

5-3-12 Message to Rufunsa Congregation

Torah Portion: Lev 16:1-18:30, *Acharei Mot* (following the death)

Haftorah: Ashkenaz Amos 9:7-15, Sefard Ezekiel 22:1-16

Suggested additional reading: Matt 16:1-18:35 and 19:1-21:46 or Heb 9:11-28 and 1 Peter 1:13-16

## **Yom Kippur, the Gate, and the Scapegoat.**

**Central question of this message: How are Yom Kippur, the Gate of Judgment, and the Scapegoat connected with Yeshua?**

Lev 16:1-6, 7-10, 29-34

16:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died. 2 And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

Skip to verse 7.

7 "And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 8 And Aaron shall

cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell, and make it a sin offering. 10 But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

Let's skip the offerings of Aaron which are associated with the sanctification of himself, the altar, and the sin offerings for atonement.

29 "And this shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; 30 for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. 32 So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father's place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, 33 and make atonement for the

holy sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34 Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year." And just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so he did.

You immediately recognize this as Yom Kippur.

## **Yom Kippur**

The rabbis have speculated for generations regarding the unique symbolism surrounding this special day.

The sacrifice of Yom Kippur always covered sin. An animal is innocent. An animal cannot ever sin, so it cannot be sinless.

Only a sinless sacrifice could ever cleanse from sin – rather than cover sin.

Only One can become that sacrifice, according to our sages.

Where does that judgment take place?

The Gate

Let's take a look again at verse 7

7 "And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

What happens at the “doorway of the tent of meeting”? Judgment.

Judgment by the elders happened “in the gates”, and often the punishment rendered there as well.

In ancient architecture, the “gate” included a large entryway or even more, where important things happened. The doorway was at the outside, then there were rooms behind that door, before the city.

Deut 22:15 – the issue of the virginity of a new bride is determined “at the gate” of the city.

Deut 25:7 – the wife of a dead brother seeks justice for herself with the elders gathered “at the gate” when the living brother does not carry out his responsibilities to her.

Josh 20:4 – in the cities of refuge, the elders would stand at the gates and conduct a hearing regarding the events that led a man to flee to that city.

Ruth 4:1 – Boaz sat among the elders, and after a discussion regarding the legalities of property rights, and the responsibilities of a brother, purchased the inheritance of Elimelech, and Ruth the Moabitess, the widow, was thrown-in with the deal.

2Kings 7:3 – Where men with tzarat were sitting, hoping for someone to come along to heal them.

Jer 7:2 – it is at the gate that the prophecies are proclaimed.

Amos 5:12 – it is at the gates that the poor come to receive the tzedakah of the righteous ones.

The concept of the earthly “gate” has a spiritual component as well.

Mat 7:13 – we find that the difficult gate is the one of “righteousness”, and few enter by it.

It is through the gate of righteousness, that we seek entrance to the kingdom.

It speaks of a holy gate, the gate to heaven.

Ps 118:19-21

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness;

I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;

The righteous will enter through it.

21 I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me;

And You have become my salvation [Yeshua]..

In many Shuls, there is a phrase above the ark.

*“Pitchu Li Shaarei Tzadek”* Open unto Me the Gates of Rightousness”

## **The Two Goats**

Lev 16:20-22

20 "When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 21 Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat,

and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

It is not clear from the passage, but our traditions are clear that the goats are to be as identical as possible.

Neither one should be chosen for either task because of “his looks”. And we should not be disappointed that the lot fell on one or the other.

In fact, the whole process is designed to make us believe there is no difference at all as to which goat dies as the sin offering.

## **The Azazel**

G-d chooses (by lot) between these two nearly-identical goats.

The lots were drawn from a bag. One said “to the L-rd” and the other “to azazel”. The lot “for the L-rd” would always show up in the right hand.

After these lots were drawn, the goat “to azazel” had to wear a special garment – although none of his bones were broken – he wore evidence of blood sacrifice tied about his horns.

The white cloth was dipped in the blood of the other goat, and then divided in two.

One half kept by the high Priest, and the other tied about the horn of the azazel.

Azazel is taken outside the city to die.

The procedure includes it being led involuntarily out of the city (symbolizing banishment due to sin),

driven into the wilderness, (symbolizing that even G-d turned His face away)

observed closely until it dies an odd death (not by the hand of the high priest, but by jumping off a cliff),

and then it is remembered as our righteousness, since it carried away our sins.

If the work of this Azazel was effective, the bloody cloth miraculously turned white as snow.

It is called the Azazel, because it was sent into the desert “to Azazel”.

The word ‘azazel’ appears only here in Scripture. But that means that Jews spend more time trying to figure this word out, not less.

Three distinct ideas of thought developed regarding this term.

1. According to Rashi (Shlomo Yitzhak) who lived in France 1040-1105, it means “a steep, rocky, hard place”. It might have described a specific location. No location bears that name today, that I can find.

Although there are some cliffs just six to ten miles east of Jerusalem.

2. According to Nachmanides, (Moishe ben Nachman) who lived in Spain from 1194-1270, “azazel” was the name of a spirit or demon, one of the fallen angels found in Genesis 6:2.

3. Associated with nobody in particular, is that the word azazel can be divided into two parts. “Az” – goat – “azal” – taken away.

The first is attractive to many because Rashi popularized it, and many consider Rashi to be super-wise. I think this commentary by Rashi led to the current theory that the azazel was led out of the city, then to a cliff, and then driven over that cliff to its death. Maybe he just guessed at what happened (most likely), and because he was so popular, people just adopted that idea as fact.

The second was popularized by this very famous scholar, who spent a lot of time bringing the Zohar into the mainstream of Jewish thinking. This idea persists until today.

