

4-25-26 To Roeh Israel Abilene – *Acharai Mot* – *Kedoshim* (after the death – holy ones)
Torah Portion; Lev 16:1 – 20:27
Haftarah: Amos 9:7-15
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Matt 27:15-26

The Soul, the Blood, and the Azazel

Central question of this message: How are the soul, the blood, and Yeshua all connected?

This week we have another double-portion, *Acharai Mot*, and *Kedoshim*. The name for *Acharai Mot* comes from the 7th through 9th words in the English, and the 5th and 6th words in the original Hebrew.

Lev 16:1-3

16 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.

בְּנֵי	שְׁנַיִם	הַ	מֹת	אַחֲרָי	מֹשֶׁה	אֶל-	יְהוָה	וַיְדַבֵּר	16:1
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<u>1121</u>	<u>8147</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>4194</u>	<u>310</u>	<u>4872</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>1696</u>	
			וַיָּמָתוּ:	יְהוָה	לִפְנֵי-	בְּקִרְבָּתָם	אֶהְרֹן		
			and died;	the Lord,	before	when they offered	Aaron,		
			<u>4191</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>6440</u>	<u>7126</u>	<u>175</u>		
וְאֵל-	אָחִיךָ	אֶהְרֹן	אֶל-	דַּבֵּר	מֹשֶׁה	אֶל-	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	2
that not	thy brother,	Aaron	unto	Speak	Moses,	unto	the Lord	And said	
<u>408</u>	<u>251</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>1696</u>	<u>4872</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>559</u>	
יָבֹא	בְּכָל-	עַתָּה	אֶל-	הַקֹּדֶשׁ	מִבֵּית	לְפָרֹכֶת	אֶל- פְּנֵי		
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<u>935</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>6256</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>6944</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>6532</u>	<u>6440</u>	<u>413</u>	
הַכִּפֹּרֶת	אֲשֶׁר	עַל-	הָאָרֶץ	וְלֹא	יָמוּת	כִּי	בִּעָנָן		
the mercy seat,	which	is	the ark;	that not:	he die	for	in the cloud		
<u>3727</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>5921</u>	<u>3808</u>	<u>4191</u>	<u>3588</u>	<u>6051</u>		
אֶרְאֶה	עַל-	הַכִּפֹּרֶת:							
I will appear	upon	the mercy seat.							
<u>7200</u>	<u>5921</u>	<u>3727</u>							

Acharei Mot begins with the instructions to Aaron on how he is to correctly enter the holy place – for it is a matter of life and death – and then there to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering.

Then it continues with the two identical goats which are selected. After casting lots, one is selected for the atonement sacrifice and the other is the *azazel* – the “sent away” goat – or the “scapegoat”.

Before I get into the deep meaning of the two goats, I want to examine the idea of the soul’s connection with blood a bit further.

Blood, the soul, and Kosher

In the early days of science, mankind knew there was a soul. And they were speculating as to where it resided in the body.

Plato drew inspiration from Socrates, and determined that the human soul consisted of three parts:

1. *logos* (mind or reason), located in the head.
2. *thymos* (emotion), located in the chest.
3. *eros* (appetite, desire), located in the stomach.

Some Christians hold to a three-part understanding of soul. It's called the trichotomic view. They believe humans have a body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*), and spirit (*pneuma*). I have heard that view taught by Christian leaders very recently.

These specific understandings probably spring from the Greek translation of the "New Testament" where the Greek word *psyche* was chosen by the ancient translators to be the closest equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh*. And so some equate "soul" with the thought process.

But in more modern times, scholars noticed that Paul spoke of two segments, the body and soul. See Rom 7:23, 1 Cor 9:27, and others.

So, at the 8th Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 869 C.E., trichotomy was changed to dichotomy (body and soul) as a foundational belief in the Catholic Christian churches.

Jewish thinkers have concerned themselves with the soul. Some of their thoughts are reflected in the teachings of Kabbalah. I do not subscribe to those teachings, and don't recommend them here. But in this instance, some of their teachings demonstrate how we as Jews have tried to sort this out.

Kabbalah separates the soul into five parts:

1. *Nephesh*, related to natural instinct. The “animal soul”.
2. *Ruach*, related to emotion and morality.
3. *Neshama*, related to the intellect, to include the awareness of G-d.
4. *Chaya*, actually, a “part of G-d”.
5. *Yechidah*, also known as the *pintele Yid*, the “essential Jew”, which part has always remained “One with G-d”.

