

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 30

7th May 2016

ACHAREI MOT

29th Nissan 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 1 - 17

- ✚ After the death of Nadav and Avihu, Hashem tells Moshe to instruct Aaron about the four special white garments he must wear only for Yom Kippur and the duties he must perform on that day.
- ✚ Firstly Aaron has to offer up one bull as a Korban Hatat (Sin offering) and one Ram as a Korban Olah (Burnt offering).
- ✚ Next he must take from the nation and offer up, two male goats as a Korban Hatat and a ram for a Korban Olah. These sacrifices will atone for all the aveiros (sins), committed in the past year by Aaron himself, his family and the entire nation.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 18 - 24

- ✚ Aaron is then instructed to bring two goats to the entrance of the Ohel Moed where he would draw lots. On one lot, the words 'For Hashem' are written, meaning that if drawn, the first goat is to be sacrificed as a Korban Hatat. The other lot contain the words 'For Azazel' meaning that if chosen, this goat will provide atonement for the people and is escorted out of the camp and into the desert to die of natural causes.
- ✚ Once all the Korbonos (sacrifices) are completed, Aaron is to collect the hot coals from the Mizbayah (altar) along with some incense and enter the holy of holies with them. Aaron then places the incense on to the coals so that it engulfs the Aron (ark) with incense smoke. Ending the Yom Kippur service.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 25 - 34

- ✚ Yom Kippur is to be observed each year on the 10th of Tishrei even if it happens to fall on a Shabbat.
- ✚ To be able to concentrate fully on seeking atonement from Hashem and to be able to purify oneself of aveiros, everyone must abstain from doing any work and afflict themselves by fasting.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 17, verses 1 - 6

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe, to inform Aaron, his sons and all of Bnai Yisrael that it is totally forbidden to offer up sacrifices to other deities as Hashem himself is the one and only true G-d.
- ✚ Hashem sets an eternal decree that apart from the Mishkan and the future Beis Hamikdash (Temple). No one is allowed to offer up any Korbonos, however much they desire to do so.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 17, verse - Chapter 18, verse 5

- ✚ As Blood is the major life-force of all living flesh and is used solely as a means of atonement; we are warned that anyone found drinking it, will be personally punished by Hashem himself.
- ✚ If anyone traps a kosher animal or bird, they must drain the blood onto the ground and cover it. If the animal has been hunted down and killed or has died of natural causes, it is now classed as forbidden and should not be consumed.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 18, verses 6 - 21

- ✚ A list of prohibited sexual relationships, including adultery, incest and co-habiting with a menstruating female, etc. are discussed here.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 18, verses 22 - 30

- ✚ Anyone found engaging in the above forbidden relationships including the prohibitions against homosexuality and bestiality will be expelled from the land of Israel because it is a 'Holy Land' and cannot tolerate any immoral behaviour.

Haftorah – 1st Book of Samuel: Chapter 20, Verses 18 - 42

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Machar Chodesh is a segment from the Book of Samuel which is read whenever Shabbat falls the day before a new moon (Rosh Chodesh).
- ✚ The Haftorah describes the emotional parting between Yonasan (Johnathan) the son of Shaul, and Dovid, who has been anointed by Shmuel to succeed Shaul as the future king of Israel.
- ✚ Dovid's relationship with Shaul had broken down to such an extent that Dovid had to flee for his life. Yonasan, wanting to ascertain the extent of Shaul's hatred for Dovid, devised a plan, whereby Dovid would be absent from Shaul's Rosh Chodesh meal. If his father acted lovingly in asking about Dovid's absence, then it would be safe for Dovid to return. If not, Dovid would be forced to remain hidden to escape from Shaul's wrath.

GEMATRIA LINKED WITH THE SEDRA:

- ✚ The Torah tells us not to contaminate ourselves with sin **בְּהֵמָה תִּטְמָאוּ וְלֹא**. The gematria of this phrase adds up to 540. The Hebrew word **שָׁמַר** (Guard) also has the numerical number 540.
- ✚ This teaches us the only way to avoid committing any sins is to take extra care and precautions in guarding the 613 Mitzvot.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

In Judaism, aveiros (sins) are viewed as either intentional or unintentional, but they always have consequences – small or big. Today's Torah portion on what's often referred to as the "Ritual Scapegoat" (The Azazel) has always fascinated me. It's a description of what the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) performed in the Mishkan and later in the Beis Hamikdash during Yom Kippur.

Two identical goats were brought to the entrance of the Ohel Moed (tent of meeting). The Kohen Gadol by casting lots, (The old version of playing heads or tails) designates the fate of both goats. One is destined to become a korban Hatat (sin offering for Hashem to atone for all the unintentional sins committed; and the other into something the Torah calls "Azazel". (Loosely translated as the 'gone goat'; This goat according to some opinions is escorted out of the camp to fend for itself in the harshness of the desert or thrown over a cliff; in order to atone for sins acted out deliberately or ones' that could never be resolved. What's the reasoning behind these two identical goats, each destined to different fate by the luck of a draw?

One idea I heard was that we have to recognize that there are plenty of opportunities and elements in our lives which we have complete control over. However, there are some aspects that we do not have the power to precipitate change, no matter how hard you try and is therefore left to chance. Basically! Everything is decreed by Hashem and we should place our trust in him because ultimately he knows what best for us in the long term, more than we do.

In an article I once read, the author questioned why Yaakov was told by his mother Rivka to bring two goats when preparing to receive the coveted blessings from his father Yitzchak. During the piece, the author connects those two goats with the two goats brought during the Yom Kippur service. The goat chosen to go to Hashem represents the positive requirement of fulfilling certain mitzvot which could be detrimental to others. I.e. Yaakov, performing the act of 'Honoring your parents', by carrying out his Mother's command of obtaining Yitzhak's blessings meant for Esav; even though by effect would be deceiving his own father in the process. The other goat, corresponding to the goat for Azazel meant that Yaakov was not allowed to gain any personal benefit or pleasure from knowing he had tricked and swindled his brother from receiving them.

When Yaakov left the room after receiving the blessings from Yitzchak Esav entered immediately afterwards. The expression the Torah uses is "Ach Yotzei" (He went out). The word Yotzei is the term used when one has fulfilled their obligations. This denotes that Yaakov lived up to the requirements implied by both of the goats. Meaning; that although it appeared that Yaakov had erred and felt grieved about it. He was in fact doing the will of Hashem because Hashem wished it to happen.

I believe 'The lottery of the two goats' is telling us that even though we should feel guilty of what we may have done wrong and atone for our sins by doing teshuva. Sometimes it was Hashem's intention all along to either teach us a valuable lesson or to get us where we were supposed to be. In effect forgiving and absolving us from the past actions committed; enabling us to start again with a clean slate for the future. What a comforting thought.

