Closest, which is farthest from the High Priest — מעשה מפרץ ולא מחמוד: The High Priest would pile the incense on top of the coals in the coal pan on the side that was closest to the Ark and farthest from him, so he would not be burned. This halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Abaye (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 4:5).

Not to begin in front of you — השלא תחתית מצפור שמא יכאום: The comments of Tosafot in this regard are puzzling, as they state that Abaye cited a proof from a baraita, whereas he actually quoted a mishna (see Tosafot Yom Tov). It is possible that Tosafot here distinguish between the incense burned every day of the year and the incense of Yom Kippur, as they maintain that the baraita is specifically referring to Yom Kippur (Katt. LakMaar and others). With regard to the issue itself, it is necessary to state that the priest does not begin with the incense immediately in front of him; otherwise, it might be assumed that, in accordance with the principle that one does not pass over the opportunity to perform mitzvot, he should start with the incense closest to him. Therefore, a special justification is necessary for the High Priest to burn the incense far from him (Shin Yitzhak).

If he omitted any of its spices — סחורה את התבלין מפרץ שמא יכאום. This halakha applies not only to the four spices mentioned explicitly in the Torah, i.e., stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense, but also to the other spices not mentioned in the verses, which are learned from a halakha transmitted to Moses from Sinai (Me'ir).

Not to begin piling the incense in front of you,⁴⁴ i.e., from the side closest to you, lest you be burned. If the priest were to place the incense on the side directly in front of him and then proceed to spread it toward the Ark, his hands would pass over the incense that is already burning and he might burn himself.

The Sages taught in a baraita: “And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord” (Leviticus 16:13); this means that he should not prepare by placing the incense outside, in the Sanctuary, and bring into the Holy of Holies a coal pan holding the burning incense. This was emphasized in order to exclude the opinion of the Sadducees,⁴⁵ who say that he should prepare the incense outside and then bring it in.

The Gemara asks: What did the Sadducees interpret; what verse do they cite as the basis for their opinion? The Gemara answers that it was the verse: “For I will appear in a cloud upon the ark cover” (Leviticus 16:2), which the Sadducees say teaches that he should prepare it outside, so there would already be a cloud of incense, and only then should he bring it inside the Holy of Holies.

The Sages said to them: Wasn’t it already stated explicitly: “And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord” (Leviticus 16:13), which indicates that the High Priest should present the incense only when he stands before God in the Holy of Holies? If so, what is the meaning when the verse states: “For I will appear in a cloud upon the ark cover” (Leviticus 16:2)? This verse does not mean that there should already be an incense cloud before he enters.

Instead, this verse is referring to the shape of the incense cloud, and it teaches that he includes a smoke-raiser in its spices, a plant that causes the smoke to rise straight up like a staff. And from where is it derived that he includes a smoke-raiser in its spices? As it is stated: “And the incense cloud shall cover the ark cover” (Leviticus 16:13). Therefore, if he did not include a smoke-raiser, or if he omitted any one of its spices,⁴⁶ he is liable to receive the death penalty.

To exclude the opinion of the Sadducees — לא המחמוד: During the Second Temple, there was a community of Sadducees who did not accept the tradition of the Oral Torah. In their opinion, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies only after he put the incense on the coal pan. Concerned that the High Priest might sympathize with this heresy, the Sages made him swear not to behave in this manner (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 13).

If he omitted any one of its spices — סחורה את התבלין שמא יכאום. If the High Priest leaves out one of the incense spices or if he does not include the smoke-raiser, he incurs the death penalty. He is likewise liable to be put to death for entering the Holy of Holies without performing a mitzva. Consequently, if the priest enters unintentionally but burns the incense intentionally, or if he burns the incense unintentionally but enters the chamber intentionally, or if he brings in both complete and incomplete incense, he incurs the death penalty. The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rav Sheshet and Rav Ashi (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 235).
The Gemara analyzes this last halakha: Why does one incur the death penalty for omitting one of the spices? And let the tanna derive the fact that he incurs the death penalty for a different action, as his entry into the Holy of Holies unless one is performing a mitzva. If the incense lacks an ingredient, the High Priest is not truly performing the mitzva, and therefore he has entered the Holy of Holies for no purpose. Consequently, he incurs the death penalty on account of his entry, even without burning the incense.