I don't think I subscribe to all these divisions. Frankly, I think they all are simply facets of the same diamond – a unified soul that reflects, to

one degree or other, all of those various attributes. I collapse all of this back into two Hebrew words– *nephesh* and *noshoma*.

Where does the “soul” reside? G-d gave us the answer. It is found in a further elaboration upon the kosher laws we have seen in Lev 11, back in *parasha Shemini*. In today’s *parasha*, it is repeated in chapter 17.

Lev 17:10-16

10 'And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. **11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls;** for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' 12 "Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood.' 13 "So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

14 "For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for **the life of all flesh is its blood**; whoever eats it shall be cut off.' 15 "And when any person eats an animal which dies, or is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean. 16 But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt."

The passage in Hebrew says, “*Ki nephesh ha-basar b’dam hu.*” Focus on the two words, “*nephesh ha-basar*”.

The word translated into English as “life” is the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

OT:5314 נֶפֶשׁ **naphash** (naw-fash'); a primitive root; to breathe; passively, to be breathed upon, i.e. (figuratively) refreshed (as if by a current of air):
KJV - (be) refresh selves (-ed).

OT:5315 נֶפֶשׁ **nephesh** (neh'-fesh); from OT:5314; properly, a breathing creature, i.e. animal of (abstractly) vitality; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense (bodily or mental):

Nephesh carries with it the concepts of breathing, and vitality. The familiar phrase “breath of life” applies here.

But in the same passage it is also translated as “soul”, which is also quite proper. In fact, the word “soul” is often the better translation. Let’s look now at *b’sar*.

OT:1319 בָּשָׂר **basar** (baw-sar'); a primitive root; properly, to be fresh, i.e. full (rosy, (figuratively) cheerful); to announce (glad news): -messenger, preach, publish, shew forth, (bear, bring, carry, preach, good, tell good) tidings.

OT:1320 בָּשָׂר **basar** (baw-sawr'); from OT:1319; flesh (from its freshness); by extension, body, person; also (by euphem.) the pudenda of a man:

That word carries with it the concepts of “flesh”. But more than that, underlying that concept is also the idea of fresh (new, unspoiled), and even the announcement and showing forth of good news.

But before we move on, take the Hebrew word *basar* apart. The leading Hebrew letter *bet* means “in”. The two remaining letters, *shin* and *resh*, form the Hebrew word *sar*, which means “prince”.

So, as we revisit the passage in Hebrew, “*Ki nephesh ha-basar b’dam hu*”, and consider the elegant nuances that we now see, we find that it can be retranslated as:

“The soul, the life, the fresh, new and unspoiled announcement and showing forth of the good news (gospel) is in the blood of the Prince.”

The exciting thing about all this is that not only do we now know that the soul (*nephesh*) resides “in the blood”, but we now can see that the gospel message of Yeshua is declared in the blood of the Prince.

When Yeshua poured out His blood, He at that time was also pouring out His *nephesh* – His spirit – upon this Earth. His blood cleanses us from iniquity, but His Spirit remains with us today – to guide us into all righteousness.

But let’s look one more time at verse 11 and see something else quite wonderful that is there. You might have read past it the first time.

11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

Do you see it? The language is clear. This verse does not speak of the sacrifice that *we bring* to offer to Him. It speaks of the sacrifice that *He*

brings to offer for us! It could not be more clear. This verse speaks directly of Yeshua!

We see clearly why the blood of the kosher animal - an animal which is subject to being offered as a sacrifice before the L-rd – is not to be eaten.

It is because that blood represents in a physical way on this earth the blood of the Prince (Yeshua), which would be sprinkled in the Holy of Holies in heaven. He laid Himself on that altar for us. He made the sacrifice, and all we need to do is to accept it to be redeemed.

Kosher animals taken by hunting.

Can one hunt kosher animals, and eat that which is killed? A passage in our *parashiot* for today tells us the answer.

Lev 17:13-16

13 "So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

. . .

15 "And when any person eats an animal which dies, or is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean. 16 But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt."

The Hebrew word translated here as “catches” is *tzayid*. A better translation would be, in my opinion, “hunts.” This word carries with it the concept of chasing, or hiding and lying in wait for the animal.

