



Yom Kippur

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Ramban's Goat of Azazel: Devil Worship or Greatest Praise? Adam Frieberg

Relating to the temple service, with its many sacrifices, is hard for many of us in the year 5774. The disconnect is highlighted by the fact that much of our prayer service on Yom Kippur is dedicated to recounting, in great length and exquisite detail, the step-by-step procedure that the kohen gadol followed on this most holy day. Many of the actions of the kohen gadol require explanation and analysis – but the "goat of Azazel" truly begs for further explanation. While we may not be fully conversant in the laws of sacrifices, we know enough to realize that throwing a goat, on which we have confessed our sins, off a cliff, is not a normal part of our sacrificial service - but the Torah (Vayikra 16:22) obligates us to carry out this procedure on every Yom Kippur. What is this about?

Ibn Ezra, despite providing a cryptic hint, claims that the meaning of this practice is hidden. Ramban then offers a lengthy explanation in which he says that he will be the "talebearer who reveals his [Ibn Ezra's] secret." He explains that there is a celestial officer named Samael who "rules in the desolate places" and has the power to cause destruction and desolation. The gist of Ramban's explanation is first found in a midrash (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer HaGadol Chapter 46), which describes the goat of Azazel as a bribe that the Jewish people give to Samael on Yom Kippur "so that he not subvert their offering" by prosecuting them in the heavenly court. The midrash explains that Samael will find no sin amongst the children of Israel, and therefore he will compare them, in every way, to angels, who neither eat

nor drink, don't wear shoes, stand, and are free of sin. Ramban explains that the goat is not a sacrifice to Samael, and this is why we do not slaughter it; rather, it is a bribe.

After contemplating Ramban's explanation – and it would be worthwhile to read his text in the original – an immediate reaction might be: Isn't this idol worship? Does this practice really fit into Jewish belief and practice, especially on the holiest day of the year? Ramban attempts to address this question through a parable: A man made a feast for the king, and the king commanded him to feed a certain person. It is clear that the host isn't giving of his own to this man; rather, it is now the king's food, and the host the host is a conduit providing food for this man on behalf of the king. So, too, we offer this goat to Samael as messengers of G-d, who has commanded us to provide this bribe. Our intention is solely to fulfill the command of our Creator.

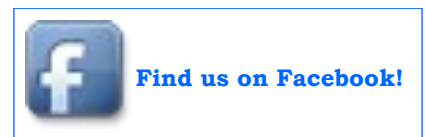
Despite the above explanation, a bigger question yet remains: Accepting Ramban's view of Samael, why are we scared of the potential curses of this demonic being? Are we not confident that G-d will judge us based on our true merits? Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz points to a comment by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch to shed light on the nature of Ramban's Samael, which is also known as Satan.

G-d declared to Kayin (Bereishit 4:7), "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at your door. It

desires you, but you can conquer it." The normal reading of the end of this verse is that a Satan, or evil inclination, wants to ensnare you, but you can overcome it. However, Rabbi Hirsch continues, quoting a midrashic idea, "Satan comes from G-d to tempt human beings; when they have yielded to his temptations, he goes up and complains to G-d." Rabbi Hirsch's point is that this Satan does not want us to fail; rather, his goal is to push us to levels we thought were beyond us, and cause us to conquer new challenges. [Note that the biblical term Satan, as seen in Bamidbar 22:22, refers to an obstruction or hurdle.]

Applying Rabbi Hirsch's idea to Ramban's explanation of the goat of Azazel: On Yom Kippur we put our sins on this goat and push it over a cliff to demonstrate defeating Satan/Samael. Satan is happy to lose, and so, as Ramban's midrash says, this is a gift for him; his mission was to help us achieve our greatest potential. The ritual of the goat of Azazel celebrates our greatest achievement. We have defeated the Satan and provided him the opportunity to sing our praise, and so we celebrate the heights we have achieved and present them to G-d on this holy day.

afrieberg@torontotorah.com



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Is Azazel a person, place, or thing? (Vayikra 16:8)

- **Rashi** claims it is a strong, harsh mountain, with a high cliff.
- **Ibn Ezra** explains that it is a mighty mountain. He also cites one opinion which suggests that it is near Sinai.
- **Ramban** disagrees with Rashi's interpretation, and then cites mystical and kabbalistic sources to explain the true nature and meaning of Azazel. These are best seen in the Ramban's commentary.
- **Chizkuni** explains that it refers to Sama'el, and the goat is a gift to him so he will not nullify the Yom Kippur service (See Ramban for a more in-depth discussion).

