Acharei Mos/Kedoshim 5783 Volume XXX Number 28

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

The nineteenth chapter of Vayikra, with which our parsha begins, is one of the supreme statements of the ethics of the Torah. It's about the right, the good and the holy, and it contains some of Judaism's greatest moral commands: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," and "Let the stranger who lives among you be like your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt."

But the chapter is also surpassingly strange. It contains what looks like a random jumble of commands, many of which have nothing whatever to do with ethics and only the most tenuous connection with holiness:

"Do not mate different kinds of animals."

"Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed."

"Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material." (19)

"Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it."

"Do not practise divination or sorcery."

"Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard." (26-28)

And so on. What have these to do with the right, the good and the holy?

To understand this we have to engage in an enormous leap of insight into the unique moral/social/spiritual vision of the Torah, so unlike anything we find elsewhere.

The West has had many attempts at defining a moral system. Some focused on rationality, others on emotions like sympathy and empathy. For some the central principle was service to the state, for others moral duty, for yet others the greatest happiness of the greatest number. These are all forms of moral simplicity.

Judaism insists on the opposite: moral complexity. The moral life isn't easy. Sometimes duties or loyalties clash. Sometimes reason says one thing, emotion another. More fundamentally, Judaism identified three distinct moral sensibilities each of which has its own voice and vocabulary. They are [1] the ethics of the king, [2] the ethics of the priest and fundamentally, [3] the ethics of the prophet.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel talk about their distinctive sensibilities: "For the teaching of the law [Torah] by the priest will not cease, / nor will counsel [etzah] from the wise [chakham], / nor the word [davar] from the prophets." (Jer. 18:18)

"They will go searching for a vision [chazon] from the prophet, priestly instruction in the law [Torah] will cease, the counsel [etzah] of the elders will come to an end." (Ez. 7:26)

Priests think in terms of Torah. Prophets have "the word" or "a vision." Elders and the wise have "etzah". What does this mean?

Kings and their courts are associated in Judaism with wisdom -- chokhmah, etzah and their synonyms. Several books of Tanakh, most conspicuously Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Mishlei and Kohelet), are books of "wisdom" of which the supreme exemplar was King Solomon. Wisdom in Judaism is the most universal form of knowledge, and the Wisdom literature is the closest the Hebrew Bible comes to the other literature of the ancient Near East, as well as the Hellenistic sages. It is practical, pragmatic, based on experience and observation; it is judicious, prudent. It is a prescription for a life that is safe and sound, without excess or extremes, but hardly dramatic or transformative. That is the voice of wisdom, the virtue of kings.

The prophetic voice is quite different, impassioned, vivid, radical in its critique of the misuse of power and the exploitative pursuit of wealth. The prophet speaks on behalf of the people, the poor, the downtrodden, the abused. He or she thinks of the moral life in terms of relationships: between God and humanity and between human beings themselves. The key terms for the prophet are tzedek (distributive justice), mishpat (retributive justice), chessed (loving kindness) and rachamim (mercy, compassion). The prophet has emotional intelligence, sympathy and empathy, and feels the plight of the lonely and oppressed. Prophecy is never abstract. It doesn't think in terms of universals. It responds to the here and now of time and place. The priest hears the word of God for all time. The prophet hears the word of God for this time.

The ethic of the priest, and of holiness generally, is different again. The key activities of the priest are lehavdil -- to discriminate, distinguish and divide -- and lehorot -- to instruct people in the law, both generally as teachers and in specific instances as judges. The key

This issue of Toras Aish is dedicated in honor of
Yair and Noa Weiss
on the birth of their new brother!
Mazel tov!

words of the priest are kodesh and chol (holy and secular), tamei and tahor (impure and pure).

The single most important passage in the Torah that speaks in the priestly voice is Chapter 1 of Bereishit, the narrative of creation. Here too a key verb is lehavdil, to divide, which appears five times. God divides between light and dark, the upper and lower waters, and day and night. Other key words are "bless" -- God blesses the animals, humankind, and the seventh day; and "sanctify" (kadesh) -- at the end of creation God sanctifies the Shabbat. Overwhelmingly elsewhere in the Torah the verb lehavdil and the root kadosh occur in a priestly context; and it is the priests who bless the people.