Rav Sheshet said: With what are we dealing here? We are dealing with a case where he acted unwittingly with regard to the entry, i.e., he was unaware that entering for no reason renders him liable, or he did not mean to enter the Holy of Holies at all; and he acted intentionally with regard to the burning, knowing that one who burns incense that lacks an ingredient incurs the death penalty. In that case, he is liable to receive the death penalty only for burning incomplete incense.

Rav Ashi said a different explanation: Even if you say that he acted intentionally with regard to both this and that, i.e., he knew full well that he would be liable to receive the death penalty both for burning incomplete incense and for entering the Holy of Holies for no purpose, it is nevertheless possible that he is not liable to receive the death penalty for his entry. And Rav Ashi explains that this is the halakha in a case where he brought two sets of incense into the Holy of Holies, one complete with all the spices and one incomplete, both of which he burned. For his entry to the Holy of Holies he is not liable to be put to death, as he brought in a coal pan with complete incense and thereby fulfilled the mitzva. However, for burning he is liable to receive the death penalty, as he burns incomplete incense.

The Gemara analyzes the above baraita. The Master said in the baraita: And from where is it derived that he includes a smoke-raiser in its spices? The verse states: “And it shall cover” (Leviticus 16:13). The Gemara expresses surprise at this statement: One verse for another verse? The requirement of a smoke-raiser was already proven from the verse: “For I will appear in a cloud upon the Ark cover” (Leviticus 16:2); why cite a second verse in support of the first one?

Rav Yosef said: This is what the baraita said; this is how to understand the matter: I have derived nothing other than the obligation to bring a leaf of a smoke-raising plant. From where is it derived that he must also bring a root of a smoke-raiser? The verse states: “And it shall cover,” which indicates the requirement for more of the smoke-raiser than might have been supposed from the other verse.

Rab Abaye said to Rav Yosef: Your interpretation indicates that the leaf of the smoke-raiser raises smoke better than its root, as the requirement for a root is merely considered an addition. But wasn’t the opposite taught in a baraita? As it was taught in a baraita: He put into the incense a root of a smoke-raiser, and the smoke would rise in a column like a staff until it reached the Temple ceiling. When it reached the ceiling there was nowhere for the smoke to exit the building, and therefore it slowly descended the walls until the entire House was filled with smoke, as it is stated: “And the House was filled with smoke” (Isaiah 6:4). This baraita indicates that the root of the smoke-raiser raises smoke better than its leaf.

Rather, Rab Abaye said that this is what the baraita said; this is how it should be understood: I have derived nothing other than the obligation to bring a root of a smoke-raiser plant. From where is it derived that he must also bring a leaf of a smoke-raiser? The verse states: “And it shall cover.”

Rav Sheshet said that the baraita means the following: I have derived nothing other than the inclusion of a smoke-raiser amongst the other spices in the Tent of Meeting that was in the wilderness; from where is it derived that this obligation extends to the Tabernacle at Shiloh and in the eternal Temple in Jerusalem? The verse states: “And it shall cover,” which indicates that wherever the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies to burn incense, he must include a smoke-raiser in its ingredients.
It is a mitzva to bring man-made fire – מִשְׁכַּבְתָּא אִם יִשְׁמַע אוֹתוֹ אוֹתוֹ מַעְלָה מִלְתָּא. Although fire descends from the heavens, it is a special mitzva to bring man-made fire to ensure that fire burns constantly on the altar (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Temidin 2:1).

**HALAKHA**

The sin of Aaron’s sons – מִיתַת אַהֲרֹן. The midrashim discuss this issue at length and list several sins that the two priests committed, either before or during the act for which they were punished. According to all opinions, they were punished because their act of bringing in the fire was unlawful, but they would not have died had they not been guilty on other accounts as well (see Rashi on Leviticus 10:3).

