

Aharon shall lean his two hands upon the head of the living he-goat, and confess upon it... and send it with a designated man to the desert. (16:21)

The *ish iti*, designated man, who accompanied the *seh l'azazel*, he-goat, to the desert did not go alone. In fact, *Chazal* teach (*Yoma* 66b) *Mi'yakirei Yerushalayim hayu melavin oso ad succah ha'rishonah*, "Some of the eminent men of Yerushalayim would accompany him to the first booth". There were altogether ten booths from Yerushalayim to the cliff where the *seh l'azazel* met its death. The first booth was two thousand *amos*, cubits, from the city, which is the *techum Shabbos*, the distance one may walk on *Shabbos* beyond the city limits. **Horav Mordechai Leib Saks, zl**, makes a noteworthy observation. Let us analyze what these eminent men of Yerushalayim were doing and when they were doing it.

It was *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the year. Can one even begin to imagine the spectacle, the awesome exhibition, that was occurring in the *Bais Hamikdash*? The experience of witnessing the *Kohen Gadol* perform the *avodas Yom Kippurim*, service of *Yom Kippur*, was unparalleled in grandeur and reverence. It took place once a year, and the outcome for the entire year depended upon it! Yet, despite the opportunity of joining and participating in this unprecedented experience, these eminent men instead chose to accompany a lone Jew who was to walk with the goat to the desert. They did not want him to be alone. Is this not incredible? It is not as if *the ish iti* did not himself volunteer for the job. He wanted it, so let him do it alone. No – that is why these people were *yakirei Yerushalayim*, the eminent men of Yerushalayim. No Jew is left alone – even if it means that they would miss the most sublime, most spectacular religious experience of the year. It takes someone special to be so selfless.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, cites a precedence for this practice from the *parsha* of *Pesach Sheni*. A group of men were *tamei*, ritually contaminated, having been unable to celebrate the first public *Korban Pesach* offering due to their ritually-defiled status. They requested a second chance – which they subsequently received. These were special men, who were the coffin bearers for *Yosef HaTzaddik*, or (as some commentators suggest) they took care of the remains of *Nadav and Avihu*. They were so special that the *parsha* of *Pesach Sheni* is taught to *Klal Yisrael* as a result of their personal request for a second chance. *Moshe Rabbeinu* did not teach the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheni*. It was taught as a result of the request of these men. What made them so special?

It was their selflessness. They were willing to forgo the great public offering of the *Korban Pesach* because someone had to attend to the deceased. They gave up the experience of a lifetime, so that they could instead do the "right thing".

This Torah thought brings back a poignant memory, and, truthfully, a somewhat sense of envy that I have harbored for almost twenty-two years. A dear friend of mine, *Yosef Feigenbaum, zl*, became gravely ill with the malignant disease that would snuff out his life at the young age of forty-seven. It

was my privilege to visit him for eight and half months, literally from his diagnosis to his passing from this world. One day, however – one special day – I missed. It was *Yom Kippur*, a few months before his passing, and he was in the hospital. I had never missed a day – even a *Shabbos* – or a *Yom Tov*. *Yom Kippur* was difficult, because I *davened* for the *Amud*. I had to lead the *Neilah* service, and fasting and walking do not work well for me.

It bothered me that he would be alone all day on what would probably be the last *Yom Kippur* of his life. His cousin, Meshullem Feigenbaum, came forward and volunteered to walk down after *Mussaf*. He would miss reciting *Neilah* with a *minyan*. Instead, he would say it together with his cousin – my friend.

After the fast, I quickly drove down to the hospital. Meshullem was still there. I would give him a ride home. I looked at his face, and I knew that he had just been privy to the spiritual experience of his life. He was enraptured, on a spiritual high like none I had ever seen before. He intimated that, at first, he was concerned about missing *Neilah* with a *minyan*, but reciting *Neilah* together with a person who knew that this was it was an indescribably and unforgettable experience. They sat together, the tears flowing down their faces, drenching their *kittelach*, knowing that this *Yom Kippur* they were closer to Hashem than ever before.

Hashem presents us with opportunities. May they all be positive. The decision we make-- in accepting to do what we might rather not do-- can ultimately change our lives.