

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5785

D. Mordechai Schlachter

Aharon is instructed on how he can enter the inner Kodesh.

וְלָקַח מִלֵּא-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ גֶּחַל־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וּמִלֵּא תְּפִלֵּי קִטְרֹת סַמִּים דָּקָה  
וְהָבִיא מִבֵּית לְפָרְקֵת:

“And he shall take a panful of glowing coals, from upon the mizbeach from before Hashem, and handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense, and he may come in behind the curtain [lit. to the House of the Curtain].” (Vayikra 16:12).

All of this occurred “after” the sons of Aharon died. Why only afterwards? The Torah only indirectly says that if Aharon wants to enter then this is the ritual... (Ibid 16:2). It describes a twenty-seven pasuk process of the service for that day. The Torah also does not immediately indicate this was the Yom Kippur service. Instead, it describes the service and then finally says, “And this shall be the law for all time, in the seventh month on the tenth day...” (Ibid 16:29). Why does the Torah couch this service in such mystery?

Hashem originally only taught Moshe about Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos. (Shmos 23:16-17; 34:18-23). Our parsha is the first time the Torah mentions Yom Kippur. Yom Zichron Terura – colloquially known as Rosh Hashana – is not mentioned until later, ibid 23:24. There were no holidays mentioned that were to occur in the seventh month, except Succos. The entire first year passed and there was no mention of a day of atonement. It is entirely possible that these days were not meant to be commemorated until later events caused them. Then, after events, Hashem granted a Day of Atonement on the tenth of the month. Once that was instituted, then the first day of the month was made into a chag to herald in the month of celebration. Finally, after having the first, tenth, and fifteenth through twenty-first be chagim, Hashem added one more day – Atzeres.

The term “afterwards” in the Torah means one event is the prerequisite for the other. The Torah gives the lineage of Adam to Noach. It says “afterwards” every time that person had their firstborn. (See Bereishis 5). It says the same when giving the lineage from Shem to Terach. (Ibid 11 et seq). The Torah says that there were Nephilim on the earth. After that, mankind fell into wickedness. (Ibid 6:4). Hashem promised Avram that He would bring judgment on the nation that will oppress his children. After that, they go and become wealthy. (Ibid 15:14). It was only after the events of the Marking of Yitzchok that it was told to Avraham that there was a suitable match for Yitzchok. In all cases, the first one was a prerequisite for the next events to occur.

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death.” (Vayikra 16:1). The death is explained as, “two sons of Aharon, they came close before Hashem, and they died.” (Ibid). This pasuk explains their passing as we did, two weeks ago – that they could not survive the great holiness of the fire of Hashem, so they expired. They were not killed for committing sin.

Only after they died did Hashem instruct Moshe on how Aharon could enter the Kodesh HaKedashim—holy of holies or inner sanctum. Their passing, or the events of their passing, facilitated the establishment of Yom Kippur. A simple explanation is that just as Nadav and Avihu brought a firepan that was unwarranted, Hashem was now telling Moshe that even Aharon cannot offer or come close, within the curtain, at will. He will have to do it by procedure.

Hashem warns that if Aharon “shall not come at any time to the Holies...so he will not die.” (Ibid 16:2). This means, it is not necessarily a punishment. It is the reality that humans cannot withstand a place of such holiness. The Torah explains that it is so dangerous, “Because in a cloud I appear on top of the [Aron’s] cover.” (Ibid).

The procedure for Aharon to enter is him having to bring offerings to make expiation—cleansing or forgiveness—for himself and his household. (Ibid 16:6). He should also draw the lottery on the two goats, for they will make expiation for the general public. (Ibid 16:10). He offers his bull for himself and his family. (Ibid 16:11). After that—and after bathing in a mikveh and changing into white vestments (ibid 16:4)—he takes the coals and the incense and enters. (Ibid 16:12). Inside, he puts the ketores on the burning coals and it makes a smoke that conceals the site of the Aron and cloud. (Ibid 16:13). Even while inside, he may not linger and gaze.

His task is not yet done. In order that this process not kill him, he still needs to sprinkle the blood (ibid 16:14) and slaughter the people’s goat and sprinkle its blood (ibid 16:15). The purpose of this is to *וּמִפְשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־הַטְּאֵתָם* “Make expiation upon the sanctuary from the impurity of Bnei Yisroel, and their transgressions, and all their sins.” (Ibid 16:16). Their sins are secondary to their tumeh. He shall do the same for the Ohel Moed that resides with them. (Ibid). No man shall be in the Ohel Moed when he makes this cleansing. (Ibid 16:17). He also cleanses the altar. (Ibid 16:19). This all seems like he is purifying the Mishkan and the mizbeach once a year from the impurities it absorbs or “catches” from Bnei Yisroel. However, Bnei Yisroel do not enter the Mishkan in a state of tumeh. They certainly do not enter the sanctuary. They do not touch the mizbeach or the curtains. Why would the Mishkan be tameh from them? Also, the purification is not from the Mishkan’s impurity, but from sin it or defect it has incurred because Bnei Yisroel is tameh. What expiation is this? Is the Mishkan responsible for Bnei Yisroel’s impurity or sin? It is not Bnei Yisroel’s fault that they become tameh. Much of it comes naturally—i.e., relations, death or discharges.

The next pasuk explains. “And when he completes expiation for the Kodesh, Ohel Moed, and Mizbeach, he brings close the live goat.” (Ibid 16:20). This goat is sent away and carries with it all iniquities. (Ibid 16:22). There is a need for the cleansing of the Mishkan from apparent sin. It is because the Mishkan itself took lives. Even though it was an accident, the Mishkan, in all its purity, caused the death of Nadav and Avihu. Therefore, even the Mishkan, needed atonement. If Bnei Yisroel were always pure and free of sin, Nadav and Avihu would have been able to withstand the holiness. But mankind is susceptible to ritual impurity and sin. Thus, Aharon was given a chance not only to atone for the entire nation but also atone for the Mishkan itself.