

Shemini

De 8e dag

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An examination of the Torah's descriptions of the seven days of the consecration of the Mishkan, the following eighth day, and the avoda performed in the Kodesh HaKodashim (Vayikra 16) reveals that all three events are joined by a common thread.

The eighth day (as described in Vayikra 9), the day of the revelation of the Shekhina, is unquestionably a continuation of the events of the seven days of "milu'im" (consecration) which preceded it. However, in contrast to the seven-day commemoration which was commanded prior to the erection of the Mishkan, it is clear that the parasha concerning the eighth day only took place afterwards. The eighth day is not mentioned in Sefer Shemot, and it is not repeated like most other matters concerning the construction of the Mishkan and its consecration (Shemot 25-31 covers the command to build the Mishkan, 35-40 describes its fulfillment.

Shemot 29: command concerning the milu'im; Vayikra 8: fulfillment.) [The Ramban explains that the yemei milu'im were an inauguration of the Mishkan, while "on the eighth day, the kohanim were to offer the sacrifices. And so these sacrifices represented their own inauguration...". The Ramban adds that the sacrifices on the eighth day were instituted as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf, based on the fact that this is the first command which God issues following that sin. The Mekhilta's commentary on the milu'im in the Sifra states explicitly, "Let the calf (of the sacrifice) come and atone for the sin of the calf."]

The account of the eighth day ends with the death of Nadav and Avihu, with the prohibition of inebriated kohanim serving in the Mishkan and the goat as sin-offering (se'ir chatat) which is burnt (Vayikra 10). However we can trace its continuation in the parasha of the avoda in the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16), which is also the Yom Kippur service for the future: "And God spoke to Moshe AFTER THE DEATH OF AHARON'S TWO SONS, WHEN THEY SACRIFICED before God AND DIED. And God said to Moshe, Speak to Aharon your brother, and LET HIM NOT COME at any time into the Kodesh, inside the veil before the covering which is upon the Aron SO THAT HE WILL NOT DIE, for I shall appear in the cloud upon the covering. WITH THIS shall Aharon come into the Kodesh..." (Vayikra 16:1-3)

In other words, the parasha describing the manner of entry into the inner Kodesh is the result and continuation of - and perhaps an atonement for - the entry of Nadav and Avihu, which was contrary to this manner. Here we are told HOW one is to properly enter the abode of the Shekhina in order to atone and to purify the Kodesh and Bnei Yisrael who enter it.

Parashat Acharei-Mot is clearly a continuation and correction/atonement for the parasha of the eighth day, because it deals with the permitted procedure for entering the inner Kodesh, and the avoda of the Kodesh Kodashim - in the desert, as a one-time mitzva to be performed by Aharon, and for all generations as a mitzva for Yom Kippur. Hence this parasha represents the conclusion of the mitzvot concerning the Mishkan and the presence of the Shekhina in the camp. Let us now explore the fundamental significance of this connection between the parashot.

The connection between the eighth day and the avoda in the Kodesh Kodashim is also clearly apparent in the content of the avoda itself: Aharon's sacrifice is identical in both cases - a bull as a sin

offering (except that on the eighth day it is an “egel” - a year-old calf rather than “par” - a three-year-old bull. The sin offering brought by the nation is also termed “egel” and this is the only time in the Torah when “egel” is specified for a sacrifice, unquestionably hinting at its function as atonement for the golden calf) and a ram as an olah (9:2 and 16:3). Furthermore, in both cases the nation brought a goat which was sacrificed as a sin offering. (On Yom Kippur a second goat was brought but not sacrificed. Rather, it was sent to Azazel - 9:3; 16:5.) In both cases the nation brought an olah: on the eighth day it was “a calf and a sheep, both one year old” (9:3) while on Yom Kippur the calf is omitted and there is only a ram as an olah (16:5). The shelamim and mincha which were offered on the eighth day are exceptions to the comparison, and do not appear in the Yom Kippur avoda, but this is because the nature of Yom Kippur is one of atonement, self-infliction and fasting; therefore none of the korbanot which are eaten are brought on this day.

It is also fascinating to note the comparison to the korbanot of the previous seven days of milu'im. There, too, there is a bull as a sin-offering and a ram as an olah (exactly like Aharon's korban on the eighth day and on Yom Kippur). Furthermore, there is a second ram as a shelamim, which was eaten together with the matzot at the entrance to the ohel mo'ed on each of the seven days. (These korbanot are similar on one hand to those brought by the Nazir at the conclusion of his period of nezirut [Vayikra 8:26-29, Bemidbar 6:13-20], and on the other hand to those brought by the metzora at the conclusion of his eight-day period of tahara [Vayikra 14:10-20]. Hence the milu'im hints at both purification from tum'a and the self-imposed measures of the Nazir who strives to emulate the kedusha of the kohen gadol.)

It appears, therefore, that during the days of milu'im, the function of which was to “fill” (train), the kohanim, they brought a chatat, an olah, and a shelamim - but the nation brought no korban. On the eighth day Aharon brought a chatat and an olah, and the nation did likewise. The shelamim, the korban of joyous celebration, was brought on the eighth day by the nation, since this day was characterized principally by the revelation of the Shekhina to the nation (outdoors, at the entrance to the ohel mo'ed) rather than just to Moshe (in the ohel mo'ed itself), while the kohanim - who had already completed their milu'im - no longer needed to eat the shelamim. On Yom Kippur, too, Aharon's korban atones for himself and for his household and prepares him to sacrifice as on the eighth day, and the korban of the nation parallels this - this time, though, without the shelamim, since on Yom Kippur there is no joyous eating of korbanot.

The crux of the comparison of the korbanot, however, resides in the fact that Aharon's chatat in all three cases is burnt and not eaten, like the bull always brought as chatat by the kohen mashiach (Vayikra 4).

But herein, too, lies the fundamental difference between the days of milu'im and the eighth day, on one hand, and Yom Kippur on the other. The procedure for the sacrificing of the bull as chatat during the days of milu'im and on the eighth day (Shemot 29:10-14, Vayikra 8:14-17, Vayikra 9:8-11), includes only avoda on the outer altar. Despite this, the sacrifice is burnt outside the camp: “And the flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside of the camp” (9:11). This is the only time that a chatat is burned although it is sacrificed on the external mizbe'ach, and its blood is not brought into the kodesh. Rashi comments, “There is no external chatat which is burned other than this one.”

All other chatat offerings which are burned are sacrificed on the inner altar. Their blood is brought into the Kodesh, and the kohen mashiach sprinkles their blood inside. Such is the case regarding the chatat bull of the kohen mashiach, or the chatat of the people (Vayikra 4:5-7, 10:16-18). In both cases the kohen sprinkles in the Kodesh on the parokhet and on the inner altar. Such is the case once again concerning the bull brought on Yom Kippur - the blood of which is sprinkled in the Kodesh Kodashim - on the kaporet and in front of the kaporet, and afterwards on the inner altar.

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