



If others sincerely seek our forgiveness for their wrong doing, we can facilitate their Teshuva...forgive others today. God will be lenient with us, if we are lenient with others.

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Yom Kippur

Innuis vs. Asceticism

RABBI RUBEN GOBER

When one searches through the words of Torah and Chazal, one can easily see that Judaism doesn't view the physical pleasures of the world as inherently evil. Certainly, they must be enjoyed within the framework that the Torah sets up, but there is no

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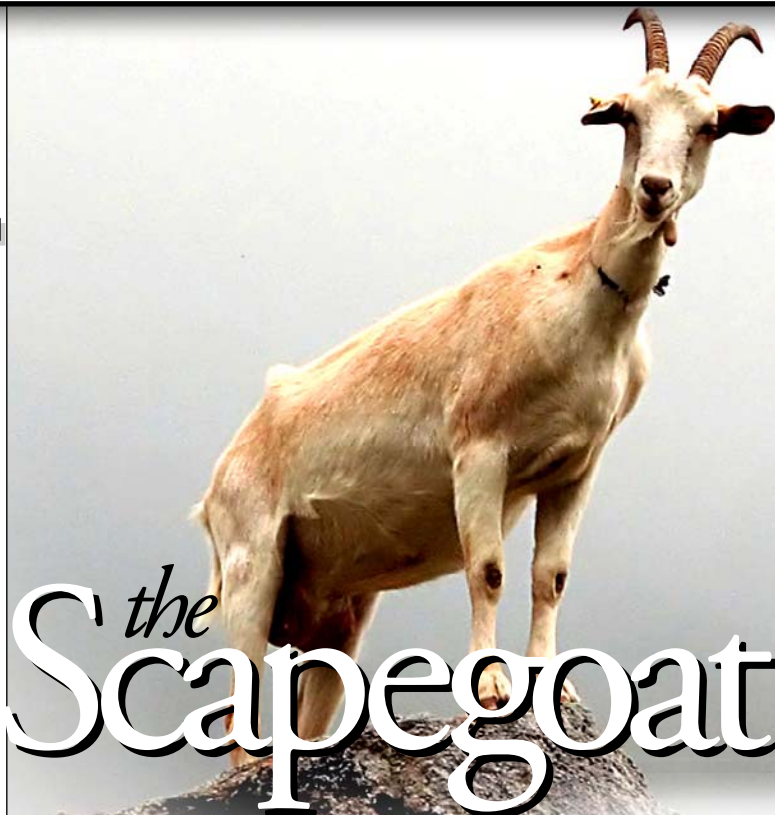
the Yom Kippur SACRIFICES

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Many people live by the principles of "modernity", the feeling that "anything that preceded me must be outdated". Some espouse the opinion of "animal cruelty" in connection with Temple sacrifice. Additional rejection of the sacrifices of Yom Kippur may arise due to their association with a long day of fasting, standing, and many uncomfortable restrictions. Are the Temple's "ancient" sacrifices just that – archaic, inapplicable, and even brutal acts, deserving our abandonment? Must our religiosity comply with our subjective feelings, or must "we" comply with these practices and ideas, regardless of our opinion of their inapplicability?

As Torah Jews who respect that all in our Torah is God's word, applicable for all time[1], we take a different road: we seek to discover the eternal truths contained in each of our precious Mitzvahs and ideals, instead of projecting our wishes on them. As Torah Jews, we know all

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the Scapegoat

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

The Scapegoat is a very unique sacrifice. All other sacrifices require slaughter and blood sprinkling, which is the fulfillment of the sacrifice and reflects the presence of atonement. However, the Scapegoat is brought to a desolate place and is brutally killed by being thrown over a precipice. Chazal teach us that the nations of the world criticize the B'nai Yisroel for its practice of the Scapegoat as being solely ritualistic and ceremonial. Although the gentiles have ritualistic practices, they are symbolic and their performances engender some emotional satisfaction unlike the Scapegoat. Judaism prides itself on the fact that one's commitment to the Torah is based upon his intellectual conviction and that its commandments are ethical and moral principles. We must therefore explain the significance of the Scapegoat and the intellectual insight the Torah is imparting to us.

