



## *Acharei Mot*

### **Learning From A Transformative Moment**

If you had the honour of an audience with a monarch, would it make sense that after your meeting, just before you leave the palace, you get changed into extra special clothes in order to emerge, back to your regular life?

But isn't that exactly what used to happen every year on Yom Kippur?

In Parshat Acharei Mot, the Torah tells us how the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, would prepare for Yom Kippur. It's the holiest day, the most special moment for the entire nation as he represented them before Almighty God, as he would enter into the Holy of Holies. On five separate occasions, he would change his garments, and on each occasion he would immerse himself in a mikvah to prepare himself spiritually for the next special phase.

And then, just before he would leave the presence of Hashem, he immersed himself again. Again, he would change into extra special garments, but this time it was to prepare him to go *out* back into regular life. One way we can understand this is through a statement by the Torah at the very beginning of this process.

“בְּזֹאת יָבֵא אֶהְרֹן אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ”

“It is with this that the High Priest comes into the holiest space on earth.”

The Torah doesn't tell us what the “בְּזֹאת”, the “this” is. However, there is a midrash which tells us that the “this” refers to the merit of all the Shabbatot of the previous year. That's what the high priest would be presenting before Hashem.

There is a connection here between Shabbat and Yom Kippur: at the end of Shabbat, we don't just place the holiest day of the week behind us - we make Havdalah, and with the besamim, the spices, we guarantee that the Spirit of Shabbat will linger on through the week that follows.

Similarly, the High Priest always wanted to ensure that that the exceptional holiness of being in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, continued to be with him with the entire nation for the whole of the following year. And that's why he prepared himself to emerge back into the presence of everyone else.

From here we learn a very powerful lesson: if we have the privilege of experiencing a transformative moment, let's savour that moment. Let's not just park it behind us as a “one off” and move on with our lives. Let's instead guarantee that the inspiration of that moment will continue to be with us, to inform us, and to inspire us for the rest of our lives.

Shabbat Shalom.