



SoulSpa 3.26 • P. Aharei Mot-Kedoshim
April 25, 2026 • 8 Iyyar 5786
23rd Day of the Omer • Gevurah sheba'Netzah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

Barukh Atah Adonai
eloheinu melekh ha'olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH, our God,
eternal sovereign, who sanctified us
in God's *mitzvot* and commanded us
to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

Orientation to the Book of Leviticus

ט.ה.ר (t-h-r) pure > *uncharged*

ט.מ.א (t-m-') impure > *charged*

ק.ר.ב (k-r-v) proximity, inwardness > *sacrifice*

ע.ל.ה ('-l-h) ascent > *burnt offering (olah)*

ח.ט.א (h-t-') sin > *"sin" offering (hatat)*

turn'ah model - - - - - "missed mark" model?

from yom kippur

we destroy we break we are broken
and this is the fast you have chosen
on rosh hashana it is written
on yom kippur it is sealed

who shall live and who shall die
which goat will have his throat cut
like an unlucky Isaac

spitting a red thread and which goat
will be sent alive to the pit where the crazies are
thread lightly tied around its neck...

this is the fast you have chosen, *turn return*
how to turn like leaves like a page like a corner

– Alicia Ostriker

Kohenic purpose to shift from tum'ah to taharah
SHAMANIC ACT = transmutation of energy

Leviticus 16:3-16

INVOCATION OF "POWERS" - korban
Use what we "had" (physically)

זאת זבא אהרן אל-הקדש בפר
גור-בקר לחטאת ואיל לעלה:
כתנת-בד קדש ולבש ומכנסים-בד
יהיו על-בשרו ובאבנט בד נחור
ובמזנפת בד וצנף בגדי-קדש הם
ורחץ במים את-בשרו ולבשם:

3-4. Aharon will come thus to the Holy: with a young bull for a *hatat* offering and a ram for an *olah*. He will put on the holy linen coat, linen pants on his flesh, linen girdle and headdress. These are holy garments, so he will wash his flesh in water, then dress in them.

בומאת עדת בני ישראל יסח
שני-שעירי עזים לחטאת ואיל אחד
לעלה: והקריב אהרן את-פר
החטאת אשר-לו וכפר בעדו ובעד
ביתו:

5-6. He will take from the Children of Israel two goat kids for a *hatat* offering and one ram for an *olah*. Aaron will *korban*-ify his own bull for a *hatat* offering, and atone for himself, and for his house.

"SIN"
transmutes
to ... ???!

by KORBAN
= **food**
(big deal in
bronze age
culture)

ולקח את-שני השעירים והעמיד
אתם לפני יהוה פתח אהל מועד:
ונתן אהרן על-שני השעירים גרלות
גורל אחד ליהוה וגורל אחד
לעזאזל:

7-8. He will take the two goats and stand them before YHVH at the opening of the Tent of Witnessing. Aharon will cast lots on the two goats – one lot for YHVH, and the other lot for Azazel. ****SCAPEGOAT****

AZAZEL:
wilderness
creatures
Other Side
SPLITTING
unknown

והקריב אהרן את-השעיר אשר
עלה עליו הגורל ליהוה ועשהו
חטאת: והשעיר אשר עלה עליו
הגורל לעזאזל יעמד-חי לפני
יהוה לכפר עליו לשלח אותו
לעזאזל המדברה:

9-10. Aharon will *korban*-ify the goat on which the lot for YHVH arose, and make him [into] a *hatat* offering. The goat on which the lot arose for Azazel will be stood live before YHVH, to atone for [Aharon], and he will send it to Azazel in the wilderness. **LIMINAL; what happens to the Goat? Sin?**

sent out:
anti-korban

והקריב אהרן את-פר החטאת
אשר-לו וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו
ושחט את-פר החטאת אשר-לו:
ולקח מלא-המחקה גחלי-אש מעל
המזבח מלפני יהוה ומלא חפניו
קטרת סמים דקה והביא מבית
לפרכת:

11-12. Aharon will *korban*-ify the bull of his *hatat* offering and atone for himself and his house, then slaughter the bull of that *hatat* offering. He will take a pan of burning coals of fire from the altar before YHVH, and handful of sweet incense finely ground, and take it **inside the veil**. **wilderness too**

LIMINAL

ונתן את-הקטרת על-האש לפני
יהוה וכסה ענן הקטרת את-
הכפרת אשר על-העדות ולא ימות:
ולקח מדם הפר והזה באצבעו על-
פני הכפרת קדמה ולפני הכפרת
יזה שבע-פעמים מן-הדם באצבעו:

13-14. [Aharon] will put the incense on the fire before YHVH, so the incense cloud will cover [it] so he not die. He will take bull **blood** to sprinkle with his finger on the covering eastward: he will sprinkle the **blood** seven times with his finger.

