

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The strangest element of the service on Yom Kippur, set out in Acharei Mot (Lev. 16: 7-22), was the ritual of the two goats, one offered as a sacrifice, the other sent away into the desert "to Azazel." They were brought before the High Priest, to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from one another: they were chosen to be as similar as possible to one another in size and appearance. Lots were drawn, one bearing the words "To the Lord," the other, "To Azazel." The one on which the lot "To the Lord" fell was offered as a sacrifice. Over the other the high priest confessed the sins of the nation and it was then taken away into the desert hills outside Jerusalem where it plunged to its death. Tradition tells us that a red thread would be attached to its horns, half of which was removed before the animal was sent away. If the rite had been effective, the red thread would turn to white.

Sin and guilt offerings were common in ancient Israel, but this ceremony was unique. Normally confession was made over the animal to be offered as a sacrifice. In this case confession was made over the goat not offered as a sacrifice. Why the division of the offering into two? Why two identical animals whose fate, so different, was decided by the drawing of a lot? And who or what was Azazel?

The word Azazel appears nowhere else in Scripture, and three major theories emerged as to its meaning. According to the sages and Rashi it meant "a steep, rocky or hard place," in other words a description of its destination. According to Ibn Ezra (cryptically) and Nahmanides (explicitly), Azazel was the name of a spirit or demon, one of the fallen angels referred to in Genesis 6:2, similar to the goat-spirit called Pan in Greek mythology, Faunus in Latin. The third interpretation is that the word simply means "the goat [ez] that was sent away [azal]." Hence the English word "(e)scapegoat" coined by William Tyndale in his 1530 English translation of the Bible.

Maimonides offers the most compelling explanation, that the ritual was intended as a symbolic drama: "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, III:46). This makes sense, but the question remains. Why was this ritual different from all other sin or guilt offerings? Why two goats rather than one?

The simplest answer is that the High Priest's service on Yom Kippur was intended to achieve something other and more than ordinary sacrifices occasioned by sin. The Torah specifies two objectives, not one: "On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins" (Lev. 16: 30). Normally all that was aimed at was atonement, kapparah. On Yom Kippur something else was aimed at: cleansing, purification, teharah. Atonement is for acts. Purification is for persons. Sins leave stains on the character of those who commit them, and these need to be cleansed before we can undergo catharsis and begin anew.

Sin defiles. King David felt stained after his adultery with Batsheva: "Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity and cleanse me of my sin" (Psalm 51:4). Shakespeare has Macbeth say, after his crime, "Will these hands ne'er be clean?" The ceremony closest to the rite of the scapegoat—where an animal was let loose rather than sacrificed—was the ritual for someone who was being cleansed of a skin disease: "If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird... And he is to release the live bird in the open fields." (Lev. 14:4-7)

The released bird, like the scapegoat, was sent away carrying the impurity, the stain. Clearly this is psychological. A moral stain is not something physical. It exists in the mind, the emotions, the soul. It is hard to rid oneself of the feeling of defilement when you have committed a wrong, even when you know it has been forgiven. Some symbolic action seems necessary. The survival of such rites as Tashlikh, the "casting away" of sins on Rosh Hashanah, and Kapparot, "expiations" on the eve of Yom Kippur—the first involving crumbs, the second a live chicken—is evidence of this. Both practices

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were criticized by leading halakhic authorities yet both survived for the reason Maimonides gives. It is easier to feel that defilement has gone if we have had some visible representation of its departure. We feel cleansed once we see it go somewhere, carried by something. This may not be rational, but then neither are we, much of the time.

That is the simplest explanation. The sacrificed goat represented kapparah, atonement. The goat sent away symbolised teharah, cleansing of the moral stain. But perhaps there is something more, and more fundamental, to the symbolism of the two goats.

The birth of monotheism changed the way people viewed the world. In polytheism, the elements, each of which is a different god with a different personality, clash. In monotheism, all tension-between justice and mercy, retribution and forgiveness-is located within the mind of the One G-d. The sages often dramatised this, in Midrash, as a dialogue between the Attribute of Justice [middat ha-din] and the Attribute of Compassion [middat rachamim]. With this single shift, external conflict between two separate forces is reconceptualised as internal, psychological conflict between two moral attributes.

