

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Yom Kippur

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A Taste of Torah

Get Your Goat

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It has a strange name. It is one of the most puzzling parts of Yom Kippur. It is the inaccurate source for a term used throughout the world and throughout history.

I'm talking about the *azazel* goat, often referred to as the scapegoat. The Torah commands that the *Kohein Gadol* (High Priest) take two goats and stand them together. He draws two lots, one of which says "*Lashem*," for Hashem, while the other says "*La'azazel*," for *azazel*. The goat that receives the former lot is used as a sacrifice, while the goat that receives the latter lot is sent off, bearing the load of sins of the Jewish Nation, to be cast off a rocky cliff.

The idea behind the *azazel* is profound, complex, and not the subject of this article. I would like to focus on another strange detail the Talmud (Yoma 62a) shares with us about these two goats: "The two goats on Yom Kippur; the mitzvah is for them to be identical in appearance, size, and value, the two shall be chosen together."

Why? Identical twins may be cute, but goats?! Especially when they are both going to die, one being thrown from a mountain, the other offered as a sacrifice in the Temple?

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980) reveals a deep message in the likeness demanded of the two goats. He explains that when one is made aware that two things differ from each other, yet one cannot see any external manifestation of distinctiveness, one must perforce conclude that the difference lies in the roots of the two things. The fact that one cannot easily discern a difference means that the distinction is underlying, deep and goes to the core of the essence of each item; it is precisely the difficulty in identifying the differences that points

to the acuteness and profundity of the distinction between the two!

Rabbi Hutner's applies this idea to that famous set of twins, Yaakov and Eisav. Twins, says Rabbi Hutner, are indicative that externally, they seem to be the same. While the Torah clearly catalogues the physical differences between Yaakov and Eisav, our Sages tell us that in their youth, their identical character and spiritual stature rendered them indistinguishable. It was only as they grew older that their varying personalities became apparent and sent them in very different directions.

This amazing thought puts these two goats in an entirely new light. For do they not teach us how easily one can confuse goodness with evil, right with wrong, light with dark? One can choose a particular path, travel along it for years, thinking that he is going in the right direction, growing, building, achieving, and the exact opposite is occurring! One must truly plumb the depths of one's actions, thoughts and motives, reaching into the deepest depths of his persona, to discover whether one is headed toward G-d or toward a precipice.

On Yom Kippur, we stand before Hashem and confess our sins. There are some sins of which we are acutely aware, shortcomings that we know we must work on. But there are many sins we recite throughout this great day, and, as we beat our chests, we may wonder if we are indeed guilty of the heinous crimes we are recounting. The story is told of a man who approached the Rambam and asked this exact question: There are so many sins mentioned in the prescribed confession that I am simply not guilty of! The Rambam proceeded to display the subtle mistakes people

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories For The Soul

Tooth or Consequences

Based on a story on Revach.net

A Jew who had emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel once struck up a conversation with his seatmate on a bus. In the course of the conversation, he described himself as a Yom Kippur Jew.

His seatmate initially understood him to mean that he went to shul only once a year, on Yom Kippur. However, the Russian Jew explained to his new friend that he was referring to something else.

The fellow related that he had been a soldier in the Russian army following WWII. In order to avoid serving on Yom Kippur, he would feign illness annually. Every Yom Kippur, he would show up at the army doctor and moan over his "toothache" and beg to have the offending tooth extracted. After his tooth was pulled, he was freed from his duties for the rest of the day.

The Russian Jew flashed a toothless smile to his seatmate and said, "I was in the army for six years, and I lost six teeth this way - but at least I never worked on Yom Kippur."

Yom Kippur has historically been a day observed by Jews despite the great duress and sacrifice needed to ensure the day's sanctity is preserved. Let us ensure that we, who do not need to make such sacrifices, utilize the day's potential.

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Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch & Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What non-food *bracha* is recited daily but omitted on Yom Kippur?

A: 1. According to the Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla 7:8), we do not wash our hands in the normal ritual manner on Yom Kippur, and, therefore, we don't recite the blessings associated with it (*Al Netilas Yadayim* and *Hama'avir Sheina*; see Berachos 60b). This was the custom of the Vilna Gaon. 2. According to the custom of many Sephardic communities (and those who follow the customs of the Vilna Gaon), the morning *beracha* of *She'asa Li Kol Tzarki* (Who has provided me my every need) is omitted on Yom Kippur. This is because the Gemara (Berachos ibid.) indicates that this *bracha* is associated with wearing shoes, which is forbidden on Yom Kippur. (For

an explanation of the connection this *bracha* has with shoes, see Imrei Noam, Berachos ibid.). According to the Vilna Gaon's custom (but not according to the Sephardic custom), this *beracha* (as well as *Hama'avir Sheina*) is recited after the fast ends and one has put on shoes and washed his hands.

Sources: Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 613:10, Kaf Hachayim 613:10 and Ma'aseh Rav, 9

This week's question: On Simchas Torah, the festivities center around the Torah. Many of our customs are exceptions to the usual practiced *halacha* and customs regarding *Krias Hatorah* (public Torah reading). How many can you name?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gunzberg - The Shaagas Aryeh Part I

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gunzberg, known by the name of his most famous work, *Shaagas Aryeh* (lit., Roar of the Lion), is one of the most brilliant Torah scholars and halachic authorities of the past 500 years.

Aryeh Leib was born circa 1695 somewhere in Lithuania. Not very much is known about his early life.

Initially, he was rabbi of Pinsk, but he later moved to Minsk and opened a yeshiva there. The much-older Rabbi Yechiel Halpern (author of the work *Seder HaDoros*) was the rabbi in Minsk at

the time and also headed a yeshiva there. Rabbi Gunzberg and Rabbi Halpern disagreed sharply on the proper method of learning and teaching Torah, and this dispute eventually spread to their students. Eventually, Rabbi Aryeh Leib was run out of town by Rabbi Halpern's followers.

Legend has it that as he left the town in disgrace, he said "What, Minsk isn't burning yet?" Fires that broke out in Minsk for years afterwards were attributed to the insult the residents of Minsk had visited upon Rabbi Aryeh Leib.

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make that are, indeed, included in these transgressions.

As you recite the *vidui* this Yom Kippur, stop for a moment and consider: Perhaps superficially all seems well, more or less. But the lesson of the identical goats is that the

biggest problems are the ones not evident, the issues buried deep within. Where am I truly standing in life? Am I headed *Lashem*, or *La'azazel*? It's Yom Kippur, and it's never too late to make a U-turn and head the other way!

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