BLOOD =
• rebirth
• touching death

ושחט את-שעיר החטאת אשר
לעם והביא את-דמו אל-מבית
לפרכת ועשה את-דמו כאשר עשה
לדם הפר והזה אותו על-הכפרת
ולפני הכפרת: וכפר על-הקדש
מטמאת בני ישראל ומפשעיהם
לכל חטאתם וכן יעשה לאהל
מועד השכן אתם בתוך טמאתם.

15-16. [Aharon] will slaughter the *hatat*-offering goat for the people, bring its **blood** inside the veil, do with that **blood** as he did with the **blood** of the bull, and sprinkle it on and before the veil. He will atone for the Holy, for the *tum'ah* of the Children of Israel, and for the iniquity of all their *sins*. And so will he do for the Tent of Witnessing that dwells with them amidst their *tum'ah*.

Rashi, Lev. 16:8

עזאזל - הוא הר עז וקשה, צוק גבוה, שנאמר ארץ גזרה יהו"ה חתוכה: *Azazel* - A mountain of strength (*azaz*) and power (*El*), as in (B.T. Yoma 67b), "[The goat was sent to] a **deeply cut** craggy land for God."

Hizkuni, Lev. 16:8

עזאזל - היינו סמאל וכדי שלא יבטל קרבנם נותנים לו שחד. *Azazel* – That is, **Samael**. So that their *korban* won't be in vain, we give him a bribe.

- 10 cure for fear (minyan)
- 10 commandments
- 10 creation impulses
- 10 kabbalistic energy centers

Mishnah Yoma 6:4-6

וכבש עשו לו מפני הבבלים, שהיו מתלשים בשערו, וא"ל, טל וצא, טל וצא. מן קירי ירושלים היו מלוין אותו עד סכה הראשונה. **עשר** סכות מירושלים ועד צוק.... על כל סכה וסכה אומרים לו, הרי מזון ונהרי מים. ומלוין אותו מסכה לסכה, חוץ מאחרונה שבקהו, שאינו מגיע עמו לצוק, אלא עומד מרחוק ורואה את מעשיו: מה היה עושה, חלק לשון של זהורית, חציו קשר בסלע וחציו קשר בין שתי קרניו, ודחפו לאחוריו, והוא מתגלגל ויורד, ולא היה מגיע לחצי הקר עד שנעשה אברים אברים. They made a ramp for the goat, because Babylonians used to pluck at the goat's hair and say to it: "Take [our **sin**] and go! Take [our **sin**] and go!" Jerusalem's prominent [people] escorted the one leading the goat up to the first *sukkah*. There were **ten** *sukkot* from Jerusalem to the cliff.... At each *sukkah*, they said to him: "Here is food. Here is water." They accompanied him from *sukkah* to *sukkah*, except for the last one so nobody reaches the cliff with him. Rather, one stood at a distance and observed his action. What did the one designated to send the goat do? He took a strip of crimson [rope], tied half to a rock and the other half between the goat's two horns. He then pushed the goat backward, so it would roll and fall. It would not have fallen halfway down the mountain before [the rope tension from] its fall would tear it limb from limb.



The Yom Kippur scapegoat being cast from Mount Azazel into the abyss, where the demon Azael waits. Mahzor MS Kaufmann A 387. Heilbronn, Germany, ca. 1370–1400.