OT:6718 **צַיִד** **tsayid** (tsah'-yid); from a form of OT:6679 and meaning the same; the chase; also game (thus taken); (generally) lunch (especially for a journey):

OT:6719 **צַיִד** **tsayad** (tsah'-yawd); from the same as OT:6718; a huntsman:

This particular Hebrew word in this passage clearly contemplates hunting. And if we apply modern techniques, a *tzayad* (hunter) who chases, or lies in wait in hiding for an animal is clearly engaged in either spot-and-stalk tactics, or is sitting in a blind, or possibly a tree stand.

And at the time that this command was given, the entire people of Israel were living in tents, and were, along with G-d, engaging in the largest recorded “camping trip” of all of human history.

And on top of that, we, as Hebrews, are commanded to come together to celebrate the beginning of that camping trip annually. I know that Moses said, “Let my people go”. But the unstated last word of that sentence might have been, “camping”.

Some of our rabbis argue that the hunted animal can only be acquired by trapping, and then slaughtering it in the ritual manner. That doesn’t make sense to me. I don’t follow that *halacha*. Here’s why.

A trapped animal will react to its condition with terror, and will struggle mightily to escape, and in doing so will certainly become bruised and even “torn” (*tref*), and thus inedible regardless of the method of slaughter.

And if the point of ritual slaughter is to dispatch the animal so that the animal is not subjected to terror and pain, then a trap is definitely NOT the way to go, in my opinion. This would be true especially when hunting bull moose, or bison.

Add to that the certainty of no small measure of terror and collateral damage to the hunter as he tries to pronounce a blessing and slit the throat of one of these trapped animals.

And I believe that the passage clearly contemplates a situation where the animal is killed in the non-ritual manner, in the field. And the passage says the animal, “may be eaten”, by following a simple process.

The passage tells us the first step is to drain the blood and cover it with dirt. This can be done in the field immediately after the kill. But it goes further, because G-d knows that some will rightly characterize the killed animal as *tref* when it is killed either with spear, arrow, or even bullet.

When one properly arrows an animal, the animal has no idea what has just happened. But immediately the blood is released inside the animal, and some outside as well. The animal might run away, but it will soon become light-headed, lie down and go to sleep. The process of draining the blood from the meat is well underway by the time it lies down.

When properly shot with a rifle, the animal likewise has no idea what happened, and often the trauma of the bullet stops the heart, and the animal goes down immediately, dead. The hunter then cuts the throat of

the animal during the process of removing the entrails, and the blood is drained.

But in neither of these hunting scenarios is the animal trapped, terrorized, then wrestled into position for ritual slaughter.

In this passage, G-d contemplates and provides for death-by-hunter of the kosher animal in the field. We see that in verse 15.

15 **"And when any person eats an animal which dies,** or is torn (tref) by beasts, whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean.

It is important to remember that the phrase “animal which dies”, is an idiom for “not killed in ritual slaughter”. Killing an animal by spear, arrow, or even bullet results in “an animal which dies”.

So, within the land of Israel, if you hunt and shoot an otherwise kosher animal and after draining its blood you eat it, you are considered “unclean,” and must take a bath and launder your clothes before you may enter the Temple. Then, at sunset, you are clean again.

Trust me, after shooting an animal, draining its blood, gutting it, dragging it to the place of butchering, and finally washing out the carcass with cold water, you are bloody to the elbows, you are sweaty, and exhausted. As darkness falls, you are more than ready for a bath, and your hunting clothes do need laundering. It's all quite natural.

One might argue that being “unclean” means you must have sinned. Not so. Not all uncleanness is as a result of sin.

When a woman has a child, she is unclean for a number of days (Lev 12:2). When a man has a discharge from his body, he is unclean (Lev 15:2), and everything he sits on, lies on, or even spits on is also unclean. The same applies for a woman (Lev 15:19). Note that these unclean conditions do not come as a result of anyone's sin. They are simply conditions.

There's an easy illustration. Picture a child playing in the mud outdoors. He then comes to dinner. His Mom will decree that his clothes be washed and that he take a bath before dinner. Not because he is a sinner... but because he is ... unclean. That's the Torah of the Mother.

And look at the language of verse 15. G-d doesn't say “you shall not eat hunted kosher animals”. In Lev 11 He *does* say “you are not to eat of these,” as He lists non-kosher animals, fish and birds.

