

# פרשת

## אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת

### *Parashat Acharei Mot*

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*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:1-18:30, Ezekiel 22:1-19  
Matthew 15:10-20; Mark 12:28-34*

### **The Devil is in the Details of Yom Kippur**

In this week's Torah Portion, there is a very interesting combination of events that are described. The Torah Portion opens with instructions on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), described in *Vayikra / Leviticus 16*. Yom Kippur is a central element of Judaism. This holiday is practiced today in the sense of remembering, including a preceding month of repentance (*the month of Elul, the sixth month of the Jewish year, which immediately precedes Rosh Hashanah. The month of Elul has no specific importance in the Torah or in the early rabbinic writings, various customs however have arose during the first millennium that designated Elul as the time to prepare for the High Holy Days through repentance.*) Yom Kippur is also characterized by an entire day a total fast as it was practiced in ancient times. Although many have heard of this day, most would be startled to learn that a sinister figure lurks in the shadows of Parashat Acharei Mot. We are given a clue as we read the following according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:7*, וְלֹא-יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת-זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשִׁעִירִם אֲשֶׁר יָהָם זִנִּים אֹחֵר, *17:7 and that they may offer their sacrifices no more to the goat-demons after whom they stray. This shall be to them a law for all time, throughout the ages.* The warning in chapter 17 begins with the sacrifice and slaughtering inside

vs. outside of the camp as Moshe writes the following, *17:3 if anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or sheep or goat in the camp, or does so outside the camp, 17:4 and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD, before the LORD's Tabernacle, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man: he has shed blood; that man shall be cut off from among his people.* (ג איש איש מבית ישראל אשר ישחט שור או-כֶּשֶׁב או-עֵז במחנה או אשר ישחט מחוץ למחנה: ד ואל-פֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא הֵבִיאוּ לְהִקְרִיב קָרְבָן לַיהוָה לִפְנֵי מִזְבְּחֵן יְהוָה דָּם יִחַשֵׁב לְאִישׁ הַהוּא דָּם שָׁפַךְ וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִקְרֵב: (עמו: The Torah states the one who slaughters in any other place besides at the entrance to the Tabernacle, blood will be imputed unto the man (דָּם יִחַשֵׁב לְאִישׁ). This is translated as “*bloodguilt.*” This means that one is guilty of shedding blood and defiling the land (*Bamidbar / Numbers 35:33*). The Talmud describes these verses in the following way:

***Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 51b***

*The verse states: “Any man...that slaughters an ox... outside the camp, and to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting he did not bring it, to sacrifice an offering to the Lord” (Leviticus:17:3–4). Until this point, the verse is speaking about sacrificial animals that one consecrated during a period when the prohibition of sacrificing offerings on private altars was in effect, after the Tabernacle was erected, and then he also sacrificed them during a period when the prohibition of sacrificing on private altars was in effect.*

According to the description here in the Talmud, the context of these verses are related to sacrificing upon a personal or private altar. Based on this text, it seems as if to sacrifice upon a private altar was allowed up until the Tabernacle was erected and put into service. Moshe however speaks of sacrificing to demons by which the people had been led astray. (As we read above from *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:7* on sacrificing to Demons (לְשֵׁעִירִים)). The idea of sacrificing to demons draws in the concept of avoda zara (idolatry, see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:17*

and *1 Corinthians 10:20*). Other Talmudic sources describes these things in regard to sacrificing on personal altars, and the sprinkling the blood upon an altar aside from the Tabernacle, or to sacrificing non-sacred animals. (*Zevachim 106a:17, Avodah Zarah 51b:2, Chullin 85a:18, Kiddushin 57b:12*)

