

בס"ז

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Acharei

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Compiled from the works of  
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
**Parshas Acharei**

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

ויקרא ט"ז, ד': כְּתִנַּת-בֶּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי-בֶד יִהְיוּ עַל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבְאֵזָרָה וּבְמִצְנַפֶּת בֶּד יִצָּגֶה בַּגְּדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַתֵּץ בְּמִים אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבָשָׁם:

רש"י ד"ה כתנת בד וגו': מגיד שאינו משמש לפניו בשמונה בגדים שהוא משמש בהם בחוץ, שיש בהם זהב, לפי שאין קטיגור נעשה סניגור, אלא בארבעה, ככהן הדיוט, וכולן של בוך:

**Vayikroh 16:4:** He shall wear a holy linen shirt and linen pants shall be upon his flesh. He shall gird himself with a linen sash and wear a linen cap, these are holy garments ...

**Rashi Heading – a linen shirt:** This tells us that he (the Kohen Gadol) does not perform the service inside (in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur) wearing the eight garments with which he conducts the service outside (the Holy of Holies) because those (garments) contain gold, and a prosecutor cannot become a defender<sup>1</sup>. Instead, he wears four garments like an ordinary Kohen, all of which are linen.

**Synopsis**

This week, we read Parshas Acharei, describing the service conducted in the Tabernacle and the Temple on Yom Kippur<sup>2</sup>. The Kohen Gadol must perform the entire service. The Torah specifies the vestments which he must wear while performing this service. The Torah says, "He shall wear a holy linen shirt, and linen pants will be upon his flesh. He shall gird himself with a linen sash and wear a linen cap; these are holy garments ..." Rashi cites the words "linen shirt, etc." He explains that this tells us that the Kohen Gadol does not wear the special eight vestments Hashem commanded him to wear the rest of the year in the Holy of Holies. Instead, he only wears the four garments that a regular Kohen wears, which are made of linen. He explains that this is because a prosecutor cannot become a defender<sup>3</sup>.

Why must Rashi tell us that "he wears four garments?" The Torah enumerates each garment; by simply counting them, we know that there are four. Furthermore, why does Rashi need to tell us that they are all made of linen? While enumerating the garments, the Torah specifies that each was linen.

Rashi needs to explain this to understand the answer to a different question. We know from the context that the Kohen Gadol serves with only four garments on Yom Kippur. However, a Kohen who lacks the proper number

1. The Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to atone for all the Jews. Therefore, he may not enter wearing gold, which is reminiscent of the sin of the golden calf.

2. This description begins with our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:1.

3. For the explanation of this, see footnote 1.

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of vestments is not permitted to serve in the Bais Hamikdosh. Rashi's explanation that "a prosecutor cannot become a defender" does not explain why the Kohen Gadol was allowed to serve with fewer than eight garments.

To answer this question, Rashi specifies that on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies, the Kohen Gadol "wears four garments like an ordinary Kohen, all of which are linen." He is not wearing four of the eight vestments he must ordinarily wear. Instead, at that time, he is serving "like an ordinary Kohen," who is only obligated to wear four garments.

### **Rashi's Explanation**

In this Shabbos, we read Parshas Acharei, which describes the High Priest's service on Yom Kippur in great detail. The Torah tells us which priestly vestments the Kohen Gadol had to wear while performing this service. The Torah tells us that<sup>4</sup> "He shall wear a holy linen shirt. Linen pants shall be upon his flesh. He shall gird himself with a linen sash and wear a linen cap. These are holy garments ..." Rashi cites "a linen shirt" and explains as follows. "This tells us that he (the Kohen Gadol) does not perform the service inside (in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur) wearing the eight garments with which he performs the service outside (the Holy of Holies) because those (garments) contain gold, and a prosecutor cannot become a defender<sup>5</sup>. Instead, he wears four garments like an ordinary Kohen, all of which are linen."

The Torah told us earlier of the obligation for a Kohen to wear special garments while performing the service in the Tabernacle or the Bais Hamikdosh. It spelled out the commandment to fashion these vestments in great detail and the Kohen's obligation to wear them while serving. Moreover, the Torah tells us that he is liable to the death penalty if a Kohen performs the service without wearing these garments<sup>6</sup>. What need is there for the Torah to tell us of the garments the Kohen Gadol wore *here*?

Therefore, Rashi explains that this verse does not come to command or teach us something new. Instead, it teaches us something new about those vestments worn on Yom Kippur by a Kohen Gadol. A regular Kohen wears four garments yearly, while a High Priest wears eight. We indeed know this from before. The Torah teaches us that on Yom Kippur, the order changes, and the Kohen Gadol performs the entire service. He wears only four garments for every service he performs within the Holy of Holies, the same as a regular Kohen throughout the year.

### **Difficulties in Understanding Rashi**

This explanation leaves us with several difficulties in understanding Rashi. Why must Rashi tell us that "he wears four garments?" All one needs to do is count the number of garments the verse lists! Furthermore, we must

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4. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:4.

5. For the explanation of this, see footnote 1.

6. Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 28:43.

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understand why Rashi adds the words "like an ordinary Kohen?" The Torah taught us some time ago that a regular Kohen wore four garments<sup>7</sup>!

