

The “Eighth Day” and Yom Kippur

The Torah’s description of the “seven days of consecration” of the Mishkan, the account of the “eighth day” that followed, and the unit detailing the service of the Kohen Gadol in the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16) all share a connection.

The eighth day (described in Vayikra 9), the day of the revelation of the Divine Presence to the congregation of Bnei Yisrael in the Mishkan in the midst of the camp, is unquestionably the continuation and culmination of the preceding seven days of consecration. (Ramban explains that the sacrifices of the eighth day are, in effect, the consecration of the kohanim in their new positions, since – according to Hazal – during the seven days of consecration Moshe himself performed the sacrificial service.) Nevertheless, in contrast to the seven days – concerning which Moshe is commanded prior to the establishment of the Mishkan – it is clear that the description of the eighth day is recorded after its establishment. (Rashi and Ramban explain that the sacrifice of the calf, commanded specifically for this day, comes as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf.) Similarly, the command concerning the consecration that appears in Sefer Shemot and is then repeated in Vayikra, likewise does not include the matter of the eighth day (Shemot 25-31 = command concerning the Mishkan; 35-40 = fulfillment of the command; Shemot 29 = command concerning the consecration; Vayikra 8 = fulfillment of the command).

The unit concerning the eighth day ends with the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, the prohibition of entering the Sanctuary in an inebriated state, and the goat for the sin offering, which is burned (Vayikra 10). However, it is clear that the same subject is then resumed in the description of the service performed in the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16) and the Yom Kippur service for all generations:

“God spoke to Moshe **after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they came near** before God **and they died**. And God said to Moshe, Speak to Aharon your brother, that **he should not come** at all times into the Sanctuary, within the veil that is before the covering upon the Ark, **so that he will not die**, for I shall appear in a cloud above the covering. **Thus shall Aharon come** into the Sanctuary...” (Vayikra 16:1-3)

In other words, the description of the proper manner of entry into the Sanctuary is a result and continuation – perhaps a *tikkun* – of the entry of Nadav and Avihu into the Sanctuary, which was executed in an improper manner. (The question of how soon the commands followed after the deaths of Nadav and Avihu is a matter of debate among the commentators.) Here the Torah sets forth how the entry into the place of the cloud is to be carried out for the purposes of purifying the Sanctuary as well as Bnei Yisrael, who visit there.

This unit on the service in the Kodesh Kodashim – the Yom Kippur service for all generations – follows the same model as the commandment of circumcision (Bereishit 17) and the Pesach sacrifice in Egypt (Shemot 12): first comes the commandment to Avraham/Moshe/Aharon for that specific time, and then comes the commandment for all generations (Bereishit 17:9-14; Shemot 12:14-20; Vayikra 16:29-). The Vilna Gaon (cited by Rabbi Avraham Danzig in Hokhmat Adam) explains this phenomenon in our parsha as follows: Aharon himself could have entered the Kodesh Kodashim at any time that he wanted to, not only on Yom Kippur – subject, of course, to the procedure prescribed in the text: “Thus shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary...” (16:3). For later generations, on the other hand, the entry into the Kodesh Kodashim could be undertaken by the Kohen Gadol, a descendant of Aharon, only on Yom Kippur – as stated explicitly at the end of the chapter (verse 29 onwards).

This resolves a number of difficulties arising from the unit on Yom Kippur (as we shall see below). Indeed, the midrash teaches: “That he should not come at all times’ – Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Simon said: Moshe suffered great sorrow over this matter. He said, ‘Woe to me; perhaps Aharon, my brother, has

been rejected from (God's) Presence... a 'time' can last an hour... a 'time' can last a day.. a 'time' can last a year... a 'time' can last forever...'

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: It is not as you think... Rather, at any time that he wishes to enter, he may enter, only he must enter in accordance with this procedure" (Vayikra Rabba, parsha 21). (It is not clear whether the phrase "at any time that he wishes to", in this midrash and as cited by the Vilna Gaon, means "whenever he feels like doing so" or "whenever he needs to do so, for the purposes of performing atonement for the Sanctuary, for the nation, etc.". Obviously, this distinction has important ramifications – as we shall see below.)

It is possible, of course, that this parsha was connected to Yom Kippur even then, in the wilderness (and indeed, Rashi asserts that Aharon put it into practice on the following Yom Kippur; Rashbam similarly concludes that from this point onwards, Aharon would enter the Kodesh Kodashim only on Yom Kippur). This may be because this was the day when, as the text would suggest (Devarim 9:9-11; 17-18, 25; 10:1-5; Shemot 34:1-4; 27-28; also Yoma 4b, Ta'anit 28b), the second tablets were received; according to Hazal, the day when the nation was forgiven for the sin of the golden calf and the Torah was restored to them. Thus, as part of the special command issued to them here, in the wilderness, they were also commanded concerning Yom Kippur for all future generations – paralleling the model of Pesach in Egypt. On the other hand, it is possible that "after the deaths of Aharon's two sons" is meant literally: "immediately after their deaths". The conclusion of the parsha, "And he (Aharon) did as Moshe had commanded", may accordingly mean that Aharon did all of this immediately, in the first month, and only later on did this parsha come to apply to Yom Kippur. This closing formula, "And he did as Moshe had commanded", is commonly employed to indicate an activity prescribed for a specific time; it is quite inappropriate in the context of an activity that is to be continued for all generations. Thus, the plain meaning of the text would seem to be that at this stage there was no connection between the "eighth day" and Yom Kippur.

Either way, it is clear that parshat Aharei-Mot is a continuation and *tikkun*, or completion, of the parsha describing the eighth day (as Rabbi David Hofmann concludes) since its subject is the permitted manner of entry into the Kodesh Kodashim, and the service that should be performed there: in the wilderness, as a commandment for that particular time, to be fulfilled by Aharon; for future generations, as the procedure for Yom Kippur. Hence, this parsha represents the conclusion of the commandment concerning the Mishkan and the process of bringing the Divine Presence to rest in the midst of the camp. This connection between the parshiot and its significance requires thorough study.