This led to a reframing of the human situation. Jack Miles says something profoundly interesting about the difference between Greek and Shakespearian tragedy: "The classic Greek tragedies are all versions of the same tragedy. All present the human condition as a contest between the personal and the impersonal with the impersonal inevitably victorious... Hamlet is another kind of tragedy... The contest is unlike that between doomed, noble Oedipus and an iron chain of events. It is, instead, a conflict within Hamlet's own character between 'the native hue of resolution' and 'the pale cast of thought'."

Monotheism relocates conflict from 'out there' to 'in here', transferring it from an objective fact about the world to an internal contest within the mind. This flows from our belief in G-d but it changes our view of the soul, the self, the human personality. It is no coincidence that the struggle between Jacob and Esau, which begins in the womb and brings their relationship to the brink of violence, is resolved only when Jacob wrestles alone at night with an unnamed adversary-according to some commentators, a portrayal of inner, psychological struggle. The next day, Jacob and Esau

meet after a twenty-two year separation, and instead of fighting, they embrace and part as friends. If we can wrestle with ourselves, the Bible seems to suggest, we need not fight as enemies. Conflict, internalized, can be resolved.

In most cultures, the moral life is fraught with the danger of denial of responsibility. "It wasn't me. Or if it was, I didn't mean it. Or I had no choice." That, in part, is what the story of Adam and Eve is about. Confronted by their guilt, the man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. Sin plus denial of responsibility leads to paradise lost.

The supreme expression of the opposite, the ethic of responsibility, is the act of confession. "It was me, and I offer no excuses, merely admission, remorse, and a determination to change." That in essence is what the High Priest did on behalf of the whole nation, and what we now do as individuals and communities, on Yom Kippur.

Perhaps then the significance of the two goats, identical in appearance yet opposite in fate, is simply this, that they are both us. The Yom Kippur ritual dramatised the fact that we have within us two inclinations, one good (yetser tov), one bad (yetser hara). We have two minds, one emotional, one rational, said Daniel Goleman in Emotional Intelligence. Most recently Daniel Kahneman has shown how the same duality affects decision-making in Thinking, Fast and Slow. It is the oldest and newest duality of all.

The two goats-the two systems, the amygdala and prefrontal cortex-are both us. One we offer to G-d. But the other we disown. We let it go into the wilderness where it belongs and where it will meet a violent death. Ez azal: the goat has gone. We have relinquished the yetser hara, the instinct-driven impetuosity that leads to wrong. We do not deny our sins. We confess them. We own them. Then we let go of them. Let our sins, that might have led us into exile, be exiled. Let the wilderness reclaim the wild. Let us strive to stay close to G-d.

Monotheism created a new depth of human self-understanding. We have within us both good and evil. Instinct leads to evil, but we can conquer evil, as G-d told Cain: "Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you can master it" (Gen. 4: 6). We can face our faults because G-d forgives, but G-d only forgives when we face our faults. That involves confession, which in turn bespeaks the duality of our nature, for if we were only evil we would not confess, and if we were wholly good we would have nothing to confess. The duality of our nature is symbolized by the two identical goats with opposite fates: a vivid visual display of the nature of the moral life.

Hence a supreme irony: the scapegoat of Acharei Mot is the precise opposite of the scapegoat as generally known. "Scapegoating," as we use the word today, means blaming someone else for our troubles. The scapegoat of Yom Kippur existed so that this kind

of blame would never find a home in Jewish life. We do not blame others for our fate. We accept responsibility. We say mipnei chata-enu, "because of our sins."

Those who blame others, defining themselves as victims, are destined to remain victims. Those who accept responsibility transform the world, because they have learned to transform themselves. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The direct message of these two parshiyot is clear: In order to live a meaningful life that contains within it the necessary elements of spiritual sanctity one must limit one's desires and physical behavior patterns. The Torah does not award accolades for great intellectual or social achievements if they are unfortunately accompanied by uninhibited physical dissolute behavior. It is not only the message that counts - it is just as much the messenger as well.

There are many laws, mitzvot and strictures that are the stuff of these two Torah parshiyot. The Talmud warns us against the dangers of false preaching and hypocrisy. All faiths and political systems are strewn with the remains of noble ideas preached by ignoble people and dissolute leaders. The Torah is therefore prescient in demanding that Jews must first dedicate themselves to the goals of righteousness and probity before it instructs them in the details of Jewish living and normative behavior.