**NOTES**

The Gemara raises a difficulty with regard to this interpretation: ‘This halakha is derived from the verse: “And so shall he do for the Tent of Meeting that dwells with them” (Leviticus 16:16). This verse teaches that this rite must be performed not only that first time in the wilderness, but wherever the Divine Presence dwells.

Rather, this is what the baraita said: I have derived nothing other than the obligation to include a smoke-raiser in the spices of the incense offered on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies; from where is it derived that this obligation applies to the incense offered on the rest of the days of the year in the Sanctuary? The verse states: “And it shall cover,” to teach that every incense burned in the Temple must include a smoke-raiser.

Raw Ashi said: One verse teaches us the mitzva itself, and one verse teaches that this requirement is indispensable, i.e., the rite is invalid if one omits this ingredient. Rava said: One verse teaches that the omission of the smoke-raiser renders one liable to receive the punishment of death, and one verse serves as a warning that it is prohibited to omit it, as the Torah does not require punishment without issuing a warning.

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One might have thought that both verses were said before the deaths of Aaron’s sons, who died upon entering the sacred place. Therefore, the verse states: “After the deaths of the two sons of Aaron” (Leviticus 16:1). One might have thought that both of them, the punishment and the warning, were said after the deaths of Aaron’s two sons. Therefore, the verse states: “For I will appear in a cloud upon the Ark cover.” How so; how should these verses be understood? The warning was said before the death of Aaron’s sons, and the punishment associated with it was stated after the death of his sons.

The Gemara expresses puzzlement at Rabbi Eliezer’s statement: What is the biblical derivation? How does Rabbi Eliezer learn from the phrase “I will appear” that the warning was stated earlier? Rava said that the verse states: “For I will appear in a cloud”; the future tense indicates that the cloud over the Ark cover had not yet appeared, as the Tabernacle had not been built, which means that this command was issued before Aaron’s sons entered and died. The Gemara asks: Rather, what is the reason that Aaron’s sons were punished with death, if the punishment had not been stated? The Torah does not punish one who is unaware of the sin’s punishment.

The Gemara answers: They were not punished for their entry into the sacred place but for a different reason, as it was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: Aaron’s sons died only because they taught a halakha before Moses their teacher; they should have asked him for his ruling, but they neglected to do so. The Gemara asks: What did they interpret from the verse that led them to enter the sacred place with fire? The verse states: “And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar” (Leviticus 1:7), which indicates that although fire descends from the heavens, it is a mitzva to bring man-made fire. To fulfill this mitzva, Aaron’s sons entered and brought fire to the altar. Although their ruling was in accordance with the halakha, they incurred the death penalty for failing to ask Moses.

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§ The mishna teaches that the High Priest exits and comes out the way that he entered, i.e., he does not turn around, but walks backward with his face toward the Ark. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived; what is the source in the Torah for this halakha? Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥman said that Rabbi Yonatan said that the verse states: “And Solomon came to the high place that was at Gibon, Jerusalem” (1 Kings 3:1). Now, what does Gibon have to do with Jerusalem? Either he came to Gibon or to Jerusalem; these are two different places.
They said to Rav Yosef: This is what Rava does. Rav Yosef was blind and could not see for himself. Rav Yosef said to him: May it be God’s will that you lift your head over the entire city, in reward for honoring your teacher.

Apropos the obligation of a student to walk backward when taking leave of his teacher, the Gemara discusses a similar topic. Rabbi Alexander said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: One who prays must take three steps backward upon concluding his prayer and then recite: Peace, in a manner befitting one who departs from before the Holy One, Blessed be He. Rav Mordekhai said to him: Since he has taken three steps backward, he should stand there and not return to his place immediately. This is analogous to a student who takes leave of his teacher. If he returns immediately to the place where was first standing, he is similar to a dog who returns to its vomit, and his previous action is spoiled.