Da'at Zekenim, Lev. 16:8

עזאזל - כתב הרב אברהם בן עזרא ז"ל כשתגיע לשלשים ושלש תדענו וה"פ כשתגיע לגל עד שעולה בגי' ל"ג תמצא לו דומה שאותה תיבה מתחלקת לשנים כלומר גל עד בד והכא נמי תחלק האי תיבה לשנים לעז אזל וזהו שעיר המשתלח שהולך לעז לצוק ההר שהוא עז הולך מתרגמינן אזל:

Azazel – This procedure is meant to teach us not to sacrifice to Satanic forces anymore. Satanic forces are symbolized by the scapegoat. Just as the bird released to the air by a *kohein* for a person afflicted with *tzora'at* is seen as taking away iniquity, so the scapegoat is supposed to do this on behalf of the whole Jewish nation on Yom Kippur... The words *l'az* (strength to go to) and *azel* (waste) symbolize this concept.

Mishnah Shabbat 9:3

מנין שקושרין לשון של זהורית בראש שעיר המשתלח שנאמר אם יהיו חטאיכם כשנים כשלג ילבינו:

How do we know that they tied *crimson* rope on the head of the scapegoat? As in (Isa. 1:18), "Though your **sins** be as scarlet, they will be white as snow."

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 46:9

גורלו של הקב"ה קרבן עולה וגורלו של עזאזל שעיר חטאת, וכל עונותיהם של ישראל עליו שנאמר "ונשא השעיר עליו את כל עונותם"

The lot for the Holy Blessed One **arose** onto the [goat] for the burnt offering, and the lot for Azazel [**arose**] onto the goat for a *hatat* offering – for all the iniquities of Israel were on it, as in (Lev. 16:22), "The goat will bear on itself all their iniquities."

ראה סמאל שלא נמצא בהם חטא ביוה"כ אמר לפניו רבש"ע יש לך עם אחד בארץ כמלאכי השרת בשמים: מה מלאכי השרת אין להם קפיצין כך ישראל עומדים על רגליהם ביוה"כ. מה מלאכי ישראל אין להם אכילה ושתיה כך ישראל אין להם אכילה ושתיה ביוה"כ. מה מלאכי השרת נקיים מכל חטא כך ישראל נקיים מכל חטא ביוה"כ. מה מלאכי השרת שלום מתווך ביניהם כך ישראל שלום מתווך ביניהם ביוה"כ.

Samael saw that no **sin** was found among [Israel] on the Day of Atonement. He said to [God]: "Sovereign of the universe! You have but one people like heaven's ministering angels. The ministering angels have bare feet; so Israel has bare feet on the Day of Atonement. The ministering angels have no food or drink; so Israel has no food or drink on the Day of Atonement. The ministering angels have no joints; so [lightly] does Israel stand on its feet on the Day of Atonement. The ministering angels have peace among them; so Israel has peace among them on the Day of Atonement. The ministering angels are free of **sin** on the Day of Atonement; so Israel is free of **sin** on the Day of Atonement!"

(the classical function of "Satan")

והקב"ה שומע עתירותן של ישראל מן הקטיגור שלהם ומכפר על המזבח ועל הכהנים ועל כל עם הקהל למגדול ועד קטן, שנאמר "וכפר על המקדש".

Thus the Holy Blessed One hears the entreaties of Israel and not their **accuser**, and atones for the altar, and the *kohanim*, and all the people of the congregation great and small – as in (Lev. 16:16), "He [=God] will atone for the Holy."

The Womens' Torah Commentary

Azazel. This is the name of the wilderness beyond the boundaries of settled life; most likely it originated as the name of a demon. *Azazel* in this case is best imagined as the antithesis of the Tabernacle/sanctuary, a place of disorder devoid of the relevant priestly distinctions. By carrying Israel's impurities to such a wilderness, the scapegoat effectively conveys the chaotic aspects of human life back to a place of origin.

Maharat Sarah Pincus, from [Acharei Mot; A Modern Midrash](#)

“My dear Aharon: take your hands, but instead of putting your hands on the heads of Nadav and Avihu on Friday night before *kiddush*, you will lean on the scapegoat, and confess all the **sins** of the people on its head. And then you will send it away to the desert. You will wash up and change your clothes, and all the remains of the *korbanot* will be brought outside of the camp and will be consumed in fire...

For eternity, this process will be repeated on the 10th day of the seventh month. It will be a day of rest for all in your community. It will be a day when all will be forgiven. Through the *dam* (blood) of the *hatat*, and the *demama* (silence), life will be granted.”

