

# THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE PROCESS OF REDEMPTION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*G-d told Moshe, "Tell Aharon your brother that he should not enter at just any time the Holy, past the Curtain towards the Kapores which is on the Aron, and then he won't die, because I am seen in a cloud over the Kapores." (Vayikra 16:2)*

Thus begins the laws dealing with Yom Kippur, the one time a year that the Kohen Gadol was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. And, though it might seem somewhat incongruent to speak about Yom Kippur right after Pesach, in truth, it is quite appropriate.

For, Pesach is really a stepping-stone to the holiday of Shavuos, which comes after 49 days of counting the Omer. As we have mentioned before, Pesach and Shavuos are like one holiday, the first day of Pesach being the first day of Yom Tov, and Shavuos being like the last day of Yom Tov. The 49 days of the Omer in-between are like the period of Chol HaMoed connecting the two, and would have been festive had the students of Rebi Akiva not died during this time.

This is what the rabbis meant, on a deeper level, when they said:

If there is no flour, there is no Torah, and if there is no Torah, there is no flour. (Pirkei Avos 3:21)

Pesach is symbolized by flour, since Matzah is central to the entire holiday. Shavuos is all about receiving the Torah. Thus, the rabbis are saying, if we had not been redeemed from Egypt, we could never have been able to receive the Torah, and had we not received the Torah, then there would have been no reason to free the Jewish people from Egypt. Even the words "Pesach" (peh-samech-ches) and "kemach" (flour: kuf-mem-ches) are equal to each other in gematria: 148.

However, though Shavuos is called "Zman Toraseinu" - Time of our Torah - in truth, it was not in the end. As you will recall, the Torah Moshe Rabbeinu received at that time, in the form of the first set of Tablets, he broke upon seeing the golden calf. By the time Moshe made it back to the camp after the first set of 40 days on Har Sinai, he was empty-handed and set about purging the camp of the calf and of all its perpetrators.

The next 40 days, after cleansing the camp of the calf and sinners, Moshe spent his time at the top of Har Sinai begging G-d for forgiveness on behalf of the remaining people below. All they could do was teshuvah, and await with tremendous concern regarding their future fate, hoping against hope that Moshe Rabbeinu had enough of an edge with G-d to mitigate the Divine wrath blowing their

direction.

He was successful, and as a result, G-d commanded Moshe to return back to the camp below, and to hew out two new tablets (G-d had done it the first time) like the ones he had broken, upon which G-d would write the Torah down again for him and the nation. Moshe did as commanded and ascended once again on the first day of Elul, and he did not return until the 11th of Tishrei, the day after the first Yom Kippur.

And this is the Torah that we have until this very day, making Yom Kippur the real "Zman Toraseinu" for now, and with a difference. Perhaps, in the end, this will reflect differently on the meaning of Yom Kippur, and why we have the period between Pesach and Shavuot, when we count the Omer, it is not the period of joy it ought to be, but will one day be in Yemos HaMoshiach. It will help to explain why:

The main period of time for this rectification will be in the future, at the time of the End [of Days], because the redemption begins on Pesach and ends on Shavuot . . . (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 87)

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*But the goat on which the lot "To Azazel" fell must be presented alive before G-d, as an atonement, and sent to Azazel into the desert. (Vayikra 16:10)*

This is the most peculiar part of the Yom Kippur service of Temple times, and perhaps one of the most unusual in all of Judaism. That is, until you understand the Kabbalah behind it, and its relevance to everyday life.

The Arizal revealed:

"The sod of Azazel is the sod of Samael and the "female" of Nogah . . ."

For those who don't know, Samael is the angel whose job it is to try to obstruct us from doing mitzvos, so that we can have the chance to overcome him and perform the mitzvos as a matter of will, and earn reward for doing so in the World-to-Come. And, as Kabbalah teaches, he has a female counterpart.

There are basically four levels of spiritual impurity, the least potent of which is called "Nogah." In fact, Nogah is the level that separates between the holy and the profane, and therefore is itself half good and half evil. One's propensity to sin and ignore G-d is based upon which level of spiritual impurity has enveloped him or her.

". . . We give him a goat, and he is called 'Depths of the Sea' . . ."

In Hebrew, the term is "Metzulas Yumm," and it is where, supposedly, we send our sins to be rid of them. This is the symbolism of standing by a body of water while doing Tashlich on Rosh Hashanah, something that is being accomplished here in a very real way by sending the goat to Azazel.

". . . They are the 'Shadow of Death,' male and female. Therefore, he is transformed into a defender, as a result of the good side within him, as mentioned in the Zohar, Parashas Emor (101)."

Normally, it is the job of Samae"l to prosecute us, which he does only too willingly. First, he tests us and makes the performance of mitzvos difficult, and the doing of transgressions easy, and then presents his case against us before G-d during the Aseres Yemai Teshuvah. However, the Zohar explains, by giving him this goat, he is transformed into an advocate instead!

". . . On Yom Kippur, Hashem Yisborach willingly commanded us and permitted us to send to Samae"l, one goat, which is a combination of good and evil. Then he rejoices over the [other] three evil impurities, because he has already received his bounty and life from the good within the goat. For, as it is known, they (the evil impurities) chase after holiness because it is their life force, without which they die . . ."

When a person sins, he is said to have made the forces of impurity stronger. This is because evil has no intrinsic existence of its own, but rather, it feeds off of anything holy that it can access, and is drawn after it "like bees to honey." This is why evil, unlike good and holiness, will not and cannot exist forever, but will meet its end in the time of Moshiach. (Succah 52a)

Therefore, everyday of the year as we perform mitzvos and avoid sinning, we are in fact, keeping holiness and our life force away from the realm of spiritual impurity. "When a person transgresses a Negative Mitzvah," the Arizal explains, "he brings completion to the three worst levels of impurity of his yetzer hara. This is the punishment for transgressing a Negative Mitzvah."

