

Yom Kippur - Yom Tov

Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

This Parsha which details the AVODA of Yom Kippur in the Beth Hamikdash, is introduced with the outline that it was taught "following the death of Aaron's children." Even the name of the Sedrah "Acharei Mois" seems to focus on this tragedy.

On the surface, the calamitous death of the Bnei Aaron has no connection to the AVODAH on the Day of Atonement. Yet, commentators and Poskim tell us that upon reading this chapter on Yom Kippur we should develop within us a profound sympathetic distress over the tragedy, even bringing to tears (see Mishna Brura 621:2).

One ventures to suggest that the Poskim had in mind, also, the misfortunes of the death of children, chas v'shalom, closer to our own generation, which, naturally, is easier to "bring to tears". This could, additionally, evoke focus on the CHURBAN of our generation, the Holocaust.

The post Holocaust generation counts seventy years since the beginning of the SHOAH. Torah Umsorah has begun at this juncture, a more serious and thorough program of study in Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs, of this greatest tragedy in Jewish history.

The awesome number, six million, the number itself, when uttered, brings about a shiver in the spine. It also includes a CHESHBON (count) of one million children, with a focus of its own.

The Belzer Rebbe, Reb Aaron, z.t.l., it is told, was reluctant to make public HAZKOROS (memorials) for the victims of the Shoah, in which his own family perished. When a person is struck at an accident and is brought to the hospital, the Rebbe explained, the first thing done is to examine him and treat and heal him. Only when he comes back to his strength, he is in a position to explain how the accident occurred. Similarly, said the Belzer Rebbe z.t.l., we must bring back into the world one million children before gathering HAZKORA assemblies.

The Rebbe z.t.l. surely had in mind bringing those children into the world and giving them a proper Torah education, so that they would live the Yiddishkeit for which the Shoah victims died.

When our patriarch Yaakov met his beloved son Joseph after an elapse of twenty two years, he exclaimed: "Now I can die since I have seen your face" lit. "I will die once..." (Braishis 46:30). Rashi interprets: "I had thought I will die a double death, in this world and in the next, for the Al-mighty would hold me responsible for your death. Now that you are alive, I will die only one death." The Shach expounds as follows: If Joseph had gone astray from the righteous path, Yaakov would have suffered in the hereafter, which is tantamount to a second death. Yaakov therefore intimates to Joseph, "now that I see that you are a Tzadik I know I will die only once."

With the aim to annihilate the Jewish people, chas v'sholom, the Nazis y.sh. possessed a particular satanic goal to abolish Torah and its devotees. To daub the Jew as an "ugly Jew", they caricatured him as a rabbi studying the Talmud. In the furnaces they burned millions of Sifrei Kodesh together with the sacred bodies of Jews.

Not unlike Reb Chananya ben Teradyon, one of the ten martyred sages put brutally to death by the Roman ruler, about whom we relate during Yom Kipur Musaf. The pretext to execute Reb Chananya was that he violated the Roman edict against teaching the Torah publicly. The Romans took the Torah scrolls that he kept with him and wrapped him in it, setting both afire.

Horav Reb Joshe Ber Soloveichik z"l, in a Boston Tisha B'Av Kinos, explained the difference between reciting the catastrophic death of the ten sages by the vicious Roman Emperor during Kinos on Tisha B'Av, and the recital on Yom Kippur during the Musaf Avoda. On Tisha B'Av their tragic death is part of our kinos, crying out our history of ruin and devastation. On Yom Kippur it is cited as our Korbonos, loss of Tzadikim, which implies atonement (see Rashi Bamidbor 20:1).

The Belzer Rebbe z"l seemingly regards the death of the million children as part of our Yom Kippur Avodah and our renewed effort to enhance the sanctity of our people.

At the annual survivors' march in Birkanau some days ago, the picture of which was published in the world press showing the marchers under the arched sign "Arbeit Macht Frei", one leader made a meaningful statement. What he said was succinct, terse: "Mir Zenen Do" we are here.

The special concentrated effort to wipe out, chas v'sholom, the Torah element within the "Am Kodosh" unfortunately succeeded to the larger extent. Yet the small minority of these survivors succeeded to rebuild Torah in the world. This is nothing less than miraculous. Torah faithful Jewry can say without hesitation, with animated thrust, "Mir Zenen Do".

Thousand upon thousands of our young flock to the Yeshivahs and Kolelim rather than to universities. They seem to be elated in the Beth Medrosh, both in the larger cities and smaller communities. This is only a beginning, and the feeling of steady growth, "from strength to strength", is glaring. "Dor l'dor... each generation will laud ("yeshabach") your deeds to the next" (Tehillim 145:4). "Yeshabach" is indicative of an improved level (Malbim, *ibid.*).

The introduction of the death of Bnei Aaron to the parsha of AVODA on Yom Kippur speaks volumes. Surely we remember the million Bnai Arons of our generation's Shoah, and not with a dry eye. Their Kidush Hashem screams to the Heavens. But the new million Torah youth, dedicated to a Yom Kippur renewal, we must promise, will be a LIVING Kidush Hashem. Yom Kippur is not only fasting, Yizkor and atonement. Yom Kippur is also a Yom Tov.

It is in that Yom Tov spirit that Yom Kippur was designated, also, as a day for SHIDUCHIM (engagements), as taught in the Mishna (Taanis 26b). It is an AIS ROTZON, moment of opportunity, for cheerful confidence of renewal, building families for the "KEDOSHIM TIHYU" people.

