

Atonement

"On this day, you will be atoned to purify yourselves from all your sins - before G-d you shall be pure."

Accepting our nature as inherently flawed, is itself an atonement. How does this work?



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Holidays

Yom Kippur

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"Do not think... that the Holy One, Blessed be He, decrees upon a person from the moment of creation that the individual will be a tzadik or rasha. It is not so! Rather every individual is capable of being a tzadik like Moshe or a rasha like Yiravam..." (Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 5:2)

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YOM KIPPUR

TEMPLE SERVICE

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

WRITTEN BY A STUDENT
WITH UNAUTHORIZED ELABORATION

Today, two days before Yom Kippur 5765, Rabbi Chait gave a class on the Yom Kippur Temple service. Rabbi Chait commenced his class, distinguishing between the central focuses of Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashannah focuses on G-d's Kingship. This means we are to recognize and accept upon ourselves G-d's absolute rule as expressed through His creation (omnipotence). G-d's role as Creator reserves for Him the exclusive cause for all that exists. This translates to absolute Kingship over all. Rosh Hashannah also focuses on His absolute Knowledge (omniscience). G-d alone knows all, and thereby He alone inscribes us for good or evil for this coming year. G-d's omnipotence and omniscience expressed together on Rosh

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Hashannah teach that G-d reigns over all, and is knowledgeable of all. Nothing is beyond His abilities, or His knowledge. There is no other cause for the universe and all that fills it.

In contrast, Yom Kippur's distinction is "G-d's ineffable name": the priests would recite G-d's ineffable name ten times in the Temple during Yom Kippur. Being prohibited to enunciate G-d's name normally, is to serve as our demonstration that we lack any knowledge of G-d, i.e., we cannot even mention His name, which would suggest we possess some idea about Him. Any description of G-d – even the meaning of His name – is unknown to us. But on Yom Kippur, this actual name of G-d is mentioned ten times. This indicates that on Yom Kippur, there is a closer relationship to G-d. What is this relationship?

Rabbi Chait stated that the very recognition of our ignorance about G-d's nature atones for our sins. How so? The answer is that through our recognition that we have no concept of G-d, this acknowledgement entitles us existence for another year. We thereby learn that our existence depends on obtaining correct ideas, and our admission of ignorance regarding anything related to G-d. We cannot know G-d, as the Torah says, "...for man cannot know M while he is alive." So when we admit of this ignorance, we are in fact stating a truth, and

when man is in line with truth, G-d's providence relates to him even more. The more knowledge we attain of truths, and the more we realize we are ignorant of G-d, that is how much more our lives are a reality before G-d and "worth" existence. In other words, as we continually grow in our realization that G-d is not physical, that He possesses no emotions, nor any quality existent in the universe, although we attain no positive knowledge of G-d, we are in fact removing false notions about Him. This act of negating, positions us more in line with truth. Let us now examine the ideas obtained through the Yom Kippur service

After the normal daily service, the High Priest would slaughter the ox, one of many sacrifices on Yom Kippur. But before enacting the central service of this sacrifice – sprinkling of the blood on the Ark's cover – the High Priests is commanded to interrupt this ox service, and offer the incense in the Temple's Holy of Holies. Why this interruption? Additionally, the priest must wait until this room is entirely filled with the smoke of the burning incense. What is the meaning behind this waiting period?

The purpose is that the smoke is to create an opaque veil between the High Priest and the rest of the room of the Holy of Holies. This veil is an admission of the "veil" that exists

between G-d and man. Maimonides states that Revelation at Sinai too was traditionally explained to have been a rainy day, also a veil of sorts. The cloud and thick cloud at Sinai certainly teaches this lesson, that there is an infinite distance between G-d and man. Even when G-d "reveals" Himself by creating the miracles of Sinai - a closer relationship – nonetheless, only a distant relationship exists between G-d, who is far exalted from anything we can fathom, as mortal, created man.

So the High Priest must acknowledge that man is far removed from G-d, and only through this realization, is the High Priest permitted to then complete his offering. There is a danger that man may think he possesses some idea about G-d. Not only is this false, but until the High Priest admits of his ignorance through the incense's veil, he is prohibited to continue with his worship, lest he assume he is serving his own fantasy idea of G-d, and not the true G-d. For if we wrongly assume that we do in fact possess some truths about G-d, Temple worship would then be converted to heresy and idolatry. This explains the interruption of the ox sacrifice.

In another class given by Rabbi Chait many years ago, he cited the Talmud that described the most powerful human instincts as a "fiery lion exiting the Holy of Holies in the Temple".

Rabbi Chait explained then, that this teaches us that the most powerful instinct is the "religious emotion". It is in Temple that man is subject to forming ideas about to whom he is serving. Therefore, the Talmud states that the "fiery lion" (a powerful and dangerous entity referring to the religious emotion) had exited. It is within service to G-d that man must be on his highest level of guard. For it is here that man religious emotions are heightened.

The next sacrifice is the goat of the people. So far there are two sacrifices: the High Priest's ox, and the peoples' goat. Why must there be two separate offerings for our sins? We derive a new insight: the priests require their own atonement.

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YOM KIPPUR

TEMPLE SERVICE

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

What additional atonement do they require? Why can't they join in the nation's goat sin sacrifice? The answer can only lie in the priest's distinction: Temple service. Meaning, even those who serve in the Temple by G-d's very command – the priests – are not immune to the instincts, which never cease to cause us to sin. As such, the priests must demonstrate that Temple service is not something that they can perform flawlessly. Therefore, they alone must be atoned through a separate animal. Had they joined the people with the nation's goat, this lesson would not be learned.

Rabbi Chait mentioned that there is no escape from the control of our unconscious and our emotional drives. This is our nature. Other religions wish to deny this aspect of man, but Judaism does not have heroes or saints, all man's sins are revealed in the Torah, even those of our greatest prophets. Judaism embraces the acceptance of reality, and foremost, this includes that we are instinctual by nature, that we have an unconscious, and that we possess emotional attractions for matters that the Torah prohibits.