The Eben Ezra gives us a clue as to the secret of the Scapegoat. He states that a basic secret of the Scapegoat is after the word "azazel" and when you are 33 years old you will know this secret. If one counts 33 verses from the word

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(Innuï cont. from pg. 1)

Yom Kippur

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reason for one to feel that to be close to G-d one must be totally removed from the physical. The Rambam, in the Fourth Chapter of his introduction to his commentary on Pirkei Avos, explains that the Torah does not value abstention the abstention from physical pleasures as an ends to itself, like taking on extra prohibitions. In fact, he says that the Torah is critical of the Nazir for taking added prohibitions upon himself, which is the reason why he must bring a sin-offering. Furthermore, we see that there are mitzvos that demand that a person engage in some physical pleasure, such as eating on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Of course, the reasoning of these types of mitzvos goes beyond the physical pleasure itself, but it is clear that the Torah makes use of these pleasures, demonstrating that bodily pleasures aren't viewed as inherently evil. This contrasts with the philosophy of Asceticism, a view that maintains that any physical pleasure is inherently evil and damaging to a person. Ascetics go to extreme lengths to avoid any and all worldly pleasures, for they feel that to be on a spiritual level, one must be removed from the physical world. Clearly the Torah labels such an opinion as false and untenable. G-d put man in this world as a physical being to utilize all of its opportunities for the service of G-d.

However, when we come to Yom Kippur we find a mitzvah which has a striking resemblance to asceticism, that of 'Innuï', affliction. The Torah says that on Yom Kippur one must afflict himself and separate from worldly pleasures. How do we understand this commandment in the framework of the Torah's view on worldly pleasures?

The Torah uses a similar term of Innuï by the event of the 'mon', the food which G-d gave to the Jews in the desert. Moshe Rabbeinu says, in Devarim 8:2, that G-d gave them the 'mon' "in order to afflict" them. There are two questions that must be asked on this statement. Firstly, what does it mean that the Jews were afflicted by their receiving the 'mon'? Where was the harm in their

receiving food? Secondly, what was the purpose of their affliction in the desert? What did it accomplish?

The Talmud, in Yoma 74b, addresses what the affliction was in receiving the 'mon'. According to one opinion, the affliction stemmed from the fact that they didn't have 'bread in the basket'. Rashi explains that each day, they only received enough 'mon' for that day so that they were concerned about what they would have to eat the next day. But we are still left with some questions. What is so bad about not having food stored up for the future, when G-d Himself said that He would provide it for them? Even more, we need to understand why this affliction was so important that G-d wanted the Jews to experience it; what is the big deal about not having food for tomorrow if don't need it now anyway?

If we look around at society, we can easily see that the Talmud has sharp insight into human psychology. We do not have to look far to see how people are so concerned with having food for the future; some people go so far as to have pantries and freezers filled with food for weeks to come, even if there is no need for it in the foreseeable future and despite the fact that it costs them money now. People do not just

get food when they need it; they want it way in advance, knowing that it is there for them. Having 'bread in the basket' certainly does provide people with a sense of security, and this is what the Talmud is talking about. Still, we need to ask why-- why is man so concerned with his food for weeks to come? What is this security that man looks for?

Food is a type of object that is distinct from all other types in that it is essential for a person's survival; without food, one will starve to death. This dependency on food means that a person must depend on something external to himself for his own existence. Because of this, man cannot be absolutely independent—he needs that which is external to himself and which he cannot provide

(continued on next page)

(Innuï continued from page 2)

Yom Kippur

by himself. This fact, however, isn't so simple for man to accept; man, by his very nature, thinks highly of himself and wants to feel as if he can do everything on his own. People don't like to feel that they are dependent on some external source or object for anything, and certainly not for their very survival and existence. Man's ego wants to convince him that he can control everything that affects him on his own. Because man resists accepting the reality of dependency, he must find ways to delude himself of this fact, and allow him to feel that he's not dependent in actuality. This is why we find people who constantly store food in their house, even before the need or the possibility of need for it arises. By storing food in one's house, a person can act as if he is independent and feel secure about his survival; he doesn't have to go anywhere or to anyone for his sustenance and he can feel that he has the ability to continue to survive on his own. With food within his own reach, he need not look anywhere else for his continued survival and, through this, he may feel independent.

With this principle in human psychology, we can now understand the affliction that the Jews experienced with the 'mon'. In the desert, the Jews never had this security since G-d only provided food for that day. Even though they didn't actually need more food at the time, there was still that part of them that wanted to feel independent and secure, which means having 'bread in the basket' so that they need not worry about tomorrow. This feeling of constant dependency was an 'affliction'; since its against the natural human desires, it had to cause some psychological pain.

