



Parshas Acharei Mos & Kedoshim 2023, Pray With All

Our Parsha begins immediately following the death of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu. G-d commands Aaron and his 2 remaining sons never to enter the Holy of Holies at will, lest they share the same consequences as Nadav and Avihu. Only Aaron can enter the Holy of Holies on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur.

The Torah then explains the service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, which entails an incense offering in the Holy of Holies and the drawing of lots for the fate of two goats, one for G-d and one for Azazel. The next portion begins with the statement: **קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה'** אֱלֹהֵיכֶם - *"You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, am holy."*

This declaration is followed by many commandments, including charity, Shabbos, morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, and the sacredness of life. We also have the commandment of ***"Love your fellow as yourself,"*** which Rabbi Akiva holds is a cardinal principle of the Torah.

However, a question comes to mind: The third Pasuk of our Parshas (16:3) states: **בְּזֹאת יָבֵא אַהֲרֹן אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ** - *"With this, Aaron should enter the Holy of Holies."* What does **"בְּזֹאת - With this"** refer to? Why does the Pasuk begin with this specific word?!

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, answers this question. He writes that **"בְּזֹאת - With this"** is not just referring to a physical thing but rather a date, Yom Kippur. Meaning that Aaron and all future high priests may

only enter the Holy of Holies on a specific day and not at will. Even if they wear the special and holy Priestly garments, they may only enter on Yom Kippur.

Rashi continues that "*בְּזֹאת* - *With this*" also refers to the preparation the high priest must make during the weeks leading up to Yom Kippur. Since only through the correct mindset and preparation will the high priest succeed in gaining atonement for the Jewish people and blessings for the upcoming year.

The Rabbienu Bachya, Rav Bachya Ben Asher, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He gives a few explanations but ends with the kabbalistic approach. He writes that the word "*בְּזֹאת* - *With this*" refers to the fact that the high priest enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur with "*כֹּסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל* - *a spiritual concept representative of the Jewish people.*"

The high priest doesn't enter the Holy of Holies alone; he goes in with the Jewish people's prayers, trust and confidence. He doesn't just enter as an emissary but as a physical representative of the spiritual element, G-d's chosen nation.

The Talmud in Yoma (4b) details the intricate and complex service of the high priest on Yom Kippur: from the many sacrifices specifically offered on this holy day to the special incense offering brought into the Holy of Holies. The service includes many elements of tradition dating back to Aaron Hakohen and his sons.

The Talmud explains that a core component of the service was the isolation the high priest would be in prior to Yom Kippur. Seven days before Yom Kippur, the high priest was accompanied from his home to the Parhedrin Chamber in the northeast corner of Beis Hamikdash. Similar to Moshe preparing his brother for seven days before Aaron took his place as high priest on the eighth day.

The Rabbienu Bachya explains that we do not exist, nor were we created in a vacuum; we are not separate from prior events or people but exist as a whole. As an entire Jewish Nation dating back to Avraham Avinu and his recognition of one Creator and Master of the universe.

This principle of existence allows us to enter young baby boys into Avraham's Covenant through circumcision. This profound concept enables us to invoke our forefathers as we pray each day for our needs and desires. This notion atones for our sins as we read Akeidah's Yitzchak - the binding of Yitzchak on our day of atonement, Yom Kippur.

We only exist and prevail as one whole unit, one equal element, one massive entity that embodies our core essence, the soul, our unique spark of G-d. According to the Rabbeinu Bachya, the high priest enters the Holy of Holies with every Jew spanning all of the time he went in with us today.

This profound kabbalistic concept is ever more relevant as we memorialize soldiers who died protecting our sacred homeland. Their sacrifice only continues to drive a people who just eighty years ago were on the brink of total annihilation. Reminding us that we are each unique part of a greater whole, a nation fulfilling G-d's desire of having a home here on earth.

In our daily life, is imperative that we embrace the entirety of ourselves, the aggregate sum of our intellect, feelings and experience. A task that begins and ends with true self-awareness and reflection, to look at our strengths and weaknesses and their impact on the people around us.

Understanding and then accepting ourselves, flaws and all, makes us resilient, confident and better equipped to handle the challenges in this journey called life. We become open to the opportunities and experiences we would have never seen had we not first truly seen ourselves. Succeeding far beyond our imagination is a positive change that creates positivity and happiness for all.

"You do not need numbers to enlarge the spiritual horizons of mankind. You need other things altogether: A sense of worth and dignity of individual, a sense of community and power of all of human possibility."

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*