

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Yom Kippur Torah Readings

Leviticus 16:1 20:27

Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, who "came close to G-d and died", G-d tells Moses to instruct Aaron

...that he should not enter, at all times, into the holy, inside the Parochet (the "veil" that separated the "Holy of Holies" from the rest of the Sanctuary), before the Kaporet (cover) that is upon the Ark — lest he die; for in a cloud I appear above the Kaporet...

Only on the holiest day of the year — Yom Kippur — and after bringing a series of specially ordained offerings, should the Kohen Gadol ("high priest") purify himself, put on n white linen garments, and enter the chamber housing the Ark:

He shall take a pan-full of fiery coals from atop the altar that is before G-d, and the fill of his hands of finely-ground ketoret (incense), and bring them inside the Parochet.

And he shall place the ketoret upon the fire before G-d;

and the cloud of incense shall cover up the Kaporet that is on [the Ark of] the Testament...

The Torah then goes on to detail the service performed by the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur to secure atonement for his people. Among the offerings of the day were two male goats:

And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for G-d, and one lot for Azazel.

The goat that which the lot determined to be "For G-d" is brought as an offering and its blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. The one deemed for "Azazel" is "dispatched by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon it all their sins to a barren land."

And he shall make atonement for the holy place, over the defilements of the children of Israel, over their transgressions in all their sins. And so shall he do for the Tent of Meeting, which dwells amongst them in the midst of their defilement...

And this shall be an everlasting statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, the home born or the stranger that sojourns among you.

For on this day will He will atone for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before G-d... once a year.

Commentary

AFTER THE DEATH OF THE TWO SONS OF AARON WHO CAME CLOSE TO G-D AND DIED (LEVITICUS 16:1)

They approached the supernal light out of their great love of the Holy, and thereby died. Thus they died by "divine kiss" such as experienced by the perfectly righteous; it is only that the righteous die when the divine kiss approaches them, while they died by their approaching it... Although they sensed their own demise, this did not prevent them from drawing near to G-d in attachment, delight, delectability, fellowship, love, kiss and sweetness, to the point that their souls ceased from them.

(Ohr HaChaim)

AND HE SHALL BATHE HIS FLESH IN WATER, AND CLOTHE HIMSELF IN THEM (16:4)

On that day, the Kohen Gadol immersed (in a mikveh) five times, and washed his hands and feet from the *kiyor* ("basin") that stood before the Sanctuary ten times: each time he changed his clothes, he was required to immerse once, and wash twice (once before removing the first set of clothes, and again after dressing in the second set).

For there were five sets of services performed by him on that day: 1) The regular morning services, performed in the "golden garments" (worn by the Kohen Gadol throughout the year). 2) The special services of the day (reciting the confession over the Yom Kippur offerings, casting the lots, entering the Holy of Holies to offer the *ketoret* and to sprinkle the blood of the Yom Kippur offerings)—performed in the linen garments. 3) The two rams brought as "ascending offerings" and the day's *musaf* offerings—in the

golden garments. 4) returning to the Holy of Holies to remove the pan of burning incense—in linen garments. 5) the regular afternoon services—in the golden garments.

(Talmud, tractate Yoma)

TWO HE-GOATS (16:5)

They should be identical in appearance, height and price, and should be acquired together.

(Talmud, Yoma 62b)

AND SO SHALL HE DO FOR THE TENT OF MEETING, WHICH DWELLS AMONGST THEM IN THE MIDST OF THEIR DEFILEMENT (16:16)

Also when they are in a state of defilement, the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) dwells with them.

(Talmud; Rashi)

FOR ON THIS DAY, HE SHALL ATONE FOR YOU (16:30)

On Yom Kippur, the day itself atones... as it is written, "For on this day... shall atone for you."

(Maimonides)