

Yom Kippur Torah Readings & Haftarot

Torah reading for YK comes mostly from Parshat Acharei - 34 p'sukim of Vayikra 16 for Shacharit (first Torah) and 30 p'sukim of Vayikra 18 for Mincha. The Maftir (second Torah in the morning) is from Parshat Pinchas.

Morning

Seven people are called to the first Torah - because it is Shabbat

The Torah's portion dealing with the Kohen Gadol and the Yom Kippur service in the Beit HaMikdash. It is "repeated" (sort of) in the repetition of the Musaf Amida. Mixed in with the Beit HaMikdash service are some aspects of "our" Yom Kippur - especially the aspect of ATONEMENT.

Kohen • First Aliya 3 p'sukim • 16:1-3

An emotional element is introduced when the Torah tells us that G-d gave the command of Yom Kippur service "after the deaths of Aharon's two sons". We cannot help but be struck by the combination of the Kohen Gadol performing the loftiest of spiritual tasks with the background of his personal grief. These feelings are especially powerful as we hear this reading on Yom Kippur morning. Before the Service is described, kohanim in general are warned not to enter the Beit HaMikdash other than

when they have tasks to perform there. (It is hard to miss the additional connection to Nadav and Avihu, who entered the Mikdash for the performance of an "improper" task.)

Rashi explains that mentioning the deaths of Nadav and Avihu was a particularly sharp warning to kohanim in general and the Kohein Gadol, in particular, since he will be entering Kodesh HaKodashim several times in the course of the Avoda on YK. His actions and his thoughts, motives, kavana have to be perfect to avoid a tragedy and to facilitate the KAPARA of all of Israel.

The entire Yom Kippur service, with all of its details, constitutes one mitzva. Aharon is to take a bull as a sin-offering and a ram as a burnt-offering.

Levi • Second Aliya 3 p'sukim • 16:4-6

He is to wear his special garments - the Kohen Gadol on YK alternates between his full set of eight garments and a special set of four pure white garments which he wore when he entered the Holy of Holies and does other YK-specific Avoda. These white garments were not the regular 4 garments of every kohein; they were made with an exceedingly fine linen

weave - at the expense of the Kohein Gadol, not the community's; they were used only once and then buried.

The Kohen Gadol washes his hands and feet ten times throughout the day and immerses in a mikveh five times.

"From the People", Aharon takes two goats for sin-offerings and a ram as an Olah. The bull is an atonement for Aharon and the kohanim.

Sh'lishi • Third Aliya 5 p'sukim • 16:7-11

Lots were cast to determine which of the two (identical) goats was to be offered as a korban and which was sent out alive into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

There are two very different styles of sin - rejecting what G-d says and distancing oneself from the Divine, and violating His commands in an attempt to get closer to Him. Most sin is of the former type; that of Nadav and Avihu was an example of the latter kind. Corresponding to these two opposite motivations for sin, we have two special offerings on Yom Kippur - one that was offered inside the Beit HaMikdash, its blood actually being brought into Kodshei Kodashim, and the other being sent completely away from the Beit HaMikdash. Ponder this: The two goats were identical.

R'vi'i • Fourth Aliya 6 p'sukim • 16:12-17

The Kohen Gadol performs all of the duties of the Day, with minimal assistance from other kohanim. The Holy of Holies filled with smoke from the incense offering when the Kohen Gadol entered. The service of Yom Kippur is complex; it is detailed in the repetition of the Musaf Amida on Yom Kippur as well as in the Torah reading.

This next portion continues to describe the complex service of Yom Kippur. Among the many tasks of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, is VIDUI on behalf of all the people of Israel.

His confession of sin must be accompanied by that of each Jew, if complete atonement is to be achieved. Rambam says that there is "communal forgiveness" for "minor" offenses, but major sins require that the individual do his own T'shuva. This should not be taken as implying that T'shuva is not necessary for minor offenses - it is. Even when there is "communal forgiveness", an individual still has to be part of the community in order to benefit from it. He who distances himself from the community does not receive the benefits of communal prayer, repentance, and atonement. (Over-simplified, to be sure, but there is a point here.)

Chamishi • Fifth Aliya

7 p'sukim • 16:18-24

The description of the Avoda of Yom Kippur continues. The Kohen Gadol continues to process the bloods of the bull and the goat. He then leans on the "scapegoat" and says VIDUI on behalf of all of Israel. There is another change of garments, washing of hands and feet, immersion in a mikve.

