

Fast of the First Born - 14 Nissan 5782

Tractate Chagigah

Source Sheet by Howard Freidin

Chagigah is the last book of Seder Moed, one of the six orders of the talmud (think of the Pesach song Echad Mee Yodei-a, otherwise known as Who Knows One). As part of the Daf Yomi cycle, we studied Chgihah from February 11th through March 8th.

We began Moed with Tractates Shabbat and Eruvin which, in keeping with Shabbat's status as the most significant Jewish holiday, merited by far the largest discussion. We now conclude with a much quicker journey through the laws that apply to the three pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot.

Tractate Chagigah deals with the *halakhot* of the mitzva to ascend and appear in the Temple on the three pilgrimage Festivals. The analysis of these *halakhot* can be divided into two main categories: The offerings which the pilgrims must bring, and ritual purity and impurity, especially those aspects which are relevant to the Festivals. (Sounds boring and irrelevant so far, but there is some interesting material.)

Tractate Chagigah consists of three chapters, which move back and forth from one topic to another.

- Chapter One deals with the basic pilgrimage obligation and the Festival offerings, as well as the various areas of the Torah that are merely alluded to in the Torah itself and which are elucidated by the tradition of the Sages.
- Chapter Two covers those matters which may not be taught in public, the manner of bringing offerings on a Festival day, and the differences between the halakhot of ritual purity and impurity as they apply to non-sacred items, teruma, and the sacred articles of the Temple.
- Chapter Three discusses the higher standard that is conferred on sacred articles beyond that of teruma, and the leniencies that the Sages applied to the ritual purity of consecrated items in Jerusalem, particularly during the Festival period.

Chagigah 2a:1

MISHNA: All are obligated on the three pilgrim Festivals **in the mitzva of appearance**, i.e., to appear in the Temple as well as to sacrifice an offering, **except for a deaf-mute, an imbecile, and a minor; and a *tumtum*, and a hermaphrodite, and women, and slaves who are not emancipated; and the lame, and the blind, and the sick, and the old, and one who is unable to ascend to Jerusalem on his own legs.**

Those who are exempt from the mitzva of appearance are divided by the mishna into different categories based on the reason for their exemption. Some are exempt because they are not of sound mind; others because they are not defined as: "All your males" (Exodus 23:17); while yet others are exempt due to the fact that they are unable to ascend to the Temple by foot.

A tumtum is one whose external sexual organs are indeterminate, and it is unclear whether the person is male or female. In certain cases, the gender of the tumtum is established at a later stage, which is described in the language of the halakha as: A tumtum who was torn, revealing his gender. At that point this person is considered a full-fledged member of that gender.

Chagigah 2a:2

Who has the status of a **minor** with regard to this *halakha*? **Any child who is unable to ride on his father's shoulders and ascend from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount; this is the statement of Beit Shammai. And Beit Hillel say: Any child who is unable to hold his father's hand and ascend on foot from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount, as it is stated: "Three times [regalim]"** (Exodus 23:14). Since the term for feet is *raglayim*, Beit Hillel infer from here that the obligation to ascend involves the use of one's legs.

Chagigah 2a:3

Beit Shammai say: The burnt-offering of appearance brought on a pilgrim Festival must be worth at least **two silver** coins, **and the Festival peace-offering** must be worth at least one **silver *ma'a*** coin. **And Beit Hillel say: The burnt-offering of appearance** must be worth at least one **silver *ma'a*** **and the Festival peace-offering** at least **two silver** coins.

Chagigah 3a:17

They said to him that Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya interpreted the following verse: **"Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones"** (Deuteronomy 31:12). This verse is puzzling: **If men come to learn, and women, who might not understand, come at least to hear, why do the little ones come?** They come **in order** for God to **give a reward to those who bring them**, i.e., God credits those who bring their children to the assembly. Rabbi Yehoshua **said to them: This good pearl of wisdom was in your hands, and you tried to conceal it from me?**

Some commentaries question the need for this statement, for if the adults are all obligated to come, who will watch the children at home? They explain that although the parents have no choice, nevertheless the act of bringing the children is a meritorious act deserving of its own reward.