The task of the priest, like God at creation, is to bring order out of chaos. The priest establishes boundaries in both time and space. There are holy times and holy places, and each time and place has its own integrity, its own setting in the total scheme of things. The kohen's protest is against the blurring of boundaries so common in pagan religions -- between gods and humans, between life and death, between the sexes and so on. A sin, for the kohen, is an act in the wrong place, and its punishment is exile, being cast out of your rightful place. A good society, for the kohen, is one in which everything is in its proper place, and the kohen has special sensitivity toward the stranger, the person who has no place of his or her own.

The strange collection of commands in Kedoshim thus turns out not to be strange at all. The holiness code sees love and justice as part of a total vision of an ordered universe in which each thing, person and act has their rightful place, and it is this order that is threatened when the boundary between different kinds of animals, grain, fabrics is breached; when the human body is lacerated; or when people eat blood, the sign of death, in order to feed life.

In the secular West we are familiar with the voice of wisdom. It is common ground between the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and the great sages from Aristotle to Marcus Aurelius to Montaigne. We know, too, the prophetic voice and what Einstein called its "almost fanatical love of justice." We are far less familiar with the priestly idea that just as there is a scientific order to nature, so there is a moral order, and it consists in keeping separate the things that are separate, and maintaining the boundaries that respect the integrity of the world God created and seven times pronounced good.

The priestly voice is not marginal to Judaism. It is central, essential. It is the voice of the Torah's first chapter. It is the voice that defined the Jewish vocation as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." It dominates Vayikra, the central book of the Torah. And whereas the prophetic spirit lives on in aggadah, the priestly voice prevails in halakhah. And the very name Torah -- from the verb lehorot -- is a priestly word.

Perhaps the idea of ecology, one of the key discoveries of modern times, will allow us to understand better the priestly vision and its code of holiness, both of which see ethics not just as practical wisdom or prophetic justice but also as honouring the deep structure -- the sacred ontology -- of being. An ordered universe is a moral universe, a world at peace with its Creator and itself. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l* *© 2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"You must surely instruct your colleague, so that you not bear the brunt of his sin" (Leviticus 19:7). Judaism teaches us that "every Israelite is responsible for the other." Except for the State of Israel, where the Jewish population continues to grow, Jews in the rest of the world suffer from internal "hemorrhaging."

How do we "inspire" our Jewish siblings so that they remain within – or return to – our Jewish peoplehood? We recently celebrated the festival of Passover, and we are now "counting" each day towards the festival of Shavuot. The Hebrew term for the counting is sefira, a word pregnant with meaning. Its root noun is the Hebrew sappir, which is the dazzling blue—as the Bible records immediately following the Revelation at Sinai: "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel then went up. And they saw the God of Israel, beneath whose 'feet' was something akin to the creation of a sapphire stone, like the essence of the heavens as to its purity" (Ex. 24: 9-10).

From this perspective, the days of our counting are a period of spiritual growth and development, of a connection between Passover and Shavuot. But when and how does this spiritual journey begin?

It begins with Passover, God's encounter with His nation Israel at its conception. And the Hebrew sefira (counting/ sapphire) is also based on the Hebrew noun sippur, a tale, a story, a recounting – the very essence of the Passover Seder evening experience: "And you shall tell (haggada, telling a story) your child on that day saying…" (Ex. 13:8)

The Israelites came into Egypt as a family, the 70 descendants of Jacob. Hence the recounting of the story of our enslavement and eventual redemption is the recounting of family history. A nation is a family writ large: in a family, there are familial memories of origins; in a family there is a sense of commonality and community togetherness; in a family there are special foods and customs, special holidays and celebrations; in a family there are mandated values and ideals, that which is acceptable and that which is unacceptable "in our family"; and in a family there is a heightened sense of a shared fate and shared destiny.

Eda is the biblical word for community (literally

"witness"), and every community attempts to recreate a familial collegiality. The relationship within the family is largely horizontal (towards each other) rather than vertical (connected to a transcendent God). And familial rites of togetherness are largely governed by family customs rather than by a Divinely ordained legal code.

Most importantly in families – as well as communities – every individual counts (once again, sefira).

Passover is our family-centered, communal festival, at the beginning of our calendar, at the very outset of our history, at the early steps towards our sefira march. On that first Passover we had not yet received our Torah from God, and we had not yet entered our Promised Land.

The Passover Sacrifice (Exodus 12) emphasizes our willingness to sacrifice for our freedom from slavery—our sacrifice of the lamb which was a defiant act of rebellion against the idolatrous Egyptian slave-society – and it attests to our uncompromising belief in human freedom and redemption even before we became a faith ordained at Mount Sinai. In order for every person/community to really count, large communities must be subdivided into smaller – and more manageable – familial and extra-familial units, "a lamb for each household" or several households together.