Now we can explain why G-d did this to the Jews in the desert. The purpose of this affliction wasn't for them to just be in pain and insecurity; as we said before, there is no value in pain per se. G-d did this to them to teach them an idea that they must live by. There is only one source of security for man and that is G-d. If man wants to attain any sense of security so that he need not worry about his needs, then he must recognize his 'real dependence', namely that ultimately everything in the world comes from G-d and if one looks for sustenance he must look to G-d. When the Jews left Egypt they were on a low level; the Egyptian culture was based on idolatry and false notions about G-d and man's relationship to G-d. In the desert, G-d had to teach the Jews the correct view, which includes how man must view himself as a dependent being, looking to G-d for all his needs, despite the fact that man's emotional nature is to deny this and look for independence. This, then, was the lesson of the affliction of the 'mon' in the desert.

With this, we have a better understanding of what the Torah view of Innuï is. Innuï is not an idea of asceticism where man must pain himself

and be removed from the physical world to reach higher levels; rather, innui is an affliction on the instinctual, psychological part of man, where he undergoes some psychological pain to move closer to G-d and truth. By the 'mon' the affliction was in their having to give up the instinctual desire for independence so that they could properly view their dependency on G-d.

Now we can explain the concept behind Innuï on Yom Kippur. The main theme of Yom Kippur is Teshuvah, the process of repentance in which a person recognizes the evil of sin and abandons his sinful ways. In order to recognize the evil of sin, though, a person must see what is the good, for evil is defined as that which is not good. The Torah teaches us that the good is that which brings us closer to G-d, namely the study of His Torah, gaining knowledge of Him and following his commandments. Sin is where a person leaves this path because he values something else, namely that which brings him instinctual satisfaction. If man would work purely based on truth, he would see the good in G-d's Ways and Wisdom and not be interested in sin; it is the 'yetzer hora', the evil inclination in man, that is his instinctual part, which overpowers him and

influences him to sin. Teshuva, then, necessitates that one pull back from instinctual satisfaction and gain control over his desires in order to move closer to G-d. However, in order to do this, one must be able to undergo a certain amount of psychological pain so that he can withdraw his attraction to the instinct and channel this energy towards his service to G-d.

This then is the concept of Innuï on Yom Kippur. The affliction that man undergoes by abstaining from these physical pleasures is essentially tied to the theme of Teshuva. True repentance, that is leaving the instinctual desires for the higher good of pursuing G-d, demands that one be 'afflicted' not for the pain itself but rather so that he may pull away from his involvement and attraction to the physical pleasure and channel that energy towards the real good. Part of abandoning sin is the removal of energy from that desire for satisfaction. By its very nature, this process demands a certain amount of pain since that part of him will then be left unsatisfied. However, after this stage of Innuï, man can use that energy and sublimate it towards the true good, that of pursuing G-d through the Torah, and then live the most pleasurable life possible for man. ■



(Scapegoat continued from page 1)

Yom Kippur

“ha'midbarah”, the word after “azazel”, which appears in Leviticus, chapter 16 verse 10, one may get a clue. The verse that is being referred to is 17,7. The verse states: “They should no longer sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs that lead them astray. Rashi explains the word l'saerim to mean l'shaydim, unto the demons. The Eben Ezra is teaching us that if one desires an insight into the Scapegoat he [sic] must recognize that adhering to this practice will lead one to the practice stated in chapter 7 verse 17. The Israelites will no longer turn astray and sacrifice to the demons as the nations of the world. We will explain this insight after we examine several salient laws with respect to the Scapegoat. It is interesting to note that the Rambam holds that the Scapegoat renders atonement without repentance for all commandments that are not punishable by kares, excision. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's position in the Talmud, although we do not rule like him, is that even the “day of Yom Kippur” itself effectuates atonement. We must appreciate how atonement works, if the sinner is not repentant. Halachically, Teshuva implies that one must return to God. His relationship with the creator must be rekindled as a result of his recognizing the cause of his sin and being able to elevate himself to a higher intellectual level. The individual is a changed person, one who is no longer drawn by the temptations of the instinctual nor the frailties of the emotional components of his nature, which causes him to commit the sin. We therefore must understand how does the mere practice of the Scapegoat grant atonement to a sinner?