The way this seems to be connected to Yom Kippur is in the sense how the Day of Atonement required a ram, a bull, and two goats (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:3-5*). The ram was to be used as a whole burnt offering before God (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:3-4*). The bull, taken from the herd, served as a sin offering for Aaron (the high priest) and his family. This enabled the High priest to go before God to make atonement on behalf of the nation. The two goats were taken and one was slaughtered for the people (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:5*, אֶל-מִבֵּית לְפָרֶכֶת, וְעָשָׂה אֶת-דָּמוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדַם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה אֹתוֹ עַל-הַכַּפֹּרֶת וְלִפְנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת:). The high priest would cast lots over the two goats, with one chosen as a sacrifice for the Lord (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:8*). The blood of the goat was sprinkled upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies and before the covering of the holy ark. The second goat, the priest would lay his hand upon its head and pronounce all of the sins of the nation over the goat. The Hebrew text describes this in the following way:

### ספר ויקרא פרק טז

ח וַנִּתֵּן אֶהָרֹן עַל-שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים גְּרִלּוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַיהוָה  
וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאֵזֶל: ט וְהִקְרִיב אֶהָרֹן אֶת-הַשְּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר  
עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַיהוָה וְעָשָׂהוּ חֲטָאת: י וְהַשְּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר  
עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעִזָּאֵזֶל יַעֲמַד-חַי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו  
לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזָּאֵזֶל הַמִּדְבָּרָה:

### *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:7-10*

*16:8 'Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. 16:9 'Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering. 16:10 'But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.*

*(NASB)*

Note how the Hebrew text is written, לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזָּאזֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה a literal translation saying “*to send it for/to azazel the wilderness.*” Here we find the community as a whole receiving atonement for sin before God by the blood of the goat on the altar. The other goat carries the sins of the nation out into the wilderness to die. Following this section, we find the command against offering sacrifices upon personal altars and then to *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:7* on sacrificing to Demons (לְשִׁעִירִים, goat-demons). And again, sacrificing to demons also draws in the concept of avoda zara (idolatry). A very interesting point is how this second goat was not sacrificed or designated “*for the Lord.*” On the contrary, this goat, the one that symbolically carried the sins away from the camp of Israel into the wilderness, was “*for Azazel*” (לְעִזָּאזֵל) (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:8-10*).

The Scripture verses we are looking at this week are from *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:14-28*.

#### ***Vayikra / Leviticus 16:14-28***

*16:14 ‘Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. 16:15 ‘Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16:16 ‘He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities. 16:17 ‘When he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel. 16:18 ‘Then he shall go out to the*

altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat and put it on the horns of the altar on all sides. 16:19 'With his finger he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times and cleanse it, and from the impurities of the sons of Israel consecrate it. 16:20 'When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 16:21 '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. 16:22 'The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. 16:23 'Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. 16:24 'He shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come forth and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. 16:25 'Then he shall offer up in smoke the fat of the sin offering on the altar. 16:26 'The one who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; then afterward he shall come into the camp. 16:27 'But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp, and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire. 16:28 'Then the one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water, then afterward he shall come into the camp. (NASB)

יד וְלָקַח מִדָּם הַפָּר וְהֵזָה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל-פְּנֵי הַכֹּהֵן