We learn that Temple itself requires atonement, that is, we demonstrate through the priest's offering that Temple service is not an area in which man escapes sin - how profound an idea. In other words, we are not worthy of Temple. We make the Temple impure by not guarding ourselves from Torah defined impurities. And when we are in an impure state (contact with the dead for example) and we enter the Temple without purification, we defile the Temple, its vessels and its sacrifices. These sins all require atonement. We cannot properly relate to the requirements of Temple, so in Temple law itself, are the commands to offer atonements for Temple impurities that we commit.

I added that the Rabbis state, "the Day of Yom Kippur 'itself' is an atonement." What is meant by "itself"? I suggested that this means the following: Yom Kippur's existence as a fixed part of the calendar teaches our unavoidable need to be forgiven. We cannot escape sin, and we learn this as well from there

being an eternally fixed day of Yom Kippur, even in the Messianic era. Although we will rise to a higher level of existence during this era, man's nature will still include instincts. Thus, our recognition that Yom Kippur is essential for our forgiveness impresses us with the idea that man is inherently flawed. Such an idea carves into man's heart his acceptance of his nature. This acceptance alone atones. How so? As we said, recognition of our nature raises us to be more in line with reality, and additionally, as we accept this reality, we may be moved to reflect on our flaws.

Rabbi Chait also taught that even on the Day of Atonement itself, Yom Kippur, there are infractions committed by the priests and man who cannot control all of their thoughts. Ironically, as we are being atoned for our sins of the year, we continue to have sinful thoughts crossing our minds, and these must be atoned for as well! This is why there are two additional sin offerings later on, in the day of Yom Kippur. To me, this is such a prime example of the honesty of Torah, that it is a system which embraces truth at every turn, and never considers there to be any area or service in which man is bereft of his instinctual nature, and thus, sin.

Now, although we stated that the priests must atone for their own Temple service infractions through a distinct sacrifice, yet, we are one people. Rabbi Chait stated that this is

demonstrated by the command of the mixing of the blood of both offerings. The priest's animal blood and that of the animal of the nation are intermingled as one.

Returning to the idea that man cannot escape his instinctual drives, no matter how far he progresses in his perfection, Rabbi Chait mentioned the Scapegoat, the Sa-ir Ha-Azazel. The priest confesses the sins of all the Jews, and the Torah euphemistically states that the animal "carries off" our sins to the desert, where this Scapegoat is delivered to its certain death as it is dismembered upon its fall onto Mount Azazel's rocky slopes. Through this service, we attain recognition that the unconscious emotions in man will lead him too to a most certain, spiritual death. ■

(This service is elaborated upon in the article entitled "Saer L'azazel-The Scapegoat".)



Maimonides explains that we are endowed with freewill. We are the product of our choices. The Almighty does not decree upon any individual that this person will be wicked or righteous. Instead, the Creator empowers us. We choose and through our choices fashion ourselves.

Maimonides explains that we are not limited by predetermined constraints. Each of us can be as righteous as Moshe. This comment seems to contradict other statements by Maimonides. In Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, Maimonides discusses prophesy. He explains the differences between the prophesy of Moshe and of other prophets. Maimonides comments that Moshe is the master of all prophets. His prophesy is distinguished from all prophets that preceded him and that follow him.[1] It seems clear that Maimonides maintains that no other individual will achieve the level of Moshe! Yet, in our text, Maimonides tells us that each of us can be a Moshe!

This question can be answered on different levels. On the simplest level, we can resolve this apparent contradiction through better understanding the phenomenon of prophecy. Maimonides explains that prophecy is not acquired through the unilateral efforts of the individual. Spiritual perfection is a prerequisite for prophecy. However, one's personal perfection does not assure the prophecy will be achieved.[2] Hashem may grant the person a vision. It is also possible that the Almighty will not respond with a prophetic communication.

This understanding of prophecy provides an obvious answer to our question. We can each achieve the righteousness of Moshe. It does not follow that this righteousness will secure the prophetic vision of Moshe. Prophecy, at its various levels, cannot be claimed through individual effort alone. The Almighty bestows prophetic vision. He has indicated that He will not elevate another individual to the prophetic level of Moshe.

We can also resolve our question in a different manner. Maimonides comments that any individual can be a tzadik like Moshe. What does the term tzadik mean? The term is derived from the word tzedek. Tzedek means justice. This indicates that the tzadik is a person associated with justice. Justice is a difficult concept to define. However, we can make the following observation. The concept of justice assumes the existence of an order within the universe and society. Justice requires that a person live within this order. Let us consider an example. Assume two

individuals come to court. One claims to be owed money by the other. How does the court resolve the issue? The court assumes that an order exists. This order dictates specific rights between individuals. The court attempts to resolve the issue through applying these rights to this case. In short, justice is achieved through applying a system of order to the case.

What does this tell us about the tzadik? The tzadik wishes to fulfill his or her role in the universe created by the Creator. What is this role? It certainly differs for various individuals. However, we know the outline. We must observe the Torah and serve the Almighty. We are each created with unique talents and abilities. These traits dictate different specific roles for various individuals. No individual can be a prophet on par with Moshe. This is not part of our individual missions. However, personal righteousness is an expression of faithfulness to the highest role each individual can achieve.

Now we can understand Maimonides' comments. In order to be a tzadik, a person does not need to be as wise as Moshe or a prophet. Yet, every person can work towards fully actualizing his or her potential and fulfilling one's individual role.

