

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 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.

The uniqueness of Yom Kippur lies in the fact that only on this day is there avoda in the Kodesh

Kodashim, including offering of incense and sprinkling of blood (Vayikra 16:12-19, Mishna Zevachim 5:1-2).

On the eighth day, on the other hand the situation is reversed: on this day Aharon sacrifices for the first time and commences his kehuna, but nevertheless his special avoda excludes any activity inside the Kodesh, and even those activities which would seemingly be worthy of being performed inside - such as the offering of the bull as chatat - are not. The bull is burned, by God's command, as though it had been sacrificed inside.

In summary, there was no avoda in the Kodesh, and certainly not in the Kodesh Kodashim, on the eighth day - in the same way that there had not been during the seven days of milu'im. In contrast, on Yom Kippur the blood of both the bull and the goat are brought inside: "And he shall slaughter the goat for the chatat of the nation... and he shall do with its blood as he did to the blood of the bull, and he shall sprinkle it on the kaporet and before the kaporet" (16:15) - and both are burned together (16:27).

In other words, the chatat-bull on the eighth day is external, but nevertheless it is burned (as an exception, by Divine command). On Yom Kippur, though, its blood is brought before God (also exceptional, but IN THE OPPOSITE WAY), as opposed to the bull always brought by the kohen mashiach, the blood of which is brought into the Kodesh, but ONLY UP TO THE PAROKHET.

We may summarize what we have said above as follows:

- The bull of the days of milu'im and the eighth day is sacrificed externally, but burned.
- The bull of the kohen mashiach has its blood sprinkled on the parokhet and on the gold mizbe'ach.
- The bull of Yom Kippur has its blood sprinkled between the badim, on the parokhet and upon the gold mizbe'ach.

But the contrast is demonstrated most clearly with regard to the ketoret: Throughout the year it is a mitzva to offer the ketoret before God in the Kodesh, and to bring fire "min ha-hedyot" - regular, "earthly" fire, from the outer altar. On the eighth day, in contrast, ketoret is not brought inside the Kodesh, and the earthly fire is the "esh zara" ("strange fire") (10:1) for which Nadav and Avihu are punished. On Yom Kippur, the ketoret is brought not only into the Kodesh, but into the Kodesh Kodashim.

Hence it is clear that the parallel between the eighth day and Yom Kippur is in fact inverse. The seeming similarity serves only as a basis for the sharp contrast. The eighth day and Yom Kippur are the two extremes of a single continuum of Divine revelation to Israel. The usual daily situation in this continuum is one of sanctified avoda with its peak in the Kodesh, i.e., in the heikhal, but it does not reach the Kodesh Kodashim. In contrast to this usual situation are the two extremes: The eighth day on one hand, where the sanctified avoda is performed only on the outer altar at the entrance to the ohel mo'ed, outside of the Kodesh, while on Yom Kippur the situation is reversed: the most holy avoda takes place beyond the Kodesh, "inside the parokhet", in the Kodesh Kodashim.

The significance of the contrast between the parashot will become clearer if we first thoroughly explore the meaning of the 'Kodesh' as opposed to the 'Kodesh Kodashim', and the meaning of the parokhet which divides them (Shemot 26:33). We are accustomed to thinking of the difference between them as varying degrees of kedusha, increasing in one direction - from the outside inwards, from the "bottom upwards". There is the chatzer and the eikhal, and inside the heikhal itself there is the Kodesh and an internal, even more holy Kodesh (as explained in Mishna Kelim, 1:6-9).

It is easy to prove that such an understanding is not quite accurate. Such a grading puts all levels of kedusha together on one continuum, on one scale common to all. Closer inspection reveals that we cannot do this. What we have before us is not one single scale or continuum but rather two fundamentally and qualitatively different spheres which in fact stand in mutual contrast.

The first sphere is that of the chatzer and the Kodesh, the ohel mo'ed OUTSIDE of the parokhet. In the Kodesh it is the kohanim - man - who arrange the lechem ha-panim before God (Shemot 25:30, 40:22-23, Vayikra 24:1-9), who are responsible for the eternal light of the menorah (Shemot 27:20, 40:26-27, Bemidbar 8:1-3), and who offer the continuous ketoret on the inner altar (Shemot 30:6-7, 40:26-27). The fire there is regular fire - from the outer altar (see Sifra, beginning of parashat Tzav, no. 6 and in Massekhet Yoma 45b) - all of this reflecting a situation of 'from the bohom upwards', from earth heavenwards. In contrast, in the Kodesh Kodashim the situation is reversed: the place of the Shekhina, the place where God's kingship is revealed to Israel and the world, the place where God speaks to Moshe, is "above the kaporet, from between the two keruvim". (Shemot 25:22, Bemidbar 7:89).

