the Priesthood had special significance. It may indeed have been only a "beginner's mistake" which they committed, but because it occurred at the inauguration it set important precedents and its consequences had to be grave. As the Hebrew expression goes: "כל התחלות קשות" "All beginnings are hard."

Even the best beginnings, the ones which go off flawlessly, often require untold sacrifices just to get to that beginning in the first place. And after those preliminary sacrifices have been made, it is not unusual for missteps to occur. Those "beginners' mistakes" are often serious enough to derail the whole project. I often wondered what gave Aaron the fortitude to persevere and continue with the Inauguration after his great loss. And what made Moses so inhumanely insistent about continuing with the Investiture as planned, not allowing Aaron and his children to mourn? But had they stopped the investiture at that point, the whole procedure would have had to be repeated. Too much had been "Invested" in this Investiture to allow it to be derailed. They had no choice but to proceed, or else the sacrifices already made would be in vain.

Aaron's famous silent perseverance upon the incident of his sons' deaths, it occurred to me as I read the section this week, has to be understood in this Inaugural context. Sometimes there are "false starts" which should cause us to rethink a course of action we have begun. At other times, so much has been invested and the consequences of stopping are so severe that there can be no going back. The entire Exodus from Egypt was, indeed, a project from which there was no going back. The threats made by Israelite factions to return to Egypt were never realistic nor credible. And even here in this more ritualistic context, too much had been sacrificed and expended already to stop and turn back. A huge amount of resources had been spent on the Tabernacle in general, and even more on the Inauguration ceremonies themselves. Our Parasha's title, Shemini, meaning the "Eighth" Day of the Inauguration, highlights the "lateness" of this incident. The seven days of purification had successfully passed. The ceremonies on the Eighth Day had just successfully been drawn to a climax as Moses and Aaron blessed the people and the Glory of God was revealed in the Divine Fire which consumed the sacrifices. It was far too late to allow for any further delay. The first missteps indeed actually coincided with the first success. At that point, the only way was to proceed forward to completion. Despite the enormity of Aaron's sacrifice, The Show Must Go On. Although the consequences of Aaron's sons' missteps devastated their father, it was "Too Late to Turn Back Now." Aaron and his remaining sons were now full-fledged Priests, They were now officially on-the-job, and would have to learn what they needed while continuing on-the-job, for better or for worse.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Shemini-Parah

March 25-26, 2022 | 23 Adar II, 5782

SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 443 | Haftarah: p. 999 | Parah: p. 652
Kaplan: p. 536 | Haftarah: p. 1278 | Parah: p. 756

Candle Lighting | 6:55 pm

Friday Evening Services | 7:00 pm

SEASON FINALE: Friday Night Lights | Rabbi Soloveichik | Following services
| 2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Small Synagogue

Kiddush | Levy | following services | *Sponsored by the Kiddush Committee, in honor of Rev. Z. Edinger*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | Rabbi Soloveichik | 6:10 pm

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 6:55 pm

Habdala | 7:50 pm

FINALE: Virtual Habdala | 8:05 pm | Rev. Z. Edinger

***Shabbat Parah:** We read the law concerning the ashes of the Red Heifer [Heb. "Parah Adumah"] from Numbers 19 to remind us of the purification ritual for the Paschal sacrifice.*

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **6:30 pm**

THIS SHABBAT

5782 SEASON FINALE

Friday Night Lights

This Friday | IN PERSON with Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Following 7:00 pm Evening Services with the Shearith Israel Choir

2021-2022 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

Shabbat Afternoon Class

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

This Shabbat | IN PERSON | 6:10 pm | 45 minutes before Evening Services

COMING UP

STARTS IN 1 WEEK - REGISTER NOW!

Karate For Kids

Taught by Sifu Eddie Kelen, White Crane Martial Arts

For children in grades 3 - 7 and their parents (optional) | On Paved Paradise

Four sessions on Sunday mornings: April 3 & 10; May 15 & 22

Join Sifu Eddie Kelen, a fourth-degree black belt in Karate and a master of T'ai Chi, in this introductory youth Karate course! In the Karate classes that he has specifically designed for children, students learn to increase their concentration, self control, calmness, self defense skills, physical coordination, responsibility, and street smarts. Children develop these skills through the use of martial arts games, stretches and strengthening exercises, self defense techniques, inspirational Karate stories, and meditation.

Details and registration, visit shearithisrael.org/karate-kids.

Mets Game Outing

Sponsored by the Lewin Family

Sunday, May 15 | 1:00 pm | Citi Field

Now that the baseball season is back on schedule, Shearith Israel youth and their families are invited on this highly subsidized trip to watch the Mets play the Mariners – only \$15 a ticket (actual ticket price: \$40)! First come, first served, while supplies last.

Registration now open to members only at shearithisrael.org/mets.

COMING UP

Lincoln Square Synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel, and Congregation Ohav Zedek join together for

UWS Community Clothing Drive

**Sunday, April 3 | 9 am-1 pm | At Lincoln Square Synagogue
(180 Amsterdam Avenue)**

Seeking gently-used men's, women's, and children's of all ages clothing and shoes. Also, linen, table cloths, towels, handbags, and hair accessories will be shipped to Israel and distributed to Israel's neediest, including recent immigrants from Ukraine, by an organization called Yad Leah. Nothing with holes, stains, tears, please. Please only donate clothing that you would feel comfortable handing to the recipients in person.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Elie Sasson**, son of **Sharon & Rafé Sasson**, upon becoming a Bar Mitzvah. We look forward to celebrating with you next month!

Congratulations to **Avi Friedman**, son of **Zoya Raynes & Naftali Friedman**, on qualifying for the national finals of the Chidon HaTanach (International Bible competition). Best of luck!

Condolences to **Hayyim Obadyah**, upon the passing of his brother, James H. Thomas III.

Election Results

Congratulations to Rabbi Soloveichik, Rabbi Rohde, and Rev. Edinger upon being re-elected to their constitutional positions of Hazzan, Shohet, and Shamash, respectively.

Congratulations, also, to our newly voted-in electors:

Isabelle Levy
Nugzari Jakobishvili
Scott Shay

Several dozen electors participated in the meeting via zoom. We encourage you to welcome our new electors, and we look forward to having them sign their names in our historic book.