"It is a mitzvah to eat and drink on the eve of Yom HaKippurim and to partake of an extensive meal." (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 604:1)

Shulchan Aruch explains that we are commanded to partake of an extensive meal on the eve of Yom Kippur. This halacha is discussed in the Talmud. The Talmud explains that one who eats and drinks extensively on the eve of Yom Kippur is regarded as having fasted for two days.[3]

The commentaries offer various explanations for this requirement. Rashi explains that the Torah requires us to partake of a substantial meal on the eve of the fast in order to prepare ourselves for the ordeal of fasting.[4]

Rashi essentially maintains that meal on the eve of Yom Kippur is a preparation for the fast. This is a difficult concept to understand. Every mitzvah requires preparation. On Succot, we live in the Succah. In order to fulfill this mitzvah, we must build a Succah. This is a necessary preparation for the fulfillment of the commandment. Yet, the

building of the Succah is not regarded as a part of the mitzvah of living in the Succah. It is a preparation. In contrast, Rashi seems to indicate that preparation for Yom Kippur, through eating and drinking, is part of the actual performance of the command!

Rabbaynu Asher deals with this issue. He too, explains the requirement to eat and drink prior to the fast. He offers the same explanation as Rashi. However he adds important comments. He explains that this law is designed to demonstrate the Almighty's love for Bnai Yisrael. He offers a parable, which illustrates the concept. A king decrees that his son should fast on a predetermined date. He then commands his servants to feed his son on the day prior to the fast. The king wishes to assure that the son will be well prepared to endure the challenge of the fast. Similarly, the Almighty assigns us a day of the year to fast. This is an opportunity to atone for our transgressions. He then commands us to eat and drink the previous day. He wishes to help us through the ordeal.[5]

The comments of Rabbaynu Asher provide an answer to our question. The preparation for Yom Kippur is different from the preparations for Succot. We build a Succah because of strictly practical considerations. These preparations are not part of the actual mitzvah of living in the Succah. The preparations for Yom Kippur are not motivated by practical considerations. Instead, these preparations are designed to place Yom Kippur in the proper context. The day must be viewed as an expression of the Almighty's compassion for His people. This is accomplished through fulfilling the obligation of eating and drinking on the eve of the fast. This helps present Yom Kippur as an expression of the Almighty's compassion for His people. Therefore, the meal on the eve of Yom Kippur is a fundamental component of the actual mitzvah. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 7:6.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 7:5.

[3] Mesechet Yoma 81b.

[4] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Yoma 81b.

[5] Rabbaynu Asher, Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Yoma, Chapter 8, note 22.

The Scapegoat

WRITTEN BY A STUDENT

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

The scapegoat is a very unique sacrifice. All other sacrifices require shechita and zerika which is the fulfillment of the sacrifice and reflects the presence of atonement. However, the scapegoat is brought to a desolate place and is brutally killed by being thrown over a precipice. Chazal teach us that the nations of the world criticize the B'nai Yisroel for its practice of the saefer l'azazel as being solely ritualistic and ceremonial. Although the gentiles have ritualistic practices, they are symbolic and their performance engender some emotional satisfaction unlike the scapegoat. Judaism prides itself on the fact that ones commitment to the Torah is based upon his intellectual conviction and that its commandments are ethical and moral principles. We must therefore explain the significance of the scapegoat and the intellectual insight the Torah is imparting to us.

The Eben Ezrah gives us a clue as to the secret of the saefer l'azazel. He states that a basic secret of the scapegoat is after the word azazel and when you are 33 years old you will know this secret. If one counts 33 verses from the word ha'midbarah, the word after azazel, which appears in Leviticus, chapter 16 verse 10, one may get a clue. The verse that is being referred to is 17,7. The verse states: "They should no longer sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs that lead them astray. Rashi explains the word l'saeirim to mean l'shaydim, unto the demons. The Eben Ezrah is teaching us that if one desires an insight into the scapegoat he [sic] must recognize that adhering to this practice will lead one to the practice stated in chapter 7 verse 17. The Israelites will no longer turn astray and sacrifice to the shaydim as the nations of the world. We will explain this insight after we examine several salient laws with respect to the saefer l'azazel. It is interesting to note that the Rambam holds that the saefer renders atonement without repentance for all commandments that are not punishable by kares, excision. Rabbi's, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's position in the Talmud, although we do not paskin like him, is that even the day of Yom Kippur effectuates atonement. We must appreciate how does atonement work if the sinner is not repentant. Halachically Teshuvah implies that one must return to G-d. His relationship with the creator must be rekindled as a result of his recognizing the cause of his sin and being able to elevate himself to a higher intellectual level. The individual is a changed person, one who is no longer

drawn by the temptations of the instinctual nor the frailties of the emotional components of his nature which causes him to commit the sin. We therefore must understand how does the mere practice of the scapegoat grant atonement to a sinner?

The last Mishna in the tractate of Yumah quotes a statement of Rabbi Akivah which states "Happy are you Israel before whom you are purified, and who purifies you, your father in heaven." This is a puzzling statement. Anybody who does Teshuva and returns to G-d as a result of his own actions is purified before G-d. This applies even to a Gentile. Why does Rabbi Akivah specify a Jew; and furthermore it seems from his statement that Teshuva is extraneous to this purification process. We must try to comprehend Rabbi Akivah's teaching.

Nachmanidies comments on the Eben Ezra and explaining the service of the scapegoat discusses a Medrash. The Medrash says that the children of Jacob give Samael, their prosecuting angel, a bribe on Yom Kippur. This bribe is the sacrificial goat. It is given so that he should not annul their sacrifices. The goat l'azazel has all the sins of the Children of Israel on its head as set out in the verses in the Torah. The Medrash continues, as a result Samael will see that there is no sin on Yom Kippur and will explain before G-d, Creator of the world, there is one nation in this world which are akin to the ministering angels. Just like the ministering angels are bare footed, so too on this day the Jews are bare footed. Samael makes similar observations when addressing G-d with respect to eating, drinking, standing all day, making peace amongst themselves and being free of sin. In all these activities the Jewish people on Yom Kippur are comparable to the ministering angels. The Holy One upon hearing these testimonies from the prosecutor Samael, makes atonement for the alter, the sanctuary, the



priests of Israel and for all the people of the assembly of Israel. This is the Agadah that the Rambam quotes to help us understand the saefer l'azazel.