So, I believe G-d clearly contemplates sinlessly hunting kosher animals. He also gives us a way to become ritually clean again, on the same day as the hunt. So, to my friends in PETA, I declare this truth. It *is not a sin* to hunt for food.¹

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

¹ Some consider it inappropriate to eat leafy green salads, for in doing so one deprives an animal (which is food) of that animal's food. Thus creating a cruelty to animals by eating their food.

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.

One goat was placed to the right and the other to the left of the place where the High Priest was to stand.

The selection of which goat was to be used for which sacrifice was determined by lots. One lot said “to the L-rd” and the other “to *azazel*”. These two lots were placed within a wooden jar, vigorously stirred, and then the jar handed to the High Priest. The Priest could not see into the wooden jar. He would place both his hands at the same time within the depths of that jar, and grasp one of the lots in each hand. He would then draw them both out. The Priest would then take the lots and show them to those assembled for the ceremony. Miraculously, the lot “for the L-rd” would always show up in the right hand. , and would place them upon the

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 pushing it 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 once - here in Scripture. But that means that Jews spent 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.”
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. The second was popularized by Nachmanides, a 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. Let me be very clear - G-d will never require (nor will He allow) a sacrifice to be made unto a demon. That theology is not proper at all. The third option seems to have no identifiable origin. I think that is because it is the *pashat* of the passage. The Hebrew word 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.

Aaron ties around the horn of the *azazel* a white cord which was dipped in the blood of the other goat. Then Aaron places his hands on the head of the *azazel* and pronounces all the sins of the people, then the *azazel* is sent away into the wilderness, where it dies.

At its death the cord on the horn of the *azazel* would miraculously turn bright white. It was actually whiter than the color of the original woolen cord before being dipped in blood. That dramatic removal of the blood-stain was a sign that the sins of Israel had been forgiven and the atonement sacrifice was accepted.

Let's look even deeper...

עֲזָאזֵל = *azazel*

Take the word apart a new way.

עֵז = goat

And

אָזַל = removal

גֹּד = G-d

גִּזְגֹּד = גֹּד with a ז in its center.

In pre-Babylonian Hebrew the *zayin* represents an axe – an instrument of killing. So, the concepts of goat and slain G-d are found in that word.

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

Yeshua's Trial

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!"

Two men stand before the ruler representing the two goats. Let me read it to you again, and I am going to fix the intentional name changes, and give a proper Hebraic translation of the name which will make things much more clear.

Two “goats” stood before the ruler. But one was the Greatest Of All Time, and the other was an “animal.” It was the ruler’s 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 assembled in the small area before him to choose. So, Yeshua bar Abba (Yeshua son of the Father) stood alongside Yeshua bar Abba (Yeshua son of the father) – and the two appeared nearly identical to that ruler. The ruler expected the small knot of people to choose one way, but the priests had already 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 to die outside the camp, away from G-d's face. And they said, Yeshua bar Abba, who is now known as Barabbas, shall remain in the camp, for Yeshua bar Abba shall die in his place.

And the Babylonian Talmud in Yoma 39a records that coincident with the sacrifice of Yeshua on the cross, three odd things began happening.

§ The Sages taught: During all forty years that Shimon HaTzaddik² served as High Priest, **the lot for God arose in the right hand**. From then onward, sometimes it arose in the right hand and sometimes it arose in the left hand.

Furthermore, during his tenure as High Priest, **the strip of crimson wool that was tied to the head of the goat that**

² “Simon the Righteous” was a High Priest during the Second Temple period, and one of the last members of the Great Assembly.

was sent to Azazel turned white, indicating that the sins of the people had been forgiven, as it is written: “Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). From then onward, it sometimes turned white and sometimes it did not turn white. Furthermore, **the western lamp of the candelabrum would burn continuously as a sign that God’s presence rested upon the nation.** From then onward, it sometimes burned and sometimes it went out.

The Jerusalem Talmud in Sota 3:6:3 records a parallel description but adds another detail.

It has been taught: Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. **They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open.**

These each have significance, but the scarlet cord might be one of the biggest signs of all.

It signified that the ultimate sacrifice for Yom Kippur was not in the *azazel*, which symbolically carried the sins of Israel outside the camp, and which died a violent death.

The ultimate Yom Kippur sacrifice was Yeshua, whose atoning work of offering Himself to die in our place, worked the full and final atonement necessary to move us from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of light.

What we have seen in today's parashiot offers a strong prediction of the redemptive work of G-d through Yeshua the Messiah. Let us live today worthy of His great gift to us.