The last Mishna in the tractate of Yumah quotes a statement of Rabbi Akiva, which states “Happy are you Israel before whom you are purified, and who purifies you, your Father in heaven.” This is a puzzling statement. Anybody who performs Teshuva and returns to God, as a result of his own actions, is purified before God. This applies even to a Gentile. Why then does Rabbi Akiva specify a Jew; and furthermore it seems from his statement that Teshuva is extraneous to this purification process. We must try to comprehend Rabbi Akiva's teaching.

Nachmanides comments on the Eben Ezra, explaining the service of the Scapegoat discusses a Medrash. The Medrash says that the children of Jacob give Samael, their prosecuting angel, a bribe on Yom Kippur. This bribe is the sacrificial Scapegoat. It is given so that he should not annul their sacrifices. The Scapegoat has all the sins of the Children of Israel on its head, as set out in the verses in the Torah. The Medrash continues, “as a result Samael will see that there is no sin on Yom Kippur and will explain before God, ‘Creator of the world, there is one nation in this world which are akin to the ministering angels. Just like the ministering angels are bare footed, so too on this


day the Jews are bare footed’.” Samael makes similar observations when addressing God with respect to eating, drinking, standing all day, making peace amongst themselves and being free of sin. In all these activities the Jewish people on Yom Kippur are comparable to the ministering angels. The Holy One upon hearing these testimonies from the prosecutor Samael, makes atonement for the altar, the sanctuary, the priests of Israel and for all the people of the assembly of Israel. This is the Agadah that the Rambam quotes to help us understand the Scapegoat.

This Agadah raises several questions: Who is Samael and how is he bribed? Originally the purpose of the bribe is so that the sacrifices should not be annulled, however the seeming result of the

bribe is that it is responsible for the entire atonement of Yom Kippur. Maimonides, in his “Guide for the Perplexed” states that Samael is the appellation applied by our sages to Satan. The derivation of the word Samael is “Sam-El”, the blinding of God. Samael represents that part of human nature, which blinds the individual from perceiving the ultimate reality, God. The Yetzer Harah and Satan are used interchangeably by Chazal and represent man's evil inclination which is rooted in his physical nature. Chazal use the term Satan, which implies something external to man, to signify that this part of man is not his essence. Rather the tzelem Elokim – intelligence – is man's essence. Chazal use the term Yetzer Harah to teach

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ROSH HASHANNAH

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us that although it is not man's essence, we are nevertheless responsible for this part of us. The key to understanding the Scapegoat is appreciating its inexorable connection to the atonement of Yom Kippur. There were two goats, which were subject to the lottery. One was designated for God and was brought upon the altar as a sacrifice. The second goat was designated l'azazel and was the saeer ha'mishtaleyach, the goat that was sent away to meet its final destiny in the desert. The atonement of the day of Yom Kippur was really a result of the goat that was designated l'azazel and not the one that was brought as a sacrifice. The atonement of Yom Kippur is unique because it atones for many sins, kalot vechamurot, lenient and stringent sins. Whereas a korban chatas is brought for a particular maaseh aveira, act of violation, and atones for that particular sin. On Yom Kippur "lifneh Hashem tetaharu", we are purified before God. The essential character of the day atones. This is a different type of forgiveness than a specific korban chatas, a sin offering. Yom Kippur is related to the state of the gavra, the individual. The day atones the individual. A person, who appreciates the sanctity of the day, demonstrates that he, as an individual, is worthy of forgiveness. Consequently, this new status results in the removal of the particular sins.

An understanding of the service of the Scapegoat gives us insight into the essential nature of the sanctity of Yom Kippur and its function as a purifier. The Scapegoat atoned for all the sins of the Jews. Leviticus Chapter 16, Verses 21 and 22 tells us that Aaron placed his hands on the Scapegoat and confessed all the sins of the Children of Israel and all their transgressions, and placed them on the head of the Azazel goat. How does this goat serve to forgive all the sins of the Jewish people? The Torah is teaching us that the sins of man are really separate and extraneous to his essential nature. Aaron was capable of removing all of man's sins and placing them on the head of the goat. The Scapegoat as stated, represents the Satan, man's evil inclination, the part of man driven by his fantasy. This service signifies that the part of man, which is based upon his emotions and fueled by his fantasy, is really not reflective of man's true essence, his Tzelem Elokim, his intelligence. This part of man, his instinctual nature, may be severed from his true nature. However, if man follows his fantasies and his evil inclination, he is doomed as the Scapegoat, to face a brutal and lonely death.

