

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Week of 1-7 Adar 5759 / 17-23 Feb 1999

Yoma 44-50

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Saved by the Bells

"No one shall be in the ohel moed (literally 'tent of assembly,' but in the Beis Hamikdash this referred to the Sanctuary area), from when he (the kohen gadol) enters to achieve atonement in the Sanctuary until he goes out." (Vayikra 16:17)

This passage is part of the Torah's instructions for the sacred service on Yom Kippur. It refers to the kohen gadol entering the kodshei kodashim (inner Sanctuary, Holy of Holies) to offer the incense. No one was permitted to be present in the heichal (Sanctuary area which contained the table, menorah and golden incense altar) while the kohen gadol was in this most sacred area which contained only the holy ark.

The superficial interpretation of this passage presents a difficulty understanding what our great commentaries write regarding one of the kohen gadol's eight sacred garments, the meil.

The bottom hem of the meil was belled. The purpose of these bells was "that the sound should be heard when he enters the Sanctuary" (Shmos 28:35). Rashbam explains that the bells served as an alarm to warn all present in the sanctuary to depart when the kohen gadol entered to perform his service. Ramban adds that there is a hint in this passage that the bells summoned even the heavenly angels to leave the Sanctuary, allowing the kohen gadol to be alone with his King.

The problem with their approach is that the kohen gadol did not wear the meil when he entered the kodshei kodashim to offer the incense; rather he wore only the four garments worn by an ordinary kohen. How could the bells which the Torah assigned only to the meil serve as a warning for everyone to leave the heichal?

This problem disappears, however, when we learn in our gemara that the requirement for vacating an area of the Beis Hamikdash while sacred service was being performed was not limited to the kohen gadol's entry into the kodshei kodashim on Yom Kippur. The blood of the bull brought as the kohen gadol's special sin offering (Vayikra 4:6), or brought for the community to atone for a mistaken court ruling (ibid. 4:17), or of the goat brought by the community when such a mistake involved idol worship (Bamidbar 15:26), had to be sprinkled in the heichal. When the kohen entered the heichal for this purpose, everyone had to depart not only from there but also from the area between the altar in the courtyard and the entrance to the Sanctuary. The gemara derives this from the word "atonement" used regarding such a need for removal on Yom Kippur, which teaches us (through a "gezeirah shavah" according to Tosefos, or a "binyan av" according to Rambam) that this rule applies to all situations when the kohen enters the Sanctuary for atonement purposes. The above mentioned commentaries are, therefore, referring to a situation where such service is being performed by the kohen gadol, and the bells on his meil do indeed sound a warning for all to clear the area and enable this servant with a higher degree of spirituality be alone with his King.

Yoma 44b

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Issue #262 - Yoma 44-50

For the week of 1-7 Adar 5759 / 17-23 Feb 1999 (Parshas Terumah)

Feminine Dignity

Kimchis was a remarkable woman. She had seven sons and each served as *kohen gadol*. When asked how she had merited such great honor, she explained that even the beams within her own home never saw her hair exposed.

The connection between such modesty and its reward is explained in the Jerusalem Talmud cited by Rashi: "The dignity of a princess is in her modesty," writes King David (*Tehillim 45:14*), "and her garment is made of gold embroidery." A woman of such outstanding modesty deserves children who will wear the golden garments of the *kohen gadol*.

But how does one woman see seven sons achieve this honor when there can be only one *kohen gadol* at a time? It can hardly be that one succeeded the other upon his death, because this would mean that this righteous woman buried six of her sons!

The answer is supplied by the *gemara's* account of what happened to one of the sons of Kimchis by the name of Yishmael. One year he became spiritually impure just before Yom Kippur and his brother Yeshairov substituted for him until he regained his purity. On another occasion the same thing happened to him, and his brother Yosef took over for him. Although these incidents are mentioned only in regard to three of the sons, we can infer, says Tosefos Yeshanim, that this happened more than twice to these brothers, and eventually all seven of them had at least a momentary opportunity to serve as *kohen gadol*, to the delight of their righteous mother.

Maharsha raises an interesting question regarding the Yishmael mentioned in these two stories. The stories imply that he served as *kohen gadol* from before one Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, a period of at least one year. An earlier *gemara* (*Yoma 9a*) informed us that during the Second *Beis Hamikdash* unscrupulous people bought the position of *kohen gadol* from corrupt kings, even though they were not suited for it. Because of this, none of them, except for three or four, lived out the year of his appointment. How then could Yishmael, son of Kimchis, have been around for two successive Yom Kippurs as a *kohen gadol*?

One of those few exceptions, explains Maharsha, was Yishmael the son of Pavi who served for ten years. He and the Yishmael mentioned in our *gemara* are one and the same. In the earlier *gemara* he is identified by his father's name, as is customary. Our *gemara* mentions only his mother, Kimchis, because it was the merit of her modesty that gained this honor for him.

Yoma 47a

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