The Torah is wary of those who immerse themselves in purifying waters while still retaining in their hands, hearts and minds the defiling creature itself. The Torah is keen to apply this concept to its entire worldview. Justice is to be pursued but only through just means. The Jewish nation is not only to be an obedient and observant nation - it is charged with being a holy nation. Without the goal of personal holiness being present in Jewish life, observance of the Torah laws oftentimes will be ineffective, a matter of rote behavior and not of spiritual uplift and improvement.

This required dedication to holiness in life is achieved in the small, every day occurrences in human life. It defines how we speak and what we say and hear. It prevents us from taking advantages of others in commerce and social relationships. It fights against our overwhelming ego and our narcissistic self. Holiness opens up to us the broad panorama of life and allows us to view the forest and not just the trees.

It demands inspiration and makes us feel unfulfilled if we achieve only knowledge. It creates a perspective of eternity and of future generations and lifts us out of the mundane world of the ever-changing present. It infuses our behavior with a sense of cosmic importance and eternal value so that everything in life, in fact living itself, is of spiritual importance and value.

It impresses upon us the realization that we are not only to be judged by our current peers but by past and future generations as well. Even achrei mot - after one's departure from this world - kedoshim tihiyu - shall later generations be able to judge one as being holy, dedicated and noble. This is the mindset that the Torah demands from us as we proceed to fulfill all of the laws and mitzvot that are detailed for us in these two parshiyot. For in the absence of such a dedication and mindset, the perfunctory observance of those laws and mitzvot cannot have the necessary effect upon our souls and lives. © 2012 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Davar B'Ito

“Perform all My laws and safeguard My decrees to go in them. I am Hashem your G-d. Safeguard My decrees and My laws, which man shall perform and live by them. I am Hashem." Confusion reigns! First the order is laws followed by decrees. That changes to decrees and laws in the very next verse. In the first pasuk, we are asked to "go" in the decrees; there is no such demand regarding the laws. We could object even more strongly regarding the latter pasuk. Not only is the order changed, but we are hard pressed to find a reason for stating it altogether. What does it add that was left unsaid by the first pasuk?

Customary wisdom (reflected here in Rashi on the first pasuk) tells us that mishpatim/laws refers to rules that are rationally appealing and self-evident. Chukim/decrees are rules that have no such appeal, and which therefore upset our "rational" selves. We obey them out of respect and devotion to the King, Who has the right to command whatever He wants, whether it makes sense to us or not. In fact, this approach fits our first pasuk rather nicely. It explains why we are only told to "perform" the rationally-accessible mitzos, while we are asked to "go in" the chukim. This last phrase asks us to turn some behavior into the custom of the land. Chukim have to be artificially turned into an accepted way of life, a customary way in which the community acts and "goes" in. Mishpatim do not require such regimentation. Because they appeal to us, we must simply see to it that we follow our natural inclination to observe them, and not fall prey to the meretricious arguments of our lusts and desires.

So far, so good. But what will we make of the second pasuk, with its curious reversal? We must conclude that here, "decrees" and "laws" mean something quite different. The usual explanation holds true when mishpatim are placed first. When the order changes, as it does in the second verse, we can see no reason why the Torah would assign pride of place to

those mitzvos whose understanding troubles us, putting them before mitzvos whose logic we find compelling.

We must conclude that in the second pasuk, the terms mean something quite different. They do not refer to the practical observance of the mitzvos, but to the way Torah is learned and processed-in effect, to the mechanics of the Oral Law. Chukim are the fixed rules of derivation, whereby new laws are derived from the text, even though they are not part of the plain meaning of the text. Mishpatim are those laws that are uncovered through the use of the chukim. When used this way, it makes perfect sense that chukim should come before mishpatim! (In fact, it is not only when the words "chukim" and "mishpatim" are used together-and in that order-that they refer to the process of Torah she-b'al-peh. Even when used alone, the two terms sometimes do not refer to types of practical mitzvos, but to the rules and process of derivation. When Moshe explains his judicial role to his father-in-law, "And I make known the chukim of G-d and His teachings," (Shemos 18:16) he means the ways Hashem wanted Torah studied to yield new halachic conclusions. When the Torah speaks of "the Torah they will teach you and the mishpat that they will say to you," (Devarim 17:11) Rambam (Mamrim 1:2) explains mishpat as "things that are learned by derivation, using one of the principles of derivation.")