This Agadah raises several questions. Who is Samael and how is he bribed? Originally the purpose of the bribe is so that the sacrifices should not be annulled, however the seeming result of the bribe is that it is responsible for the entire kapara of Yom Kippur. The Rambam in the Guide To The Perplexed states that Samael is the appellation applied by our sages to Satan. The derivation of the word Samael is Sam - Kel, the blinding of G-d. Samael represents that part of human nature which blinds the individual from perceiving the ultimate reality, G-d. The yetzer harah and Satan are used interchangeably by Chazal and represent mans evil inclination which is rooted in his physical nature. Chazal use the term Satan, which implies something

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external to man, to signify that this part of man is not his essence. Rather the tzelem elokim is man's essence. Chazzal use the term yetzer harah to teach us that although it is not man's essence we are nevertheless responsible for this part of man. The key to understanding the saeer liazazel is appreciating its inexorable connection to kapparot Yom Hakippurim. There were two goats which were subject to the lottery. One was designated for G-d and was brought upon the alter as a sacrifice. The second goat was designated l'azazel and was the saeer haimishtaleyach, the goat that was sent away to meet its final destiny in the desert. The atonement of the day of Yom Kippur was really a result of the goat that was designated l'azazel and not the one that was brought as a sacrifice. The kapparot Yom Hakippurim is unique because it atones for many sins, kalot vechamurot, lenient and stringent sins. Whereas a korban chatas is brought for a particular maase aveira, act of violation, and atones for that particular sin. On Yom Kippur lifneh Hashem tetaharu, we are purified before G-d. The essential character of the day is a mechaper. This is a different type of forgiveness than a specific korban chatas, a sin offering. Yom Kippur is related to the state of the gavra, the individual. The day is mechaper the individual. A person who appreciates the sanctity of the day, demonstrates that he, as an individual, is worthy of forgiveness. Consequently, this new status results in the removal of the particular sins.

An understanding of the service of the scapegoat gives us insight into the essential nature of the sanctity of Yom Kippur and its function as a metaheer. The saeer liazazel functioned as a atonement for all the sins of the Jews. Leviticus Chapter 16, Verses 21 and 22 tells us that Aaron placed his hands on the saeer liazazel and confessed all the sins of the Children of Israel and all their transgressions and placed them on the head of the Azazel goat. How does this goat serve to forgive all the sins of the Jewish people? The Torah is teaching us that the sins of man are really separate and extraneous to his essential nature. Aaron was capable of removing all of man's sins and placing them on the head of the goat. The saeer liazazel as stated, represents the Satan, man's evil inclination, the part of man driven by his fantasy. This service signifies that the part of man which is based upon his emotions and fueled by his fantasy is really not reflective of man's true essence, his tzelem elokim, his sechel. This part of man, his instinctual nature, is severible from his true nature. However, if man follows his fantasies and his evil inclination he is doomed as the saeer l'azazel, to face a brutal and lonely death.

The Midrash quoted by Ramban, Nachmanidies, can now be understood. We bribe Samael and give him the saeer l'azazel. We as Torah Jews recognize that the pursuit of the fantasy blinds us from

perceiving chachmas haboreh, the wisdom of our creator. We acknowledge by the service of the scapegoat, that there is a spiritually higher nature to man, his true essence which we value. As Torah Jews, we thereby attempt to lead our lives based upon the tzelem elokim. By bribing Samael, we acknowledge that there is a part of man's nature, which is overpowering. However, we can not deny our instinctual nature, but must acknowledge that it stems from the lower part of man's being, and as such must be dealt with. If we deny our instinctual nature Samael, it can have tragic consequences. On the contrary, we recognize the instinctual part of man's nature but acknowledge our life long struggle as Torah Jews to separate that part of our nature from the tzelem elokim. Only by bribing Samael and recognizing the potent powers of the fantasy, can we hope to ever be successful in combating these forces and removing them from overwhelming our actions as Torah Jews. We demonstrate that ultimately if one is led astray by the powers of the fantasy he will surely perish and be doomed to spiritual genocide.

The saeer liazazel was taken to the desert by the ish iti, a specially prepared man. This demonstrates that the ultimate destruction of the saeer is not fortuitous. Rather, it is a necessary result that the pursuits of the fantasy will lead to ones downfall. That is why the ish iti was mezuman l'kach, was prepared for this job, to ensure and guarantee that the saeer would meet its eventual destruction. This recognition by Klall Yisroel that we appreciate the overwhelming force of man's instinctual nature and constantly strive to overcome it and elevate our lives to a higher spiritual plane, makes us akin to the maliachey hashares, ministering angels. This causes Samael to remark that on Yom Kippur the Children of Israel are like the Ministering Angels. The Ministering Angels are not under the influence of the instinctual, they are not swayed by emotions. Similarly on Yom Kippur the Jewish people demonstrate through the prohibitions of the day (eating, drinking, cohabitation, and wearing leather shoes etc.) that we abstain from these physical pleasures to demonstrate that there is a higher part to man's existence.

This explains how the saeer liazazel atones for all sins. Since man recognizes this concept and appreciates that his physical existence leads him on the path of Samael, he must strive through chachma to live life based upon his tzelem elokim, and thus become a different type of gavra. Yom Kippur is a day of reality whereby he recognizes the dangers in his daily existence of Samael but elevates himself on this day to be metaheer before Hashem. This explains that although a person did not do teshuva on a particular maeseh aveira, but since he recognizes the consequences of Samael and that man's true essence is chachma, he has elevated himself to higher

spiritual level and he is a gavra worthy of forgiveness.

We can now understand the reason why there are two goats, one for Hashem and one for azazel. This represents man's dual nature, his intellect which is l'Hashem and his instinctual which is l'azazel. In order to have the sacrifice to Hashem, you must have the saeer l'azazel. One can not be successful in his struggle as a talmid chachom unless he recognizes the lower part of human nature. Intellectual perfection can not be achieved if one simply represses his instinctual nature. By repressing one's instinctual nature it still remains a influential part of his personality.