Special foods, special stories and special songs define and punctuate the close-knit nature of the event.

The ticket of admission is that you consider yourself a member of the family and wish to be counted as such; this entitles you to an unconditional embrace of love and acceptance, to inclusion in the family of Israel.

The rasha (wicked child) of the Haggadah is the one who seems to exclude himself from the family – and even s/he is to be invited and included! How do we engage our unaffiliated Jews so that they do not defect and fall away from us? We must embrace them as part of our family, love them because we are part of them and they are part of us, regale them with the stories, songs and special foods which are expressed in our biblical and national literature that emerged from our challenging fate and our unique destiny, share with them our vision and dreams of human freedom and peace, and accept them wholeheartedly no matter what. *© 2023 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Touching Food

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

In our Parsha it states the words "V'initen et Nafshsechem" 17;31 (you shall afflict yourselves). This language "to afflict" appears four more times with relation to the holiday of Yom Kippur, in which our Rabbis derive the five activities that one must refrain from doing on Yom Kippur (eating, drinking, anointing, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations).

In the Jerusalem Talmud, Law Five, it states that the showbread which was usually divided by the Kohanim (priests) on Shabbat, when Yom Kippur falls on a Shabbat they would divide it after the completion of Shabbat. It would seem that even touching this bread, and by extension even touching food would similarly be forbidden on Yom Kippur.

There are those who say , that touching food on Yom Kippur is really not an issue since the severity of the day is upon the individual and one would never therefore eat food because one touches it The Imrat Chasidim seems to concur when he states that even if all the fast days were eliminated, people would still fast on Yom Kippur because of the seriousness of the day.

In order to explain the Jerusalem Talmud that was quoted earlier, one must say that it was sited not in the context of a law but rather according to the view that states that one may prepare from Yom Kippur (if it falls on a Shabbat) to after Shabbat, and in that setting even on Yom Kippur it would be forbidden because one might come to eat it by touching it.

However according to the accepted law, this is not necessary. *© 2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Among the many commandments and values that are represented in this week's double parsha, special attention seems to being paid to the intimate and marital relationships between people. The Torah lists for us those relationships which are considered to be incestuous, immoral and forbidden. There is perhaps no area of human behavior so sensitive and yet so dissolute and dangerously self-destructive as these liaisons and relationships.

According to the popularization of Freudian psychology, it is the sexual drive more than anything else that is the energy source for human behavior. The Torah looks not to deny this basic drive, it never preaches celibacy, but rather it looks to channel and control this activity, turning it from something potentially illicit and harmful to something that is holy and creative. In order to accomplish this, the Torah imposes a set of limitations, inhibitions and rules to govern and sanctify such human behavior. In effect, the Torah teaches us that our sexual drive is a neutral commodity. It is rather the circumstances and structure that surround the use of this drive that determines its probity, and holiness. That is the key idea that lies behind the commandments that appear in these parshiyot -- discipline, sensitivity, correctness behavior and a sense of positive purpose.

Be holy and sanctified the Torah tells us -- that is our goal. How to arrive there is what the commandments, individually and collectively, come to teach us. And the road is paved with self-discipline, self-control and a devotion to duty and responsibility. These parshiyot also emphasize to us the Torah's view

regarding the treatment of other human beings. The Torah bids us to love, to respect, and to tolerate others, to become a holier person. Piety in matters that are, so to speak, between man and God are of prime importance in Jewish life. But of equal importance is the correct relationship between humans and their fellow human beings. One cannot be a holy person through ritual piety and scholarship alone. Ramban advances the idea that the possibility of being obnoxious and disgusting, even within the confines of the Torah, so to speak, exists. How we deal with other human beings is a crucial part of being a holy person. It is far easier to deal with an unseen and inscrutable Divinity than to have to deal with a real human being face to face. When people differ with us, oftentimes they are not cognizant of our needs and desires, and can prove to be annoying and difficult. How are we to deal with such people? The Torah prescribes the same formula for dealing with others as it does for dealing with our innate drives as described above -- patience, sensitivity, self-discipline, and retention of the goal of being holy.