What is the meaning of Yom Kippur's title, *shabbat shabbaton*? (Vayikra 16:31)

- **Ibn Ezra** notes that according to some authorities the double expression of *Shabbat* refers to a rest for both the body and the soul, while others suggest that it means the highest level of *shevitah*.
- **Meshech Chochmah** suggests that the plural mention of *shevitah* hints at the multiple behaviors from which we refrain on Yom Kippur. As explained by Rabbeinu Nisim to Yoma 74a, citing the Ramban, the Torah prescribed general *innui* (oppression) for Yom Kippur, and left it to the sages to define the specific proscriptions which would create *innui*: bathing, anointing

one's skin and marital relations. These are included in *shabbat shabbaton*.

- **R' S.R. Hirsch** explains that refraining from *melachah* on Shabbat is an expression of G-d's Kingship. On Yom Kippur, though, we express not only G-d's sovereignty, but also our own unworthiness for our gifts and existence. *Shabbat* highlights our lack of justification for the power given to Man, and *shabbat shabbaton* highlights our lack of justification for Man's existence itself. This is why we afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur; we refrain not only from exercising our creative power through *melachah*, but also from eating and drinking, our means of existing.

What is learned from the words *vachai bahem*, "You shall live through them"? (Vayikra 18:5)

- **The Talmud, in Sanhedrin 74**, deduces from this verse that it is better for one to violate a Torah command than to give up his life, since the commands were given in order that, "You shall live through them." (The classic exceptions to this rule are: Idolatry, illicit relations, murder, and public violation of any command.)
- **Onkelos** reads the phrase as referring to life in the world to come; you will "live" if you observe the commandments.

- **Rashi** reads it as Onkelos does, noting that it can't refer to this world since Man is destined to die.
- **Rashbam**, presumably in response to his grandfather's logical argument above, suggests that this phrase *does* refer to life in this world. He says that one who violates these laws will have his life cut short, and so, in a manner of speaking, one will be granted life for following these laws.
- **Ma'ayan Beit HaShoeivah** asks how Onkelos/Rashi and the gemara can learn two opposing ideas from the very same verse. His answer, though too long to be recorded here in its entirety, is that life in the world to come and the rule stated in the gemara are actually the same point.

For children: Was the fish which swallowed Yonah male or female?

Rashi, based on the change of gender in the verses, suggests that Yonah was originally swallowed by a male fish. Because he had space, though, Yonah felt no need to pray for HaShem's help. Therefore, HaShem had the male fish spit him into the mouth of a female fish where Yonah had less space due to her fetuses (or eggs according to some), and so he davened for HaShem to save him.

meir.lipschitz@gmail.com

613 Mitzvot: #295-296

The Avodah of Yom Kippur

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

We normally think of Yom Kippur in terms of its contemporary mitzvot: Repenting and reciting the apologetic *viduy*, fasting, not wearing leather shoes, not bathing for pleasure, and refraining from marital relations. In generations which have a Beit haMikdash, though, Yom Kippur's central focus is the *avodah* [service] performed therein, as described in Parshat Acharei Mot and Parshat Pinchas and constituted in the Torah's 185th mitzvah.

Per *Sefer haChinuch*, the service of Yom Kippur includes:

- The daily korban tamid, morning and evening;
- When Yom Kippur is Shabbat, the Shabbat korban musaf;
- A bull, a ram and seven sheep as a korban musaf;
- A goat as a korban chatat;
- A ram as a korban olah;
- Two goats, one as a korban chatat and the other as the *sa'ir la'azazel* "scapegoat" sent out into the wilderness.

In our temporary lack of a Beit haMikdash, the central component of the musaf amidah is a *piyut* which describes how the kohen gadol carries out this service.

It may seem odd that a day which is dedicated to repentance should revolve around rituals of sacrifice. Realize, though, that since the earliest biblical times, sacrifice has been a means of drawing closer to G-d. G-d showed approval of Hevel when he brought a gift to G-d, and Kayin saw rejection of his gift as rejection of himself. After the Flood, Noach demonstrated that humanity could be generous and giving by offering of his own to G-d. When the Jews arrived at Har Sinai, they brought offerings to G-d. It is not that G-d needs these offerings, but that they demonstrate our desire to give.