The many meticulous details with respect to the performance of the saeer liazazel also evidences this concept. A person is driven to the life of the physical by many powerful forces. Each of these drives are shattered by the method of performance mandated by the Torah by bringing the saeer l'azazel. A person is drawn to the life of the material because of the enticements of the physical pleasures that one imagines is comforting when living an instinctual existence. This is why the saeer liazazel is brutally thrown over the cliff to a torturous death. This represents that visions of physical pleasures are illusory and transitory and ultimately will result in a painful shattering of such false emotions. A person is also drawn to the life of the physical because he feels that material success garners respect and popular acceptance by the masses. Therefore the saeer l'azazel is sent out with one man, alone without any fanfare, to a desolate and lonely place in the desert. This demonstrates that leading a life of materialism will ultimately and invariably result in a lonely and desolate existence. Lastly, a person is fooled by the entrapments of a physical existence in order to insulate himself from the limited nature of such an existence and to cater to his fantasy of immortality. Thus the saeer liazazel always meets the same destiny, a harsh and cruel termination, to help emasculate any such fantasies that a person may harbor.

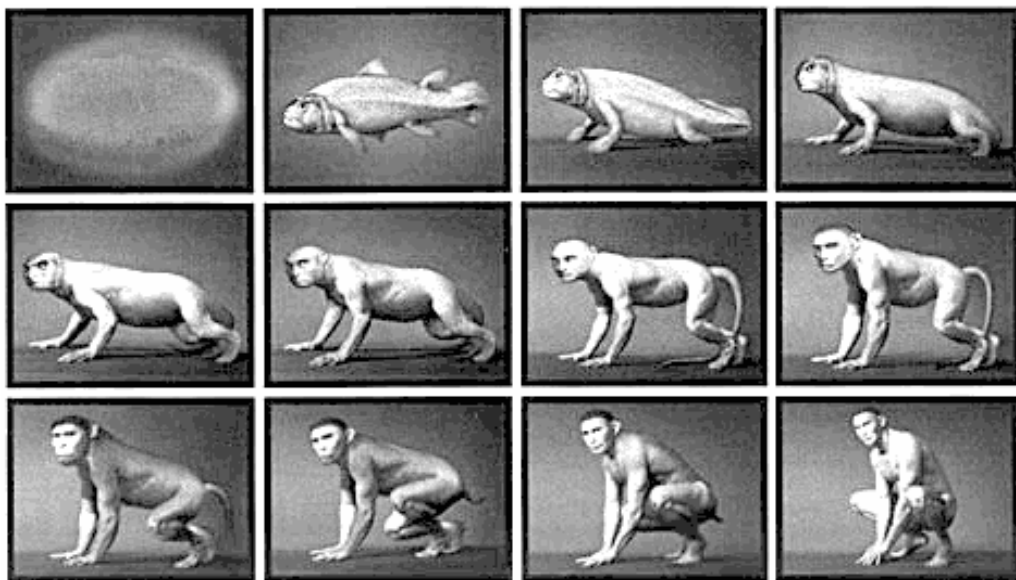
We can now appreciate Rabbi Akivah's statement quoted in the last Mishna in Tractate Yumah. "Happy are the Children of Israel because they are purified before G-d." Although it might be possible in isolated cases for individuals to come to the true recognition of G-d, however for a nation of people, on such a large scale, is impossible. How fortunate are we Torah Jews who have a system of Torah and Mitzvos, (that contains the abstract and beautiful practice of the saeer l'azazel), a system based upon chachma that allows us to recognize man's true nature and remove ourselves from living a purely physical existence, the life of fantasy that ultimately leads to man's downfall. Therefore Rabbi Akivah exalts "how happy are we the nation of Israel that we are fortunate to such a blessing." ■

Taken from "Getting It Straight" Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity

Evolution II

DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ

"Care to live dangerously?" His eyes sparkled behind the question as we settled in patio chairs at the small cafe overlooking the water. Spring had finally arrived, accompanied by a gentle afternoon breeze holding promises of the warm summer days to come. We each ordered herb tea. "That depends," I said. "How dangerous?" The King of Rational Thought smiled. "Do you remember when you wrote about our conversation on evolution and abstract thinking a few months ago? That evolution couldn't possibly have occurred based only on survival of the fittest because the ability to think abstractly about the idea of evolution itself wasn't needed for survival and therefore would never have developed?" "Yes," I said. "And I also remember that two of my readers wrote and took issue with your conclusion." "Right. Since then, I've had time to study their responses," he said. "Want to tackle one of them?" I hesitated. "Uh, why is this dangerous?" "Because," he said as the waiter brought our tea, "many people think that evolution answers the question about whether God exists or not. That makes evolution a religious topic. And people get very emotional about religion." "I won't argue that point," I said, absorbing the steamy chamomile blossom aroma. "Ok, I'm game." "Excellent," he said, pulling the newspaper clipping from his shirt pocket. "This reader points out that walking upright allows us to dance. The ability to speak allows us to sing. And the development of an opposable thumb allows us to button shirts. He goes on to say that dancing, singing, and buttoning shirts have nothing to do with survival. Yet they are by-products of walking, speaking, and an opposable thumb - abilities he presumes we did develop for survival. Thus he concludes that the ability to think abstractly is similarly a by-product of the development of the cerebral capacity we needed to survive. Got it?" "Yeaahh," I said slowly. "What's wrong



with it?" asked the King of Rational Thought.