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The connection between the literary unit concerning the "eighth day" and the Yom Kippur service finds halakhic expression at the beginning of Mishna Yoma:

"For the seven days preceding Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol is separated from his wife and moves to a Temple chamber; another kohen is appointed as his replacement should he become disqualified for any reason...".

In other words, Yom Kippur is approached like an "eighth day" that follows seven "days of consecration", during which time the Kohen Gadol is separated and prepared for the atonement service that he will perform. Throughout this period of preparation "they sprinkle (purifying waters of the red heifer) upon him for each of the seven (days)" (Yoma 4a; 8a), and according to Rabbi Akiva he is unable to perform the priestly service himself during these days because of this sprinkling (like Aharon during the seven days of consecration, during which Moshe performed the sacrifices). According to Hazal, however, during these days the Kohen Gadol would rehearse his Yom Kippur service:

“Throughout the seven days he sprinkles the blood and offers the incense and prepares the lamps and offers the head and the hind leg...” (Yoma 14a).

Indeed, in the Gemara, this connection between the biblical “eighth day” and the historical Yom Kippur seems quite self-evident. The Gemara derives the law of separating the kohen for the seven days preceding Yom Kippur from the “seven days of consecration”:

“From where do we deduce this? Rabbi Manyumi son of Hilkiya said in the name of Rabbi Mahsiya son of Idi, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: It is written, “As he has done on this day, so the Lord has commanded to do, to make atonement for you” (Vayikra 8:34): ‘to do’ – this refers to activities pertaining to the heifer; ‘to make atonement for you’ – this refers to the activities pertaining to Yom Kippur” (Yoma 2a; 3b; 4a).

The Talmud admittedly mentions the heifer, too, but even a cursory review of the discussion shows that the comparison and the deduction of Yom Kippur from the seven days of consecration is the more self-evident aspect (since the Torah states, “to make atonement for you”. The heifer purifies, but does not make atonement), and the problem that the Gemara addresses is the law of separating the kohen who prepares the heifer (see 2b onwards).

Clearly, then, there is a fundamental parallel between the “eighth day” and Yom Kippur; this assumption of the Gemara presents no difficulty, and indeed the only question that arises concerns the heifer: can we use the *gezera shava* (analogous language of the text) to deduce the law of the heifer, too, or does the verse merely connect the seven days of consecration to Yom Kippur?

Further on in the discussion, too (3b) the Gemara discusses the law that Aharon takes an ox of his own, pointing out the parallel between the verses concerning the “eighth day” and those prescribing the procedure for Yom Kippur (“Take for yourself”; “he shall take... that is his”). As Rav Ashi notes: “The ox for the sin offering and the ram for the burnt offering parallels the ox for the sin offering and the ram for the burnt offering – this rules out any parallel (which may have been supposed) to Rosh ha-Shana or Shavuot, where these are (both) burnt offerings.” In other words, the “eighth day” parallels Yom Kippur because Aharon offers the same sacrifice in both cases (see Ramban on Vayikra 9:2).

Ravina adds a dual justification: both the “eighth day” and Yom Kippur involve a special service for the Kohen Gadol, and in both cases “the service began then and there” – i.e., the eighth day represented the commencement of the service for the first time on the external (sacrificial) altar. (Moshe’s service during the seven days was not considered “priestly service” – see Rashi ad loc.), and correspondingly, parshat Aharei Mot also describes the commencement of service: this is the first time that a service is performed in the Kodesh Kodashim (see Rav David Hoffmann’s commentary on Vayikra 16, viewing this as the significance of the connection between the two units).

The connection between the two units is expressed in the clearest possible language in a beraita that supports the view of Rabbi Yohanan (ibid, 4a):

“‘Thus shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary’ (Vayikra 16:3) – (i.e.,) with that which was stated in this matter. And what was this? The matter of the consecration. And what is stated in the matter of the consecration? Aharon separates himself for seven days, and then performs the service for one day, and Moshe taught him throughout the seven days in order to prepare him for his service. For future generations, too, the Kohen Gadol separates for seven days (in order) to serve for one day. And two learned sages, of Moshe’s disciples (to exclude Sadducees) teach him throughout the seven (days) in order to prepare him for his service. Hence (the Sages) said, ‘For seven days preceding Yom Kippur the Kohen Gadol is separated from his home (wife)...’.”

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This connection between the eighth day and the service in the Kodesh Kodashim is also clearly discernible from the nature of the service itself: in both cases Aharon offers the same sacrifice – an ox as a sin

offering and a ram as a burnt offering (9:2; 16:3). (The “eighth day” is the only place in the Torah where the offering is specified as a “calf” – *egel*. This, along with the fact that this same sacrifice is brought by Aharon as a sin offering and by the nation as a burnt offering, hints strongly at the purpose of atonement and *tikkun* for both Aharon and the nation, for the sin of the golden calf.) In both cases the nation brings a goat that is sacrificed as a sin offering (as Ramban notes – Vayikra 9:2) (an additional goat is brought on Yom Kippur, but it is not offered as a sacrifice; rather, it is sent off into the wilderness – 9:3; 16:5). In both cases the nation brings a burnt offering: on the eighth day, it is “a calf and a lamb, both of the first year” (9:3); on Yom Kippur, the calf is omitted and there is only a ram as a burnt offering (16:5). Only the peace offering and the meal offering, which are mentioned on the eighth day, do not appear on Yom Kippur, the reason being that this is the day of forgiveness and atonement, a day of affliction of the soul, such that there can be no sacrifice that is eaten.

A comparison with the sacrifices of the days of consecration is similarly enlightening: there, too, we find an ox as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering (exactly like Aharon’s offerings on the eighth day and on Yom Kippur). Likewise there is a peace offering – the ram of consecration (in addition to the ram of the burnt offering), which is eaten together with the unleavened loaves at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting on each of the seven days.