Additionally, what difference does it make that on Yom Kippur, a Kohen Gadol wears the same number of garments as an ordinary Kohen does during the year? Finally, we must understand why Rashi says that "all of them are of linen." The verse specifies this regarding each garment.

### The Explanation

These questions can be understood in the following manner. Rashi is answering a different question that arises from this verse. Namely, why does the Torah tell us which garments the Kohen Gadol wore on Yom Kippur? One would think that it should appear in one of two different places. This could have been written before the Torah told us of the service performed on Yom Kippur<sup>8</sup>. Or it could have been written after the Torah tells us the details of the Yom Kippur service, which the Kohen Gadol must perform in white garments<sup>9</sup>. Why tell us of these garments while describing the Yom Kippur service?

The verse tells us of his wearing the four white garments immediately following the words<sup>10</sup>, "With this shall Aharon enter the Holy of Holies; with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering." Therefore, one could have assumed that he *only* wears the four linen garments when he enters to bring the "young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering."

However, from the verses following ours, two things are clear. Firstly, his burnt offering – the ram for a burnt offering – must be brought while he is wearing the eight garments in which he serves all year<sup>11</sup>. There are other services that he must perform before offering his burnt offering. These include the two goats brought as a sin offering on behalf of the Jewish nation and the incense offering. The Torah tells us of these *after* our verse. Yet clearly, these must be brought while wearing the four white garments.

To explain this, Rashi says, "This tells us that he does not perform the service inside wearing the eight garments with which he performs the service outside." From a simple reading of the verses, we see that the burnt offerings are described immediately before the injunction to wear the four white linen garments. It would seem clear that he must bring these while wearing the four garments. Rashi's comments explain that this is not the case. Our verse tells us that the Kohen Gadol must wear the four linen garments only for those services performed within the Holy of Holies. He wears the eight garments he wears all year for those he performs outside the Holy of Holies. He brings the burnt offerings outside the Holy of Holies, in the sanctuary<sup>12</sup>. Hence, he wears all eight garments.

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7. Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 28:40-42.

8. In other words, it should be written one verse earlier; our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:3.

9. It could have been written following 16:22.

10. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:3.

11. See our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:24 and Rashi's comments there.

12. See the previous footnote.

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In contrast, the sprinkling of the goat's blood and the offering of the incense are performed within the Holy of Holies<sup>13</sup>; therefore, he conducts those in the four linen garments.

This is also why the Torah tells us of the special vestments for Yom Kippur after saying,<sup>14</sup> "With this shall Aharon enter the Holy of Holies, with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering." The Torah tells us that the change in clothing is not because of Yom Kippur but because when Aharon enters the Holy of Holies, he may not enter with golden vestments.

The law is that a Kohen serving without all of the proper vestments is liable to the death penalty. If so, how can the Kohen Gadol enter with only four garments? He is seemingly in the category of what the Sages call a "Mechusar Begodim – Lacking (the Proper) Vestments." Rashi's explanation that "a prosecutor cannot become a defender" would not suffice. That is not a reason to allow a Kohen Gadol to transgress the law!

To answer this question, Rashi specifies that on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies, the Kohen Gadol "wears four garments like an ordinary Kohen, all of which are linen." He is not wearing four of the eight vestments he must ordinarily wear. Instead, at that time, he is serving "like an ordinary Kohen," who is only obligated to wear four garments.

This also explains why Rashi writes, "all of which are linen." He is not merely pointing out that his clothing does not serve as a prosecutor; he is emphasizing that on Yom Kippur, his service is comparable to that of an ordinary Kohen.

### **A Deeper Lesson from Rashi**

Rashi's comments give us a fundamental lesson in our service to Hashem. At times, a Jew strives to reach the level of<sup>15</sup> "you shall be cleansed of all of your sins before Hashem." He wishes to reach this level himself and would like to bring those around him to this level. He wants to get himself and those surrounding him closer to Hashem, Torah, and Mitzvos. First, he must go "inside" the Holy of Holies. He must "enter" and serve with the innermost, most profound parts of his soul. Only with this strength will he be able to affect another Jew.

How can he enter with the depths of his soul? He must first take off his own "honor and glory<sup>16</sup>," his golden clothing. One cannot reach the depths, the innermost intention of Hashem, as long as he is involved with his own "honor and glory." He can accomplish his goal only when he feels like an ordinary Kohen, with simple, white linen clothing rather than vestments of gold. It is only then that the pure simplicity of G-d and his soul shine<sup>17</sup>.

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13. Even a service which is not actually done within is done for the need of that which is done within.

14. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:3.

15. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:30.

16. Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 28:2.

17. See Likkutei Torah, Vayikroh beginning with page 28 at the end of side 2. See also Atteres Rosh at length, in the section dealing with Yom Kippur beginning with Chapter 5.

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This alone entitles him to go "within." He accomplishes atonement and purity in this manner, not for himself alone. In the Torah's words<sup>18</sup>, "...he shall bring atonement upon himself, his household, and the congregation of Israel.

*(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Acharei 5736)*

**I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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18. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 16:17.

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