An awareness of circumstances and situations that govern all of the commandments of the Torah also relate to our interpersonal behavior, one with another. The Torah is always to be viewed as a unit, as something whole and inseparable. That is the way to embark on the road to holiness. *© 2023 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why were Nadav and Avihu, two of Aaron's sons, killed? The Torah states their deaths occurred when they brought an esh zarah (foreign fire) into the Temple (Leviticus 10:1). But what was the nature of this fire?

Some maintain that because the prohibition against drinking is found in the sentences that follow their deaths, the fire alludes to the possibility that Aaron's sons served in the sanctuary while intoxicated (Leviticus 10:9; Vayikra Rabbah 12:5).

Others insist that the fire relates to their being "hot" in deciding halachic matters themselves without consulting Moses. Note that the preceding sentence stresses the leadership role of Moses and Aaron (Leviticus 9:23; Eruvin 63a).

It may be that offering many answers indicates that none are sufficiently compelling. That is, we cannot comprehend the reason Nadav and Avihu's actions mandated death. Only God can grasp the unfathomable; we cannot.

This perplexity may explain why the Torah tells us that the Lord spoke to Moses immediately after the death of Aaron's two sons (Leviticus 16:1), which teaches that, despite the suffering of sufferings, the horror of untimely ghastly deaths, dialogue continues. God tells Moses to speak to Aaron, detailing the laws of the high priest on Yom Kippur (16:2–28). In fact, this may be the central point of the Nadav and Avihu narrative. Although Aaron does not understand why his sons died, he and the priesthood continue to serve God.

In other words, in times of challenge, rather than ask "Why?" a better question is "What now?" "Why" relates to the past, which cannot be undone; it is philosophical, concerning which God understands and we do not. "What now" is a future-oriented, pragmatic query that we, on some level, can control.

Not only should we ask, "What can we do about it?" but we should ask, "What will God do about it?" God gives us inner strength to overcome, to do things we never thought we could.

Sometimes I think there are no great people in this world – only great challenges. Faced with these challenges, God from above helps us to do the impossible. And as God is limitless, so are we, created in the image of God, given the strength to reach toward limitlessness.

And perhaps, just perhaps, if we gain a sense of what God does for us in helping us move forward, we will then be emotionally better equipped to ponder – if we wish – the insoluble question of why: Why did it happen in the first place?

When confronted with inexplicable suffering, we all ought to remember the words of Esther Wachsman, mother of Nachshon, the young Israeli soldier murdered by Arab terrorists in the early 1990s. Asked how she continued on, Esther, paraphrasing Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, said, "I had to ask myself, will I be a victim of my fate, or will I initiate a new destiny?"

This idea has helped me face many challenges in my life. The motto I strive to live by is never allow what you cannot do to control what you can do. *© 2023 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale*

DR. ERICA BROWN

The Torah of Leadership

One of the most unusual rituals in the entire book of Leviticus is found in this week's Torah reading, Achrei Mot-Kedoshim. Aaron is commanded to take two male goats and place lots upon them as a means of expiation. One goat was to be sacrificed, and the other, the mysterious Azazel, was to be sent off into the wilderness.

Aaron shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before God at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for God and the other marked for Azazel. Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for God, which

he is to offer as a sin offering; while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before God, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel. (Lev. 16:7-10)

The word 'ez' in Hebrew is a goat, and 'azal' is to be gone, making the goat in this conjunction an animal that has been banished. Rashi explains that the word 'Azazal' is a compound of the Hebrew for strong and mighty. He also cites the Talmud, which states that the word means a 'precipitous and flinty rock' (BT Yoma 67b), implying that the goat should meet its death by being cast off a rough, mountainous cliff. The sages of the Talmud interpret our verses to mean that the goats should be as equal in size and appearance as possible (BT Hullin 11a).

Maimonides, in his "Laws of Repentance," explains that on Yom Kippur, the High Priest confessed for the sins of all of Israel on this goat, the severe and non-severe transgressions, those that are intentional and those that are not intentional and then sent the goat away (1:2). Maimonides also adds an important qualifier: this ritual only worked to atone for certain wrongdoings if the people themselves repented. This unusual goat could not magically carry away sins if those committing them felt neither agency nor determination to change.