קדמה ולפני הפפרת יזה שבע-פעמים מן-הדם באצבעו:  
 טו ושחט את-שעיר החטאת אשר לעם והביא את-דמו  
 אל-מבית לפרכת ועשה את-דמו פאשר עשה לדם הפר  
 והזה אתו על-הפפרת ולפני הפפרת: טז וכפר על-הקדש  
 מטמאת בני ישראל ומפשעיהם לכל-חטאתם וכן יעשה  
 לאהל מועד השכן אתם בתוך טמאתם: יז וכל-אדם  
 לא-יהיה | באהל מועד בבאו לכפר בקדש עד-צאתו וכפר  
 בעדו ובעד ביתו ובעד כל-קהל ישראל: [שני] יח ויצא  
 אל-המזבח אשר לפני-יהוה וכפר עליו ולקח מדם הפר  
 ומדם השעיר ונתן על-קרנות המזבח סביב: יט והזה  
 עליו מן-הדם באצבעו שבע פעמים וטהרו וקדשו מטמאת  
 בני ישראל: כ וכלה מכפר את-הקדש ואת-אהל מועד  
 ואת-המזבח והקריב את-השעיר החי: כא וסמך אהרן  
 את-שתי ידו [ידיו] על-ראש השעיר החי והתודה עליו  
 את-כל-עונת בני ישראל ואת-כל-פשעיהם לכל-חטאתם  
 ונתן אתם על-ראש השעיר ושלח ביד-איש עתי המדברה:  
 כב ונשא השעיר עליו את-כל-עונתם אל-ארץ גזרה  
 ושלח את-השעיר במדבר: כג ובא אהרן אל-אהל מועד  
 ופשט את-בגדי הבד אשר לבש בבאו אל-הקדש והניחם  
 שם: כד ורחץ את-בשרו במים במקום קדוש ולבש את-  
 בגדיו ויצא ועשה את-עלתו ואת-עלת העם וכפר בעדו  
 ובעד העם: [שלישי] [שני כשהן מחוברין] כה ואת  
 חלב החטאת יקטיר המזבחה: כו והמשלח את-השעיר  
 לעזאזל יכבס בגדיו ורחץ את-בשרו במים ואחרי-כן יבוא  
 אל-המחנה: כז ואת פר החטאת ואת | שעיר החטאת  
 אשר הובא את-דמם לכפר בקדש יוציא אל-מחוץ למח-  
 נה ושרפו באש את-ערותם ואת-בשרם ואת-פרשם: כח  
 והשרף אתם יכבס בגדיו ורחץ את-בשרו במים ואחרי-כן  
 יבוא אל-המחנה:

The goat, the one that symbolically carried the sins of the nation away from Israel into the wilderness, the Hebrew text states was *“for*

*Azazel*” (לְעִזָּאֵזֶל) in the wilderness (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:8-10*). The question is “*What or who is Azazel?*” The traditional English translation of this verse is “*scapegoat.*” There are stories from the rabbinic literature when this goat would be sent (led) out into the wilderness to die, historically at one point the goat made it back to the camp as if the sin was returning, and this was seen as a bad sign. So it was put into the procedure to take the goat and cast the goat off of a cliff so it would die and so this situation would not happen again. The Jewish Encyclopedia describes this in the following way:

*The Rabbis, interpreting “Azazel” as “Azaz” (rugged), and “el” (strong), refer it to the rugged and rough mountain cliff from which the goat was cast down (Yoma 67b; Sifra, Aḥare, ii. 2; Targ. Yer. Lev. xiv. 10, and most medieval commentators). Most modern scholars, after having for some time endorsed the old view, have accepted the opinion mysteriously hinted at by Ibn Ezra and expressly stated by Nahmanides to Lev. xvii. 8, that Azazel belongs to the class of “se’irim,” goat-like demons, jinn haunting the desert, to which the Israelites were wont to offer sacrifice (Lev. xvii. 7 [A. V. “devils”]; compare “the roes and the hinds,” Cant. ii. 7, iii. 5, by which Sulamith administers an oath to the daughters of Jerusalem. The critics were probably thinking of a Roman faun). (Jewish Encyclopedia on “Azazel”)*

The Hebrew term *azazel* (עִזָּאֵזֶל) occurs four times in *Leviticus 16* but nowhere else in the Bible. Many translations prefer to translate the term as a phrase, “*the goat that is sent away,*” which is the same idea conveyed in the King James Version’s “*scapegoat.*” Other translations treat the word as a transliterated name *Azazel* (NLT, ESV, GNT, HCSB, NET, GNB, JPS, ASV, DBT, ERV). The “*scapegoat*” translation is possible, however, studying the Hebrew text reveals how the phrase “*one for Azazel*” (אֶחָד לְעִזָּאֵזֶל) parallels the phrase “*one for YHVH*” (אֶחָד לַיהוָה) in *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:8* (הַ יָּנִתוּ אֶהָרֹן עַל-שְׁנַיִם) (הַשְּׂעִירִים גְּרִלּוֹת גֹּרֶל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגֹרֶל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאֵזֶל:), the wording

suggests this may be a personification of impurity which is being contrasted by the two goats.