Thus, during the seven days of consecration, whose purpose is to train and give practice to the kohanim, the kohanim brought a sin offering, a burnt offering, and peace offerings – but the nation brought no sacrifice. On the eighth day, Aharon brought a sin offering and a burnt offering, and the nation matched these with their own offerings. The peace offering, an offering representing joy and celebration, is brought on the eighth day by the nation, since the essential purpose of this day is the revelation of the Divine Presence to the nation (outside, in front of the entrance to the Tent of Meeting), and not only to Moshe (inside the Tent of Meeting). The kohanim, on the other hand, having already completed their training and practice, no longer need to partake of the peace offerings. On Yom Kippur, too, Aharon’s sacrifice comes to atone for him and his household, and to prepare him for sacrifice as on the eighth day. It is matched by the sacrifice of the nation – but this time without the peace offering, since on this day there is no joy associated with the eating of sacrifices.

However, the essence of the resemblance between the respective sacrifices lies in the fact that Aharon’s ox as the sin offering is **burnt and not eaten** – during the days of consecration, on the eighth day, and also on Yom Kippur, in keeping with the ox specified as the fixed offering to be offered by the anointed kohen (Vayikra 4).

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However, herein lies also the essential difference between the days of consecration and the eighth day, on one hand, and Yom Kippur, on the other. The sacrifice of the ox as a sin offering on the days of consecration and on the eighth day is described in detail (Shemot 29:10-14; Vayikra 8:14-17; Vayikra 9:8-11), and it involves only the external sacrificial altar. Despite this, it is followed by burning outside of the camp: “He burned the flesh and the skin with fire outside of the camp” (9:11). As Rashi notes, this is the only instance in which a sin offering is burned even though it was offered on the external altar without having its blood brought inside the Sanctuary.

In contrast, the other sin offerings that are burned all have their blood brought into the Sanctuary, where the anointed kohen sprinkles it. This applies to both the ox as sin offering of the anointed kohen, and to the sin offering of the congregation (Vayikra 4:5-7; 10:16-18) – where the kohen sprinkles upon the *parokhet* (veil) and upon the inner (incense) altar. On Yom Kippur, too, the kohen sprinkles – this time in the Kodosh Kodashim, on and in front of the covering of the Ark (*kapporet*), and then upon the inner altar.

The uniqueness of Yom Kippur lies in the fact that only on this day is there a service that is performed within the Kodesh Kodashim, including the offering of incense and the sprinkling of blood (Vayikra 16:12-19; Mishna, Zevahim 5,1-2).

In contrast, on the eighth day (preceded by the days of consecration, during which the kohanim were prepared) the situation is reversed: this was the day when Aharon offered sacrifices for the first time and commenced his priesthood; nevertheless, his special service on this day involves no “inner” service, and even the sacrifice that should have its blood sprinkled inside the Sanctuary – his ox as sin offering – is not brought inside, but rather burned, at God’s command, as though it had been brought inside!

Based on the literal text (suggesting that the goat is the nation’s offering for the eighth day, and not the offering for Rosh Hodesh; see Sifrei, Beha’alotekha 19), it was logical to conclude that the goat offered as a sin offering by the nation should also be burned, like the ox as a sin offering by Aharon: “And Moshe diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned, and he grew angry...” (10:16). After all, the text explicitly connects the two: “And he brought the nation’s sacrifice, and he took the goat as sin offering for the nation, and slaughtered it, and offered it for sin, **like the first one**” (9:15). This conclusion could arise because on the eighth day it was impossible to distinguish between the “inner” sin offering and the “outer” one in any way other than by God’s command. Moshe’s rebuke – “Behold, its blood was not brought into the holy place...” (10:18) is difficult to understand specifically on this day: the blood of the ox was likewise not brought inside, and it was burnt. Nevertheless, Moshe was angry, because eating of the sin offering brings atonement for the owner (10:17), and Aharon’s ox could not be eaten by anyone, since he was the Kohen Gadol, elevated above the other kohanim. Aharon responds and explains the burning of the sin offering as arising from the tragedy that he has experienced, rendering him a mourner. Hence, there is no-one who could possibly eat of the sin offering in order to atone for the nation

For lack of any alternative, then, it is burned (Vayikra 10:16-20).

In summary, while the reasons may differ, the reality is nevertheless identical: there was no priestly service inside the Sanctuary, and certainly not inside the Kodesh Kodashim, on the eighth day, just as there had not been during the seven days of consecration.

In contrast, on Yom Kippur both the blood of the ox and the blood of the goat are brought into the Sanctuary: “And he shall slaughter the goat for the sin offering that is for the nation... and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the ox, and sprinkle it upon the covering (*kapporet*) and before the covering” (16:15), and both are burnt together (16:27).

In other words, the ox for the sin offering, on the eighth day, is altogether “external”, yet it is burned (at God’s command, deviating from the usual procedure). On Yom Kippur, on the other hand, its blood is brought into the Kodesh Kodashim (similarly unique – in the opposite manner), in contrast to the usual ox of the anointed kohen, whose blood is always brought into the Sanctuary but only as far as the *parokhet*.

We may summarize the above as follows:

The ox of the days of consecration and of the eighth day – external, but burned.

Ox of the anointed kohen – blood sprinkled upon the *parokhet* and upon the golden (incense) altar.

Ox of Yom Kippur – blood sprinkled between the staves of the Ark, upon the *parokhet*, and upon the golden altar.

The goat for a sin offering offered by the nation, on the eighth day, is similarly “external”, and theoretically should have been eaten (but was burned instead, because of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu). On Yom Kippur, however, the blood of the goat is brought into the Kodesh Kodashim and it is burned. Obviously, no sacrifice that is usually eaten is brought on Yom Kippur.

Most importantly, though, the contrast finds expression in the incense. Throughout the year there is a commandment to offer incense before God in the Sanctuary, and to bring “regular fire” (from the external, sacrificial altar). On the eighth day, however, incense is not brought into the Sanctuary and regular fire is considered “strange fire” (10:1); for this reason Nadav and Avihu are punished. On Yom Kippur, however, incense is brought not only into the Sanctuary, but into the Kodesh Kodashim.