The kohen gadol and his assistants are the only ones to perform these rites, but the *avodah* has a major impact upon every Jew. Imagine what it must be like, to know that once the kohanim have brought the offerings and performed their associated actions, we are absolved from the sins for which we have repented! Would that we could experience such closure.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Spira

Josh Gutenberg

Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Spira was born in Galicia in 1783. As a student of both Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz (the Chozeh of Lublin), and his uncle, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (author of *Noam Elimelech*), he learned with some of the greatest Hasidic teachers of his time.

Rabbi Spira served as Rabbi in several Polish cities. While living in Munkacz, he forbade the practice of force-feeding animals, upsetting many of the wealthy members of the community. Rabbi Spira was compelled to leave the city, and he went to Dinov, where he served as Rabbi for the remainder of his life. During his rabbinic tenure, he was outspoken in opposing the Enlightenment movement then spreading throughout Europe.

Rabbi Spira wrote several books relating to Jewish law and Hasidic thought. He is best known for the book, *Bnei Yissaschar*, the name by which he is commonly known. The book is written based on the events of the Jewish calendar; it is divided into twelve sections, each section relating to one of the months of the year. He writes essays, interweaving both legal and kabbalistic concepts, discussing the holidays and other important dates that fall out in each month. He titled the book *Bnei Yissaschar*, because the Chozeh of Lublin told him that he was a descendant of the tribe of Yissaschar, experts regarding matters dealing with the calendar. Other books that he wrote include *Agra DeKallah*, a commentary on the torah, and *Derech Pikudecha*, a work based on mysticism and the 613 mitzvot.

Rabbi Spira's descendants played an important role in the Hasidic community. His grandson, Rabbi Shlomo Spira, served as the rabbi of Munkacz some fifty years after he left the city, and was the founder and first rebbe of the Munkacz Hasidim, who have communities in several cities around the world.

Rabbi Spira died in 1841, at the age of 58. His legacy remains strong, as *Bnei Yissaschar* is still highly regarded by many Hasidic sects and is widely studied until today.

jjgutenberg@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

Shabbat and Yom Kippur

Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Spira
Bnei Yissaschar, Tishrei 6:17-18
Translated by Josh Gutenberg

(ז) אלמלי שמרו ישראל ב' שבתות מיד נגאלין [שבת קיח ב]. ראיתי בספר אחד קדוש מדבר, "היינו כד איקלע ב' שבתות ביחד, היינו דאיקלע יום הכפורים בשבת, ונראה לפרש שהוא על דרך ויחזו את האלקים ויאכלו וישתו [שמות כד יא], ומתרגמינן והוון חדין בקורבניהן דאיתקבלו ברעוא כאילו אכלן ושתן," ע"כ

והנה יום הכפורים הוא יום שאין בו אכילה ולא שתיה וא"כ אין כאן עונג שבת, אבל כשמתקבלים הקרבנות של יום הכפורים ברצון א"כ יש תענוג כמו אכילה ושתיה, א"כ יש כאן שמירת ב' השבתות, שבינת יום הכפורים בעינוי ושבינת שבת באכילה.

וכן בגלותינו ונשלמה פרים שפתינו כאשר נתבשר מן הש"י שנתקבלו ברצון תפלתנו במקום הקרבנות לרצון לפני ד' ויען ויאמר סלחתי, א"כ יהיה שבינת ב' השבתות ביחד העינוי והעונג, אז מיד נגאלין, כן יאמר השי"ת במהרה בימינו.

(יח) בספר עקרי דינים חלק או"ח סימן ל"א אות ו', המתענה תענית חלום בערב יום כפורים צריך למינת תענית לתעניתו, ולפי מה שכתב משאת בנימין דאם חל תענית ציבור למחרתו אינו עולה לכאן ולכאן וכו' אמנם להרב כנסת הגדולה וכו' דעולה תענית ציבור לזה ולזה וכו' עיין שם.

ונ"ל לדעה זו דאם מתענה תענית חלום בשבת תשובה יום ח' דימי תשובה דאין צריך למינת תענית לתעניתו, דאכילה ושתיה של ערב יום כפורים מיקרי תענית כמו שאמרו רז"ל כל האוכל ושותה בתשיעי מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מתענה תשיעי ועשירי [ברכות ח ב] וא"כ הוה כתענית צבור.

