



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.

Shabbat Shemini

April 10-11, 2026 | 24 Nisan, 5786

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 443 | Haftarah: 454
Kaplan: Parasha: 536 | Haftarah: 1148

Candle Lighting | 7:12 pm

Evening Services | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Tot Shabbat & Youth 5+ | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Kiddush | following services | *Kiddush supporter: Laury, Reuben, and Matea Frieber in honor of The Solomon and Edinger families*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 6:25 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 7:10 pm

Habdala | 8:09 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): 6:30 pm

COMING UP

EARLY BIRD PRICING ENDS THIS SUNDAY **Siyyum HaTwain: A Community Shabbat Luncheon**

with Prof. Susan K. Harris

for the Mark Twain Reader, Admirer, or Curious

Shabbat, April 25 | Following Morning Services

This past year a group of congregants honored American literary icon, Mark Twain, by divvying up his oeuvre and reading it all. Come enjoy a community luncheon with congregants and friends who joined the "CSI Mark Twain Book Club," as well as anyone who would like to learn (more) about Mark Twain from our special guest and

Twain expert, Dr. Susan K. Harris.

The luncheon will be a relaxed buffet conducive to discussion, readings, and interaction in the Elias Room. It's sure to be as full of insightful and witty conversation as Twain himself.

Register for early bird pricing at shearithisrael.org!

Annual UWS Yom HaShoah Reading of The Names

THIS Monday night, April 13, 10:00 pm-Tuesday, April 14, 5:00 pm

Shearith Israel timeslot: 6:00-6:30 am

Locations:

10 pm-7 am | Kehilat Hadar Shaare Zedek, 210 W 93rd St, betw. Amsterdam & Broadway (*look for black overhanging canopy, no external signage*)

9 am-5 pm | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Avenue

Join Rabbi Rohde in reading the names of the victims of the Shoah, during Shearith Israel's time slot.

KIDS KORNER

Coming up next:

The Lag La'Omer Amazing Race

Shabbat Afternoon, May 2

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Henri Bengualid**, upon the birth of a great granddaughter, Reva, born to his grandchildren, Michele Bengualid & Alec Fishman.

COMING UP

In honor of the US Semiquincentennial

SAVE THE DATE

Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment:

A Symposium on Religious Liberty

Monday, June 8 | At Touro Synagogue, 72 Touro Street, Newport, RI

Consider joining on Monday, or plan to spend the entire weekend with us in Newport (but book your accommodations now - Newport hotels go fast! And do let us know).

Full schedule coming soon!

Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment: A Symposium on Religious Liberty



HELD AT
Touro Synagogue
72 Touro Street, Newport, RI

HOSTED BY
Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City and
Congregation Ahavath Israel, Newport



EMCEE and
KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Rabbi Dr. Stuart Halpern
Author of *Esther in America*, and
*Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land:
The Hebrew Bible in the United States*



Dr. Tevi Troy
Presidential scholar and author,
and former Deputy Secretary of HHS
and senior White House aide