I was afraid he'd ask that. "What do you mean?" I stalled. "There is a basic flaw in that reasoning," he replied. "Do you see it?" I looked and looked. I even stared studiously at my soggy tea bag, hoping for inspiration. It didn't work, and I finally gave up. "Don't feel bad," he said. "Most evolutionists miss this point. There is a critical difference between (a) using a given capacity for another function, and (b) developing a significantly different or advanced capacity. For example, the capacity to walk and dance are not in the same relationship as the capacity to walk and run. Dancing is simply using walking for another function. But running is an advanced ability. When it comes to evolution, if you don't need the ability to run, you won't develop it. "In other words," he continued, "if evolution is correct, you might use an ability developed for survival - such as walking - for some other non-survival purpose, such as dancing. But you won't develop a new

or advanced ability - such as running - unless you need it for survival. Something useless will not develop in the evolutionary process. Extras like that are detractions which will make you inferior in terms of survival, not superior. "Similarly," he went on, "the ability to think abstractly is an advanced thinking ability, clearly not needed for survival. It is hardly in the same league with, or ancillary to, the type of thinking that, say, an ape might use to get a banana." "Wow," I said, as I saw his point. "That's a subtle yet powerful distinction." "It's about proper classification," he said. "That's one of the keys to knowledge." "Is there more?" I asked. "Yes," he replied as he finished his tea and rose to leave, "but I have to go. Maybe we can cover it another time. Are you coming?" "No, I think I'll stick around a few minutes longer," I replied. "You've given me a lot to think about. Besides, I'm a bit hungry."

A gleam appeared in my eyes. "Maybe I'll order a banana." ■

Innui vs ASCETICISM

RABBI RUBEN GOBER

When one searches through the words of Torah and Chazal, one can easily see that Judaism doesn't view the physical pleasures of the world as inherently evil. Certainly, they must be enjoyed within the framework that the Torah sets up, but there is no reason for one to feel that to be close to G-d one must be totally removed from the physical. The Rambam, in the Fourth Chapter of his introduction to his commentary on Pirkei Avos, explains that the Torah does not value abstinence the abstention from physical pleasures as an ends to itself, like taking on extra prohibitions. In fact, he says that the Torah is critical of the Nazir for taking added prohibitions upon himself, which is the reason why he must bring a sin-offering. Furthermore, we see that there are mitzvos that demand that a person engage in some physical pleasure, such as eating on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Of course, the reasoning of these types of mitzvos goes beyond the physical pleasure itself, but it is clear that the Torah makes use of these pleasures, demonstrating that bodily pleasures aren't viewed as inherently evil. This contrasts with the philosophy of Asceticism, a view that maintains that any physical pleasure is inherently evil and damaging to a person. Ascetics go to extreme lengths to avoid any and all worldly pleasures, for they feel that to be on a spiritual level, one must be removed from the physical world. Clearly the Torah labels such an opinion as false and untenable. G-d put man in this world as a physical being to utilize all of its opportunities for the service of G-d.

However, when we come to Yom Kippur we find a mitzvah which has a striking resemblance to asceticism, that of 'Innui', affliction. The Torah says that on Yom Kippur one must afflict himself and separate from worldly pleasures. How do we understand this commandment in the framework of the Torah's view on worldly pleasures?

The Torah uses a similar term of Innui by the event of the 'mon', the food which G-d gave to the Jews in the desert. Moshe Rabbeinu says, in Devarim 8:2, that G-d gave them the 'mon' "in order to afflict" them. There are two questions that must be asked on this statement. Firstly, what does it mean that the Jews were afflicted by their receiving the 'mon'? Where was

the harm in their receiving food? Secondly, what was the purpose of their affliction in the desert? What did it accomplish?

The Talmud, in Yoma 74b, addresses what the affliction was in receiving the 'mon'. According to one opinion, the affliction stemmed from the fact that they didn't have 'bread in the basket'. Rashi explains that each day, they only received enough 'mon' for that day so that they were concerned about what they would have to eat the next day. But we are still left with some questions. What is so bad about not having food stored up for the future, when G-d Himself said that He would provide it for them? Even more, we need to understand why this affliction was so important that G-d wanted the Jews to experience it; what is the big deal about not having food for tomorrow if don't need it now anyway?

If we look around at society, we can easily see that the Talmud has sharp insight into human psychology. We do not have to look far to see how people are so concerned with having food for the future; some people go so far as to have pantries and freezers filled with food for weeks to come, even if there is no need for it in the foreseeable future and despite the fact that it costs them money now. People do not just get food when they need it; they want it way in advance, knowing that it is there for them. Having 'bread in the basket' certainly does provide people with a sense of security, and this is what the Talmud is talking about. Still, we need to ask why—why is man so concerned with his food for weeks to come? What is this security that man looks for?

Food is a type of object that is distinct from all other types in that it is essential for a person's survival; without food, one will starve to death. This dependency on food means that a person must depend on something external to himself for his own existence. Because of this, man cannot be absolutely independent—he needs that which is external to himself and which he cannot provide by himself. This fact, however, isn't so simple for man to accept; man, by his very nature, thinks highly of himself and wants to feel as if he can do everything on his own. People don't like to feel that they are dependent on some external source or object for

anything, and certainly not for their very survival and existence. Man's ego wants to convince him that he can control everything that affects him on his own. Because man resists accepting the reality of dependency, he must find ways to delude himself of this fact, and allow him to feel that he's not dependent in actuality. This is why we find people who constantly store food in their house, even before the need or the possibility of need for it arises. By storing food in one's house, a person can act as if he is independent and feel secure about his survival; he doesn't have to go anywhere or to anyone for his sustenance and he can feel that he has the ability to continue to survive on his own. With food within his own reach, he need not look anywhere else for his continued survival and, through this, he may feel independent.

With this principle in human psychology, we can now understand the affliction that the Jews experienced with the 'mon'. In the desert, the Jews never had this security since G-d only provided food for that day. Even though they didn't actually need more food at the time, there was still that part of them that wanted to feel independent and secure, which means having 'bread in the basket' so that they need not worry about tomorrow. This feeling of constant dependency was an 'affliction'; since its against the natural human desires, it had to cause some psychological pain.

Now we can explain why G-d did this to the Jews in the desert. The purpose of this affliction wasn't for them to just be in pain and insecurity; as we said before, there is no value in pain per se. G-d did this to them to teach them an idea that they must live by. There is only one source of security for man and that is G-d. If man wants to attain any sense of security so that he need not worry about his needs, then he must recognize his 'real dependence', namely that ultimately everything in the world comes from G-d and if one looks for sustenance he must look to G-d. When the Jews left Egypt they were on a low level; the Egyptian culture was based on idolatry and false notions about G-d and man's relationship to G-d. In the desert, G-d had to teach the Jews the correct view, which includes how man must view himself as a dependent being, looking to G-d for all his needs, despite the fact that man's emotional nature is to deny this and look for independence. This, then, was the lesson of the affliction of the 'mon' in the desert.