It is clear, then, that the relationship between the eighth day and Yom Kippur is an inverse parallel. The similarity merely serves as a foundation for and background to the stark contrast. The eighth day and Yom Kippur are two opposite poles in the single system of Divine Revelation to Bnei Yisrael. The usual situation, in this system, is one of sanctified service with its pinnacle in the Sanctuary (*heikhal*); it does not reach as far as the Kodesh Kodashim (*devir*). Two phenomena contrast with this usual situation: the eighth day, when the sanctified service involves only the external altar, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, outside of the Sanctuary; and Yom Kippur, where the situation is reversed: the most sanctified service is performed beyond the Sanctuary, inside the *parokhet*, in the Kodesh Kodashim.

The three distinct situations comprising this system may be presented in tabular form, as follows:

	Eighth Day	Regular Situation	Service of Kodesh Kodashim (and for future generations: Yom Kippur)
Line dividing man’s actions from God’s revelation	At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting	At the <i>parokhet</i>	At the Ark, facing the keruvim
Fire from heaven	Purpose of service on this day	none	None
Regular fire	Forbidden (Rashbam 10:1) – it burned Nadav and Avihu	Mitzvah – for the inner (incense) altar in the Sanctuary	Mitzvah – with the incense for the Kodesh Kodashim
Entrance to Sanctuary or Kodesh Kodashim	No entrance for any service, but for prayer	Entry for service	Entry to Kodesh Kodashim
Service	Only on external altar	On external altar and internal altar, not in Kodesh Kodashim	Also in Kodesh Kodashim
Sin offering of anointed kohen	External, but burned like an “internal” sin offering. Blood placed on horns of external altar.	Internal, but only in the Sanctuary. Blood sprinkled on the <i>parokhet</i> and on the inner altar. Also placed on horns of the inner altar.	Internal – in Kodesh Kodashim. Blood sprinkled upon the covering, upon the Tent of Meeting (<i>parokhet</i>), and upon the inner altar. Also placed on horns of inner altar.
Sin offering of the congregation	External, and burned – debate as to whether the burning was proper.	Internal – for unintentional transgression of one of the commandments. External, regular – for unintentional	Internal (as in regular service throughout the year)

		transgression of all the commandments (= sin offering of idolatry, Bemidbar 15)	
Sacrifice of Aharon (and of anointed kohen who replaces him)	Calf for sin offering and ram as burnt offering	Ox as sin offering	Ox as sin offering and ram as burnt offering
Sacrifice of the congregation	Goat as sin offering, calf and lamb for burnt offering (ox and ram for peace offering, and meal offering mixed with oil)	Ox as sin offering (for unintentional transgression of all the commandments: ox as burnt offering and goat as sin offering)	Goat as sin offering and ram as burnt offering (and goat to Azazel)
Similar verses	<p>“And make atonement for yourself and for the nation” (9:7)</p> <p>“the goat which was the sin offering for the nation” (9:15)</p> <p>“And Moshe and Aharon came into the Tent of Meeting, and they emerged, and they blessed the nation” (9:23)</p>		<p>“And make atonement for himself and for the nation” (16:24)</p> <p>“The goat which is the sin offering for the nation” (16:15)</p> <p>“And Aharon shall come into the Tent of Meeting... and he shall emerge” (16:23-24)</p>

God’s word to man – man’s position before God

The significance of the contrast between these different situations will become clear if we explore the meaning of the “Sanctuary” (“Kodesh”) and of the “Kodesh Kodashim”, and the meaning of the *parokhet* that separates them (Shemot 26:33). We are used to viewing this separation as a matter of ascending levels of holiness in one direction – from the outside inwards; “bottom up”. There is a courtyard and there is the Sanctuary, and within the Sanctuary itself there is the “Kodesh” and there is an inner place that is even more holy (Mishna, Kelim 1, 6-9).

It is not difficult to prove that this representation is not accurate. This arrangement places all the levels of holiness on a single continuum, a single common scale. Upon closer inspection, however, we find that this is impossible. What we have is not one continuum, but rather two; two areas that are fundamentally different from one another and which are **orientated in two opposite directions**.

One area includes the courtyard and the “Kodesh” – the Tent of Meeting outside of the *parokhet*. (In describing the menorah, the table for showbread, and the incense altar, the Torah emphasizes over and over that these vessels are placed “outside of the *parokhet*” – e.g., Shemot 27:21; 26:35; 30:6-8; 40:22-26). In the “Kodesh”, **man** arranges the showbread continually upon the table **before God** (Shemot 25:30; 40:22-23; Vayikra 24:1-9), prepares the light that burns continually in the menorah (Shemot 27:20; 40:25; Bemidbar 8:1-3), and offers the continuous incense upon the inner altar (Shemot 30:6-7; 40:26-27). The fire here is regular fire, from the external altar (Sifra, Tzav, ot 6, and Yoma 45b) – i.e., “bottom up”, from earth to the heavens.

The Kodesh Kodashim represents the opposite: it is the place of the Divine Presence, the place where God's Kingship is revealed in the midst of Israel and the world; it is the place of Divine communication with Moshe "from above the covering, from between the two keruvim" (Shemot 25:22; Bemidbar 7:89). And since the essence of God cannot be perceived at all, the Kodesh Kodashim contains nothing but the support for God's "Throne": the "Ark of the covenant of the Lord, the footstool of our God" (Divrei ha-Yamim I 28:2), with keruvim on either side, and containing the Tablets of the covenant and the testimony (Shemot 25:21; 40:20; 31:18; Devarim 10:1-5), with a Sefer Torah "alongside the Ark of the covenant of the Lord" (Devarim 31:26).

Likewise, from all of the parables that Hazal offer, depicting a mortal king and his palace, we see that the innermost chamber – and it alone – is, as it were, the place of the King's seat on earth, a footstool for the King's throne, while everything else serves as entrance halls and vestibules.