Bereishit Rabbah 65:15

וְנָשָׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו, זֶה עֲשׂוֹ, שְׂנֵאָמֵר: הוּא עֲשׂוֹ אֲחִי אִישׁ שְׂעָר: אֵת כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָם, עֲוֹנוֹת תָּם, שְׂנֵאָמֵר: וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם
The goat will bear on itself – This is Eisav, as in (Gen. 25:27), “Behold, Eisav my brother is a hairy [=goat-like] man.” *All their iniquities* [*avonotam*] – iniquities of the simple [*avonot tam*], as in (Gen. 25:27), “Ya’akov was a simple [*tam*] man.”

Rambam, The Guide for the Perplexed III: 46

אִין מִי שֶׁמְטִיל סִפְק שֶׁהַחַטָּאִים אֵינִם דְּבָרִים גְּשָׁמִיִּים הַמּוֹעֲבְרִים מִגִּבּוֹ שֶׁל פֶּרֶט אֶחָד לִפְרֵט אַחֵר, אֶלֶּא כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים הָאֵלֶּה הֵם מְשָׁלִים שֶׁמְטַרְתֵּם לְהַשְׁגֵּת צוּרָה בְּנֶפֶשׁ כַּדִּי שְׂתוֹשֵׁג הַיַּפְעֻלוֹת לְתוֹשׁוּבָה, כְּלוּמַר שֶׁהַתְּנַעֲרָנוּ מִכָּל מַעֲשֵׂינוּ הַקּוֹדְמִים וְהַשְׁלַכְנוּם אַחֵר גּוֹוֵנוּ וְהַרְחַקְנוּ אוֹתָם כִּכֵּל הַאֲפֶשֶׁר
There is no doubt that **sin** is not such that it can be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one being [=human] to be laid on another [=goat]. These ceremonies are of symbolic character to impress on humanity 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.”

Dr. Erica Brown, [Leadership and the Scapegoat](#)

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.**

Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

THE SAGES IN OUR OWN TIME EXPLAIN: Azazel was a goat demon, a popular mythological figure in the ancient world. According to the apocryphal Book of Enoch, the angel Raphael, in order to punish Azazel along with several other angels for sleeping with the “daughters of men,” banished him to the desert. From this outpost he controlled acts of harlotry, war, and sorcery. Using “sympathetic magic” – that is, fighting fire with fire – the High Priest would dispatch the sin-laden goat once each year to cancel the goat-demon’s sinful influence on the people.

THE RABBIS ADD: We learn in the Mishnah that a priest was appointed to accompany the goat to make sure it did not return to inhabited lands: later, it was driven off a cliff.

MIRIAM THE PROPHET SUGGESTS: Although nowadays we only *read* about this ritual as part of Yom Kippur liturgy, we might consider – given our experience as a people, and as Jewish women in particular – designating during this period our own totem figures: symbolic images, words, or objects that we could release against those “demonic” forces that scapegoat us or encourage us to stray.

DINAH THE WOUNDED ONE DECLARES: Imagine how liberating it would be to exorcise the stereotype of the JAP (Jewish American Princess) from popular culture. Or our own internalized antisemitism, which makes us hate our own bodies, our names, our men, and ourselves. How healthy it would be to drive those demons off a cliff!

R. Shefa Gold, Aharei Mot

DURING THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION, two goats are brought. One is designated “for God” and is slaughtered as a *hatat*, a “sin offering.” The other is marked for Azazel. After laying upon its head all the sins and transgressions of the people, the second goat is sent into the wilderness to Azazel. Whoever or whatever Azazel is, [it] holds the key to our purification.

SOMEONE WOULD BE DESIGNATED for this job of escorting the goat to Azazel in the wilderness. He was the one charged to move between the civilized world and the wilderness. I’ve always imagined myself as that “*ish itti*” — the “man of the moment” — performing that job.

The designated escort knew this secret: All of our sins can be traced to the wild part in us being lost, misdirected or suppressed. If the wild, the ecstatic in us, is not honored and allowed its vitality, it will find outlet in cruelty and violence. When the “*ish itti*” escorted the goat with all of Israel’s sins on it into the wilderness, he was returning that misdirected energy back to its source.

OUR SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE is to find that wild place inside us and, through ecstatic practice, give it voice and space and an honored place in our lives. If we do not, it will get twisted and become a destructive force. Returning the goat to Azazel is allowing the wild part of us its wilderness, its place to be free.