Chagigah 3b:4

Lest a person say: Now, how can I study Torah when it contains so many different opinions? **The verse states that they are all “given from one shepherd.” One God gave them; one leader, i.e., Moses, said them from the mouth of the Master of all creation, Blessed be He, as it is written: “And God spoke all these words” (Exodus 20:1).** The plural form “words” indicates that God transmitted all the interpretations of the Ten Commandments. Since the Sages invariably utilize the Torah itself or the statements of the prophets as the sources for their opinions, there is a certain unity to the study of Torah, despite the numerous explanations and applications.

The notion that all opinions in a dispute involving Torah are of value is also taught in the well-known saying: Both these and those are the words of the living God. This idea is dealt with at length and in depth by the early and later authorities. Many explain that the Torah was transmitted with numerous different, yet legitimate, interpretations, each of which possesses an element of truth. Although the Sages must issue practical halakhic decisions, this does not negate the truth of the opinions that are not accepted.

Chagigah 3b:5

So too you, the student, make your ears like a funnel and acquire for yourself an understanding heart to hear both the statements of those who render objects ritually impure and the statements of those who render them pure; the statements of those who prohibit actions and the statements of those who permit them; the statements of those who deem items invalid and the statements of those who deem them valid. When Rabbi Yehoshua heard these interpretations, **he said to them in these words: No generation is considered orphaned, i.e. without a leader, if Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya dwells among it.**

Though the Torah grows in multiple directions, it is all rooted in the same source, the Divine voice communicating through Moses. Rabbi Elazar insists that the point of learning isn't about deriving a single answer, but about developing the ability to understand all of these directions with insight and empathy — and to recognize that they all derive from the same place. On today's daf, the Torah's growth is not dangerous, but rather a sign of its rootedness, vibrancy and value.

Chagigah 11b:6

MISHNA: One may not expound the topic of forbidden sexual relations before three or more individuals; nor may one expound the act of Creation and the secrets of the beginning of the world before two or more individuals; nor may one expound by oneself the Design of the Divine Chariot, a mystical teaching with regard to the ways God conducts the world, unless he is wise and understands most matters on his own.

Chagigah 11b:7

The mishna continues in the same vein: **Whoever looks at four matters, it would have been better for him had he never entered the world:** Anyone who reflects upon **what is above** the firmament and **what is below** the earth, **what was before** Creation, and **what will be after** the end of the world. **And anyone who has no concern for the honor of his Maker,** who inquires into and deals with matters not permitted to him, **deserves to have never come to the world.**

Chagigah 11b:17

What is the reason? It is due not to a biblical allusion, but rather **it is based on logical reasoning: When two students sit before their teacher, one of them is typically involved in a discussion of *halakha* with his teacher, while the other lends his ear to listen to the teaching.** However, if there are **three** students, **one of them is involved in a discussion with his teacher while the other two are engaged in a discussion with one another, and they do not know what their teacher is saying, and may come to render permitted a forbidden relation** by following their own reasoning rather than the explanation provided by their teacher.

Chagigah 11b:18

The Gemara raises a difficulty: **If so, the entire Torah should likewise be taught only to two individuals, to prevent similar errors.**

Chagigah 11b:19

The Gemara answers: The *halakha* of **forbidden sexual relations is different, for the Master said: Robbery and forbidden sexual relations** are sins that one's **soul covets and lusts after.** Therefore, we are concerned that one who has not properly studied these matters with his teacher will rule leniently for himself.

Chagigah 11b:20

The Gemara asks: **If so, robbery should also** not be taught to more than two, for this very reason. The Gemara responds: There is a difference between the lust for forbidden sexual relations and the lust for robbery. In the case of **those with whom relations are forbidden, his evil inclination is strong whether or not** the objects of desire **are before him.** With regard to **robbery, however, if the object presents a direct temptation before him his inclination is strong, but when it is not before him his inclination is not strong,** and we are therefore less concerned.