Certainly when the two terms are used together, and "chukim" is placed first (such as our second pasuk), we cannot explain them as mitzvos whose meanings are remote, as opposed to those whose meaning seems apparent. In fact, however, we see that Chazal applied both sets of meanings to our second pasuk! Some of their derashos treat the terms as referring to Torah study; others see them as dealing with performance of mitzvos. (The reason for this is not difficult to discern. One of the principles of derivation that we have been discussing is context. The shape that a derashah takes must sometimes be determined by the context in which it is embedded. Our psukim are sandwiched between others that deal entirely with practical observance-the laws of forbidden relations. This hints to us that the derashos from our pasuk should be applied, in part, to practical issues.)

So we find, on the one hand, that Chazal (Toras Kohanim, and Sanhedrin 59A) see an endorsement of Torah study in the phrase "which man shall perform and live by them." (By speaking of "man" rather than Jew, we can see that a non-Jew who studies the parts of Torah appropriate to him is as praiseworthy as a High Priest.) Clearly, the reference is to study of Torah, not to the performance of mitzvos. On the other hand, the same phrase is the source of halachah regarding practical observance of the mitzvos. The gemara (Yoma 85B) derives from it that a person need not sacrifice his life in order to comply with the mitzvos (with the exception of the three cardinal sins of idolatry, forbidden relations, and murder).

We must emphasize, however, that the primary meaning of chukim and mishpatim (when they are used in that order) refers to Torah study, not to performance of mitzvos. The gemara's derashah that puts life before mitzvos does not flow from the plain meaning of the text, but is a secondary allusion. Indeed, it must be so. Our pasuk comes after a parshah speaking about forbidden relations, which is one of the mitzvos for which a person must indeed sacrifice his or her life!

This leads to another observation. If we are correct that the primary meaning of the second pasuk tells us about Torah study, the reference to "living" by them must refer to an elevated quality of life. The Torah clues us in that if we want to experience life as it was meant to be lived-life in which the soul delights in spiritual connection-we need to learn Torah seriously. But why would such a lesson be planted in the middle of a section dealing with arayos?

The pasuk before the two we have considered here contains a clue. "Do not act according to the practice of the land of Egypt in which you lived. Do not act according to the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you. Do not follow after their decrees." People can come to transgress the most serious sins of the Torah as a consequence of the practices and decrees of their neighbors. This pasuk warns against the effects of living in the midst of a morally loose people. Some will tend to follow along with the fixed behavior patterns of their host cultures.

We have to admit, however, that not everything can be blamed on the external environment. People succumb to eruptions of desire within them. To protect against such failure, our pasuk offers a suggestion. Learn Torah in a manner that enriches your life, and leaves you feeling spiritually fulfilled. When your thoughts are full of Torah, there will be little room for thoughts of lust. (Based on Ha'amek Davar, Vayikra 18:4-5) © 2012 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“You shall love your friend like yourself...” (Leviticus 19:18). One of the great tragedies of our times is the terrible conflict that exists between different streams of Jews. Three times last year, a Reform synagogue in Ra'anana was vandalized by overly-zealous adolescents overtaken by an evil excess of religious fervor. A letter condemning the attack signed by virtually all of the Orthodox rabbis in Ra'anana - including Chief Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Peretz - was read out at that Reform synagogue, so that it would be clear to all that at least the Orthodox establishment decried the crime.

The manner in which halakhically observant Jews relate to other streams of Judaism will depend upon the interpretation of a well-known verse in this week's Biblical reading, "You shall love your friend like

yourself." Yes, Rabbi Akiva referred to this commandment as "the great rule of the Torah" (Torat Kohanim 19,45 ad loc). Yes, when a would-be convert came to Hillel with the request to be converted to Judaism on the condition that he be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot, the sage responded, merely restating the words of our commandment: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. That is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and study" (B.T. Shabbat 31a). And yes, no observant Jew would want to enter his synagogue only to find that it had been vandalized. But an observant Jew's attitude towards this crime will ultimately depend upon our interpretation of a single word in the text of the commandment: "friend," or re'a (Hebrew).

The narrowest interpretation of the word would insist that the verse refers only to "your friend vis a vis the commandments," which means an individual who is as ritually observant as you are. If it is someone who would be considered ritually lax in his observance, you may even hate him (see additions to Rashi and Rashbam ad loc). Maimonides would seem to limit the Biblical commandment to another Israelite (Laws of Proper Opinions 6:3), although he would most probably extend the practice of human sensitivity to every individual who keeps the universal moral laws of Noah (see his last ruling in his Laws of Slaves). It is the Ibn Ezra who interprets the text in accordance with every word in the verse and understands that it refers to every human being created by G-d "in His image." This is why this verse dealing with inter-personal laws concludes, "I am the Lord," in order to explain that G-d created all of us "as one." All of us were created in His image, all share a portion of G-d within ourselves, and hence we are all siblings. (Ibn Ezra, ad loc).