This ancient rite had important and potent symbolism for those cleansing themselves of sin. The effects of sin can be crippling. It can lead people to internalize that they are only the sum total of the wrongs they have ever done. Wrongdoing can make people label themselves as unworthy and lead to a downward psychic spiral of behavior. Externalizing sin and having it be symbolically marched far away into the wilderness may have had a liberating impact, allowing people to begin truly healing themselves. Wilderness is the perfect location for the goat; it represents a tangle of uncertainty, fear, danger, loss, and risk. Wilderness is a place of both disequilibrium and freedom. Sending this goat into the physical wilderness may have allowed the High Priest and those he prayed for to imagine that all the internal chaos of sin fled far away, leaving them cleansed with a sense of returned order and a renewed sense of their own goodness.

This fascinating ritual also gave birth to the word 'scapegoat' -- someone who is blamed for the mistakes or faults of others, often unfairly, to relieve others of responsibility. When we blame others, we remove the burden of accountability from ourselves. Yet its use today in common parlance is the exact opposite of its ancient meaning, according to Maimonides. The goat was there to help make sin visible and pronounced to all of Israel; it worked as a symbol only when the community was committed to change.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his book Judaism's Life-Changing Ideas, describes the perils of a scapegoat mentality: "It happens whenever a society feels that something is badly amiss, when there is a profound cognitive dissonance between the way things are and the way people think they ought to be. People are then faced with two possibilities. They can either ask, 'What did we do wrong?' and start to put it right, or they can ask, 'Who did this to us?' and search for a scapegoat."

The scapegoat is a common hazard in leadership. Leaders who don't want to take responsibility for problems within their organizations commonly look around for people and conditions to blame. Suket Gandhi, in his blog "Beware the Rise of Scapegoat Leaders" (April 17, 2016) writes that "Scapegoat Leaders" are quick to blame others for their own shortcomings and their inability to achieve expected outcomes. "These leaders have the mindset of finding a scapegoat for everything that has not gone well so that they can protect themselves." He claims the tribe of scapegoats keep growing and says that the expression 'scapegoat leader' is itself an oxymoron: "A scapegoat is a victim, and a leader cannot have a victim complex."

Leaders can also become scapegoats for much deeper systemic issues that boards or administrators do not want to acknowledge or treat. Roberto Motta in "Are You a Leader or a Scapegoat? (Medium, Sept. 19, 2015), describes what happens when companies identify a scapegoat for their problems: "The catharsis achieved by firing the unsuccessful company executive serves the important function of bringing relief to the people who remain in the organization, as well as hope that things will improve." It also reinforces "everyone's belief in individual action. These people were fired because they did not do enough. If you work harder and better, you will not be fired. But, in reality, those who are truly guilty for the health and well-being of an organization are not identified or punished. They can then seize control of the chaos for their own ends. The factors contributing to organizations' problems are ignored."

The scapegoat of the Hebrew Bible was meant to achieve the very opposite of what scapegoating does today. It was the High Priest himself who was charged with confessing on the day and sending the goat away. In full view of his community, the High Priest took responsibility for his sins, those of his household, and for those of all of Israel. When he intoned the words, he understood his responsibility as the leader to own his sins and those of his flock.

So, who and what have you blamed for your mistakes? *© 2023 Dr. E. Brown and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership*

RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Cross-Currents

The haftarah for Acharei Mos, which will be read this week for the double parsha of Acharei Mos/Kedoshim, is from Amos (9:7), where Hashem extols the Jewish people with the famous and famously strange words: "Behold, you are like the children of Kush to Me."

Kush is identified as the African kingdom of Nubia (roughly modern-day Sudan/ Ethiopia), and the Gemara (Moed Katan, 16b), commenting on the pasuk from Amos, says: "Just as a Kushite differs [from others] in [the color of] his skin, so are the Jewish people different in their actions."

The Chasam Sofer (who apparently had "the righteous" in place of "the Jewish people" in that Gemara) interprets that Talmudic comment in an interesting and poignant way: "One Jew may excel in Torah-study; another, in avodah [prayer]; another, in acts of kindness to others; this one in one particular mitzvah, that one in another. Nevertheless, while they all differ from each other in their actions, they all have the same intention: to serve Hashem with their entire hearts.

"Behold the Kushite. Inside, his organs, his blood and his appearance are all the same as other people's. Only in the superficiality of his skin does he differ. This is the meaning of '[different] in his skin,' [meaning] only in his skin. Likewise, the righteous are different [from one another] only 'in their actions'; their inner conviction and intention, though, are [the same], aimed at serving Hashem in a good way."