Rather, the verse compares his exit from Gibeon to Jerusalem to his arrival from Jerusalem to Gibeon. Just as in the case of his arrival from Jerusalem to Gibeon his face was necessarily turned toward the high place, in the usual manner of a person’s arrival, so too, upon his exit from Gibeon to Jerusalem his face was still turned toward the high place, in the manner of his arrival. This teaches that one does not turn his face away from a sacred place, rather, he must walk backward.

And likewise, with regard to priests in their service; and Levites on their platform in the Temple, where they recited songs, and Israelites at their watches, where they observed the sacrifice of the daily offering: When they departed from the sacred place, they would not turn their faces and walk but would turn their faces sideways and walk, so as not to turn their backs on the sacred place.2

And likewise, a student who takes leave of his teacher⁵ should not turn his face and walk but turn his face sideways and walk.⁶ This is in accordance with that practice of Rabbi Elazar when he took leave of his teacher, Rabbi Yohanan. When Rabbi Yohanan wanted to leave him, Rabbi Elazar would bend down and stand in his place as a sign of respect and humility, until Rabbi Yohanan disappeared from his sight; only then would Rabbi Elazar turn to leave.

And when Rabbi Elazar wanted to leave, he would walk backward until he disappeared from Rabbi Yohanan’s sight, and only then would he walk normally, so as not to turn his back on his teacher. The Gemara further relates: When Rava took leave of Rav Yosef, he would walk backward, paying no attention to the obstacles in his path, until his legs were bruised and the threshold of Rav Yosef’s house was bloodied from Rava’s wounds.

One who prays must take three steps backward. Upon concluding the Amidah prayer, one bows and takes three steps backward. He then turns his face first toward the left and then to the right, finally bowing straight in front of him, like a servant taking leave of his master (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 123:1).

Turn his face sideways and walk – מָצַבָּן עַל פְּסִיעָת מְצַד מָצַבָּן One should leave in this manner because it is difficult to walk backward without coming to harm. Rabbi Elazar and Rava, who did walk backward, acted beyond the letter of the law. For this reason Rav Yosef praised Rava for the respect he granted him (Siah Yitzhak).

Priests, Levites, and Israelites upon their exit – הסעֵפָה מִיּוֹלָהוֹלָהוֹוֹ לַעָבָה After completing his service in the Temple, a priest should not exit with his back to the Sanctuary but should walk backward or slightly to his side until he exits the Temple. Likewise, Levites who come down from their platform and regular Israelites who are in the Temple should leave in this manner (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Bet HaBe’alin 7:4).

A student who takes leave of his teacher –_rp_klm_#: A student who takes leave of his teacher should not turn his back to him but should walk backward while facing his teacher (Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 24:16).
The High Priest’s prayer — In the Jerusalem Talmud, several other statements are added to this prayer, some of which appear in the Yom Kippur service in the prayer book. The phrase: May the rule of power not depart, is based on the verse: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Genesis 49:10). The request that the people should not require sustenance from one another does not mean only that no one should suffer from poverty, but also that each person should have an inheritance of his own and not depend on others at all.

And Hanina is comfortable — Rashi explains that since Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was very poor, he did not own any fields and therefore was not troubled by the absence of rain. Many later commentators wonder how Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa could have prayed for something that would harm other people. Perhaps Rabbi Hanina did not actually pray for the cessation of rain but merely offered a casual observation. Due to his great righteousness, God reacted to his comment.

An incident involving a certain High Priest who extended his prayer — According to the Jerusalem Talmud, this High Priest was Shimon HaTzeddik. As we learned — Several commentaries cite this story as proof that the High Priest extended his prayer to the right, not the left.

The Gemara comments that this was also taught in a baraita. One who prays must take three steps backward upon concluding his prayer and then recite: Peace. And if he did not do so, it is better for him not to have prayed, as his actions are disrespectful toward God. And they said in the name of Shemaya the Sage that when one recites: Peace, he first bows to the right and then to the left, as it is stated: “At His right hand was a fiery law to them” (Deuteronomy 33:2), and it says: “A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right side” (Psalms 91:7).

