

# Scapegoat

## I. Who/What is *Azazel*?

### 1. תורה תמימה ויקרא טז: ח

לעזאזל - תני חדא, שיהא עז וקשה יכול בישוב תלמוד לומר במדבר ומניין שבצוק ת"ל גזירה, ותניא אידך עזאזל קשה שבהרים... ,ודבי ר' ישמעאל תנא, עזאזל - שמכפר על מעשה עוזא ועזאל לט) [יומא ס"ז: ] הערה לט פירש"י עוזא ועזאל שני מלאכי חבלה שירדו לארץ בימי נעמה אחות תובל קין, ועליהם נאמר ויראו בני האלהים את בנות האדם)

One taught, that it is a place which is strong and tough....and R. Yishmael's school taught, "*Azazel*, that which atones for the deeds of *Uzza* and *Azazel*" (Rashi explains that they were two demons who fell to the earth in the times of Naama the sister of Tuval Kayin, and about them it is said, "And the sons of God saw the daughters of man.")

### 2. Enoch 10:12

All the earth has been corrupted by the effects of the teaching of Azazel. To him therefore ascribe the whole crime...

### 3. רמב"ן ויקרא טז: ח

...[בפרקי רבי אליעזר הגדול (פרק מו)], לפיכך היו נותנין לו לסמאל שוחד ביום הכפורים שלא לבטל את קרבנם... אבל צוה הקב"ה ביום הכפורים שנשלח שעיר במדבר לשר המושל במקומות החרבן... וחלקו מן האומות הוא עשו... ומן הבהמות השעירים והעזים, ובחלקו עוד השדים... ובלשון הכתוב (ז: ז) שעירים... Therefore, they bribed Samael on the Day of Atonement so that he would not void their sacrifices... God commanded that on the Day of Atonement we send a goat to the wilderness to the officer who reigns in places of destruction... and his nation is Esav... and his animal is the goat, and his portion also includes demons, which are called "seirim."

### 4. בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה סה

ר' חלבו אמר טובים לך שעל ידן את נוטל את הברכות, וטובים לבניך שעל ידן הוא מתכפר להם ביום הכפורים, דכתיב (ויקרא טז) כי ביום הזה יכפר וגו'.

R. Chelbo said: They will be good for you, and good for your descendants, because by them they are cleansed on Yom Kippur, one to the Lord and one to Azazel."

### 5. בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה סה

רבי יצחק אמר...אלא ונשא השעיר עליו זה עשו שנאמר הן עשו אחי איש שעיר, את כל עונותם עונות תם, שנאמר (שם/בראשית/כה) ויעקב איש תם  
R. Yitzchak said: 'And the goat will carry upon him' (Lev. 16:22) - meaning Esav; 'all their sins' - the sins of the simple man ('avonotam' = avonot tam)...

### 6. ריקאנטי ויקרא טז: ח

...כל זה העניין נרמז בספורי יעקב ועשו, כי העזאזל נרמז באמרו [בראשית לב, כא] אכפרה פניו במנחה ההולכת לפני, ונהפך הקטיגור סניגור ומליץ בעדנו... שנאמר [שם טז] וישב ביום ההוא עשו לדרכו שעירה, הוא שעיר העזאזל שנתנו לו... ויעקב נסע סכותה [בראשית לג, יז], כי ישראל טרודים בסכות מיום כיפור עד החג...

All of this is hinted to in the stories of Yaakov and Esav. The Azazel is hinted when Yaakov says, "I will atone with a gift which goes before me," and the prosecutor became the defense attorney...as it is said, "And Esav returned on that day to his path to Seir," which refers to the scapegoat (seir) that they had given him... "And Jacob traveled to Sukkot," for Israel is busy with building the Sukkah from Yom Kippur until Sukkot.

## II. Is the לעזאזל שעייר considered a קרבן?

### 7. אבן עזרא ויקרא טז:ח

ואמר רב שמואל, אף על פי שכתוב בשעיא החטאת שהוא לה', גם השעיר המשתלח הוא לה', ואין צריך כי המשתלח איננו קרבן כי לא ישחט

And Rav Shmuel said: Though it is written regarding the Seir sin-offering that it is for God, the Scapegoat is also for God. And there is no need for this, for the Scapegoat is not a sacrifice; after all, it is not slaughtered.