It is from this perspective that Rabbi Akiva taught, "Beloved is the human being, who is created in the Divine Image" (Mishnah Avot 3,18). This is what makes this commandment "the great rule of the Torah," the rule which is inclusive of all of humanity. And it would most certainly include our Reform siblings and co-religionists.

I would like to go one step further. I am a very proud Orthodox Jew, teacher and rabbi, who believes that our Torah is the word of G-d. I believe that it is the halakha - our fealty to the Jewish legal system which has its roots in Sinai and which developed through the generations as recorded in the Talmud, the Codes and the Responsa - which has guided our continued and creative existence into this period of "the beginning of the sprouting of our redemption." Hence, I cannot pray a statutory prayer service conducted in a non-Orthodox synagogue, since it would not conform to the rules of congregational prayer which I hold to be sacrosanct.

However, the other movements are not my enemies; from a certain perspective, they are my partners. In many instances, they have reached Jews whom neither I nor my Orthodox co-religionists were

successful in reaching and have brought them closer to Jewish traditions. There are even a significant number of students who have come to our Rabbinical School on a religious journey which began in a Reform congregation or camp setting. Yes, we do not agree, yet, are there not many instances wherein partners generally disagree?

Moreover, we can even learn from heterodox groups. There were many aspects of synagogue life, especially in the diaspora, where we learned from non-Orthodox movements such as having more decorous services, including a sermon in the vernacular, and explaining our prayers to the uninitiated. Indeed, the challenge of the non-Orthodox movements made Orthodoxy more receptive and more open to human sensitivities. In a situation of "competition," every "establishment" must try a little harder!

And, even in a more extreme situation, did not Rabbi Meir continue to learn from Elisha ben Abuyah, even after he turned away from traditional Torah and became a heretic? And this was justified by the other Sages (B.T. Hagigah 15b)! The bottom line: our Torah teaches that we must love others like we love ourselves even if - perhaps especially if - the other is different from ourselves. We must always be mindful of the fact that our common "image of G-d" makes that which unites us as siblings more significant than anything which divides us.

Jewish tradition encourages everyone - from childhood on - to study our legal texts, because such studies create a socially unacceptable climate for legal infraction. A dangerous culture of male, "macho" chauvinism and corruption seep into the highest echelons of our political and military elite; when such an evil spirit of acceptance of sexual harassment rears its ugly head, it is crucially important that our press step in and express public revulsion.

Obviously, they must do so responsibly - and hopefully the laws of libel protect the innocent from unfair attacks by the media. It must be remembered, however, that fame and public office engenders added responsibility - not added privilege! One dare not turn on the public in whose adulation one basked the moment it displays its disappointment and disgust. Our society owes a vote of thanks to public media, one of whose tasks must be the safeguarding of morality in the most sacrosanct corridors of power and influence. © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“My laws you shall do and My statutes you shall keep, to go in them, I am Hashem your G-d" (Vayikra 18:4). Since we are already required to "do" and "keep" G-d's laws and statutes, what is being added by the phrase "to go in them?" The commentators on Rashi tell us that this was what Rashi

was trying to address by quoting Toras Kohanim's explanation of these words: "do not free yourselves from them; do not say I learned the wisdom of Israel, I will go and learn the wisdom of the Egyptians and the Chaldeans." In other words, the expression "to go in them" is telling us that keeping the rituals demanded by the Torah is not all that is expected of us; learning Torah, to the exclusion of other subjects, is required as well. This fits very well into the context of the previous verses, which forbid us from acting like the other nations; our "exclusionary" status applies not only to our deeds, but to the things we study and talk about as well.

The Talmud (M'nachos 99b) relates that the son of Dama, Rabbi Yishmael's nephew, asked Rabbi Yishmael whether it was okay for someone like him, who had already learned all of the Torah, to now learn the wisdom of the Greeks. Rabbi Yishmael responded by quoting the verse from Sefer Y'hoshua (1:8), where G-d told Y'hoshua that he should learn Torah "day and night." Rabbi Yishmael then added, "go and search for a time that is neither day or night, and that is when you can study the wisdom of the Greeks." Obviously, the message was that there is no time when learning the wisdom of another culture is permitted.

Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin, sh'lita (Rinas Yitzchok I) asks why Rabbi Yishmael referenced the verse from Y'hoshua if the same message is learned from a verse in Chumash; isn't using a verse from the Torah preferable to using one from Nevi'im? This question becomes even stronger when we consider that the Talmud quotes three ways to understand the verse in Y'hoshua. Rabbi Yishmael takes it literally, that we must learn Torah every second of every day and of every night. Right before that, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is quoted as saying it just means we must learn Torah every day and every night; we can fulfill this by saying Sh'ma every morning and every evening. Following the story with Rabbi Yishmael, the Talmud says there is an opposing position, as Rabbi Yonasan is quoted as saying that the verse in Y'hoshua is not teaching us a requirement, but is relaying a blessing-to be able to learn Torah every day and every night. Unless Rabbi Yishmael was so confident that his way of understanding the verse was the only correct way, why would he use a verse that can be understood in multiple ways rather than an uncontested verse that teaches the same thing? [Some commentators ask how Rabbi Yishmael's opinion in M'nachos can be reconciled with his opinion in B'rachos (35b), where he disagrees with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai regarding taking time out from learning to work; if Rabbi Yishmael understands the obligation to learn Torah as a requirement to do so every second of every day and night, how could he allow working for a living? (A similar issue applies to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who doesn't permit taking time from learning to work yet says in M'nachos that saying Sh'ma is enough to fulfill the requirement to "learn day and night." However, Rabbi Shimon bar

Yochai could base his non-stop learning requirement on the "going in them" verse, and is only pointing out that this requirement cannot be learned from the verse in Y'hoshua.) I'm not sure, though, why these two statements by Rabbi Yishmael are contradictory. There is a requirement to learn every second of every day (and night) when there is no other obligation that must be taken care of. Rabbi Yishmael understands the verse that tells us to "gather your produce" to be teaching us that this is one of the circumstances that requires us (or allows us) to temporarily put down our sefer (book) and take care of something else. It has no bearing on whether or not there is a requirement to learn every second that such requirements don't apply.]

A simplistic (yet possibly accurate) answer could be based on how obvious it is that the lesson can be learned from each of the verses. If the notion that it is not permitted to study Greek wisdom is more easily accepted/understood by referencing the verse which says that Torah must be studied day and night than having to explain how "going in them" teaches the same thing, we could understand why Rabbi Yishmael would use the verse from Sefer Yehoshua even if the same lesson is learned from our verse in Sefer Vayikra. [That more accurate sources are not quoted when less accurate sources can better relay an accurate message (for simplicity's sake) is not uncommon. Even though someone more learned, or that individual when he becomes more learned, will realize the inaccuracy of the quoted source, it is assumed that with that higher level of learning/understanding comes the ability to verify that the message itself was accurate.]

Rabbi Sorotzkin also asks how it could be possible for anyone to have learned the entire Torah if its concepts run so deep that even if all of the available texts were covered, understanding them more fully could take up every second of every day for multiple lifetimes. It is interesting to note that the wording of the lesson in Toras Kohanim (and its parallel in the Sifray, Va'eschanan 6) does not mention learning other wisdoms after finishing all of the Torah. The notion that Rabbi Yishmael's nephew learned all of the Torah was only mentioned by him, in his question to his uncle; Rabbi Yishmael may not have corrected him on this point, but that doesn't mean he agreed with his nephew's assessment. Nevertheless, whether the request to learn other wisdom is made while further Torah study is ongoing or after it has been thought to be completed may impact which verse applies more (see Birkas Sh'muel, Kiddushin 27). [Even though a similar statement to Rabbi Yishmael's is made by Rabbi Y'hoshua in the Tosefta (Avodah Zarah 1:3) and the Y'rushalmi (Peya 1:1) without including learning the entire Torah first, it is not Greek "wisdom" that is referred to there; the context of the Y'rushalmi indicates that it is regarding the Greek language being taught. Since learning Greek is not considered learning Torah, and Torah must be what is learned every second of

every day and every night, it is not allowed. We would still need to explain why the verse in Y'hoshua is referenced rather than the one in Vayikra. (Since Rabbi Y'hoshua came after Rabbi Yishmael, he may have just been following Rabbi Yishmael's lead.)]

