

Parsha Plug: Acharei Mot

| Vayikra 16:7-10 | ויקרא טז:ז-י |
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| <p>7 And Aharon shall take the two he-goats, and place them before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. 8 And Aharon shall place lots upon the two he-goats: one lot "For the Lord," and the other lot, "For Azazel." 9 And Aharon shall bring the he-goat upon which the lot, "For the Lord," came up, and designate it as a sin offering. 10 And the he-goat "For Azazel", shall be placed while still alive, before the Lord, to initiate atonement upon it, and to send it away to Azazel, into the desert.</p> | <p>ז וּלְקַח אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים וְהַעֲמִיד אֹתָם לִפְנֵי ה' פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ח וְנָתַן אֶהָרֹן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים גְּרָלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַה' וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאֵל: ט וְהִקְרִיב אֶהָרֹן אֶת־הַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַה' וַעֲשֵׂהוּ חַטָּאת: י וְהִשְׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעִזָּאֵל יַעֲמִד־חַי לִפְנֵי ה' לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזָּאֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה:</p> |

| Masechet Yoma 67b | מסכת יומא סז: |
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| <p>The Sages taught: The word ‘Azazel’ indicates that the cliff the goat is pushed from should be rough and hard. I might have thought that it may be located in a settled area. Therefore, the verse states: “In the wilderness.” And from where does one derive that the goat is pushed from a cliff? The verse states ‘gezeira’, indicating an area that is sharp, like a cliff. The rabbis taught: ‘Azazel’ is a reference to the hardest mountain, and so it says: “And the mighty [eilei] of the land he took away” (Ezekiel 17:13). Azazel is interpreted as azaz-el, with the term ‘el’ connoting something rough and hard. The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: ‘Azazel’ is so called because it atones for the actions of Uzza and Azael. These are the names of “sons of God” who sinned with “daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2) and thereby caused the world to sin during the generation of the Flood.</p> | <p>תנו רבנן עזאזל שיהא עז וקשה יכול בישוב ת"ל במדבר ומנין שבצוק ת"ל גזירה תניא אידך עזאזל קשה שבהרים וכן הוא אומר (יחזקאל יז, יג) ואת אילי הארץ לקח תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל עזאזל שמכפר על מעשה עוזה ועזאל.</p> |

| Rambam Guide for the Perplexed 3:46 | רמב"ם מורה נבוכים חלק ג מ"ו |
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| <p>[The goat for Azazel] was removed as far as possible, and sent forth into an uninhabited land. Which is to say it has no place. There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one to be laid on another. But these ceremonies are of a symbolic character, and serve to impress men with a certain idea, and to induce them to repent; as if to say, we have freed ourselves of our previous deeds, have cast them behind our backs, and removed them from us as far as possible.</p> | <p>הרחיקו תכלית ההרחקה ויושלך ל'ארץ גזרה' - רצוני לומר שאין בה ישוב. ואין ספק לאדם שהחטאים אינם משאות שיעתקו מגב איש אחד לגב איש אחר אבל אלו המעשים כולם משלים להביא מורא בנפש עד שתתפעל לתשובה - כלומר שכל מה שקדם ממעשינו נקינו מהם והשלכנום אחרי גוינו והרחקנום תכלית ההרחקה:</p> |