The Midrash quoted by Nachmanides can now be understood. We bribe Samael and give him the Scapegoat. We, as Torah Jews, recognize that the pursuit of the fantasy blinds us from perceiving "chachmas haboreh", the wisdom of our Creator. We acknowledge by the service of the Scapegoat, that there is a spiritually higher nature to man, his true essence that we value. As Torah Jews, we

thereby attempt to lead our lives based upon the Tzelem Elokim. By bribing Samael, we acknowledge that there is a part of man's nature, which is overpowering. However, we cannot deny our instinctual nature, but must acknowledge that it stems from the lower part of man's being, and as such, must be dealt with. If we deny our instinctual nature "Samael", it can have tragic consequences. On the contrary, we recognize the instinctual part of man's nature but acknowledge our life long struggle as Torah Jews to separate that part of our nature from the Tzelem Elokim. Only by "bribing" Samael and recognizing the potent powers of fantasy, can we hope to ever be successful in combating these forces and removing them from overwhelming our actions as Torah Jews. We demonstrate that ultimately if one is led astray by the powers of the fantasy, he will surely perish and be doomed to spiritual genocide.

The Scapegoat was taken to the desert by the "ish iti", a specially prepared man. This demonstrates that the ultimate destruction of the Scapegoat is not fortuitous. Rather, it is a necessary result that the pursuits of the fantasy will lead to ones downfall. That is why the ish iti was mezuman l'kach, was prepared for this job, to ensure and guarantee that the Scapegoat would meet its eventual destruction. This recognition by Klal Yisroel that we appreciate the overwhelming force of man's instinctual nature and constantly strive to overcome it and elevate our lives to a higher spiritual plane, makes us akin to the mal'achey hashares, ministering angels. This causes Samael to remark that on Yom Kippur the Children of Israel are like the Ministering Angels. The Ministering Angels are not under the influence of the instinctual, they are not swayed by emotions. Similarly on Yom Kippur the Jewish people demonstrate through the prohibitions of the day (eating, drinking, cohabitation, and wearing leather shoes etc.) that we abstain from these physical pleasures to demonstrate that there is a higher part to man's existence.

This explains how the Scapegoat atones for all sins. Since man recognizes this concept and appreciates that his physical existence leads him on the path of Samael, he must strive through chachma, wisdom, to live life based upon his Tzelem Elokim, and thus become a different type of person. Yom Kippur is a day of reality whereby he recognizes the dangers in his daily existence of Samael, but elevates himself on this day to be purified before Hashem. This explains that although a person did not do teshuva on a particular maaseh aveira, act of sin, but since he recognizes the consequences of Samael and that man's true essence is chachma, he has elevated himself to higher spiritual level and he is a being worthy of forgiveness.

We can now understand the reason why there are two goats, one for Hashem and one for azazel. This represents man's dual nature, his intellect that is l'Hashem and his instinctual which is l'azazel. In order to have the sacrifice to Hashem, you must have the Scapegoat. One cannot be successful in his struggle as a talmid chachom unless he recognizes the lower part of human nature. Intellectual perfection cannot be achieved if one simply represses his instinctual nature. By repressing one's instinctual nature it still remains an influential part of his personality.

The many meticulous details with respect to the performance of the Scapegoat also evidences this concept. A person is driven to the life of the physical by many powerful forces. Each of these drives is shattered by the method of performance mandated by the Torah by bringing the Scapegoat. A person is drawn to the life of the material because of the enticements of the physical pleasures that one imagines is comforting when living an instinctual existence. This is why the Scapegoat is brutally thrown over the cliff to a torturous death. This represents that visions of physical pleasures are illusory and transitory and ultimately will result in a painful shattering of such false emotions. A person is also drawn to the life of the physical because he feels that material success garners respect and popular acceptance by the masses. Therefore the Scapegoat is sent out with one man, alone without any fanfare, to a desolate and lonely place in the desert. This demonstrates that leading a life of materialism will ultimately and invariably result in a lonely and desolate existence. Lastly, a person is fooled by the entrapments of a physical existence in order to insulate himself from the limited nature of such an existence and to cater to his fantasy of immortality. Thus the Scapegoat always meets the same destiny, a harsh and cruel termination, to help emasculate any such fantasies that a person may harbor.