Except on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, not only do we not keep holiness away from him, but we send it out to him:

"This is the great joy Samae"l enjoys by receiving the goat of Azazel, especially since it was sent completely willingly, and it did not require any effort or trouble on his part!"

Huh? What gives?

### **SEUDOS SHILSHIS:**

*When he has finished atoning for the Holy, the Appointed Tent, and the Altar, he will bring the live goat. Aharon will lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel, all their rebellious and inadvertent transgressions, putting them upon the head of the goat. [He will then] send it with the designated person into the desert. (Vayikra 16:20-21)*

Now comes the punch line:

"Then the Kohen Gadol will atone on the head of the goat, and as a result of the power of this teshuvah . . . he will separate out from [the goat] the good part, because it is impossible for it to remain as it was before the sin, a mixture of good and evil. For, sinning strengthens evil and

subjugates the good [within]. This is the definition of teshuvah, when they will become separated from each other. They were [both] attached to the impurity of Nogah, but now [only] the evil within it that is completely spent adheres to the goat and goes out to the impurities completely. However, the good returns to holiness above, and not to the impurity of Nogah."

In other words, though the goat began as a mixture of good and evil, allowing the impurities to draw from the side of holiness, the teshuvah of the Kohen Gadol causes the good to separate from the "clutches" of the side of impurity. This allows the good to return back to the side of holiness, leaving the impurities distant from any source of sustenance.

Really, it is an analogy for all of creation, which, ever since Adam HaRishon sinned through the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, remains a mixture of good and evil. Our role as a "nation of priests" is to learn Torah and to perform mitzvos, which is the ultimate way to separate out the good from the bad, and redeem creation. And, the Kabbalists explain, if we do not complete the process by learning Torah and performing mitzvos, then it occurs through us, through the suffering we undergo, personally and nationally.

"This is the sod of the joy of Samae"l, for at that time [that the Kohen Gadol places his hands on the head of the goat], [Samae"l] feels as if he has the upper hand and therefore tries to adhere to [the Kohen Gadol] as much as possible. However, he is a fool and errs in his thinking, because really it is 'flaming coals' that are on his head! For, in the beginning, the impurity of Nogah was combined with good, and it had a strong grasp, forcing holiness from above through the portion of good that was in it . . . But, now the good is separated from the evil, and Samae"l has lost the portion from which he was receiving the good . . . which has gone to the person to complete his soul in holiness." (Likutei Torah)

It may be quite confusing, especially when you consider that we are really talking about the rectifying the Sefiros. However, the principle is basic, and that is that the most dramatic change to creation as a result of Adam HaRishon's sin was to intermingle good with evil, which is the cause of all our sins. Therefore, rectification is about separating the good out from the evil, and returning the good to where it belongs above.

The Yom Kippur service was specifically about accelerating this process of separation of good from the bad. In fact, according to tradition, the first set of tablets that Moshe Rabbeinu had descended with were on the level of the "Tree of Life," whereas the second set were on the level of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." That is why the first set was carved out by G-d, whereas the second set was carved out by Moshe from the physical world below, and only afterwards inscribed by G-d.

And, the Arizal adds a VERY important point, that as we will see, brings it all home, literally.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*. . . And confess over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel, all their rebellious and inadvertent*

*transgressions, putting them upon the head of the goat. [He will then] send it with the designated person into the desert. (Vayikra 16:20-21)*

In the midst of this explanation, which I have excerpted, the Arizal inserts the following words:

"... This is the sod of the Jewish people being exiled amongst the nation."

What is the sod of exile? The idea of sources of holiness - the Jewish people - living side-by-side with those who lack holiness. And, whether they appreciate it or not, and they usually don't, they are drawing spiritual sustenance from the Jewish people who are exiled amongst them. It is a physical mirroring of what has happened within the spiritual realm.

Thus:

The depth of the matter regarding the Omer-Offering that is performed each year is for the sake of building the Malchus and completing it, from the day after the first day of Pesach until its completion at the time of Shavuos, as it is known from the Arizal. Through this, the Jewish people rectify the world making it holy to G-d, free of any mixture of the Sitra Achra (another name for Samael). For, the rectification of the Malchus and the Jewish people is one process, because they are its structure and "limbs," since it emanates within each Jew. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 86)

The "Malchus," on one hand, is the tenth of the Ten Sefiros that are the spiritual infrastructure for all of creation. When G-d made creation, He left it lacking so that we, through our free-will choices, could become "partners" with Him in bringing creation to completion. It can be referred to as the "Kingdom of G-d" on earth.

What is the connection to the Omer? The system is that, as we separate out the good from the evil, creation AUTOMATICALLY becomes a holy place, which AUTOMATICALLY results in the establishment of G-d's Kingdom here on earth. For G-d to come, evil MUST go, one way or another. Shavuos and Yom Kippur both represent the end of the process, except that Yom Kippur did not complete the process at that time, as the mitzvah to build the Mishkan revealed.

Thus, removing the good from the bad is also the process of doing the same within the Jew, and of removing the Jewish people from the nations of the world, is what we call redemption. This is why we count the Omer at this time, and why Rebi Akiva's students, who acted as if they still had bad mixed together with their good, died at this time. And, this is why the Final Redemption, when it comes and may it come this year, G-d willing, will begin on Pesach and end on Shavuos.

All in all, quite Kabbalistic. But, so is life though we don't always know and appreciate it, and this is certainly the case with Yom Kippur, one of the most KABBALISTIC days of the year.

Have a great Shabbos,  
Pinchas Winston

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! [www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org)