Maybe that mysticism led him to associate this act with a demon. This interpretation has sadly found some popularity among Christian commentators.

For some reason they seem to want to pick the choice that involves Jews sacrificing something to a demon.

I cannot embrace the second, because G-d will never require (nor will He allow) a sacrifice to be made unto a demon.

The third seems to have no identifiable origin. I think that is because it is the pashat of the passage.

It means “sent away goat” because the goat was “sent away”.

It was this meaning that William Tyndale adopted in his 1530 English translation of the Bible by using the term “scapegoat”.

This term has stuck, and remains the traditional term we see today.

Whether you pick choice one or three makes no difference, because the lesson is still there.

Let's tie it all together, rewinding the Scroll of understanding as we have unwound it.

We will begin with...

## The Azazel

The azazel

עֲזָזֵז לְ

Take the word apart a new way.

עֲזָז = goat

And

לְעֲזָז = עֲזָזֵז with a לְ in its center.

“El” means G-d. And the zayin represents an axe – an instrument of killing.

So, the concepts of goat and slain G-d are tied into that name as well.

It's hard for me to believe that some Jewish scholar hasn't already seen this, and chosen not to discuss it openly.

The concept of two goats appears in a not-so-hidden way in the trial of Yeshua.

Only one translation – the New Revised Standard Version – has the courage to get this crucial connection right. Fix this in your Bibles, so you won't miss it the next time through.

## Matt 27:15-26

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" 18 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. 19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

What happened here? Two men stand before the people representing the two goats. Let me read it to you again, and add some changes which will make it more clear.

Two goats stood before the ruler. It was his custom to send one outside the camp at that season and the other goat would remain in the camp. Both goats are condemned to death, but only one will bear the sins of the nation. Rather than casting lots, he allowed the people to choose. So, Yeshua bar Abba stood alongside Yeshua bar Abba – and the two appeared nearly identical. The ruler expected them to choose one way,

but the priests urged the people to select Yeshua bar Abba – who is now known as Jesus – to be the one to bear the sins of the people and be cast into outer darkness and die outside the presence of G-d. And they said, Yeshua bar Abba, who is now known as Barabbas, shall remain in the camp and be holy, for Yeshua bar Abba shall die in his place.

Thus it was fulfilled, as was written by the prophet.

Isa 1:18

18 "Come now, and let us reason together,"  
Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.

I do not know of any account of what happened to Yeshua bar Abba after he was released from custody.

But I suspect he soon understood – after being informed by the believers – what had just happened to him. He was “dead to sin, but alive in Christ” as Romans says.

I don’t know for sure, but it seems somewhat likely to me that Yeshua bar Abba also lived-out his destiny, and after a season of repentance, he also became a believer and finally died by the hand of the ruling council, as a holy brother.

## The Gate of Judgment

Let me offer you an interpretation of a familiar verse that lines up with the lesson of the gate that we have just learned.

Matt 16:16-19

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

By this analysis, it would seem that we see that Yeshua declared the judgments, the negotiations, the deals, the prophecies, the transactions, the false miracles that are hatched in the “gates of Hades” by the evil one and his elders shall not prevail against the one simple truth...

*Yeshua hu Adon.* [Yeshua He is L-rd]

The gate of judgment exists today, and soon our King will take his seat there, to judge heaven and earth.

His authority is complete.

He has authority to open the gate that no one can close, and to close the gate that no one can open.

Rev 3:7-8

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 8'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

#### John 10:7-11

7 Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

#### Rev 5:11-13

11 And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

Rev 12:10-11

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.

Matt 25:31-35

31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

## **Yom Kippur**

On one special day during one festival year, more than two thousand years ago, something happened that would roll through the rest of that festival year, and show up in a strong way also on that Yom Kippur.

It is spoken of in Talmud.

In tractate Yoma 39b we find:

In the year in which Simeon the Righteous died, he foretold them that he would die. They said: Whence do you know that? He replied: On every Day of Atonement an old man, dressed in white, wrapped in white, would join me, entering [the Holy of Holies] and leaving [it] with me, but today I was joined by an old man, dressed in black, wrapped in black, who entered, but did not leave, with me. After the festival [of Sukkoth] he was sick for seven days and [then] died. His brethren [that year] the priests forbore to mention the Ineffable Name in pronouncing the [priestly] blessing.

Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple (From the time of the ascension of Yeshua) the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal would open by themselves.

I submit that Simeon was not accompanied by a “man” at all. It is recorded that they heard a sound like a loud voice saying “We shall depart this place” before these things happened.

But even the great scholar Maimonides who lived in Egypt (1135-1204) got it desperately wrong. He could not get his mind around the idea that the Messiah could take our sins upon Himself and pay for them.

So, he said,

There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one being to be laid on that of another being. 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. (Guide for the Perplexed 3:46)

Notice the concept that “we have freed ourselves” in the last sentence. That theology contradicts earlier sages, but is consistent with the desperation of Judaism of that time to re-define itself as “not Christianity”.

A last nugget.

It is on this day only, and only in the case of the one who is appointed to lead the azazel out of the camp to a terrible death, that a person is deemed impure only until he enters the mikveh.

Living animals are ritually pure. The man does not touch the dead animal.

He washes himself and his garments in the mikveh, and then he is pure to come into the camp before sunset.

The mikveh in this case is not an immersion to cleanse from defilement.

This mikveh is a sign to all of Israel that the one who took the scapegoat into the wilderness to a horrible death, bearing his sins, is the beneficiary of that cleansing act, and is pure already by simply accepting the truth of that sacrifice.

Have you become that one in charge of the death of the azazel? Have you entered the mikveh as a sign that you are already the beneficiary of the grace of the slain G-d?

Do so today.

Let's conclude with the last prayer found in Hebrews.

Heb 13:20-21

20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.