The Gemara asks: What is the reason for: And it says? Why is it necessary to cite another source? The Gemara explains: If you say that it is merely the usual manner to give an object with the right hand, but this bears no special significance, come and hear: “A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right side,” which indicates that the right side is the more significant one.

The Gemara relates that Rava saw Abaye reciting: Peace, by bowing at the end of his prayer to his right first. Rava said to him: Do you maintain that you should bow to your right? I say you should bow to your left first, as it is the right of the Holy One, Blessed be He, since He is opposite you face-to-face, as it were. Rav Hyya, son of Rav Huna, said: I observed that Abaye and Rava both took those three steps all in one act of bowing, without standing upright in between, by way of submission to and acceptance of God’s authority.

The Gemara relates: Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was walking on the road when rain fell upon him. He said: Master of the Universe, the entire world is comfortable and Hanina is suffering. The rain stopped. When he came to his house he said: Master of the Universe, the entire world is suffering for lack of rain and Hanina is comfortable. The rain came back. Rav Yosef said: What effect does the prayer of the High Priest have with regard to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa? Notwithstanding the prayer of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa’s sanctity is greater, as God fulfills his biding.

The Gemara stated that the High Priest would not extend his prayer. The Sages taught in the Tosaf: There was an incident involving a certain High Priest who extended his prayer, and his fellow priests took a vote, counted, and decided to go in after him out of concern that he had died or fainted and required assistance. They began to enter and at that moment he emerged. They said to him: Why did you extend your prayer? He said to them: Why not? Does it trouble you that I prayed for you and for the Temple not to be destroyed? They said to him: Do not make a habit of doing so, as we learned. He would not extend his prayer, so as not to alarm the Jewish people, who might fear he had died.
MISHNA After the Ark was taken into exile, there was a rock in the Holy of Holies from the days of the early prophets, David and Samuel, who laid the groundwork for construction of the Temple, and this stone was called the foundation rock. It was three fingerbreadths higher than the ground, and the High Priest would place the incense on it. After the High Priest left the Holy of Holies, he took the blood of the bull sacrificed as a sin-offering from the one who was stirring it, so it would not coagulate. He entered into the place that he had previously entered, the Holy of Holies, and stood at the place where he had previously stood to offer the incense, between the staves. And he sprinkled from the blood, one time upward and seven times downward.

And he would neither intend to sprinkle the blood upward nor to sprinkle it downward, but rather like one who whips, with the blood sprinkled in a single column, one drop below the other. And this is how he would count as he sprinkled, to avoid error: One; one and one; one and two; one and three; one and four; one and five; one and six; one and seven. The High Priest then emerged from there and placed the bowl with the remaining blood on the golden pedestal in the Sanctuary.

They brought him the goat to be sacrificed as a sin-offering to God. He slaughtered it and received its blood in the bowl. He again entered into the place that he had previously entered, the Holy of Holies, and stood at the place that he previously stood, and sprinkled from the blood of the goat one time upward and seven times downward. And this is how he would count, just as he counted when sprinkling the blood of the bull: One; one and one; one and two; one and three; one and four; one and five; one and six; one and seven. The High Priest then emerged from the Holy of Holies and placed the bowl with the remaining blood on the second golden pedestal in the Sanctuary. Rabbi Yehuda says: There was only one pedestal there, and he took the blood of the bull from the pedestal and placed the blood of the goat in its place.

And he sprinkled from the blood of the bull on the curtain opposite the Ark from outside the Holy of Holies, one time upward and seven times downward, and he would not intend, etc. And this is how he would count, etc. When he concluded, he took the blood of the goat from the pedestal and placed blood of the bull in its place on the pedestal. And he sprinkled from the goat’s blood on the curtain opposite the Ark from outside, just as he did with the blood of the bull, one time upward and seven times downward, etc. Afterward, he poured the blood of the bull into the blood of the goat and placed the blood from the full bowl into the empty bowl, so that the blood would be mixed well.

