

SCHEDULE

שבת קודש

Mincha Erev Shabbos → 7:00 PM

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 7:30 AM

Shacharis— Followed by Kiddush 8:30 AM

—Sof Zman K"Z— גר"א 9:43 < 9:07א"ג

Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos 7:35 PM

Maariv - 8:41 PM

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Sunday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 7:30 AM

Shacharis ראש חודש 8:30 AM

Mincha / Maariv 7:45 PM

Monday - Friday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 5:45 AM

Shacharis

Monday ראש חודש 6:30 AM

Thursday 6:40 AM

Tues, Wed., Fri. 6:45 AM

Mincha (Mon—Thur) 1:45 PM

Mincha/Maariv 7:45 PM

Maariv (Mon-Thur) 9:45 PM

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אהל משה



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Issue#230

Intoxicated

The Torah records this week one of the most exhilarating moments in Jewish history.

After an enormous investment of funds, energy and skilled craftsmanship and devotion, the service in the Mishkan reaches its pinnacle when on the eighth day of its inauguration a fire miraculously descends upon the Altar consuming the sacrifices that were offered there.

ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל על המזבח (ויקרא ט כד) A fire went forth from before God and consumed upon the Altar.

It was also one of the most tragic of days with the sudden death of the two eldest sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu in the midst of such great celebration and joy.

There too, the Torah uses the identical phrase to describe how this very same fire that came forth consumed their souls as well. (עש"י:ט)

A fire went forth from before God and consumed them. ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל אותם (שם יב)

The actual transgression that brought about this catastrophe is clearly delineated in the Torah.

and they brought before God an alien fire that He had not commanded them. ויקראבו לפני ה' אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם (שם טא)

Yet despite the obvious sin enumerated here, the Sifra, Midrash and Talmud make reference to no less than twelve possible infractions that made them culpable for death:

They entered into the Holy of Holies, brought an unwarranted sacrifice, initiated their own fire, did not seek counsel from one another, were intoxicated, were lacking the appropriate priestly garments, had not washed their hands and feet at the laver before entering, had no children, had not married, glowered at the leadership of Moshe and Aharon awaiting the day they would assume their roles, made halachic decisions in the presence of their teacher Moshe, and had gazed inappropriately at the Divine Presence at Mount Sinai. (ויקרא רבה כ ה, ספרא שמיי, עירובין סו, מדרש תנחומא בעלעלוד כב, אחרי ז).

Rashi, when choosing to explain the verse of: *ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל אותם. A fire went forth from before God and consumed them,* despite the Torah clearly stating that it was the bringing of an alien fire that resulted in their deaths, deviates from the "simple reading" and records only two of the many opinions stated above.

He first quotes Rabbi Eliezer, who opines that it was their having rendered a decision without first inquiring of their teacher Moshe that brought them punishment. Rashi then brings the theory of Rabbi Yishmael, who posits that it was their having entered the Mishkan to do the service in a state of drunkenness that warranted their demise.

The fact that the Torah commands directly after this sad affair, the laws dictating not to perform the service or adjudicate legal matters while intoxicated, is clear evidence to the veracity of Rabbi Yishmael's view.

Why did Rashi, whose stated objective is to interpret the verses for the sake of understanding its simple meaning, need to divert from the plain "pshat", understanding, of the verse?

Secondly, why did he choose precisely these two of the many options available in revealing a deeper meaning in the verse?

Even more perplexing is how do all the other opinions who disagree with Rabbi Yishmael, reconcile the directive not to perform the service while intoxicated placed out of context specifically here?

The Torah utilizes a phrase here that is seldomly used, *מלפני ה', from before God.*

Of the seven times it appears in Chumash, it makes its first appearance when a dejected Kayin having been spurned by God for jealously murdering his brother, "leaves God's presence", *ויצא קין מלפני ה'*, *Kayin left the presence of God.* (בראשית טז טז)

The next two times are mentioned here, first when the fire goes forth "from before God", consuming the sacrifices in testament to God's presence in the Mishkan and then in contrast, the rejection of Nadav And Avihu as the fire goes forth "from before God" and consumes their souls.

There are two more references at the episode of Korach and his cohorts. A plague breaks out after the people show sympathy to the plight of those who died, contending that Moshe was responsible for their deaths. Aharon is summoned to bring an incense offering to quell the plague and offer atonement for the "fury that has gone forth, *מלפני ה', from before God.*" (במדבר טז טז)

(ויקרא כב ג, במדבר כ ט ישי"ח)

The Arizal teaches, based on the Zohar, that Nadav and Avihu's souls stemmed from Kayin.