Elsewhere (Sanhedrin 5b), the Talmud tells us that Rav spent eighteen months living with shepherds in order to more fully understand the exact parameters of animal blemishes. Although it meant spending so much time outside the Bais Midrash (study hall), since it enhanced his Torah knowledge, it was considered part of his Torah learning, not separate from it. Similarly, Rambam studied many secular texts, including those of Greek philosophy and the religious texts of other cultures, but did so in order to better understand the context of the Torah, including the reasons behind many of the Torah's laws and their details. Many have taken Rambam to task for going too far with his "other studies," but even those who would never have done so quote Rambam's conclusions (including the reasoning behind them) based on those studies. The bottom line is that learning things not found in our sacred texts is only problematic (putting aside studying heresy) if they are being studied for their own sake rather than in order to better understand an aspect of G-d's Torah.

By prefacing his request to study Greek wisdom with the statement that he had already finished his Torah studies, Rabbi Yishmael's nephew was clearly indicating that he did not want to learn Greek wisdom in order to understand the Torah better, but because he wanted to move on to a completely different subject. Had Rabbi Yishmael referenced the verse in Vayikra which teaches us to always be involved in Torah, the message would have only been that you can't study Greek wisdom for its own sake, only if doing so will enhance your understanding of Torah. This would have opened the door to his nephew "clarifying" his request, claiming that he really wanted to learn Greek wisdom in order to understand the Torah better-even though it was clear to Rabbi Yishmael that this wasn't the case. Because the verse in Y'hoshua made it clear that studying anything outside the realm of Torah was only allowed when its neither day or night (i.e. it's never okay), this was the verse he (and Rabbi Y'hoshua, either following his predecessor or because the application was similar) used. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In this week's portion, the Torah tells us that Aharon (Aaron) the High Priest, cast lots upon two goats, "one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for Azazel." (Leviticus 16:8)

Rashi explains the procedure as follows: "One goat he (Aharon) placed on his right hand, the other on his left. He then put both hands in the urn, took one lot in each hand and placed it upon the corresponding

goat. One of the lots was inscribed 'for the Lord' and the other 'for Azazel.'" Ibn Ezra explains that Azazel was a height from which the goat was hurled.

Sforno argues that the goat inscribed "for the Lord" was sacrificed as an offering to atone for sins committed in connection with the Sanctuary. The goat sent away was meant to expiate the sins of the community. (Sforno, Leviticus 16:5)

Other explanations come to mind. It can be suggested that the lots teach us that there are aspects of life that are based purely on mazal. This doesn't mean that we do not have the power to precipitate change. What it does teach however, is that in life we all face a certain fate over which we have no control. The Talmud says it this way "life, children and sustenance are not dependant upon merit but on mazal." (Moed Katan 28a) No wonder we read about the lots on Yom Kippur, the day in which we recognize that there are elements of life that are only in the hands of G-d.

The Talmud also notes that the goats were similar in appearance, height, size and value (Yoma 62 a, b). Yet, a slight shift of Aharon's hand brought about different destinies for the goats-one to the Lord, the other to Azazel.

It has been noted that life is a game of inches. This is even true in the world of sports. For example, a hard ground ball to the short stop could result in a double play. Had the ball gone an inch to the left or right, the winning run could have been driven in. So, too, in worldly affairs. It is often the case that an infinitesimal amount can be the difference between life and death, between belief and heresy, between doing the right and wrong thing.

This may be the deepest message of the lots. The slightest movement could make the difference between heaven and earth, between being sent to the Lord and being cast to Azazel. © 2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

During the time when the Omer is counted we traditionally take note of how Rabbi Akiva's students died - because they did not show each other proper respect and did not follow their master's instructions: "'Love your colleague as yourself' [Vayikra 19:18] - this is an important principle in the Torah" [Bereishit Rabba 24]. The concept of unity is the basis of the entire Torah. "'And Yisrael rested there opposite the mountain' [Shemot 19:2] - as one man, with one heart" [Rashi]. The time of counting the Omer is an important opportunity for emphasizing the value of unity.

The nationalistic approach of Yisrael is different from that of the other nations. Yisrael does not act as a "large society of mutual responsibility" but rather as was defined by the Tanya: The community of Yisrael is "a single soul which exists in separate bodies" [32]. And that is why the sages noted the difference between the verses describing Eisav and Yaacov. "And Eisav took... all the souls of his house" [Bereishit 36:6]. Eisav had a total of six people, and the word "souls" is written in the plural. But Yaacov, with seventy souls, is described in the singular, "And it was that every soul of those who came from the loins of Yaacov..." [Shemot 1:5]. The multitude of souls mentioned with respect to Eisav denotes the fact that he worshipped many different idols, while Yaacov, who served the one and only G-d, is described as having a single soul.

