



The Next Generation

Rabbi Yaakov Glasser



“Seven days preceding Yom Kippur, we separate the *Kohen Gadol* from his family, and sequester him in the Parhedrin Chamber” (Yoma 2).

The *Lishkat Parhedrin* becomes the home of the *Kohen Gadol* for the week preceding his service on Yom Kippur. It is in this chamber that he will prepare himself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to represent the Jewish people on Yom Kippur. One can only imagine the mixed emotions of apprehension and anticipation as the reality of his awesome responsibility set in throughout the Aseret Yemei Teshuva.

The Gemara relates an interesting halachic anomaly regarding this chamber relative to the other rooms of the *Beit HaMikdash*:

תנו רבנן, כל הלשכות שהיו במקדש לא היו להן מזוזה, חוץ מלשכת פרהדרין, שהיה בה בית דירה לכהן גדול. אמר רבי יהודה: והלא כמה לשכות היו במקדש שהיה להן בית דירה, ולא היה להן מזוזה. אלא לשכת פרהדרין גזירה היתה. מאי טעמא דרבי יהודה... שלא יאמרו: כהן גדול חבוש בבית האסורין.

“Our rabbis taught: all of the chambers in the Temple did not have a *mezuzah* except for the Parhedrin chamber, which served as living quarters for the *Kohen Gadol*. Rabbi Yehuda said: Weren’t there other living quarters in the Temple that did not have a *mezuzah*? Rather, this was a specific institution for the Parhedrin chamber. What is the reason for Rabbi Yehuda? ... so that they should not say that the *Kohen Gadol* is locked in prison.” (Yoma 10a-10b)

What is the nature of Rabbi Yehuda’s concern? Why would anyone assume the *Kohen Gadol* is incarcerated, and how does placing a *mezuzah* on the door mitigate this concern?

The answer to this question reveals how the entire Yom Kippur experience truly strikes at the heart of our fundamental challenge in perpetuating our Torah values to the next generation. To the outsider, uninitiated and unfamiliar with *Kohen Gadol’s* preparatory journey, the sequestering of this great leader indeed appears as a form of incarceration. Cut off from his family and friends, he is constrained and forced to function exclusively within the narrow parameters of the Parhedrin chamber.

However, in reality, this environment provides the *Kohen Gadol* with the foundation to encounter the most profound moment of Divine connection imaginable. One who is intimately familiar with the inner workings of the Temple world can appreciate the solemnity and sanctity of the experience. Chazal were deeply concerned that people not characterize a religious experience of meaning and purpose as a confining suppression of opportunity and freedom. Therefore, they mandated a *mezuzah* to be placed upon the door of

this chamber, proclaiming to all the eternal message of *ahavat Hashem*, love of G-d, as the defining character of the religious experience.

We find ourselves raising and teaching a generation that increasingly views the lifestyle of Torah and *mitzvot* as a “*beit ha’asurim*” – a restrictive environment comprised mostly of expectations and demands that undermine our natural ambition for individuality and freedom. It is our responsibility to affix *mezuzot* on the doorways of our religious experience and inspire our children to recognize the deep meaning and purpose that Torah and *mitzvot* provide to our lives.

The month of Tishrei is a unique opportunity in this regard. One can view these weeks as a “*beit ha’asurim*,” with an endless set of expectations and demands. Alternatively, one can view the month as one of opportunity. The chance to project the “*veahavta et Hashem Elokecha*” dimension to our religious life. To recognize how the *Yamim Nora’im*, and *chagim* which follow, are an eternal gift that provide our lives with reflection, transformation, and celebration.

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