### 8. ויקרא כב:כב, תמורה ו:

עֲנֹת אוֹ שְׁבוּר אוֹ-חָרוּץ אוֹ-יִבֶלֶת אוֹ גָרֵב אוֹ יִלְפֶת לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ אֵלָהּ לָהּ; וְאִשָּׁה, לֹא-תִתְּנוּ מֵהֶם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לָהּ. לְה' לְרֵבוֹת שְׁעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח

Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scabbed, or scurvy, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD. **Temura 6b-** "unto the Lord" comes to include even the Scapegoat.

### 9. יומא סב:

תנו רבנן שני שעירי יום הכפורים ששחטן בחוץ עד שלא הגריל עגליהן חייב על שניהם, משהגריל עליהם חייב על של שם ופטור על של עזאזל.

The Rabbis taught: The two goats of Yom Kippur, if one slaughtered them outside of the Temple before performing the lottery, one is liable for both goats; once one has performed the lottery, one is liable only for the goat which is for God and exempt regarding the Scapegoat.

### 10. רמב"ם הלכות מעשה הקרבנות יח:יא

שני שעירי יוה"כ ששחטם בחוץ אם עד שלא התודה עליהם חייב כרת על שניהן הואיל וראויין לבוא לפני ה' לוידי

If one slaughtered the two goats of Yom Kippur outside of the Temple before performing the *vidui*/confession on them, one is liable for both, because both are worthy to come before God for *vidui*. If, however, one did so after performing the *vidui*, one is exempt regarding the Scapegoat; it is no longer worthy to come before God.

### 11. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 114

...despite the correspondence in Lev. 16:8 between the goat "for YHWH" and the goat "for Azazel" the latter- the scapegoat- is not conceived of as an offering to Azazel. The scapegoat too is placed "before God" and atonement is made by it "before God" (10). Together with the goat for God it evidently constitute a single *battat*. Sacrificial rites are performed only upon the goat for God. Beyond being charged with sin the scapegoat is free of rites. It is not conceive, then, as an offering but as a vehicle for carrying off sin.

**12. ספר האמונות והדעות מאמר ג**

והיה אחד משני השעירים מקריבים אותו על הכהנים במקדש, והאחר מקריבים אותו על ההמון חוץ למקדש... שניהם קרבן לאלוה אחד. אך הפלת הגורלות בעבור שני המוקרב בעדם, והם כהנים וישראל.  
They would sacrifice one of the goats for the Priests in the Temple and the other for the multitudes outside....but both are a sacrifice to one God. But the drawing of lots is to distinguish on whose behalf the sacrifice is being offered, whether for the Priests or for Israel.

**12. תולדות יצחק ויקרא טז: ח**

"והתודה עליו את כל עונות בני ישראל ונתן אותם על ראש השעיר, " ולא נאמר כן בשעיר החטאת של שם ולא בשום סמיכה שבקרבנות, לפי שהקרבנות...מרצים ומכפרים, אבל זה שאינו לשם...אינו מכפר ואינו מרצה, אלא נושא עונותם...

There is no mention regarding the Seir-sin offering or regarding the *semicha* of other offerings because sacrifices...bring God's favor and atone, but this Scapegoat which is not for God...it does not atone or grant favor, but rather it carries their sins...

**13. רמב"ן ויקרא טז: ח**

המשל בזה, כמי שעשה סעודה לאדון וצוה האדון את האיש העושה הסעודה תן מנה אחת לעבדי פלוני...וזה טעם הגורלות, כי אילו היה הכהן מקדיש אותם בפה לה' ולעזאזל, היה כעובד אליו ונודר לשמו...  
The parable regarding this is one who makes a feast for his/her master, and the master commanded the person making the feast: Give a portion to my servant, so-and-so...and this is the reason for the lots, for if the Kohen were to sanctify them, respectively, to God and to Azazel with his own declaration, it would seem like he was worshipping Azazel and making a vow to him...