With this, we have a better understanding of what the Torah view of

Innui is. Innui is not an idea of asceticism where man must pain himself and be removed from the physical world to reach higher levels; rather, innui is an affliction on the instinctual, psychological part of man, where he undergoes some psychological pain to move closer to G-d and truth. By the 'mon' the affliction was in their having to give up the instinctual desire for independence so that they could properly view their dependency on G-d.

Now we can explain the concept behind Innui on Yom Kippur. The main theme of Yom Kippur is Teshuvah, the process of repentance in which a person recognizes the evil of sin and abandons his sinful ways. In order to recognize the evil of sin, though, a person must see what is the good, for evil is defined as that which is not good. The Torah teaches us that the good is that which brings us closer to G-d, namely the study of His Torah, gaining knowledge of Him and following his commandments. Sin is where a person leaves this path because he values something else, namely that which brings him instinctual satisfaction. If man would work purely based on truth, he would see the good in G-d's Ways and Wisdom and not be interested in sin; it is the 'yetzer hora', the evil inclination in man, that is his instinctual part, which overpowers him and influences him to sin. Teshuva, then, necessitates that one pull back from instinctual satisfaction and gain control over his desires in order to move closer to G-d. However, in order to do this, one must be able to undergo a certain amount of psychological pain so that he can withdraw his attraction to the instinct and channel this energy towards his service to G-d.

This then is the concept of Innui on Yom Kippur. The affliction that man undergoes by abstaining from these physical pleasures is essentially tied to the theme of Teshuva. True repentance, that is leaving the instinctual desires for the higher good of pursuing G-d, demands that one be 'afflicted' not for the pain itself but rather so that he may pull away from his involvement and attraction to the physical pleasure and channel that energy towards the real good. Part of abandoning sin is the removal of energy from that desire for satisfaction. By its very nature, this process demands a certain amount of pain since that part of him will then be left unsatisfied. However, after this stage of Innui, man can use that energy and sublimate it towards the true good, that of pursuing G-d through the Torah, and then live the most pleasurable life possible for man. ■

THE PURPOSE of YOM KIPPUR

RIVKA OLENICK

"For on this day does He give you protection, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord." Leviticus 16:30. What is meant by: "For on this day does He give you protection, to cleanse you"? It seems that when a person is cleansing oneself of past sins before God on Yom Kippur, one is automatically given protection. We are specifically commanded on this day to atone for our sins before God, as it says. So, does the day automatically grant a person atonement for ones' sins because it is Yom Kippur? "From all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord."

There are two separate ideas in this one sentence and each is dependent on the other. God designated Yom Kippur as the day for the Jew to atone with the purpose of cleansing and purifying ourselves. If you atone appropriately you will be cleansed before God. What is kippara, atonement and what is its' purpose for us as Jews? Only the Jewish people are commanded to atone for their sins on this day; and only Jews are cleansed and protected on this day. The day of Yom Kippur distinguishes the Jewish person from a non-Jew through God's command only if we utilize this day for its' real purpose. Even in atonement the Torah gives us instruction and guides us in "how to" atone. It is a complicated process yet, we capable of it.

On Yom Kippur like the Sabbath; we refrain from all work and we sanctify God's name by not doing any work. On Yom Kippur we atone and purify ourselves from the sins we committed that took us away from God. He allows us not only to return to Him, but as we reclaim our own devotion to the future He renews our life. The Sabbath too reinforces our devotion to the future, as we guard the Sabbath and we keep it holy. Even the Jewish people who partook of the sin of the Golden Calf were forgiven by God, they were given protection, they admitted to their corrupt ways and were granted atonement. The purpose of kippara is to give a person the opportunity to reclaim the status of purity. Through the absence of gratifying our senses and having physical enjoyment we face our "moral philosophical self." This is how we show our "internal moral self" as Jews on Yom Kippur.

We cannot survive as a people without this process of atonement. We would just continue to sin until we are

completely destroyed. So, we are given Yom Kippur to atone wholeheartedly with our request and of hope for renewal from God. We are also aware that every sin we commit has "chipped away" at our moral self, the part of us that God demands to be righteous and holy. That is how He chose us to be and declared us to be maintained; it is our purpose and the purpose of our being given the Torah. All of the sins we engage in take us away from who we were originally created to be and who ideally we are to be. Sin removes a person's free will, so a person merely survives and in just surviving like an animal, we are no longer "Adom" and we forfeit our relationship to The Creator. God gives us this positive opportunity by depriving ourselves of all the physical enjoyment that we partake of on the Sabbath and He gives us Yom Kippur. The opportunity to regain our purity, to begin again, a rebirth, it is another great gift. God gives all of us everything needed to exist the best possible way. So we realize that our present existence because of our repeated transgressions is a spiritually poor existence.

We are really not worthy of continued existence since we are so far away from our true purpose, to be an Eved Hashem, the reason we were created. On Yom Kippur God allows each of us to be completely in touch with our moral self, and we desire to have new and pure moral feelings. With honesty and sincerity we beg God to renew our lives and to give us the strength to live the correct life! This is our realization - that our true existence is dependant only upon the service of God. God frees us and gives each of us a new future through kippara. He renews our life that is His gift to us. Truthfully, Yom Kippur should be the happiest day of the year for every Jew. What greater gift is there than the renewal of one's life! Just as it is a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur, it is also a mitzvah to fast on Yom Kippur.