We can now appreciate Rabbi Akiva's statement quoted in the last Mishna in Tractate Yumah. "Happy are the Children of Israel because they are purified before God." Although it might be possible in isolated cases for individuals to come to the true recognition of God, however, for a nation of people, on such a large scale, it is impossible. How fortunate are we Torah Jews who have a system of Torah and Mitzvos, (that contains the abstract and beautiful practice of the Scapegoat), a system based upon chachma that allows us to recognize man's true nature and remove ourselves from living a purely physical existence, the life of fantasy that ultimately leads to man's downfall. Therefore Rabbi Akiva exalts "how happy are we the nation of Israel that we are fortunate to such a blessing." ■

that God commanded does not expire, as man's nature does not expire. As Adam was created, and as the Jews existed at Sinai when they received these commands, so are we today: possessing those identical faculties and desires. As such, we are no less in need of the Torah's sacrifices and their lessons. The sacrifices address our human nature today, and it is only due to our sins, that the Temple is non-existent, and our levels are degraded by its absence. But we may still perfect ourselves to a great degree by understanding the underlying ideas of the Yom Kippur sacrifices; we must study the characteristics and requirements of the sacrifices. We must review the Torah, Talmud, and our sages, such as Maimonides, Ramban, Rashi and Ibn Ezra.

Two Goats

I will address just two of the Yom Kippur sacrifices: the two goats upon which a lottery was cast. Two goats – preferably with similar visual features, height, and cost – were presented in the Temple. The priest would blindly draw a lot, which contained both God's name and that of Azazel. Each goat was designated for the lot placed on it. The scapegoat – the one sent to its death off Mount Azazel – is described as “carrying all the sins of the Jews”[2]. This goat atoned for all sins, provided one repented. The other goat dedicated as a sin offering in the Temple atoned only for the sins of the Jews in their defiled entry to the Temple sanctuary.

What is the reason for the goat's similarity? Why was their designation for either a sin offering in the Temple, or Mount Azazel, decided by a lottery? Why do we require two goats: cannot a single goat atone for all sins? What was significant about Mount Azazel? And why was there a service of clouding the Holy of Holies where the Ark resided, included in the process of sacrificing these two goats?

Furthermore, we are struck by the Torah's placement of the Yom Kippur sacrifices in Parshas Achrei Mos[3] immediately subsequent to the death of Aaron's two sons who offered a “strange fire”: an offering not commanded by God. What was the gravity of their sin, that God killed them? And what is the connection between Aaron's sons' sin and the Yom Kippur sacrifices, that the Torah joins the two in one section? We also wonder what God means by His critique of Aaron's two sons, “And you shall not come at all times to the Holy of Holies behind the Parochesh [curtain] before the Kaporess[4] which is on the Ark, so none shall die...for in cloud do I [God] appear on the Kaporess”.[5] What is the stress of “for in cloud do I appear on the Kaporess”? What is the significance again of “cloud”? And finally, why, after concluding the section on Yom Kippur sacrifices,

does the Torah continue with the restriction of sacrificing outside the Temple, with the punishment of one's soul being cut off? In that section[6] God warns the Jews about sacrificing to demons [imaginary beings] and also warns about eating blood, which also meets with the loss of one's soul. Maimonides teaches that the practice of eating blood was imagined by those sinners to provide them comradery with assumed spirits, and that those sinners would benefit by such a union. Although the questions are many, I believe one idea will answer the all.

The Scapegoat

What is the significance of Yom Kippur? It is the day when we are forgiven. What does “forgiveness” imply? It implies that we sin. And in what does man sin? This is where I believe we can answer all our questions.

We readily answer that we sin by deviating from God's commands. The worst sin, of course, is idolatry, where we assume the greatest error: other powers exist, besides God. If one assumes this fatal error, his concept of God is false, and his soul cannot enjoy the afterlife, which is a greater connection with the one, true God. This explains why those sinners who sacrificed to imaginary beings – demons – and those who eat blood, lose their eternal life. And even if these exact practices are not performed, but one harbors the thought that there exists powers other than God, be they powers assumed to exist in physical objects, or even in the Torah's words...such individuals also cross that line of idolatry.