GEMARA The Gemara comments with regard to the wording of the mishna: It does not teach: After the Ark was buried, but: After it was taken. If so, we learned this mishna in accordance with the opinion of the one who said that the Ark was exiled to Babylonia and was not buried in its place, as it was taught in a baraita: Rabbi Eliezer says: The Ark was exiled to Babylonia, as it is stated: “And at the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylonia, along with the precious vessels of the House of the Lord” (II Chronicles 36:10). These precious vessels must include the Ark.

HALAKHA He took the blood from the one who was stirring it – and sprinkles the blood between the staves of the Ark eight times. He then sprinkles the bull’s blood eight times toward the curtain across from the Ark, and the goat’s blood eight times there as well. He then pours the blood of the bull into the blood of the goat and then pours the mixture back into the first bowl to mix them thoroughly (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Avodat Yom HaKippurim 42).
Likewise, Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai says: The Ark was exiled to Babylonia, as it is stated: “Behold, the days come that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored until this day, shall be carried to Babylonia; nothing [davar] shall be left, says the Lord” (Isaiah 39:6). These are the Ten Commandments [ dibrot] that are inside it; they too shall not be left behind.

Rabbi Yehuda ben Lakish says: The Ark was buried in its place, as it is stated: “And the ends of the staves were seen from the sacred place before the partition, but they could not be seen without; and they are there to this day” (1 Kings 8:8). The expression “to this day” means forever, as the text might be read at any time. This teaches that the Ark is hidden in its place.

The Gemara comments: And this opinion that the Ark was exiled to Babylonia disagrees with that of Ulla, as Ulla said: Rabbi Matya ben Ḥarash asked Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai in Rome: And since Rabbi Eliezer taught us once and twice, i.e., from two separate verses, that the Ark was exiled to Babylonia. The Gemara interrupts its citation of Rabbi Matya ben Ḥarash’s question to identify these two verses. The first verse is that which we said: “And brought him to Babylonia, along with the precious vessels of the House of the Lord.” What is the second verse? Rabbi Eliezer said: As it is written: “And gone from the daughter of Zion is all her splendor” (Lamentations 1:6). What is the meaning of: “All her splendor [ hadara]”? It means: Her chamber [ hadara], i.e., something that was hidden within the innermost chambers, namely the Ark. You, Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, what do you say in response to this? He said to him: As I say, the Ark was buried in its place and not exiled, as it is stated: “And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the sacred place before the partition, but they could not be seen without; and they are there to this day” (1 Kings 8:8).

Rabbi said to Ulla: From where in this verse may it be inferred that the Ark was buried in its place? Ulla replied that the source is as it is written: “And they are there to this day,” which is referring to any day when one might read this sentence, i.e., forever. Rabba objected to this explanation: And is it the case that anywhere that it is written “to this day” it means forever, as opposed to the time when the verse was written? But isn’t it written: “And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem, to this day” (Judges 1:1)? So too here, let us say that the Jebusites were not exiled from Jerusalem.

But wasn’t it taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yehuda says: No person passed through the land of Judea for fifty-two years after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, as it is stated: “I will raise crying and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, for they have been burned, with no person passing through. And they do not hear the sound of the cattle; from the bird of the heavens to the beast [behema], all have fled and gone” (Jeremiah 9:9). Behema, spelled beit, heh, mem, heh, has a numerical value of fifty-two, alluding to the fact that no one passed through the land for fifty-two years.

**NOTES**

Hadara, hadara – חדרה, חדרה. Since the letters heh and her look and sound similar, they are often interchangeable, and the Sages make use of this variance in their interpretations of verses. Hadara in this context serves to emphasize that the verse is referring to the Ark of the Covenant, which is located in the innermost chambers [ hadarin], as well as the Torah, referred to as hadara, the splendor of the Jewish people (see Iyyei Ḥaftam and Maharsha).