Remember, please, who was an innocent person who perished. זכר נא מי הוא אבד נקי (איוב ד ז)

קין קין is an acronym for נקי וזכר, and אביחוא and נדב, the letters in the name קין קין.

Korach too is rooted in Kayin.

קרתו בני יצחק, taking the first letter of his name then adding the last letter in the word בני, signifying his being an offshoot of Kayin, and finally adding the first letter of his father's name give you the letters of the name קין קין (שערי חכמה ל"ג דף טז) קין קין.

Kayin wants it all, pursuing pleasure at all costs.

His "earthly" profession, as a farmer, signifies his attachment to the material world, paying homage to

the forces of nature on whose influence his success is dependent. He sees his inclinations too as natural forces that need to be tended.

In contrast stands Hevel, the shepherd, who deals with living creatures that require consideration and tenderness, an occupation that does not strain the mind, allowing one the ability to ponder elevating thoughts of goodness and godliness.

See RSRH, (בראשית ד ט)

Pleasure is a gift that God bestowed upon creation. We are all wired to react to it. It gives us a sense of satisfaction in the pursuits that bring us pleasure. But it is a byproduct of purposeful existence, never the goal in and of itself.

The seeking of pleasure for pleasure's sake itself eventually becomes an endless pursuit of an objective impossible to obtain. The more we achieve it the more regular it becomes, the more regular it becomes the less satisfying it is thus requiring of us to seek more and greater pleasures to simply placate the need for pleasure.

When we subjugate ourselves to the goal to fulfill the will of God in this world we are assured that in that achievement we will find the ultimate pleasure spiritually and physically.

The joy in a marriage or the sensory sensation of good food and drink when placed in a framework of רצון השם, the will of God, is so much more profound in its pleasure than when one merely seeks the pleasure alone.

Kayin was caught in an endless pursuit of pleasure that was so powerful it dulled his senses and judgment allowing himself to kill his one and only brother. Is it any wonder that his grandson Lemech, in whose hands he found his demise, had two wives, רדע, to propagate with and צל from the world, shadow, who was always by his side for the purpose of consistently ingratiating himself.

But it does not stop with sensory pleasure alone. The addiction to the joy of "power and control" can push one to constantly seek control over others in a perpetual obsession to maintain and increase that specific type of pleasure.

This was the Korach version of a "Kayin soul" that sought dominance for the pleasure that it brings.

But there is one more subtle variation of this concept, identity. There is pleasure in identifying ourselves even in the quest for something noble. One can be extremely benevolent and kind, defining himself in accomplishing good on behalf of others. But that too can become an unhealthy addiction. Doing for others to the extent of self neglect. One can corrupt that notion into becoming a vigilante to help others to satisfy his own craving for identity and crushing the true interests of even those he seeks to help.

Religious passion can become an objective not merely the byproduct of adherence to the will of God. That is where it borders on dangerous obsession.

Nadav and Avihu sought to increase אהבה על אהבה, *love on top of love*, in their relationship with God. (ספרא)

When love becomes the objective it ignites a compulsion that needs to be fed. That addiction to "love" corrupts one's thinking like all addictions, trampling the true will of God in the pursuit.

The antidote to fixation is submission to the directive of God. One must maintain a constant awareness of being *מלפני ה', before God.* That is the key. Kayin lost his direction when he no longer placed himself *מלפני ה', before God.*

That was Korach's doom as well, he became addicted to power for powers sake alone.

Rashi teaches us that it was this absorption in "self", an addiction to one's own identity that was the downfall of Nadav and Avihu.

It was a noble self, one that was admired and that God himself attested to *in My chosen ones I will be sanctified!* (ישעי')

Nevertheless in their greatness they were taken to task for the subtlety of "pride" that drove them.

That is why Rashi chose to cite the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer first who emphasized this aspect of arrogance displayed in their having ignored their beloved teacher. Their self absorption lead them astray from that sense of *מלפני ה', from before God*, that is the vital tool we need to maintain our true goal.

Rashi closes with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael that they were intoxicated, perhaps to bring home this reality that one can become intoxicated with "self" in the same way and mechanism that leads one to drink with blinded abandon.

It impairs our judgment and ability to stand *מלפני ה', from before God* with accuracy.

May we stand "before God" every moment of existence lest we succumb to the gravitational forces of pleasure that can destroy us.

If our objective remains the fulfilling the will of God we are assured unparalleled pleasure.

באהבה,
צבי טייכמן



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