Approach Yom Kippur with hope, not dread and feel joy in the opportunity to be this close to the Creator, our Judge and our Father. "Happiness is thine, O Israel, before Whom dost thou obtain thy purity! Who maketh thee pure? Thy Father in heaven! For it says: "I pour pure water over you and ye become pure!" The fount of Israel's purity is God, even as a Mikvah purifies the unclean, so doth God make Israel pure." (Yoma 85b) ■

NASA

& the Bible

For all the scientists out there and for all the students who have a hard time convincing these people regarding the truth of the Bible...here's something that shows God awesome creation and shows that He is still in control. Did you know that the space program is busy proving that what has been called "myth" in the Bible is true?

Mr. Harold Hill, President of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore Maryland and a consultant in the space program, relates the following development." I think one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened recently to our astronauts and space scientists at Greenbelt, Maryland. They were checking the position of the sun, moon, and planets out in space where they would be 100 years and 1000 years from now. We have to know this so we won't send a satellite, up and have it bump into something later on in its orbits. We have to lay out the orbits in terms of the life of the satellite, and where the planets will be so the whole thing will not bog down.

They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant that there was something wrong either with the information fed into it or with the results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out and they said, "What's wrong?" Well, they found there is a day missing in space in elapsed time. They scratched their heads and tore their hair. There was no answer. Finally, a Christian man



on the team said, "You know, one time I was in Sunday School and they talked about the sun standing still.

"While they didn't believe him, they didn't have an answer either, so they said, "Show us." He got a Bible and went back to the book of Joshua where they found a pretty ridiculous statement for any one with "common sense." There they found the Lord saying to Joshua, "Fear them not, I have delivered them into thy hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and if darkness fell they would overpower them. So Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still! That's right-"The sun stood still and the moon stayed-and hasted not to go down about a whole day!" (Joshua 10:12-13)

The astronauts and scientists said, "There is the missing day!"

They checked the computers going back into the time it was written and found it was close but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes-not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it was "about (approximately) a day"

These little words in the Bible! are important, but they were still in trouble because if you cannot account for 40 minutes you'll still be in trouble 1,000 years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits. As the Christian employee thought about it, he remembered somewhere in the Bible where it said the sun went BACKWARDS. The scientists told him he was out of his mind, but they got out the

Book and read these words in 2 Kings that told of the following story:

Hezekiah, on his deathbed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah who told him that he was not going to die. Hezekiah asked for a sign as proof. Isaiah said "Do you want the sun to go ahead 10 degrees?" Hezekiah said "It is nothing for the sun to go ahead 10 degrees, but let the shadow return backward 10 degrees." Isaiah spoke to the Lord and the Lord brought the shadow ten degrees BACKWARD! Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes! Twenty-three hours and 20 minutes in Joshua, plus 40 minutes in Second Kings make the missing day in the universe!" Isn't it amazing? ■

(References: Joshua 10:8 and 12,13 and 2 Kings 20:9-11.)

Shechem & Justice

Reader: Was it right for Simeon and Levi to deceive and attack the Hivites?

Mesora: It appears so, as Ibn Ezra states, they took counsel from their other brothers, and their father Jacob only rebuked them for generating hatred from others, and not for their killings.

Reader: If Shechem alone defiled Dinah, then why should others suffer for Shechem's sin?

Mesora: Perhaps the fact that the other inhabitants did not oppose Shechem's actions displays that they too were worthy of punishment.

Reader: In what way was Dinah defiled?

Mesora: She was raped, and held captive.

Reader: Finally, what is the significance of saying Shechem was the most honorable of his household?

Mesora: Perhaps this indicates that since the most praised person of that city was very corrupt, it sealed the fate of the entire city. It also teaches that others would not oppose him. It may also indicate what gave him the gall to violate one of Jacob's children - his elevated status fed his ego.

I have further information for you. You asked: if Shechem alone defiled Dinah, then why should others suffer for Shechem's sin? I answered: Perhaps the fact that the other inhabitants did not oppose Shechem's actions, so they too were worthy of punishment.

I had just come across a commentary on Torah, Rashi, who supported this (Gen. 29:28):

"And if you will say, 'what is in our hands to do, G-d will punish the many for the (evil) thoughts of the individual, as it says, 'Lest there be a man or woman...[who goes astray]' ...and afterwards it says, 'the [other nations] will see how the land [of the Jews] is destroyed. [My words: this means that based on the former, i.e., the sin of one person, the land will be destroyed, as this follows immediately in the Torah. This is posed in Rashi as a question on G-d's justice, it seems unfair to punish the many for the sins of the individual...Rashi now continues] 'But a man does not know the hidden thoughts of his neighbor and we can't punish him for hidden matters [that we know not] for to G-d our G-d are hidden matters, and He will exact punishment from that individual, but the revealed (sins) 'are to us and our children' to extinguish the evil from our midst, and if we don't bring evildoers to judgment, G-d will punish the entire community.'" (End Rashi) This teaches the exact point I mentioned. ▣



Response to "Drugs" Escape vs Energy

RABBI JOSHUA MAROOF

Recently, the King of Rational thought made the claim that all drugs are essentially the same and that the only real problem with drug use is one of quantity (i.e., using too much of a controlled substance). Otherwise, he argues, coffee and cocaine are indistinguishable and, if one is legal, the other should be too.

I would like to submit that this notion is completely mistaken. What the King fails to consider is the intention of the drug-user. Coffee drinkers utilize caffeine in order to increase their wakefulness and help them better focus on their daily tasks, which might include learning and teaching Torah. Drug-users, by contrast, utilize cocaine, marijuana, etc., in order to distract themselves from reality and inundate their brains in an ephemeral delusion of escape, ecstasy and pleasure. There is no condition less fit for constructive work, intellectual or physical. Drug-induced states also have the potential to lead people to commit crimes and destroy their lives. Put simply, the stark difference between caffeine and cocaine use lies in the OBJECTIVE or INTENTION of the use, not in the nature of the substance.

The King cites the fact that cocaine and coffee are both physically harmful in large quantities as a proof that our legal system is inconsistent. This argument is a proverbial red herring, distracting us from the issue at hand. We cannot overlook the crucial fact that a coffee drinker seeks more opportunity to explore reality while a cocaine addict seeks a chance to run away from it. ▣