The Scapegoat – the one goat sent to its death off Mount Azazel – was to atone for all our sins. Sin emanates from a disregard of God and His word, but in its most grave form, idolatry. The Rabbis say that the Scapegoat is not sacrificed, but hurled from a peak downwards, to prevent us from assuming it is a ‘sacrifice’ to those demons, normally associated with the wilderness where Mount Azazel is located. By destroying the Scapegoat and not sacrificing it, we actively deny any claim of those desert-based demons, or truths about comradery with spirits by eating blood from sacrifices to demons. We wish to deny any and all claims of assumed powers, other than God. Our atonement is effectuated through the Scapegoat, by admitting the fallacy of idolatry, and the rejection of any intelligent existence besides God, His angels, or man. Nothing else exists that is self-aware; nothing else besides God, His angels, and man, possess any intelligence, or capabilities other than natural laws. The Scapegoat thereby undermines and utterly rejects man's path where he deviates from Torah practice. But there is another area of sin.

The Other Sin

“And they brought before God a strange fire, which He had not commanded them[7]”. Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu expressed the other area of sin: man-made, religious practice. Although we assume sin to be solely identified as deviation from the Torah as seen in idolatry, sin also exists when we attempt to approach God, but with our own devices, as the verse states, “And they brought before God a strange fire...”. “Before God” is the operative phrase. Nadav and Avihu intended to approach God, not in accord with His ways, but with their own. The Rabbis stated, “The Jews desired to contain the Evil Instinct. It exited as a fiery lion from the Holy of Holies. They attempted to retrain the lion by seizing its mane, but it let out a loud roar.” Regarding this Talmudic metaphor, a Rabbi once asked what was most significant. He answered, “the fact that the instincts were exiting the Temple's Holy of Holies”. What does this mean? It means that man's instincts are most powerful – like a fiery lion – in connection with the most religious of activities and locations: the Holy of Holies. We need not look far to realize this truth, as demonstrated in Jihads and other holy wars. Religion is a great target for man's instincts, as in this area he is greatly motivated. In unguided religious expression, man's emotions will take over, as seen in Aaron's two sons who wished religious expression of their own creation. The existence of so many divergent man-made religions proves this point that man wishes subjective religious expression.

It is this sin, I believe, that the second Yom Kippur goat addresses. This second, goat sin offering was brought in the Temple, and not sent to the wilderness as the other, for it is this goat that addresses man's sin in the Temple. Man requires recognizing his sin in both deviating from God, and in approaching God. God too addresses these two deviances with His commands not to add to, or subtract from the Torah. Subtracting from the Torah parallels the Scapegoat, where man abandons Torah and God in place of demons; and adding to the Torah parallels the sin of Nadav and Avihu who expressed an addition to the Torah's prescribed commands, corrected by this second goat brought in the Temple to atone for the Jews' sins in Temple.

God's Arrangement of Torah Sections

We can now readily understand why God placed the Yom Kippur sacrifices in His Torah, between the sin of Nadav and Avihu and the prohibition to sacrifice to demons. It is because Yom Kippur sacrifice intends to address man's two areas of sin: the over religious sin seen in Nadav and Avihu,

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Yom Kippur

and the lack of religiosity seen in demon sacrifice, where one does not approach God, but runs from Him towards imagined imposters. Yom Kippur atones for us by directing our attention to the two areas of human sin: non-religious, and over religious. We are alerted to apply this lesson to our own deviances. The non-religious person assumes more knowledge than God, as he feels he understands better how the world operates. He therefore creates his own demons, and worships them. He is lacking an understanding of the One Creator, as he assumes multiple forces. The over religious person feels otherwise: he feels safe, as he "approaches God" as did Aaron's sons. He feels with his intent to serve God, anything goes. He feels he can create new modes of religious practice, and that he will find favor in God's eyes. But the Torah's response for both is death of some kind. Thus, "any" deviation – even when our intent is to serve God – is construed by God as sin.

Perhaps the need for two goats is derived from our two areas of deviance. And perhaps, as one goat addresses the abandoning of God in idolatry, that same goat is unfit to address our faulted approach to God: idolatry is a far greater crime: idolatry errs about God Himself, while over religiosity errs about His will. But both goats are preferably identical, to teach that either goat satisfies one or the other requirement, since there is nothing in the goat per se that atones, but it is our understanding and conviction in their respective 'lessons', that truly atones for us. The lottery also contributes to removing any significance to either goat, as each was picked by "chance".

