

PARSHAS ACHAREI MOS/PESACH

by Gedalia Litke

This week there occurs the unusual juxtaposition of Parshas Acharei Mos and Pesach. There are (at least) two interesting connections between the Parsha and Pesach.

One, near the end of the Parsha (18:3), is *"k'ma'asey eretz mitzrayim asher y'shavtem bah lo sa'asu"* - *don't engage in the unsavory activities which are typical of the land of Egypt where you settled*. While there is some discussion in the commentaries as to why the Torah emphasizes Egypt as being the place where we settled (see Rashi and Kli Yakar), on a basic level we can all see the obvious relevance to Pesach and to our objective of unshackling ourselves from the mindset of Egypt and instead becoming HKBH's servants, a nation with a G-dly mission.

Another connection, less obvious, is near the beginning of the Parsha. The Kohen Gadol is instructed to wear on Yom Kippur holy white linen garments only, and not the usual gold garments of the Kohen Gadol. (16:4) The Sforno explains that angels appear to prophets to be wearing white, and therefore the Kohen Gadol, being angelic on Yom Kippur, wears holy white.

At the Pesach Seder it is customary for a kittel, a white garment, to be worn. Two reasons are generally given for this. One reason is so that a person not get carried away with unbridled feelings of freedom, so a white garment, reminiscent of burial shrouds, is worn as a sobering counter-balance. (See Magen Avrohom 472:2). The other reason, similar to the Sforno on our Parsha, is because white clothing is the exceptional clothing of angels and/or Talmidei Chachamim (Torah scholars), and Klal Yisroel was exceptional (metzuyanim) in Egypt; to commemorate Klal Yisroel being exceptional in Egypt we wear the kittel at the Seder. (See Rav Yechiel Heller's notes on Minhagei HaGra, reprinted in new edition of 'Malbim' Haggadah).

So one reason for the kittel is quite sobering, the other is very uplifting. This is consistent with the Kohen Gadol's role and the overall purpose of Yom Kippur; it is a finely tuned balance between utmost seriousness and elevated status and closeness to HKB'H.

Beyond the clothes of the Kohen Gadol, white plays another important role on Yom Kippur, as the red thread turning white was the sign of atonement that Klal Yisroel sought. On the Seder night we fulfill the mitzva of hagaddah by telling and explaining the story of Lavan who wanted to uproot us entirely. Lavan means white.

The Maharal says explicitly (pg 41 of the Haggadah volume) that the night of the Seder (Layl Shimurim) is like Yom Kippur. He adds that the reason for this is hidden (nistar).

May we be zocheh to a Seder of profound meaning and elevation. B'Nissan nig'alu avosaynu u'b'Nissan assidin l'higo'el. AKY'R.

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