The cloud and the Divine glory that rest upon the Tent of Meeting and within it, are the revelation of God's word to man, and their root and essence are to be found in the Kodesh Kodashim. Therefore, no man may enter there (except on Yom Kippur). For the same reason, man cannot perform any sacrificial service or prayer there, nor can regular fire be brought in. Rather, everything in the Kodesh Kodashim is "from the top down", "from heaven to earth", like Creation itself, where man was not present at all – "for I appear in the cloud above the covering (of the Ark)" (Vayikra 16:2, and 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) – a sharp division between two spheres, between two concepts, between two worlds (see Sukka 4b-5a), which together form a complete Temple, a complete world, unified – but with clear distinctions.

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This distinction and this clarification provide us with the key to understanding the significance of the difference between the eighth day and Yom Kippur. The eighth day is the day of God's appearance above the Tent of Meeting as a whole – i.e., above the Kodesh, too, and not only the Kodesh Kodashim. In this unique instance, the entire Tent of Meeting serves as the place of abode for the King, for the Lord God of Israel, on the day when He appeared to the nation, thereby expressing the special nature and quality which usually applies only to the Kodesh Kodashim, as applying to the Mishkan as a whole.

Thus on this day entry is forbidden not only to the Kodesh Kodashim, but even to the Kodesh. Therefore no mention is made on this day of inner service, and even that which should seemingly have been offered inside – the calf as sin offering – is offered outside, and is nevertheless burned like an "internal" sin offering.

Moreover, even the fire on the external altar comes from on High – "A fire emerged from before (*mi-lifnei*) God (i.e., from the Kodesh) and consumed, upon the altar, the burnt offering and the fats" (Vayikra 9:24). The people standing in the courtyard, "facing (*el penei*) the Tent of Meeting (9:5), fall upon their faces (23-24). On this day, incense cannot be brought with the coals of a regular fire, since this would be considered a "strange fire" even in the Kodesh. Even on the external altar, the fire is a fire that has emerged "from before God"; there is no room for regular fire; this is certainly so inside the Kodesh.

Only Moshe and Aharon come into the Tent of Meeting. Before the fire emerges from before God, they enter into the cloud (where Moshe was previously unable to enter – Shemot 40:35) – yet this is not an entry for the purposes of sacrificial service, but rather for the purposes of bringing a blessing: "And they emerged and they blessed the people" (Vayikra 9:23).

In light of the above, the sin of Nadav and Avihu, as the literal reading of the text suggests and as understood by Hazal (Sifra, Aharei Mot, 2), is their very entry into the **Divine** fire (God's Presence in the Mishkan which made it, in its entirety, like the Kodesh Kodashim and therefore forbidden to enter) with a censer of incense and **strange fire**, taken from a regular flame. This was an attempt to blend the two spheres, to blur the full significance of the Divine revelation, to which man could not be party. (Rashbam

explains that bringing regular fire where there was already Divine fire was an act that diminished the glory of God – i.e., a *hillul hashem*. Rav Kook explains the act as the introduction of limited, worldly values into the infinite Source of holiness – Orot ha-Kodesh, part II, 1.)

All the other disqualifications that the various commentaries attribute to Nadav and Avihu, and which are hinted to in the text (such as, for instance, the prohibition against performing the priestly service in a state of inebriation, which is conveyed to Aharon immediately thereafter – Vayikra 8:11) should be understood as factors in or results of the blurring of the division between the mortal sphere and the Divine. (See end of Orot ha-Kodesh, part III, p. 360.)

Thus, the fire emerged from before God and consumed those who had entered into the Sanctuary, bearing a strange fire, and they were burned “as they came close before God” – to tell us that any mortal, this-worldly phenomenon is nullified before the manifestation of the Divine; to emphasize that all worldly abilities receive their power and existence solely from the manifestation of the Divine within Creation, within the world, within man and within Israel. (This may explain the midrashic description of the silence before God at the giving of the Torah.) “I shall be sanctified among those who come near to Me, and I shall be glorified before all the nation” (Vayikra 10:3).

The terrible tragedy of the eighth day, and the weeping of the entire congregation over the fire that God sent, leaves in its wake a difficult question: it is possible to draw near to God without losing one’s life? At this point, following the sin and the manifestation of God’s attribute of **justice** as meted out to the sons of Aharon, there is a feeling that there must be a way of coming before the King and asking for forgiveness and **mercy**!

This question is not formulated explicitly in Sefer Vayikra, but it is voiced in similar circumstances in Sefer Bemidbar. Here, the two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation – men of standing, but not kohanim, who offered censers of incense before God - were all burned with a fire that emerged from God when His glory was revealed to the congregation at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, just like what happened on the eighth day (Bemidbar 16:16-19, 35; 17:1-5). Likewise, the congregation, which complained the next day about the deaths of these princes of the congregation, was struck with a plague when God’s glory appeared in the Tent of Meeting, and this plague was halted when the incense was brought out by Aharon.

At that time, the question was expressed in all its power: “And Bnei Yisrael said to Moshe, saying: Behold, we perish; we are done for, we are all done for. Anyone who approaches – who approaches God’s Sanctuary – dies; shall we perish altogether?” (Bemidbar 17:27-28). It is to this question – “how can we approach the Sanctuary without loss of life?” – that the unit on Yom Kippur responds: “Thus shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary...”. It is possible to atone and to purify. It is possible to approach – not only the Kodesh, but even the Kodesh Kodashim!

However, the eighth day is fundamentally different from Yom Kippur. On the eighth day, the Divine Presence is revealed before the eyes of all the congregation, outside. On Yom Kippur, the Divine Presence is hidden and “makes room”, as it were, in the Kodesh Kodashim itself, in order for man to be able to enter. In the unit on Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16) there is no revelation or even any expression of revelation.

What Yom Kippur offers is not only the possibility of entering and making atonement, but the **vital need** to do so, owing to the impurities and transgressions that have adhered even to the inside of the Sanctuary: “And he shall make atonement **for the Kodesh, from the impurities** of Bnei Yisrael and from their transgressions, for all of their sins, and so shall he do for the Tent of Meeting, **which dwells with them in the midst of their impurity**” (16:16). If these are not atoned for, the Divine Presence may not be able to remain in their midst.