Cloud

Why was there a service of "clouding" the Holy of Holies where the Ark resided, included in the service of Yom Kippur? And why was God's response to Nadav and Avihu, "for in cloud do I [God] appear on the Kaporets"? Cloud was also present at God's Revelation at Sinai. What is the commonality?

Nadav and Avihu violated the principle that God is unknowable, by assuming they knew how to approach God. Thus, God responds that He appears in cloud. What is cloud? It represents man's blindness. Man is blind about God's nature, and also about how to approach Him, without Torah. Nadav and Avihu's sin was in their denial of their ignorance concerning God. God therefore reiterated to Moses and Aaron the concept of man's blind ignorance, by describing how He appears in cloud. And again in our yearly Yom Kippur service, we must reiterate our agreement with our ignorant natures, by clouding the holiest of all places, the Holy of Holies. Our religious practice must contain a service that demonstrates our ignorance. Our atonement relies on a rejection of our instinctual, religious fabrication.



Application for Today

It is vital that in our approach to God, that we be so careful not to add to Torah commands, regardless of the popularity of new practices, even among religious Jews. Our barometer for what is God's intent, is God's word alone. We must not fall prey to our need for human approval, that we blindly accept what the masses of religious Jews perpetrate as Torah. If we are truly careful, and seek out authentic, authoritative Torah sources, we will discover what is true Torah, and what violates God's words.

In a conversation with a dear friend recently, I was asked what I felt about certain Kabbalistic views. They included these: that cut fingernails are dangerous; that people might hurt us with evil eyes; that reciting the letters of God's name offers man power; and other nonsensical positions. My first response was that there is doubt as to the authenticity of the Zohar, and further, Zohar is not the Torah given by God at Sinai. But regardless, I told this friend that if an idea makes no sense, it matters none if a Rabbi wrote it, for even Moses, the most perfected intellect erred. Therefore, no man alive today is infallible. So quoting the Zohar is meaningless, if the idea violates Torah and reason.

God gave each of us a Tzelem Elokim – intelligence – that we must engage, and not ignore. Regardless of the prevalence of practices in religious Jewish communities, we have intelligence with which we may discern what makes sense, and what is nonsense. It matters none if the practice is a sacrifice to demons, or a practice that includes a Torah object like a mezuzah, a challah, or if one cites an accepted book authored by a Rabbi. We have the Torah's authentic principles to guide us towards reasonable practices. Just as demons and their assumed powers are imagined, so are the

powers assume to exist in challas, red bendels, mezuzas, or reciting Torah verses with the intent to heal the sick.

Religious deviance seeks substantiation by including Torah articles in man made practice, and as we learn from Nadav and Avihu, any deviation from God's commands – even to approach Him – is a sin. If you are in doubt to the validity of a practice, study the Torah, read the Shulchan Aruch, or ask a Rabbi to show you a source. But if you find no source for a given practice, do not follow it. And many times with your mind alone, you can uncover the falsehood in popular claims.

This Yom Kippur, break free from what is popular, comfortable, or falsely promises success and health. "Teshuva, Tefila and Tzedaka", repentance, prayer and charity, are what God deems as our correct response:

Do Teshuva from false notions and actions, regardless of their popularity, for you exist to follow God, not to impress your neighbor by copying their errors.

Pray to God to direct you to new truths, to forgive and purify you, and to help you abandon fallacy. And if your Hebrew reading is not excellent, pray in English or your own language, for prayer is meaningless if you do not understand what you recite.

And give charity to recognize your own insignificance, to break loose of our attachment to wealth, and recognize that God alone grants wealth. Assist others, recognizing them as God's creation, and show them pity, as you wish God to show you.

Use God laws alone to secure your good life, and do not continue in the sins of abandoning God, or attempting to serve Him in way He did not command. The Scapegoat teaches that our imagination is destructive, and the goat sin offering curbs our over religious tendencies. We must learn where these lessons may apply to each one of us, for we all have false notions in connection with purely instinctual needs, and religious needs. Be guided by reason, by God's precisely worded Torah. And may we all forgive, be forgiven, and enjoy a new year of life, health, wealth and happiness that can only come from careful Torah adherence. ■

[1] See Maimonides' 13 Principles

[2] Lev. 16:22

[3] Lev. 16:1-34

[4] The Kaporets was the Ark's lid formed of solid gold, with the figurines of two cherubim – childlike creatures with wings.

[5] Lev. 16:2

[6] Lev. 17:1-16

[7] Lev. 10:1