Based on this reasoning, we can understand how the Omer is brought as a community sacrifice even though in general a Mincha sacrifice cannot be brought by a partnership (as the sages derived from the verse, "If a soul brings a sacrifice" [Vayikra 2:1] - an individual and not a partnership). This is due to the unique status of the entire community as a single "divided" soul.

Based on this reasoning, the Meshech Chochma explains a remarkable passage in the book of Shoftim, which describes how the Midyanites destroyed the crops of the land so that nothing would be left for Yisrael to eat. It is written, "And Yisrael became very poor because of Midyan" [Shoftim 6:6]. The sages explain that the use of the word "vayidal" is a reference to the fact that a poor man brings a Mincha ("If he is poor" [Vayikra 14:21]). But this is not clear: if the people were wealthy enough to bring sacrifices to the idols Baal and Ashtarot, how is it that they could not bring a Mincha, which consists of grains? The answer is that there was no unity among the people and they therefore did not act in the manner of a single soul but as a large number of separate souls. And that is the reason they were not able to bring a Mincha sacrifice.

This also gives us a basis to explain the rest of this passage in Shoftim. We are told that Gidon stole into the Midyanite camp and heard a soldier talk about his dream where "a loaf of barley bread rolling in the camp of Midyan came to the tent... and the tent fell. And his friend said to him, this can only be the sword of Gidon... G-d has given Midyan into his hand. And when Gidon heard this... he returned to the camp of Yisrael and said... G-d has given the camp of Midyan into your hands." [Shoftim 7:13-15].

The sages commented on the fact that a bread made of barley appeared in the dream, since the nation had merits because of the barley bread, referring to the mitzva of the Omer. Rashi explains that these events occurred on the night of Pesach. Up to this point, the people were separate and considered as partners, but when he heard of the symbol of barley in the dream, the Omer sacrifice, Gidon understood that the trait of unity had returned to the people, and a Mincha sacrifice

could be brought in the name of the entire community.
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SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

“Moshe received the Torah from Sinai. . .”

Moshe Rabbenu learned the entire Torah, and all of our wisdom comes to us through him. This is made very clear in numerous midrashim and statements of the gemara. However, there are other midrashim and statements of the gemara which appear to differ (see below). Can these be reconciled with each other?

Rav Shlomo Elyashiv zatz'l states that they can, and he discusses some of them. For example, in Shemot Rabbah (41:6) we find Rabbi Abahu's statement that Moshe's Torah study consisted of the general principles. Based on what we know of Rabbi Abahu's life, Rav Elyashiv explains that Rabbi Abahu made this statement in a debate with heretics. They could not accept the possibility of a mortal learning the entire Torah in 40 days. Chazal sometimes try to make the Torah easier for heretics to understand [if there will be no halachic consequences, perhaps as a first step towards further study]. (See Megillah 9a)

Can a human really learn the entire Torah in 40 days? Of course he can, considering that his teacher was none other than G-d Himself!

The midrash says that Rabbi Akiva saw things that Moshe did not see. How can we understand this? Rav Elyashiv explains this based on a kabbalistic concept that the higher a person's soul rises, the more esoteric are the concepts which it can grasp. Thus, Moshe and Rabbi Akiva saw the same concepts, but Rabbi Akiva, whose soul was lower than Moshe's, saw them "dressed" more elaborately, i.e., somehow more tangible, than Moshe needed them to be.

There is a halachic concept called a "halachah l'Moshe miSinai"— "a law [given] to Moshe from Sinai." Of course all Torah laws were given to Moshe at Sinai, some of which are stated explicitly in the Torah and some of which are only hinted at. However, the category of laws called "halachah l'Moshe miSinai" includes those which are not even alluded to in the Torah; they are simply oral traditions. [An example is the requirement that tefilin straps be black.] Rav Elyashiv explains that a "halachah l'Moshe miSinai" is a law that was given only in its most esoteric form and it never became "tangible" enough to be written down in the Torah. (quoted in *Sha'arei Leshem Shevoh V'achlamah* p.438) © 1995 S. Katz