Shishi • Sixth Aliya

6 p'sukim • 16:25-30

The Torah continues detailing the Yom Kippur service. It concludes with a re-iteration of the nature of Yom Kippur day and its rules. The Avoda is an eternal CHOK; on the 10th day of the seventh month we fast (and practice other abstentions) and refrain from Melacha (creative activities, as are forbidden on Shabbat).

For this day will atone for you, to purify yourself from all your sins - before G-d will you be purified.

One commentary took the phrase LIFNEI HASHEM and defined it as it is defined in a different context (specifically with the Arba'a Minim of Sukkot, and other verses). The result is the following statement. If we use this day of Yom Kippur properly, and repent well the sins we have, then we will be purified, AND this will lead to being purified before G-d, meaning in

the Beit HaMikdash that will be rebuilt when we "earn" it, so to speak, by proper T'shuva.

Sh'VII • Seventh Aliya

4 p'sukim • 16:31-34

This last portion of chapter 16 continues with a statement of Yom Kippur. It is the supreme Shabbat for you (us), and you shall "afflict your souls" (i.e. you shall fast) - this is the law for always. (In the time of the Beit HaMikdash - past and future), the process of atonement is facilitated by the Kohen Gadol... this will be a one time a year practice... And he (Aharon) did as G-d had commanded Moshe.

There is a well-known correlation between the number of Aliyot and the sanctity of the day we read the Torah. Minimum number of people called to a Torah reading is three. So it is on Monday and Thursday, public fast days, Purim, Chanuka. True they are special days, but they are not elevated in sanctity by restrictions of Melacha. Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed are a rung up the Kedusha ladder, as demonstrated by calling four people to the Torah on those days. Yom Tov is higher in Kedusha and we call five people (plus a Maftir). Yom Kippur is higher still, and its regular number of Aliyot is six (plus Maftir). Shabbat has the highest Kedusha and seven are called to the Torah (in addition to the Maftir).

Maftir • 2nd Torah

Bamidbar 29:7-11

The Maftir portion from Parshat Pinchas deals with the Musaf korbanot of Yom Kippur only and makes only a slight reference to the special Chatat of Yom Kippur and the daily korbanot. The korbanot of the YK Avoda are dealt with in the reading from the first Torah, as indicated above. The Maftir does mention the command to "afflict one's soul", meaning to fast, as well as the prohibition of Melacha on Yom Kippur.

Haftara • 22 p'sukim

Yeshayahu 57:14-58:14

The Haftara makes the point that fasting is a hollow observance without it being accompanied by (and/or leading to) a change for the better in individuals and society. This is a crucial and vital concept of Judaism. Heart, mind, and soul must accompany any act in order for the act to have positive value and effect. Prayer, Korbanot, Tashlich, Kaparot, Vidui... are less than meaningless without the person's sincere intent and kavana. This is not to say that one should not daven - for example - if his heart isn't in it. One must fast on Yom Kippur even if one is not yet sincere with his prayers and Vidui. But the goal is full involvement of the

aforementioned heart, mind, and soul.

The last two p'sukim of the Haftara are the basis of the "flavor" of Shabbat as shaped by Rabbinic law and custom. These two p'sukim are said by some people as part of Shabbat daytime kiddush.

Mincha

All other Mincha readings are either the "preview" of the upcoming Parshat HaShavua - Shabbat afternoon - or VAYCHAL - fast days. This one's unique.

Kohen • 5 p'sukim

Vayikra 18:1-5

Levi • 16 p'sukim

Vayikra 18:6-21

(longest Aliya of the day)

Sh'lishi • 9 p'sukim

Vayikra 18:22-30

This last portion of Acharei deals with the forbidden sexual relations and activities. Avoidance of these prohibitions is an essential part of that which is to make the Jew and the Jewish People holy. Thus, an appropriate reading for YK.

Haftara • 48 p'sukim

Whole book of Yonah

The famous lesson that repentance is universal, not only Jewish. But the story of non-Jewish T'shuva of the people of Ninvei is meant to inspire us towards our own T'shuva in a meaningful way.

We also get a a glimpse into the conflicts felt by the Navi Yonah in his desire to protect the Jewish people from G-d's anger.

Additionally, there is the lesson that Yonah was not able to run away from his G-d-given task.

In a different way, none of us can really run away from our charge and challenge to live a life of Torah and Mitzvot.