

Introduction

שבעה ימים קודם יום הכפורים מפרישין כהן
גדול מביתו ללשכת פרהדרין.
מש', יומא ב.

*Seven days preceding Yom Kippur,
we separate the Kohein Gadol from
his family, and sequester him in the
Parhedrin Chamber.*

The Lishkas Parhedrin becomes the home of the Kohein 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 *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*. The Gemara, *Yoma* 10a-10b, relates an interesting halachic anomaly regarding this chamber relative to the other rooms of the Beis HaMikdash:

תנו רבנן: כל הלשכות שהיו במקדש לא היו
לහן מזוודה, חוץ מלשכת פרהדרין שהיה בה
בית דירה לכהן גדול. אמר רבי יהודה: והלא
כמה לשכות היו במקדש שהיה להן בית דירה,
ולא היה להן מזוודה. אלא, לשכת פרהדרין
גוזירה היהת. מי טעמא דרבבי יהודה ... שלא
אמרו בהן גדול חבוש בביה האסוריון.

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 Kohein 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 Kohein Gadol is locked in prison.



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

David Mitzner Dean, YU Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi, Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton

What is the nature of Rabbi Yehuda's concern? Why would anyone assume the Kohein 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 Kohein 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 limited to function exclusively within the narrow parameters of the Parhedrin chamber. However, in reality, this environment provides the Kohein 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 *ahavas HaShem*, love of God, as the defining character of the religious experience.

We find ourselves raising and teaching a generation that increasingly views the lifestyle of Torah and mitzvos as a "*bais 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 mezuzos on the doorways of our religious experience and inspire our children to recognize the deep meaning and purpose that Torah and mitzvos provide to our lives. The month of Tishrei is a unique opportunity in this regard. One can view these weeks as a "*bais 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 es HaShem Elokecha*" dimension to our religious life. To recognize how the Yamim Noraim, and chagim which follow, are an eternal gift that provide our lives with reflection, transformation, and celebration.

Wishing you and your family a Shana Tova