

## Yom Kippur

This week, the Torah discusses the service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur. The whole process is fascinating as he's able to enter the holy of holies and converse directly with a Hashem x in order to achieve forgiveness for the Yidden.

One of the most interesting services done on this day is the שעיר לעזאזל, kid goat that is sent off to Azazel, a barren mountain deep in the desert. This is one of the least understood practices that are performed on this holy day.

The Kohen Gadol leans on the animal with all his might and confessing all of the sins of the entire nation. The kid remains in the courtyard while the Kohn enters the holy of holies and performs the prescribed ceremonies.

A red woolen cloth is hung at the entrance of the sanctuary, and the animal is sent off to the desert with all the "Jewish sins" on it's head. When the goat reaches its destination, a miracle occurs, and the red cloth turns white, symbolizing

the full atonement of all of our sins.

### **How does this work?**

Can a kid goat perform atonement? Is this some type of magic what causes the sins to evaporate?

The Kohen Gadol's job is to build a defense against the prosecuting angels. This is what he says.

“Hashem, the Jews sinned unwittingly. Although it seems that the sins were done with forethought, sometimes with malice, or even with spiteful intent. In reality they were all performed unintentionally.

A diabetic attended a party. At the party was a sweet table with luscious cakes. The poor fellow could not withstand the temptation and imbibed too much sugar. He had a terrible reaction and was rushed to the emergency room. With difficulty they managed to save his life.

The doctor chastised him, “You must never repeat your action.” The fellow responded, “Of course I won't, now that

I experienced the terrible consequence!”

We may ask a question. Didn't this fellow know that sugar can kill him? Wasn't he aware of the precautions that a diabetic must take? Certainly, he knew it, but he did not feel it. He was “book smart”, but he was not “street-smart”.

Now, however, he feels it. He is much more deeply aware of his condition. His previous knowledge was inadequate compared to his current understanding. Therefore, one can reasonably state that his previous actions were unintentional.

Similarly, if one sins against Hakadosh Baruch Hu, it is because of an inferior understanding of who Hashem is. If one acts in spite against Him, it is because he believes that Hashem hates him or is hurting him. If he were to realize that Hashem deeply loves him and is working for his benefit, there is no question that he would regret his actions.

These, and similar sentiments, are the statements that the

Kohen Gadol uses to defend the Jews and cause their sins to be atoned.

Furthermore, he states “the Jews are all fine, upstanding people. They surely wish to do your will. Only two things deter them. One is the Yetzer Hara, the evil inclination; the second is the Goyim and the difficulties that they cause. The שעיר symbolizes both of these concepts. Zohar Hakadosh says that the Yetzer Hara is likened to a goat. And the Torah calls Eisav איש שעיר which literally means a hairy person, but homiletically means the man of the goat.

The Kohen adds, “ Recognize the purity of heart of your children, see their affliction and pain rather than their infractions. And remember how they followed you into the desert with pure faith!”

Thus, when the kid goat reaches the desert, the red cloth miraculously turns white!

כֹּה אָמַר ה' ,

זָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרֶיךָ אֲהַבַת כָּלִילְתֶיךָ

לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה