



Rabbi Asher Lopatin	Sermon for Yizkor Yom Kippur 5767	Yom Kippur 5767
Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation	Chicago, IL	

G'mar chatima tova, and Shana tova

In a few minutes, Rabbi Gavriel Lakser is going to introduce some of the older kids of our shul who will be reading the names of all the 163 Israelis, soldiers and civilians, who were killed this summer in the Northern battle. The context for this is right in our machzorim.

As I mentioned on Shabbat, for almost all of our prayers the congregation itself, by everyone participating, is doing the mitzvah of davening and connecting to God – not being led by anyone. Yes the Chazan is the facilitator, but we are the ones doing the work.

But one exception is Yom Kippur, when we need our chazzan to lead us in the Avoda service. The Avoda is the description of everything that went on in the holy Temple on Yom Kippur. It is probably rated for mature audiences only – not for sexuality, or for language God forbid, but for violence and gore. Mainly for blood. But we can try as much as possible to avoid talking about blood, and it wouldn't be honest. Rosh Hashana had the blood of the ram instead of Isaac, and on Yom Kippur we have the blood of the two goats instead of our own. This summer, unfortunately, our brothers and sisters fighting in Israel, living in Israel – and Arab Israelis, who are part of our beloved State of Israel – all of them were all not replaced by animals, or birds or fish or anything else. It was human blood – blood that we shudder to see when its taken out of us at the doctor's office or when we give donations.

For this sacrifice, we are not strong enough ourselves – we need someone to help us. We need an Avraham to lead Yitzchak, we need the High Priest to call us forward into the Holy of Holies. And we have to hold our leaders accountable when they lead us in this sacrifice in America or in Israel. It is not the tzibur, the 70% or 80% who approve of the war, or even the 51% who voted for the war who are ultimately responsible. : The Chazan is the leader who is Motzi Us – not the usual meaning of taking us out of our obligation to do something, but the leader “who takes us out” into battle, and we follow. The Chazan takes us to the inner chamber of the Holy of Holies, and there we meet the High Priest.

Let me read the Mishnah:

L'makom shenichnas nichnas, l'makom she'amad amad – Where he entered he entered, where he stood he stood: We are the troops, and our chazzan is our leader to take us into battle formation to be there for God, to be there for the Jewish people, and ultimately to be there for the world.

The sprinklings, the sprayings, the schpritzings of blood were in a row of eight – Shura – from “Echad” – one on top, the top of the Ark cover – Kaporet – from the place symbolically closest to God's presence, then 7 more all the way down in a row till closest to the high priest. Eight sprinklings of blood. Some say each sprinkling needs to have more than one drop of



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blood – one drop is not enough to symbolize a life – and other's say one drop of blood is enough – every drop is precious and symbolizes a life lost.

And these drops come down in a row, until they almost touch the floor right in front of the High Priest, who represents each and every one of us. From God, to each one of us – we are all connected to every loss, to every drop of blood.

We count: Achat ve'achat, achat ushtayim, achat veshalosh.

We come back to echad – every life lost is lost to God, to echad – in our case it is 163: One and one sixty one, one and one sixty two, one and one sixty three – achat uma'ah veshishim veshalosh –lost to God who is one, lost to the Jewish people who are one. Every life is a continuum – every life is connected to God and to the entire Jewish people, and we feel the loss up until it hits each and every one of us, and by the eighth sprinkling, the eighth hits us.

Lives of our soldiers, American and Israeli, lives of Israeli civilians, lives of anyone innocent lost by hateful people, lives of our loved ones who have passed away this year or decades ago. We are all connect to them and so does God.

And each one is counted, each one is unique, each one has his or her connection to God, to the Jewish people and to the individuals who love them or who wanted to love them.

So we remember now: Achat ve'achat, achat ushtayim... For now, before we start Yizkor, we will remember for ourselves how to make these individual lives we are thinking of continue to be meaningful in our world: In our own lives, for the future of the State of Israel, for the future of the Jewish people and our communities and families. But in Musaf, the chazzan will take us one step further: not just remembering, but the chazan will take us out to step out of our security, out of our regular modis operendi. The chazzan will be motzi us – will take us out "l'makom shenichnas, nichnas" to were we enter and stand, and will bring us into the Holy of Holies, before God, were we can think of the sacrifices in life that we can make, the commitments in life that we can make, the heroic efforts in this world that we can take upon ourselves. We are taken to that holy place by our leader, but when once we are there, the sprinkles of commitment and love for our values, for what we know is really important, will be our own – the High Priest may schpritz, them, but they will be our own. We remember those who have come before us, so we can later make the commitment to continue their chain from God, from the one Hashem all the way down to us, here, in 5767.

May God give us the strength to be worthy of those who gave Avoda before us, who inspired us of the service we need to give, and may we be connected through our efforts just as those who have given their lives before us were connected through their lives.

I would now like to call Rabbi Lakser to present the youth of our community who will read the names of those who died, and also those who are still being held captive, who every minute are endangered and are sanctifying God's name just by their continued existence. And after we hear the names, we will all be here for the Memorial Prayer for the Soldiers and Martyrs, and then read the Prayer for the State of Israel and Hatikva. Afterwards, those who wish to leave for Yizkor may do so.