Therefore on Yom Kippur, on the day of affliction of the soul, incense is brought with burning coals from the external altar – regular fire – inside of the *parokhet*, where man stands before God, offering up the incense and sprinkling the blood. It should be noted that the partition of the *parokhet* is not mentioned by name at all, even where the Torah talks about sprinkling the blood in front of it.

It turns out, then, that the nature of man's entry into the Kodesh changes during Yom Kippur itself, and progresses one stage further inward: the incense altar, which always faces the Ark and the covering – “before the *parokhet* which is by the Testimony”, but which is placed “in front of the covering (*kapporet*) which is upon the Ark of Testimony” (Shemot 30:6) – i.e., with the partition separating it – is “brought in” to the Kodesh Kodashim, on Yom Kippur, by means of the censer and the burning coals. Likewise, the ox as the sin offering of the anointed kohen, whose blood is usually sprinkled “seven times before God, **towards the *parokhet*** of the Sanctuary” (Vayikra 4:6), likewise has its blood sprinkled **inside**, after the covering is itself covered with the cloud of incense (which replaces the covering of the *parokhet*!). This sprinkling is “upon the **covering** eastward, and before the **covering**” (Vayikra 16:14).

The inner altar, where it is forbidden throughout the year to offer any burnt offering or meal offering, and for which there is no obligatory “atonement of blood” of the sin offering (except for the ox offered for “a matter that is hidden”, should this occur), must likewise have atonement made for it once a year, by Aharon, with the blood of the sin offering of Yom Kippur (Shemot 30:9-10). In other words, that which is performed throughout the year on the external altar – placing the blood upon the horns of the altar (Vayikra 4:30; Mishna Zevahim 5,3), is manifested on Yom Kippur on the inner altar (and likewise the sin offering of the anointed kohen or of the congregation). At the same time, the essence of what the inner altar represents throughout the year – the offering of the incense – is manifested on Yom Kippur in the Kodesh Kodashim.

If the Kohen Gadol emerges safely from this “encounter” with the Divine Presence, it is clear to the entire nation that their sins have been forgiven, and the Divine Presence will continue to dwell in their midst, as in the beginning, **with the usual division**, represented by the *parokhet*.

The Yom Kippur service, then, is a complement to and *tikkun* for the eighth day. This is so by virtue of the **contrast** between the appearance of the Shekhina on the eighth day upon the entire Tent of Meeting, up to the courtyard, with the external altar, before the eyes of the congregation gathered in the courtyard facing the entrance, and the entrance on Yom Kippur into that which is exalted and concealed.

This is the answer to the question of how Am Yisrael can live while the Shekhina is in our midst and anyone who approaches will die; how we can live with the manifest attribute of justice, or how we can exist in close proximity to the Sanctuary of the King, where any slight deviation brings a fierce Divine fire. The purifying atonement of Yom Kippur is the answer; it is the *tikkun* that makes it possible to live.

It should be noted, as an aside, that during the plague that broke out amongst the nation after their complaint over the burning of Korah's company (Bemidbar 17:6), Aharon likewise served as a “*sheliah tzibbur*” (representative of the congregation), atoning for the nation and halting the plague by means of the incense. However, in contrast to the service of Yom Kippur, in the context of the plague the incense and the fire from the external altar were not brought inside; rather, they were taken **from the altar outwards**, to the midst of the nation: “And it was, when the congregation gathered against Moshe and against Aharon, that they turned towards the Tent of Meeting and behold, the cloud had covered it, and God's glory appeared... and Moshe said to Aharon, Take the censer and place fire in it from atop the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for **the wrath has gone out from** the Lord, the plague has begun. And Aharon took... and he ran into the midst of the congregation... and he put on incense, and made atonement for the nation. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was halted” (Bemidbar 17:6-15). The difference between the two situations is that when the Divine Presence is in its place, in the Kodesh Kodashim, then the incense is offered inside, in the place of the Shekhina. But in the case of the plague, God's wrath - destroying in God's Name (see Shemot 12:12-13,24) – had come out to the nation, to carry out God's judgment. Here the revelation of the Shekhina was not in its proper place, but rather outside. Therefore, Moshe sends Aharon to the place of the revelation of the Shekhina – the place where the power of destruction stands between

the living and the dead. There Aharon puts on the incense and makes atonement for the nation. All of this resembles the atonement that takes place inside the Kodesh Kodashim, on Yom Kippur.

Structure and order of the unit describing the service in the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16)

On the basis of the absolute contrast, discussed above, between the service of the eighth day and the service in the Kodesh Kodashim (which is the service for Yom Kippur, for all future generations) we are able to examine very closely the service of the Kodesh Kodashim and find the solution to the internal difficulties that it raises.

Firstly, a distinction should be drawn between most of the unit – which is conveyed as a **commandment for that generation only**, applying specifically to Aharon “at all times”, and the **commandment for future generations**, which is conveyed only at the end of the chapter, and which applies to Yom Kippur only: “This shall be for you as an **eternal statute**, to atone for Bnei Yisrael for all of their transgression, **once in the year**” (Vayikra 16:34).

We shall divide our analysis of the details of this unit into two parts:

- a. A clarification of the main purpose of Aharon’s entry into the Kodesh Kodashim (as opposed to objectives that are merely secondary), and
- b. Resolution of the repetitions and difficulties in the verses.

a. “**Thus shall Aaron come into the Kodesh**” – for what purpose?

