

And sent it with a designated man to the wilderness. (16:22)

The man who was appointed by the *bais din* to lead the he-goat to the wilderness was appointed the day before *Yom Kippur*. *Chazal* (*Talmud Yoma* 663) teach that he was accompanied on this journey by the *yakirei Yerushalayim*, dear ones, distinguished members of Yerushalayim's elite, who would drop what they were doing – just to accompany the *ish iti* on this unique journey. Imagine what these men were relinquishing. They could have remained in the *Azarah* and been spectators, observing the *Kohen Gadol* perform the *Yom Kippur* service. This inspirational experience would have impacted their lives forever. Yet, they acquiesced to leave, because they did not want the *ish iti* to go at it alone. This earned them the appellation *yakrei Yerushalayim*, the dear ones of Yerushalayim. They gave up an opportunity for personal spiritual advancement for the sake of helping a fellow Jew.

The **Chizkuni** quotes the *Midrash* that teaches that the *ish iti* would not live out the year. Despite the impending death sentence associated with the position of *ish iti*, there was no shortage of individuals who vied for the position. How are we to understand this? *Horav Deutsh*, son-in-law of **Horav Moshe Halberstam, zl**, relates that his revered father-in-law would often take his children to visit *kivrei tzaddikim*, graves of the righteous, to entreat them to intercede in Heaven for the living. Once, when they were traveling from *Kever Rachel* to Chevron, the *Rav* had the tendor stop the vehicle and everyone went out. "See, children!" the *Rav* would declare. "Right over here is the place where the *seir l'azazel*, he-goat, that was taken to the wilderness, was brought, and here it died, and this atoned for the sins of *Klal Yisrael*. I am sure that all of you remember what you learned in *cheder* concerning the *ish iti* who accompanied the he-goat. He died that year. Yet, *Chazal* inform us that a long list of distinguished Jews applied for this sublime work."

At that moment, the *Rav* broke into incessant weeping. When he calmed down, he said, "Children, remember this lesson. There is a powerful lesson to be derived from here: A Jew should be prepared to give up his life for the benefit of his fellow Jews. Why should the *ish iti*, who is sacrificing himself for *Klal Yisrael*, do it alone?"

Let us now address the function of the *seir l'azazel* and for which sins it brought atonement. There were two *seirim*, he-goats. The *seir hapenimi*, internal he-goat, the *seir l'Hashem*, was offered by Aharon *HaKohen* himself. He slaughtered it, accepted its blood, and sprinkled it in the *Kodesh Ha'Kodoshim*, Holy of Holies. It atoned for *tumaas Mikdash u'kedoshav*, ritual contamination which occurred or was brought into the *Bais Hamikdash*.

This is unlike its partner he-goat, which was neither slaughtered by the *Kohen Gadol*, nor was it sacrificed within the environs of the Sanctuary. Yet, it carried upon itself the atonement of all the nation's sins. Is this not anomalous? The he-goat which the *Kohen Gadol* slaughtered in the *Bais Hamikdash* atoned for a small, select group of sins, while the he-goat that was sent to the wilderness by a volunteer carried upon its shoulders the heavy load of *Klal Yisrael's* collective sins.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl, quotes **Horav Aharon Walkin, zl**, who explains that the purpose of a *korban*, sacrifice, is for the one who offers it to take an educated and insightful view of what is happening to the animal. This would catalyze within him the realization, "If not for the grace of G-d, there go I." This should have happened to him as punishment for his sinful behavior. Out of His boundless love and compassion for us, Hashem overlooks this and instead allows for the animal sacrifice to take the place of the human. This insight will generate *teshuvah*, repentance, on behalf of the sinner.

When the he-goat which was slaughtered was sacrificed, the collective reaction of the nation was: "At the end of the day, we will all die. One-hundred-years from now, nary a single one of us will be here. If we are going to die, then what better place than in the *Bais Hamikdash*, with the *Kohen Gadol* officiating?" Such a reaction will certainly not inspire *teshuvah*. When they saw what happened to the other he-goat, which died a brutal death, its limbs torn apart as it is flung off a cliff, however, the people became nervous, their anxiety catalyzing mass repentance. Since the he-goat which was led into the wilderness engendered public repentance, it makes sense that it should have atoned for a multitude of sins.