That people of different skin colors are only superficially different from one another is accepted as a truism by the Chasam Sofer. His point is that in all our diversity of vocations, fields and foci, we can be entirely equal servants of Hashem.

The Gemara (Ta'anis 22a) speaks of a pair of comedians, who used their humor to cheer up the depressed and defuse disputes.

One wonders if the parents of those meritorious men felt disappointed at their sons' choices of professions. Or whether they realized that there are, in the end, many paths that can lead to the World-to-Come.

© 2023 Rabbi A. Shafran and torah.org

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Kohein Gadol on Yom Kippur

The double-parasha, Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, begins with instructions to Moshe to relay to Aharon concerning his service on Yom Kippur. Special admonition was given to Aharon "so that he shall not die." For that reason, the death of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon's oldest sons, was mentioned as part of these instructions.

The Torah states, "Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died. And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Speak to Aharon your brother, he shall not come into the Holy (the Eastern part of the Mishkan), within the Curtain (Parochet, separation between the Holy and the Holy of Holies), in front of the Cover (Kaporet) that is upon the Ark, so that he should not die; for in a cloud I shall appear upon the Ark-Cover.' With this shall Aharon come into the Holy, with a young bull for a sin-offering (Chattat) and a ram for an elevation-offering (Olah). He shall don a sacred linen tunic, linen breeches shall be upon his flesh, he shall gird himself with a linen sash, and cover his head with a linen turban; they are sacred vestments – he shall immerse himself in water and then don them. From the assembly of the B'nei Yisrael he shall take two he-goats for a sin-offering and one ram for an elevation-offering. Aharon shall bring near his own sin-offering bull, and provide atonement for himself and for his household. He shall take the two he-goats and stand them before Hashem, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Aharon shall place lots upon the two he-goats: one lot "for Hashem" and one lot "for Azazel" (a place that symbolizes the forces of evil). Aharon shall bring near the he-goat designated by lot for Hashem, and make it a sin-offering. And the he-goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be stood alive before Hashem to provide atonement through it, to send it to Azazel, to the Wilderness. Aharon shall bring near his own sin-offering bull and he shall provide atonement for himself and for his household, and then he shall slaughter his own sin-offering bull."

There are two areas here concerning the Kohein Gadol on Yom Kippur which need further discussion: (1) the clothing of the Kohein Gadol on this occasion and (2) the different offerings that were made by the Kohein Gadol on his part and for the B'nei Yisrael. The regular Kohein had four garments made of white linen, whereas only the Kohein Gadol wore four additional garments which were referred to as the golden garments. Rashi explains that the Kohein Gadol only wore these golden garments in front of the B'nei Yisrael, but he would change into the plain garments when he entered the Holy of Holies. Rashi and others explain that the golden garments were a reminder of the Golden Calf, and it would not be appropriate to appear before Hashem, seeking His forgiveness, wearing garments which would remind Hashem of our most sinful act as a people.

The Ramban explains that the Golden Garments were called bigdei kodesh, holy garments. Still, we know that the plain, linen garments of the Kohein Hediot (the regular Kohein) were also holy. A regular Kohein could not serve in the Temple without those garments and he was not to wear them when not performing his service in the Temple. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that the Kohein Gadol was to wear the Golden garments when he appeared before the people as the representative of Hashem, but he understood that when he approached Hashem inside the Holy of Holies and stood before Him seeking forgiveness, he was not clothed in the Glory of Hashem but in the humility of his own iniquities and those of his people.

HaRav Sorotzkin asks more specifically why the Kohein Gadol did not wear the Tzitz, the Headband, with the words "Holy to Hashem" written on it when he went

before Hashem. Throughout the year, the Kohein Gadol wore the Tzitz as a reminder to the other Kohanim that their service was Holy to Hashem. The Tzitz also helped the Kohein Gadol to focus constantly on his many responsibilities so that he would concentrate on the holiness of each action he performed. It helped to remind him that any mistake in concentration could cost him his life. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the other Kohanim could not see the Kohein Gadol when he entered the Holy of Holies, so any message to them from the Tzitz would go unseen. The Kohein Gadol also did not need the reminder to concentrate before Hashem as he was in the Holy of Holies only once in the year to seek forgiveness for the B'nei Yisrael. The enormity of this task was enough to cause him to concentrate fully. HaRav Sorotzkin compares this to tefillin which are not worm on Shabbat because we are aware of the holiness which surrounds us on Shabbat.

