

Shemini 2014

1.

Atonement

Nachlas Tzvi page 271

"וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קִרְבְּ אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת־עֹלֹתֶךָ וְכִפֹּר בַּעֲדֶךָ וּבַעֲדֵי הָעָם וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־קָרְבַּן הָעֵם וְכִפֹּר בָּעֲדָם בְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּה יְקֹוֹק."

“Moshe said to Aaron: Come near to the Mizbayach (Alter) etc.” (9, 7)

During the seven days of the inauguration of the Mishkan, Moshe performed the avoda (service). On the eighth day Moshe tells Aaron to take over. The question arises, since Aahron was the Cohen Gadol, why didn't he start serving on the first day? Why did he wait until day eight? The Gemara in Yuma (43b) states that the innocent should come and atone for the guilty. Therefore, since Aahron sinned with the golden calf and was thus guilty, he was not fitting to atone for others. (Even though Aaron was just trying to stall for more time as stated in the Gemara in Shabbos (89a), nevertheless technically Aaron still sinned.) Rather, Moshe who was innocent, needed to serve first in order to atone for Aahron. Once Aahron was atoned for, he was then qualified to atone for the rest of the Jews. (There are still several questions to ask. Why were seven days required? It seems like seven days were necessary in order to atone for such a severe type of sin, avoda zara (idolatry). Furthermore, why couldn't Moshe himself atone for all of the Jews? This atonement should preferably come from the Kohan Gadol.

There is a deep and important message behind this psbat (explanation) pertaining to kiruv. Before one tries to atone, clean and purify others, he must atone, clean and purify himself first. There is much to elaborate on this important concept. See Lech Lecha 2015, Conversion and Kiruv and Vayeira 2015, Mila leading by example.

2.

Birchas Kohanim

Penenim Meshulchan Gevoah pages 66-67

"וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדָיו אֶל־הָעָם וּבֵרַכְבֶּם וַיֵּרֶד מִעֲשֵׂת הַחֲטָאת וְהַעֲלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים."

“Aaron raised his hands toward the people and blessed them.” (9, 22)

Rashi explains that this is referring to birchas Kohanim, Yevarechicha, Yaeir, and Yesa. (ברכת כהנים יברכך, יאר, ישא)

The Sifsei Chachamim asks- once Rashi explains that when the pasuk says “blessed them” this refers to berchas Kohanim, why does Rashi need to write the beracha? Furthermore, prior to berchas Kohanim they mention that this beracha is from the Torah. Subsequently the Kohanim specify that Aaron said it. The question arises, once the Kohanim mention that this beracha is mentioned in the Torah, why do they need to specify that Aaron said it? Is the Torah not enough? Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank explains that in this part of the parsha the concept of duchining was not

commanded by Hashem. Aaron willingly decided to duchin. Aaron additionally innovated the nusach (text) of berchas Kohanim. Subsequently Hashem agreed to this decision of Aaron. This is why Rashi specifies the beracha; aka the beracha that Aaron did by himself. This is also why prior to duchining we specify that Aaron said it, in order to show that Aaron willingly said this beracha. (The Ramban also discusses this concept of Aaron duchining without being commanded to do so.)