**III. The Ancient Near East****14. *The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual*, Ida Zatelli**

Generally, the Hittite rituals of *Humarlu* and *Ambazzi* are mentioned in which live animals become the vehicle to transport evil away from a group of persons or inhabited places. No sacrifice is made; the animal is taken away. In the *Humarlu* ritual a dog is waved over the king and queen inside the [palace. The celebrant is an "old woman" who recites a charm and pronounces a "magical word", so that the dog will transport the evil where the gods have decided. The animal is then taken away. In the *Ambazzi* ritual the woman celebrant wraps tin on a bowstring and then puts the string on the right hands and feet of those suffering from evil. She then removes the string and puts it on a mouse with a request: "Let this mouse take it to the high mountains, the deep valleys and the distant ways." The god *Alawimi* is called on to drive the mouse away.

In Mesopotamian literature there are elimination rituals where it seems that live animals are not used as vehicles for taking evil away. However, conceptually, they are similar to the biblical ritual of the scapegoat. In the *Utukki Lemnuti* series, in order to treat someone afflicted by demons and suffering from disease, *Marduk* touches them with a goat. By means of a spell the evil is enjoined to leave the patient and to go to underworld... (258-9)

## 15. The Hittite Ritual of Huwarlu

- ii 5...They take a small live dog.
- 6. They wa[ve] it over the king and queen
- 7. and they wave it inside the palace. The Ol[d Woman thus]
- 8. speaks: "Whatever [magical]
- 9. word is in the king and queen, in his (!) body, and in the palace, behold,
- 10. (his) member (is) great, his heart (is) great. He, the 'ass,' will bear (it).
- 11. He has overcome it. Let him take away the evil, the ma[gical word].
- 12. Wherever the gods have designated it,
- 13. there let him carry it." When they
- 14. take away the small live dog..

This Hittite rite seems to be the most similar to the scapegoat rite in regard to the purification motifs it bears. In both rites, a live animal receives the impurity and transports it away. But apart from the general motifs that form the basis of this comparison, there are significant differences. One is the incantation expressing the ability of the dog to bear the evil (lines 8-13). The scapegoat rite lacks any similar expressions...Incantations like the one in the Huwarlu ritual would be theologically unthinkable in the Priestly material since they attribute the effectiveness of the rite to the cathartic instruments rather than to God. The sins are not removed because the scapegoat has the power by itself to receive them and bear them away. They are removed because of the divine power and supervision accompanying the performance of the ceremony. (DP Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity*, 60)

## 16. Mesopotamian ritual from the Shurpu series:

- vii...53. [Go my son, Mar]duk!
- 54-55. Take seven loaves of bread made of pure *tappinni*-flour.
- 56. String (them) on a bronze (skewer).
- 57. Set a canelian bead (on it).
- 58-59. Wipe the man (with it), son of his god, whom the curse has seized.
- 60-61. Cast his spit upon the wiping material.
- 62. Cast the incantation of Eridu (upon it).
- 63. Take (it) out to the open country, the pure place.
- 64. Place (it) at the base of an *asagu*-bush.
- 65-66. Remove from his body [the disease? that be]set him.
- 67-68. Deliver his curse [to the] Lady of the Open Country and Plain.
- 69-70. May Ninkilim, lord of animals, transfer his serious illness to the vermin of the ground!

Though an animal is not used here as the vehicle of transfer, the rite is extraordinarily similar to the biblical rite since, like the scapegoat, the impurity laden material is disposed of in the wilderness. Even more striking is the mention of deities of the steppe and animals to which the impurity is delivered. The phrase "deliver his curse [to the] Lady of the Open Country and Plain" (lines 67-68) is amazingly similar to the biblical requirement of sending the goat to Azazel in the wilderness (Lev. 16:10). Yet it is in this very similarity that the greatest contrast is found. The desert deities in Shurpu are very prominent and active...In contrast, Azazel does not act; he has no personality. The name refers more to a locale than a supernatural figure. (DP Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity*, 68-69)