| Ramban on Vayikra 16:8 ¹ | רמב"ן ויקרא טז:ח |
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| <p>(As described in Pirkei DeRebbe Eliezer) That is why on Yom Kippur they would give Samael a bribe to not cancel their sacrifice, as is written, "one lot to God and one lot to Azazel," the lot of God is a burnt-offering, and the lot of Azazel is a goat of sin-offering, and all the sins of Israel are on it. Samael sees that there is no sin in them on Yom Kippur. He says to God: Master of the worlds, You have one people on earth who are like the ministering angels in heaven – just as the ministering angels are barefoot, so Israel is barefoot on Yom Kippur; just as the ministering angels neither eat nor drink, so Israel does not eat or drink on Yom Kippur, just as the ministering angels cannot bend, so Israel stands all Yom Kippur; just as the ministering angels, peace serves as an intermediary between them, so Israel, peace serves as an intermediary between them on Yom Kippur; just as the ministering angels are free of all sin, so Israel is free of all sin on Yom Kippur. God hears the testimony of Israel from their accuser and He atones for the altar, and for the Temple, and for the priests, and for all the congregation, as it is said “And he shall effect atonement upon the Holy of Holies...” (Vayikra 16:33)...Now the Torah totally prohibited the acceptance of other gods or any worship of them, but God commanded that on Yom Kippur we send a goat to the desert to the prince who rules in desolate places, which is appropriate as he is the master of (that place), and from the emanation of his strength comes destruction and desolation, for he is the cause of the stars of the sword and blood and wars and quarrels and wounds and plagues and division and destruction, and, in general, the soul of the sphere of Mars. And his portion among the nations is Eisav, who is the nation who inherits the sword and wars. And among the animals, (his portion is) the goat, and in his portion are also the demons who are called mazikim in the language of the Rabbis, and se'irim in the language of Scripture, for both he and his nation are called se'ir (goat, demon, and another name for Edom, the land of Eisav). The intention of the se'ir hamishtalei'ach is not that it be an offering from us to him, God forbid, but rather that our intention should be that we are fulfilling the will of our Creator who has commanded so. The parable for this is if one were to make</p> | <p>לפיכך היו נותנין לו לסמאל שוחד ביום הכפורים שלא לבטל את קרבנם שנאמר גורל אחד לה' וגורל אחד לעזאזל גורלו של הקב"ה לקרבן עולה וגורלו של עזאזל שעיר החטאת וכל עונותיהם של ישראל עליו שנאמר ונשא השעיר עליו ראה סמאל שלא נמצא בהם חטא ביום הכפורים אמר לפני הקב"ה רבון כל העולמים יש לך עם אחד בארץ כמלאכי השרת שבשמים מה מלאכי השרת יחפי רגל כך הן ישראל יחפי רגל ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת אין בהם אכילה ושתייה כך ישראל אין בהם אכילה ושתייה ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת אין להם קפיצה כך ישראל עומדין על רגליהם ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת שלום מתווך ביניהם כך הן ישראל שלום מתווך ביניהם ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת נקיים מכל חטא כך הן ישראל נקיים מכל חטא ביום הכפורים והקדוש ברוך הוא שומע עדותן של ישראל מן הקטיגור שלהם ומכפר על המזבח ועל המקדש ועל הכהנים ועל כל עם הקהל שנאמר (פסוק לג) וכפר את מקדש הקדש וגו'...והנה התורה אסרה לגמרי קבלת אלהותם וכל עבודה להם אבל צוה הקב"ה ביום הכפורים שנשלח שעיר במדבר לשר המושל במקומות החרבן והוא הראוי לו מפני שהוא בעליו ומאצילות כחו יבא חורב ושממון כי הוא העילה לכוכבי החרב והדמים והמלחמות והמריבות והפצעים והמכות והפירוד והחרבן והכלל נפש לגלגל מאדים וחלקו מן האומות הוא עשו שהוא עם היורש החרב והמלחמות ומן הבהמות השעירים והעזים ובחלקו עוד השדים הנקראים מזיקין בלשון רבותינו ובלשון הכתוב (להלן יז ז) שעירים כי כן יקרא הוא ואומתו שעיר ואין הכונה בשעיר המשתלח שיהיה קרבן מאתנו אליו חלילה אבל שתהיה כוננתו לעשות רצון</p> |