Since God has no physical manifestation, the Kodesh Kodashim contains nothing but the base of His royal "throne" - the "ark of God's testimony, a footstool for the feet of our Lord" (Divrei Ha-yamim I, 28:2), which is flanked by the keruvim, and which houses the tablets of testimony (Shemot 25:21, 40:20, 31:18, Devarim 10:1-5) and the sefer Torah "at the side of the ark of God's testimony" (Devarim 31:26). From this perspective the innermost chamber serves as the King's dwelling place on earth, as it were - the footstool of the royal throne, and all the rest is simply corridors and entrances.

The cloud and God's glory which dwell on the ohel mo'ed and within it represent the revelation of God's word to man, and their essence and root is to be found in the Kodesh Kodashim. Therefore no-one is allowed to set foot inside (except the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur). For this reason, too, man does not offer korban or prayer there, and no earthly fire can be brought in. Everything in the Kodesh Kodashim is from the "top down", from "heaven earthwards", like creation itself, where no man was present - "for in the cloud I shall appear upon the kaporet" (Vayikra 16:2, and see Rashi).

From the Kodesh Kodashim God speaks to man, while in the Kodesh man stands before God. "And the parokhet will separate for you between the Kodesh and the Kodesh Kodashim" (Shemot 26:33). This is a sharp distinction between two separate spheres, between two concepts, between two worlds, which together constitute a whole Mikdash, a whole world. Together - but with a clear boundary between them.

This distinction is the key to understanding the significance of the difference between the eighth day and Yom Kippur. The eighth day is the day on which the Shekhina appeared upon the entire ohel mo'ed - on the Kodesh as well as the Kodesh Kodashim. In a special and unique way the entire ohel served as the dwelling place of God, Lord and King of Israel on the day He chose to appear to the nation, thereby expressing in the entire Mishkan the special content that was usually reserved for the Kodesh Kodashim.

On this day entrance not only to the Kodesh Kodashim but also to the Kodesh is sealed. Therefore no internal avoda exists, and even that which usually would be sacrificed in the Kodesh - the calf for a chatat - is sacrificed instead outside (but is nevertheless burnt like an internal chatat).

Moreover, even the fire on the outer altar comes originally from Above: "And a fire came out from before God (i.e. from the Kodesh) and consumed upon the altar the olah and the fats" (Vayikra 9:24). On this day ketoret cannot come upon coals of a common fire, which is considered "esh zara" even in the Kodesh. For even on the outer altar, the fire was one which had come from God, and there was no possibility of a regular fire - how much more so inside the Kodesh.

In light of this, the sin of Nadav and Avihu - according to the peshat and Chazal's explanation - is really their very entry into the HEAVENLY fire with the pan of ketoret and the FOREIGN EARTHLY fire. This was an attempt to merge the two spheres, to blur the full significance of God's revelation - to which no man can be partner. (By introducing regular fire they obscured the full impact of the kiddush Hashem that would have resulted from the spectacle of the pure heavenly fire descending.) All the other reasons which the various commentators list as leading to the death of Nadav and Avihu and which are hinted at in the text (such as the prohibition against inebriation, which was conveyed to Aharon immediately afterwards - Vayikra 8:11) should be understood as causes or consequences of the blurring of the spheres and the mingling of the two worlds - the human and the Divine - which should remain separate. (See Rav Kook at the end of Orot Ha-Kodesh part 3, p. 360.)

Therefore the fire came out from before God, and devoured the bearers of the strange fire who had come into the Kodesh, and they were consumed "in their approaching before God" - in order to make it known that any humanworldly phenomenon is nullified before God's revelation. This emphasized that all earthly powers receive their strength and existence exclusively from the power of Divine revelation in creation, in the world, in man and in Israel. "I shall be sanctified among My close ones, and I shall be honored by all the nation" (Vayikra 10:3).

The terrible tragedy of the eighth day, and the cry which emanates from the entire nation at God's destructive fire, give rise to a difficult question: Is it at all possible to approach God without instant death? It is specifically at this point, after the sin and after the demonstration of God's attribute of justice towards Aharon's sons, that here is a deepened sense that there must be some possibility of appearing before the King and asking for forgiveness and mercy.