For the same reason, the Kohein Gadol does not need the Choshen, Breastplate, with the twelve stones of the Holy Tribes of Yisrael when he enters the Holy of Holies. The Kohein Gadol did not need to be reminded of the importance of each of the tribes and their ancestors, the Holy sons of Ya'akov. He knew that he represented them as part of the entire nation for whom he sought forgiveness. Each of the four extra garments were unnecessary, as the Kohein Gadol certainly understood his task and fulfilled that task with total concentration.

The animals chosen for the Yom Kippur service were of special significance. The Kli Yakar points out that the animals each represented one of our forefathers. The ox was reminiscent of Avraham ("and Avraham ran to the cattle" to get food for the three angels). The ram was reminiscent of Yitzchak (he was replaced on the altar by the ram that Avraham caught). The two goats were reminiscent of Ya'akov (his mother asked him to bring two goats which she prepared for Yitzchak so that he would bless Ya'akov in place of Eisav). HaRav Sorotzkin explains that there is a problem with saying "sh'nei s'irei izim l'chatat, two young goats for a sin offering." Only one of the goats underwent the required actions for a chatat offering: laying on of hands, confession, and the placing of the blood and the assigned parts of the animal on the Altar. The other goat is sent over a cliff but is still called a chatat offering. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that both of the animals are considered one offering; the two combine in one service to Hashem on behalf of the entire people and not as an offering for an individual.

One must understand that the Chatat offering for Yom Kippur are communal not individual offerings. The Kohein Gadol atoned for his sins, his family's sins, the sins of the Kohanim, and the sins of the people. He did not atone for each individual's sins. Each of us is still responsible for our own sins and must atone for them by making restitution and doing teshuva. We can feel certain that our teshuva and the actions of the Kohein Gadol will assure Hashem's forgiveness. © *2023 Rabbi D. Levin*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"W"Hashem spoke to Moshe, after the death of Aharon's two sons when they came close before hashem and they died." (Vayikra 16:1) On the heels of Nadav and Avihu's demise upon entering the Kodesh Kedoshim unbidden, Hashem spoke to Moshe. He commanded him to tell Aharon not to enter it whenever he wanted, but specifically when and how he should do so. The Torah then proceeds to outline to Yom Kippur service.

Regarding the prohibition to drink wine and then perform the Avoda, Aharon was spoken to directly by Hashem. In fact, this was his reward for remaining silent in the face of his sorrow. Why, then, does Hashem give these instructions to Moshe, and tell him to convey them to Aharon? Why not speak to Aharon directly?

The Ohr HaChaim points out that this verse stands alone, and in the next one it says Hashem told Moshe to speak to Aharon. Therefore, he says this was to be a warning to Moshe, as well, that as "familiar" as he felt in Hashem's home, he must also not take liberties with entering whenever he wished. Further, the fact that Nadav and Avihu were struck down is proof that they were even closer to Hashem, as it says, "I will be sanctified through My close ones." That would be one reason to speak to Moshe instead of Aharon.

There may be more to it as well. We know that Aharon was hesitant to enter the Mishkan and perform the Avoda because of his involvement with the golden calf. Moshe had to urge him forward and let Aharon know that he was specifically chosen for this role.

After what happened to his children, Aharon could have been concerned that he was not worthy. He would likely need a direct command from Hashem through Moshe because if Hashem had spoken directly to him, Aharon might have doubted that his nevuah was accurate. Now that it was coming to him through Moshe, he knew it was completely valid.

Additionally, not only did Moshe tell Aharon what NOT to do, he told him what he SHOULD do. He was directed to enter the Holy of Holies and given precise instruction on how to do so according to Hashem's wishes. It was important for this to be taught right away so no one should think that Hashem was unapproachable. It all depends on how you do it.

Perhaps, too, Hashem was underscoring the importance of Mesorah, the tradition from teacher to student going all the way back to Moshe and Sinai. One who wishes to come close to Hashem must have guidance to do it properly and not think he can blaze his own path however he sees fit.

All these messages resonate with us today,

letting us know that there are ways for us to reach heights that we never have imagined, as long as we seek the proper direction from those who are greater than us.

When R' Yisrael Meir HaKohain Kagan z"l published the sefer whose name he would become forever known by, the Chofetz Chaim, (Who Loves Life?) and its companion, the sefer Shmiras HaLashon (Guard Your Tongue,) it was the first time the laws of Lashon Hara, evil and prohibited speech, were codified and laid out systematically in one place. Some people complained to him. "Your laws are too voluminous, too difficult to follow. Now, with your book, we can never open our mouths to speak!"

