

## Parashah Achrei Mot

The one that talks about the responsibilities of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and the "scapegoat."

**The parashah begins by describing the elaborate cleansing process that the high priest must undergo to purify himself before entering the Holy of Holies**, the innermost part of the tabernacle (Mishkan in Hebrew). This process involves ritual baths and clothing changes.

**On the Day of Atonement, the high priest performs a series of sacrifices**, including a sin offering for himself and one for the entire community. He also selects two goats through a lottery system: one goat is sacrificed as a sin offering, while the other is designated as the "scapegoat." The high priest places the sins of the people onto the scapegoat and sends it into the wilderness, symbolizing the removal of their sins.

**The parashah also digs into the importance of moral behavior within the community** and emphasizes the need to avoid the practice of worshiping idols, which is common among neighboring nations.

**The parashah also tells the difference between clean and unclean animals**, as well as the proper method of slaughtering and eating clean ones. These dietary restrictions keep the holiness and purity of the Israelite community. This is why kosher meat has had all the blood removed. No kosher steaks are served rare! Most of the kosher laws are found in Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy chapter 14.

In summary, **Parashah Achrei Mot provides a thorough account of the Day of Atonement rituals performed by the high priest**, showing the importance of moral and dietary purity and warning against forbidden practices. This parashah serves as a comprehensive guide for building spiritual and moral integrity within the community and reinforcing the concept of atonement.

## Teen Takeaways from Parashah Achrei Mot

1. In order to preside over all the sacred sacrifices, the priest himself needs to be pure and clean. Jews wash their hands as part of many rituals. Perhaps it was also a way of staying clean. In the Middle Ages when plagues broke out across Europe, it was not unusual for the Jewish community to be less affected by the spread of disease. This led our oppressors to accuse us of being the cause of the plague.
2. Yom Kippur and forgiveness: In this portion, we learn about Yom Kippur, a day of asking for forgiveness. This teaches us that it's important to admit our wrongs, say we are sorry, and try to make things right when we mess up.
3. Staying true to your beliefs: The parashah talks about not worshiping idols. It reminds us to stick to our beliefs and not be tempted by things that don't align with what we believe in, even when it's not easy. It is not easy to resist being part of the popular crowd and doing what they do. We think that will make them like us, but often the opposite happens. Being faithful to your beliefs and values is called integrity.
4. Being a good person: The portion also has rules about being a good person, such as not doing hurtful or wrong things. It reminds us to treat others with kindness and respect, which is something we can all work on in our daily lives.
5. Why do people keep kosher? Some do it because they believe that is what God wants us to do. Others do it to remind themselves of their identity. Some do it to limit their social interaction with others and not be tempted to stray from their community.
6. Respect for life: Parashah Achrei Mot emphasizes how important human life is and how we should never harm innocent people. This is a reminder to value and protect all human lives, including our own. Judaism teaches "Thou shalt not murder" but does not forbid killing in self-defense.
7. Following rules: Throughout the parashah, there's a big emphasis on following rules and doing what's right. It's a reminder that rules exist for a reason and that it's important to do our best to follow them. What would life be like if there were no rules or laws and people could do whatever they wanted to whomever they want?
8. Second chances: Yom Kippur gives us a chance to start fresh after making mistakes. It teaches us that it's never too late to make amends and try to do better. Can you think of a time when someone gave you a second chance? Did you do better the second time? And did you then give someone else a second chance?

## Summary

These lessons are meant to help us **become better people** and **live good, fulfilling lives**. They can be guides for how we treat others and make choices in our everyday lives.