Chagigah 26a:5

MISHNA: In the case of *amei ha'aretz* tax **collectors who entered a house** to collect items for a tax, **and similarly thieves who returned the vessels** they had stolen, **they are deemed credible when they say: We did not touch** the rest of the objects in the house, and those items remain pure. **And in Jerusalem** all people, even *amei ha'aretz*, **are deemed credible with regard to sacrificial food** throughout the year, **and during a pilgrimage Festival** they are deemed credible **even with regard to *teruma*.**

Chagigah 26a:11

MISHNA: In the case of **one who opens his barrel** of wine for public sale, **and similarly one who starts selling his dough during the time of the pilgrimage Festival,** and these items perforce come into contact with *amei ha'aretz*, **Rabbi Yehuda says:** Since the food was pure, despite its contact with *amei ha'aretz*, when he began selling it, **he may finish** selling it in a state of purity even after the Festival, and there is no concern about the contact that has been made by *amei ha'aretz* during the Festival. **But the Rabbis say: He may not finish** selling it.

Chagigah 26a:16

MISHNA: Once the pilgrimage Festival has passed by, the priests pass all the vessels of the Temple courtyard through a process of purification, since they were touched by *am ha'aretz* priests during the Festival. If the Festival passed by into a Friday, i.e., if the Festival ended on Thursday night, they would not pass the vessels through the purification process on that day, due to the honor of Shabbat, in order to give the priests time to prepare the requirements of Shabbat. Rabbi Yehuda says: They do not even purify them on Thursday, in the event that the Festival ended on Wednesday night, because the priests are not free to do so.

Chagigah 26a:18

MISHNA: How do they pass all the vessels of the Temple courtyard through a process of purification? They immerse the vessels that were in the Temple. And they say to the *am ha'aretz* priests who served in the Temple during the Festival: Be careful

Chagigah 26b:1

that you not touch the table of the shewbread. If you defile it by touching it, it would need to be removed for immersion, and this would lead to the temporary suspension of the mitzva of the shewbread, which had to be on the table at all times.

Chagigah 26b:2

The mishna continues: **All the vessels that were in the Temple had second and third substitute vessels, so that if the first ones became impure they could bring the second ones in their place. All the vessels that were in the Temple required immersion after the Festival, apart from the golden altar and the bronze altar, because they are considered like the ground** and therefore, like land itself, not susceptible to impurity. This is **the statement of Rabbi Eliezer. And the Rabbis say: It is because they are coated.**

Chagigah 27a:7

§ Apropos the coating of the altar, the Gemara cites an Aggadic teaching: **Rabbi Abbahu said that Rabbi Elazar said:** The **fire of Gehenna has no power over Torah scholars.** This can be derived by an *a fortiori* inference **from the salamander [*salamandra*]**, a creature created out of fire and immune to its effects, and whose blood is fireproof: **If a salamander, which is merely a product of fire, and nevertheless when one anoints his body with its blood, fire has no power over him, all the more so** should fire not have any power over **Torah scholars, whose entire bodies are fire, as it is written: “Surely My words are as fire, says the Lord”** (Jeremiah 23:29), and the words of Torah become part of the Torah scholars’ very bodies.

Chagigah 27a:8

Reish Lakish said: The **fire of Gehenna has no power over the sinners of Israel** either. This can be derived by an *a fortiori* inference **from the golden altar:** **If the golden altar, which has on it a coating that is no more than the thickness of a gold dinar, and which has incense burning on it for many years and yet fire has no power over it, as the gold miraculously remained undamaged, all the more so** should immunity from fire be granted to **the sinners of Israel, who are filled with good deeds as a pomegranate is full of seeds, as it is written: “Your temples [*rakatekh*] are like a pomegranate split open”** (Song of Songs 4:3), which is to be expounded as follows: **Do not read** this word as *rakatekh*, **rather read it as *reikanin shebakh*,** meaning the empty, worthless people among you; even these people are as full of good deeds as a pomegranate is full of seeds.

הַדְּבָרִים עָלֶיךָ חוֹמֶר בְּקוּדֵשׁ וְסִלְיָא לָהּ מִסְכַּת חֲגִיגָה