¹ Translation from Rav Ezra Bick

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| <p>a banquet for the master, and the master would command the one making the banquet: "Give a portion to this particular servant of mine." In this case, the one who makes the banquet is not giving anything to the servant, and is not honoring him, but rather everything is given to the master, and the master is giving a reward to the servant. And he has fulfilled his master's command and has done, in his master's honor, all that he was commanded. But the master, out of concern for the giver of the banquet, wished that all his servants take part in it, so that they praise him and not belittle him.</p> | <p>בוראנו שצונו כך והמשל בזה כמי שעשה סעודה לאדון וצוה האדון את האיש העושה הסעודה תן מנה אחת לעבדי פלוני שאין העושה הסעודה נותן כלום לעבד ההוא ולא לכבודו יעשה עמו רק הכל נתן לאדון והאדון נותן פרס לעבדו ושומר זה מצותו ועשה לכבוד האדון כל אשר צוהו ואמנם האדון לחמלתו על בעל הסעודה רצה שיהיו כל עבדיו הנהיין ממנה שיספר בשבחיו ולא בגנותו.</p> |
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Rav Ezra Bick, *Introduction to the Thought of the Ramban (Yeshivat Har Etzion)*

The way to understand this is, I think, by remembering the basic kabbalistic orientation of the Ramban. Everything, without exception, is from God, and is rooted in the upper worlds. Being an "accuser" is part of God's justice, but it is, when taken in isolation, a role that necessarily involves the powers that we see as evil. Accusing means fomenting strife, and the powers of strife are, when they descend to this world, expressed as war and bloodshed, though obviously it still waits for men with free will to take up the arms and engage in strife...We don't serve the principle of evil, God forbid; we show that we understand that even the principle of evil is subject to God and dependent on Him. That is the **opposite** of serving evil; it is making, or rather demonstrating, that evil is subservient to God.

Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, *A Terrorist Tried to Kill Me Because I am a Jew. I will Never Back Down (NY Times Opinion)*

I am a religious man. I believe everything happens for a reason. I do not know why God spared my life. I do not know why I had to witness scenes of a pogrom in San Diego County like the ones my grandparents experienced in Poland. I don't know why a part of my body was taken away from me. I don't know why I had to see my good friend, a woman who embodied the Jewish value of hesed (kindness), hunted in her house of worship. I don't know why I had to watch Lori's beloved husband, a doctor, faint as he tried to resuscitate her. And then their only daughter, Hannah, sob in agony as she encountered both her parents collapsed on the floor. I do not know God's plan. All I can do is try to find meaning in what has happened. And to use this borrowed time to make my life matter more. I used to sing a song to my children, a song that my father sang to me when I was a child. "Hashem is here," I would sing, using a Hebrew name for God, pointing with my right index finger to the sky. "Hashem is there," I would sing, pointing to my right and left. "Hashem is truly everywhere." That finger I would use to point out God's omnipresence was taken from me. I pray that my missing finger serves as a constant reminder to me. A reminder that every single human being is created in the image of God; a reminder that I am part of a people that has survived the worst destruction and will always endure; a reminder that my ancestors gave their lives so that I can live in freedom in America;

and a reminder, most of all, to never, ever, not ever be afraid to be Jewish. From here on in I am going to be more brazen. I am going to be even more proud about walking down the street wearing my tzitzit and kippah, acknowledging God's presence. And I'm going to use my voice until I am hoarse to urge my fellow Jews to do Jewish. To light candles before Shabbat. To put up mezuzas on their doorposts. To do acts of kindness. And to show up in synagogue — especially this coming Shabbat. I am a proud emissary of Chabad-Lubavitch, a movement of Hasidic Judaism. Our leader, the great Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, famously taught that a little light expels a lot of darkness...In his vile manifesto, the terrorist who shot up my synagogue called my people, the Jewish people, a "squalid and parasitic race." No. We are a people divinely commanded to bring God's light into the world. So it is with this country. America is unique in world history. Never before was a country founded on the ideals that all people are created in God's image and that all people deserve freedom and liberty. We fought a war to make that promise real. And I believe we can make it real again. That is what I pledge to do with my borrowed time.