ועוד נ"ל יותר מזה דאם אירע לו חלום בערב יום כפורים דאין צריך להתענות תענית חלום דאכילה ושתיה נקראים תענית ביום זה מן התורה.

17) "If the Jewish people were to observe two Shabbatot, they would be redeemed immediately (Talmud Shabbat 118b)." I saw in the book *Echad Kadosh Medaber*, "This is when two Shabbatot coincide, which occurs when Yom Kippur arrives on Shabbat. The idea can be explained along the same lines as 'They gazed at G-d, and they ate and drank,' (Exodus 24:11) which we translate as, 'they rejoiced that their sacrifices were favourably accepted, so that it was as if they ate and drank.'"

Yom Kippur is a day on which we neither eat nor drink and therefore [when it falls out on Shabbat] there is no enjoyment of Shabbat. However, when the Yom Kippur sacrifices are favourably accepted there is enjoyment similar to eating and drinking. In such a situation, there is the observance of two Shabbatot: the observance of Yom Kippur through affliction and the observance of Shabbat through eating.

Similarly in our exile, when "our prayers complete the sacrifices" (Hosheia 14:3), when we are informed by G-d that our prayers have been accepted with desire before G-d and He answers and recites "I have forgiven," the observance of two Shabbatot occurs, through affliction and pleasure, and we will be redeemed immediately. May G-d say so speedily, in our days.

18) The book *Ikkarei Dinim* (Orach Chaim 31:6) says, "One who fasts due to a [frightening] dream on Erev Yom Kippur must fast [again] to make up for his [first] fast." *Masat Binyamin* states that when a make-up fast is necessary, an existing communal fast [like Yom Kippur] cannot count for the make-up, but *Knesset haGedolah* says that an existing communal fast can count for the make-up.

It appears to me, within this view [of *Knesset haGedolah*], that if one were to fast due to a dream on Shabbat Shuvah on the eighth day of the Ten Days of Repentance, then he would not need to fast to make up for his [Shabbat] fast. Eating and drinking on Erev Yom Kippur is called 'fasting', as the Talmud (Berachot 8b) says, "One who eats and drinks on the ninth of Tishrei is as though he had fasted on the ninth and tenth." If so, the ninth of Tishrei is equivalent to a communal fast.

It further appears to me that one who has a [frightening] dream on Erev Yom Kippur need not fast for the dream, for eating and drinking on this day is viewed, biblically, as an act of fasting.

This Week in Israeli History: Tishrei 10, 1973 The Yom Kippur War

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The 10th of Tishrei is Shabbat

Egypt and Syria decided to go to war with Israel in 1973 as a means of recovering land and face lost in the Six Day War in 1967, and of setting up conditions for negotiations which would give them land in the Sinai and Golan. These nations were supported by Iraqi and Jordanian forces.

On Yom Kippur, October 6, 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces invaded Israel. Israeli forces were caught off guard; factors in the Israeli miscalculation included 1) an assumption that Egypt could not go to war due to weakness in Soviet support and in their military readiness; 2) false starts by Egypt and Syria in previous months; 3) confidence in the Israeli Air Force as a deterrent. Prime Minister Golda Meir's government did receive diplomatic and military warnings in the last weeks before the war, but they discounted the reports until it was too late.


On the morning of Yom Kippur, faced with an extreme likelihood of invasion, PM Meir refused to order a preemptive strike. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had

warned that Israel would receive no American military aid if they were seen as having started the war, and in the absence of other allies, PM Meir did not want to risk total isolation.

After tremendous losses on the Egyptian front, and the death of thousands, Israel was blessed with miraculous military success, surviving, counter-attacking and even nearing Cairo and Damascus before a ceasefire was imposed. However, Israelis were demoralized by the way they had been taken by surprise, and by their close call with catastrophe. The government's Agranat Commission investigated the war and held many military leaders responsible. They exonerated PM Meir as well as Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, but PM Meir resigned in April, and her entire cabinet, including Dayan, resigned as well. The new government was headed by Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.

In 1999, Israel created its National Security Council as a means of coordinating military, intelligence and political arms of the government, to help avoid a recurrence.

torczyner@torontotorah.com



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