This question is formulated not in Sefer Vayikra but rather in similar and parallel circumstances in sefer Bemidbar: Two hundred and fifty princes of the nation, respected leaders but not kohanim, who brought ketoret before God, are all consumed in a fire which comes out from before God in a revelation of glory before the eyes of the nation, in front of the entrance to the ohel mo'ed - exactly like on the eighth day (Bemidbar 16:16-19,35; 17:1-5). The nation, which complained the next day about the death of these princes, is also stricken with a plague with God's appearance in the ohel mo'ed, and the plague stops only when Aharon takes the ketoret out.

At this point the question arises in its most powerful form: "And Bnei Yisrael said to Moshe saying, Behold - we perish, we die, we all die. Anyone who approaches, who approaches God's Mishkan, will die. Shall we die off altogether?" (Bemidbar 17:27-28). To this question - how shall we come to the Kodesh and not die? - comes the response in the parasha of Yom Kippur: "Thus shall Aharon come to the Kodesh...". There is a possibility of atonement and purification. There is a way of coming - not only to the Kodesh, but even to the Kodesh Kodashim.

The eighth day, however, is fundamentally different from Yom Kippur. On the eighth day the Shekhina is revealed to the nation outside, while on Yom Kippur the Shekhina is hidden and allows man to enter even the Kodesh Kodashim and appear before God. Indeed, in the parasha of Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16) there is no revelation and no expression of revelation, but only atonement. "And he shall atone for the Kodesh from the impurities of Bnei Yisrael and from their transgressions for all their sins, and so shall he do to the ohel mo'ed which dwells with them, within their impurity." (16:16). The implication here is clear - if they are not atoned for, perhaps the Shekhina will no longer be able to remain with them.

Therefore on Yom Kippur, the day of self-affliction, ketoret and coals are brought from the outer altar with its regular, earthly fire, into the parokhet, and there inside man stands before God, offers incense and sprinkles the blood. It should be noted that the dividing parokhet is not mentioned here even once by name, even when the Torah speaks of sprinkling blood in front of it.

During the course of Yom Kippur, the sphere of man's entry into the Kodesh changes and progresses one step inwards: the mizbe'ach ha-ketoret is 'brought into' the Kodesh Kodashim. The chatat-bull of the kohen mashiach, too, the blood of which is usually sprinkled "seven times before God towards the holy parokhet" (Vayikra 4:6), has its blood sprinkled inwards on Yom Kippur. The inner altar, upon which it is forbidden to sacrifice olah and mincha the whole year round, also has its horns atoned for by Aharon once a year using the blood of the chatat of Yom Kippur (Shemot 30:9-10). In other words, that which is performed the whole year round on the outer altar (the placing of blood of the chatat on the horns of the mizbe'ach [Vayikra 4:30, Mishna Zevachim 5:3]) takes place on Yom Kippur on the inner altar. At the same time, the substance of the inner altar throughout the year - the offering of ketoret - takes place on Yom Kippur in the Kodesh Kodashim.

When the Kohen Gadol emerged safely from this "encounter" with the Shekhina, it was clear to the entire nation that they had merited atonement, forgiveness and purification, and that the Shekhina would continue to dwell among them as it usually did, with the usual division, represented by the parokhet.

The avoda of Yom Kippur is therefore a completion and rectification of the eighth day. This process is realized in the contrast between the revelation of the Shekhina on the eighth day upon the entire ohel mo'ed before the whole nation which is gathered in the chatzer at the entrance to it, and Aharon's entry on Yom Kippur into the hidden and invisible, to his private encounter with God.

This is the answer to the question of how it is possible to live when the Shekhina is among us and anyone who approaches, dies; how to live with the open demonstration of God's attribute of justice; how to exist in close proximity to the palace of the King when any slight deviation causes a fire. The purifying kaporet of Yom Kippur is the answer, and it is the tikkun which allows us to live.

Further study

1. On the eighth day, there was no avoda inside the ohel. But Moshe and Aharon did enter the ohel (9:23). How does this entrance not contradict the explanation of the shiur; in fact, how does it support it? In other words, what is the purpose of this entrance, in terms of the "bohom up"- "top down" dichotomy?
2. Moshe's argument with Aharon concerning the burning of the goat (10:16-20) should be understood in light of the nature of "burnt chata'ot" on the eighth day. Try and understand Moshe and Aharon's position.

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