A close examination of the unit on the service in the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16), with the questions and difficulties that arise from it, has already been undertaken by my rabbi and teacher, Rav Mordekhai Breuer z”l, in his excellent work, “Pirkei Mo’adot” (Jerusalem, 5746, part II, p. 503 onwards), and he adopts a dual fundamental position:

1. There is a **similarity** between the service of the eighth day and the service of the **Kodesh Kodashim** (limited to that generation, and to Aharon alone). Therefore, every sacrifice that is mentioned in chapter 16 has an aspect to it that is **similar** to the sacrifices of Aharon and the congregation on the eighth day – i.e., external sacrifices that are burned. It is only the **additional** aspect that appears in Vayikra 16 – the atonement for the Sanctuary, the kohanim, and the nation (which has, as its source, the purpose of the Yom Kippur service for **future generations**) – that causes the sin offering of Aharon and the congregation, in chapter 16, to be an **internal** sacrifice. This is also the source of the repetition in the parsha.

2. The entry into the Kodesh Kodashim is not, in essence, for the purpose of performing sacrificial service there, but rather for the purpose of prayer and prostration – **like** on the eighth day. It is only the accompanying addition of the need for atonement for the Sanctuary, for the kohanim, and for the nation – with its source, as mentioned, in Yom Kippur for future generations – that causes each instance of entry there to entail a sacrificial service, too.

Rav Breuer’s approach assumes particular clarity in verse 23: “Aharon shall come into the Tent of Meeting...”, paralleling the verse concerning the eighth day (9:23), “And Moshe and Aharon came into the Tent of Meeting, and they emerged, and they blessed the people”. The entry is for the purpose of prayer and prostration.

However, I cannot accept these fundamental assumptions of Rav Breuer in analyzing the unit, since we have shown above that the service of the Kodesh Kodashim does indeed resemble the service of the eighth day – but in an **absolutely inverse parallel!**

Therefore, the alternative explanation proposed below adopts the opposite assumption regarding these two issues. In other words,

1. There is an absolute contrast between the service of the eighth day, which takes place entirely in the **courtyard**, and the service of the Kodesh Kodashim, which is carried out mainly **inside**. The service of the Kodesh Kodashim (Vayikra 16) expresses phenomena which are the direct opposite of those of the eighth day (Vayikra 9).
2. The entire purpose of entry into the Kodesh, in chapter 16 – even the entry that is unique to Aharon “at all times” - is to perform the internal service of atonement and purification, in keeping with **whatever need may arise**, for the Sanctuary itself, for the kohanim, or for the entire congregation. This is a **contrast** to the nature of the entry on the eighth day, which is pre-determined.

In general, entry for the sole purpose of being alone with the Shekhina or to hear God’s word is a role that belongs, almost entirely, to Moshe. Aharon, on the other hand, is a sort of *sheliah tzibbur* for atonement and purification – including for needs that may crop up, as for example during the episode of the plague following the sin of Korah, as explained above.

Based on these assumptions, and based also on the assumption that there were **different possibilities** for the need for atonement and purification (as we shall explain below), let us consider the structure and order of the unit and try thereby to resolve the repetitions and difficulties to which it gives rise.

b. Structure and order of the unit on the Kodesh Kodashim (Yom Kippur)

Our unit presents a number of difficulties, and we shall present them briefly, as Rav Breuer does in his book (*ibid.*, p. 503 onwards):

1. For what reason does the text create a separation in the form of the commandment concerning the garments (verse 4), in between Aharon’s sacrifice (verse 3) and the sacrifice of the nation (verse 5)?
2. Why does the verse repeat itself – “And Aharon shall sacrifice the ox for the sin offering which is his, and shall make atonement for himself and for his household” (Verse 6 and verse 11), and what sacrifice is referred to in verse 6? No slaughter is mentioned there, unlike verse 11, which does mention slaughtering the sacrifice. (Haza! explain that verse 6 is talking about the *vidui* – confession – but this does not seem to relate to the plain meaning of the text.)
3. A similar question may be asked concerning the goat for the sin offering: first we read, in verse 0, “And he shall prepare it as a sin offering” – seemingly, referring to the act of sacrificing it (as opposed to the “goat for Azazel”, which “is presented, alive, before God”). However, we then read in verse 15, “And he shall slaughter the goat for the sin offering of the nation...”. Has this sacrifice not already been slaughtered and offered? (Here again, Haza! interpret the words “he shall prepare it as a sin offering” in verse 9 as merely setting aside the animal as a sacrifice; “to God as a sin offering”. And here again, this explanation does not relate to the plain meaning of the verse.)
4. The location and meaning of verses 23-24: For what purpose will Aharon enter the Tent of Meeting? Is it really for the sole purpose of removing his holy garments? (Haza! explain that this is meant to allude to the removal of the incense shovel, and that “the entire parsha follows the chronological order, except for this verse” – Yoma 71a. See Ramban on this verse, and Rav Breuer, *ibid.*, pp. 508, 518).

It is simple enough to explain this parsha and to resolve the difficulties if we keep in mind that there are different instances of Aharon entering the Kodesh Kodashim for the purposes of atonement. Thus, the parsha adopts a complex approach to address these various instances. This is the key to understanding the repetitions and the difficulties enumerated above.

As noted above, the commandment to Aharon is different from the commandment for future generations, insofar as Aharon is entitled to enter the Kodesh Kodashim “**at all times**” (not necessarily on Yom

Kippur), and this fact establishes two or three reasons for entering in order to make atonement and to purify:

1. For the needs of Aharon himself (and for “his household” – his wife, his family)
2. For the needs of his brethren, the kohanim serving in the Sanctuary, and for the Sanctuary itself and its vessels (see verse 33; “his household” may even include the kohanim, cf. “the house of Aharon” [Tehillim 115]).
3. For the needs of all of the congregation of Israel.

This, of course, implies the assumption that the entry “at all times” does not mean “whenever he so wishes” (in the words of the midrash quoted above), but rather, “whenever he **needs** to do so” – i.e., whenever there arises, during the wanderings in the wilderness, the need to make atonement for the Sanctuary, for the kohanim, or for the nation.

The complexity of the parsha and its repetitions, according to this approach, arise from the fact that it is not the same situation that is being discussed each time; rather, the repetition **gives expression to the various instances** in which a need would arise for Aharon to enter.