"On the contrary," replied the sage. "Until now, you should have been afraid to open your mouths for fear of transgressing one of the myriad prohibitions and sins. My book finally allows you to successfully navigate this dangerous road and avoid the pitfalls that are so easy to fall into. Only now do you finally have the ability to speak freely, knowing that you know what to watch out for."
© 2023 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

In the first of this week's two Parashot, we read about the service that the Kohen Gadol performed on Yom Kippur. The offerings in the Bet Hamikdash on that day include two male goats--the Se'ir Ha'penimi / "inside goat," whose blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies and on the Mizbei'ach / altar, and the "Se'ir La'zazel, which is not offered in the Temple at all, but rather is thrown off of a cliff in the wilderness.

R' Yaakov Moelin z"l (Maharil; 1365-1427; Germany; his customs are a major source for the practices of Ashkenazic Jews relating to prayer) stated that he wondered all his days why so many of the Piyutim / hymns on Yom Kippur are devoted to the Se'ir Ha'penimi rather than to the Se'ir La'zazel. The Se'ir Ha'penimi atones only for Tum'at Mikdash Ve'kadashav / contaminating the Temple and its holy items, as we read (in our Parashah--16:16), "Thus he shall provide atonement upon the Sanctuary for the Tum'ah of Bnei Yisrael." In contrast, the Se'ir La'zazel atones for all other sins, as we read (verse 21), "He shall confess upon it all the iniquities of Bnei Yisrael." Surely the latter should occupy a larger place in our prayers than the former, especially since we do not have a Temple and, therefore, have never contaminated it!

Maharil offers two answers: First, the ability of the Se'ir La'zazel to atone for all of our sins depends on the Se'ir Ha'penimi atoning for our profaning the Temple (see Yoma 40b and 65a). Second, even today when we have no Bet Hamikdash, someone might profane the Temple by improperly entering its vicinity. (Sefer Maharil: Hilchot Yom Ha'kippurim)

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) offers another answer based on Sefer Meshech Chochmah by R' Meir Simcha Hakohen (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia): The Torah says (Shmot 25:8), "They shall make a Mikdash / Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them." The verse does not say, "So that I may dwell in it"; rather, it says, "among them." This means that we, the Jewish People, are the true Mikdash. Indeed, we read in Yirmiyah (7:4), "They (Bnei Yisrael) are the Sanctuary of Hashem."

It follows, writes R' Dessler, that profaning the Temple does not refer only to introducing Tum'ah / impurity into the physical confines of the Bet Hamikdash. It also--perhaps, primarily--includes contaminating or profaning ourselves by sinning, which we certainly have done. As such, it makes sense that so much of the Yom Kippur service is devoted to the Se'ir Ha'penimi, which atones for profaning "the Sanctuary." (Sha'arei Ha'zemanim: Yom Kippur p.264)

--

"Aharon shall bring near the male goat designated by lot for Hashem, and make it a Chatat / sin-offering. And the male goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be stood alive before Hashem, to provide atonement through it, to send it to Azazel to the wilderness." (16:9-10)

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (1808-1888; Germany) writes: These are the symbols of the two paths between which we are to choose.

He elaborates: The path "for Hashem" begins with self-sacrifice. He who chooses it will abdicate all his egoism; he must be ready to sacrifice himself to G-d. But, what appears to be a loss of self is, in fact, an entry into a higher and more genuine form of existence. What appears to be enslavement is, in fact, the attainment of freedom in the truest sense of the term. The animal (here, the male goat) does indeed die, but it dies so that it may be received into the Sanctuary. (Similarly, a person who chooses the path "for Hashem" sacrifices his baser instincts and desires, but he is thereby freed to serve a higher purpose.)

The path "for Azazel," on the other hand, begins with an apparent preservation of independence. (The goat is not slaughtered as a sacrifice, but rather is sent out of the Temple.) The person who chooses this path stubbornly rejects all notions of sacrifice and devotion. He appears to be on the path of life, but, in fact, it is the sure way to a miserable death (such as the goat for Azazel experiences). It appears to be the path to freedom, but, in fact, it is the path away from the Sanctuary into the wilderness. These are the two paths between which every one of us must choose, R' Hirsch reminds us. (Collected Writings II p.108) *© 2023 S. Katz & torah.org*