Below are schematic presentations of different possible views of the chapter and its structure, in light of the assumption set forth above. In employing the term “structure” I mean that even a chapter such as this has a lyrical structure, designed for a choir comprising a few different voices, and therefore the chapter offers a reading and a response, or several complementary readings.

Let us first consider the simpler possibility – that the parsha is a dual one, built on two axes; in choral terms – “two-part harmony”. One voice speaks about Aharon’s atonement “for himself and for his household” (and includes his atonement for the Sanctuary); the other speaks about Aharon’s atonement “for himself and for all of the congregation of Israel”. These two voices are **expressed alternately in the verses**, so as to emphasize the mutual connection between them, despite their differences. However, each can also be read independently, like a single voice within an ensemble. From the point of view of halakha, the right-hand column is dependent upon the left, and only the left column can truly stand alone.

The structure of the parsha, based on the assumption that it addresses two different instances, may therefore be presented thus:

Introduction: verse 1

Aharon’s atonement for himself and for his household	Aharon’s atonement for himself and for all of the congregation of Israel
Verses 2-4	Verse 5
Verse 6	Verses 7-10
Verses 11-14	Verses 15-22
Conclusion to both atonements: verses 23-25	
	Verse 26
	Verses 27-28
Commandment for future generations: verses 29-34	

This structure shows how it is possible to read about Aharon’s entry in order to atone “for himself and for his household” as a single continuum within the structure, such that there is no break in his actions caused by the goats for the nation: they are simply in the right-hand column, pertaining to the atonement for the nation. Therefore, verse 4 does not represent any sort of interruption between the sacrifices, since it is part of Aharon’s atonement for himself and for his household. It is also important to note that Aharon wears special garments only for the atonement of himself and his household. Admittedly, the repetitious

language of verses 6 and 11 would be interpreted, according to this view, as a technique for getting back to the original topic. In other words, since the goats, in verses 7-10, interrupt the discussion, the Torah repeats in verse 11 what was already said in verse 6, to indicate a return to the original topic. Since the Torah now returns to Aharon's sacrifice, and to the first column, it could continue by going to detail the procedure for the slaughter, and then move on to discuss the incense that makes it possible to sprinkle some of the blood of the ox towards the covering (*kapporet*) in the Kodesh Kodashim. This tells us that the sacrifice in verse 6 and that in verse 11 are one and the same, and just as in the details of a burnt offering or a sin offering the Torah first speaks about the sacrifice and only afterwards mentions the slaughter of the animal (Vayikra 1:3-5; 4:3-4, etc.), so likewise verse 15 goes back to the conclusion of verse 9, following the lengthy break for the atonement of Aharon and his household.

However, the unit also offers the possibility of a more complex reading, involving three, four, or perhaps even seven instances of entry into the Kodesh, for the purpose of atonement, which may arise "at any time". Based on this view the unit reveals itself as comprising a number of columns, a multiplicity of voices harmonizing together, each representing a different instance of atonement. Some verses are common to a few columns – i.e., to a few voices in this choir. The opening and concluding verses are common to all of the instances.

1. The dual introduction: verse 1 refers to the entire unit, while verse 2 introduces Aharon's atonement for himself and for his household.
2. Verse 11 repeats verse 6 following the interruption, but on the basis of the conclusion it is possible to interpret "his household" as referring to his close, personal family in verse 6, and to the wider fraternity of kohanim in verse 11. (It must be borne in mind that Aharon's family includes all of the kohanim.)
3. The language at the beginning of verse 16, the end of verse 17, and in verse 20, sounding in each case like a conclusion, is understood on the basis of the structure of the unit as conclusions for each of the various instances of atonement performed by Aharon in the Kodesh Kodashim.

Each of the possible approaches that we have presented here leads to the same conclusion – that the entire unit is written in order, except for verses 23-25, which serve as a conclusion to all the types of atonement. This may explain Hazal's assertion that "the entire unit is written in order, except for this verse" (Yoma 71a).

Aharon's entry into the Tent of Meeting, in these verses, is indeed understood as his emerging from the Kodesh Kodashim into the Tent of Meeting, and not according to the order (as Rav Breuer concludes; see p. 546 onwards). However, the reason for this is not simply a change of order, but rather that these verses may also be read after verse 14 – i.e., after the atonement for the Kodesh and for the kohanim, in which case the Kohen Gadol would unquestionably be coming from the Kodesh Kodashim into the Tent of Meeting. Only when he enters after atoning for Am Yisrael in general does his entry not follow the order.

This matter is what led Hazal to discuss at such length the place of this verse within the order of the Yom Kippur service, preceding it with the services that are performed outside, wearing the golden garments (of which no mention is made in the text), and this is the major point of debate in the Talmudic discussions (Yoma 70) concerning the order of the service. Convincing proof of the complex structure described above (and particularly in the latter approach) is to be found in the conclusion of the unit (verses 32-33): in setting down the commandment for future generations, these verses detail all the instances of atonement, for on Yom Kippur all are obligatory:

Atonement for himself and his household: "And the kohen who will be anointed and consecrated to serve in his father's stead, shall don the linen garments, the holy garments" -

Atonement for the **Kodesh**: "And he shall make atonement for the holy Mikdash",

Atonement for the **Tent of Meeting**: “And for the Tent of Meeting”,
Atonement for the **altar**: “And he shall make atonement for the altar”,
Atonement for the **kohanim**: “and for the kohanim”,

Atonement for the **sins of the congregation of Israel**: “and he shall make atonement for all the people of the congregation” (16:32-33)

This explains well the complex language of verse 32, as well as its opening: “and the kohen... shall make atonement” – meaning, **for himself** and for his household. It would appear that in the commandment for future generations, the atonement for himself includes also the atonement for his family, while the atonement for the kohanim is mentioned separately. Here we also see that the wearing of the holy garments, in verse 4, is a special, emphasized element of the atonement for himself and his family, as demonstrated in the schematic presentations above; it is only by virtue of and following this atonement that all the other categories of atonement can follow.