Nahmanides states that the Azazel was a symbolic expression of the idea that the people's sins and their evil consequences were to be sent back to the spirit of desolation and ruin, the source of all impurity, illustrated by sending the goat with the sins of all the people into the wilderness. The idea that both goats were presented before the Lord illustrates this idea of the personification of wickedness being contrasted with the righteousness and holiness of the Lord God of Israel. The rabbinic literature draws out some interesting points from the Tanach by referencing *Zechariah 5:5-11* and *Vayikra / Leviticus 14:7*.

### ***Zechariah 5:5-11***

*5:5 Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, 'Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth.' 5:6 I said, 'What is it?' And he said, 'This is the ephah going forth.' Again he said, 'This is their appearance in all the land 5:7 (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah.' 5:8 Then he said, 'This is Wickedness!' And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. 5:9 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. 5:10 I said to the angel who was speaking with me, 'Where are they taking the ephah?' 5:11 Then he said to me, 'To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal.' (NASB)*

### ***Vayikra / Leviticus 14:7***

*14:7 'He shall then sprinkle seven times the one who is to be cleansed from the leprosy and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the live bird go free over the*

*open field. (NASB)*

The rabbinic literature connects the sending off of the ephah and the woman that embodies wickedness, (*Zechariah 5*) to the bird being let loose in the open field for the cleansed leper, (*Vayikra / Leviticus 14:7*) where these things are interpreted as one ridding oneself of the sins committed during the year, finding the connection to Yom Kippur and to Azazel. They would pull the goat's hair to make it hasten forth, carrying the burden of sins away with it (*Talmud Bavli Yoma 66b and the Epistle of Barnabas 7*), and then the goat arriving at the bottom of the valley of the rock of Bet Ḥadudo, twelve miles away from the city, was symbolized by the waving of shawls to the people of Jerusalem, who celebrated the event with joy amid dancing on the hills (*Mishnah Yoma 6:6-8, Taan. 4:8*). By this the figure of Azazel was an object of general fear, as a demon of the desert, it seems to have been closely interwoven with the mountainous region of Jerusalem and of ancient origin. (see *Jewish Encyclopedia on "Azazel"*)

We also read of Azazel in the book of Enoch chapter 8.

### ***Enoch 8***

*1. And Enoch went and said: 'Azâzêl, thou shalt have no peace: a severe sentence has gone forth against thee to put thee in bonds: 2. And thou shalt not have toleration nor request granted to thee, because of the unrighteousness which thou hast taught, and because of all the works of godlessness and unrighteousness and sin which thou hast shown to men.' 3. Then I went and spoke to them all together, and they were all afraid, and fear and trembling seized them. 4. And they besought me to draw up a petition for them that they might find forgiveness, and to read their petition in the presence of the Lord of heaven. 5. For from thenceforward they could not speak (with Him) nor lift up their eyes to heaven for shame of their sins for which they had been condemned. 6. Then I wrote out their petition, and the prayer in regard to their spirits and their deeds individually and in regard to their requests that they*

*should have forgiveness and length of days. 7. And I went off and sat down at the waters of Dan, in the land of Dan, to the south of the west of Hermon: I read their petition till I fell asleep. 8. And behold a dream came to me, and visions fell down upon me, and I saw visions of chastisement, and a voice came bidding (me) I to tell it to the sons of heaven, and reprimand them. 9. And when I awaked, I came unto them, and they were all sitting gathered together, weeping in 'Abelsjâil, which is between Lebanon and Sênêsêr, with their faces covered. 10. And I recounted before them all the visions which I had seen in sleep, and I began to speak the words of righteousness, and to reprimand the heavenly Watchers.*

In the book of Enoch, Azazel is a fallen angel who is kept in chains in utter darkness. He is also connected to teaching godlessness, unrighteousness, and sin to men. The rabbis connect the story of the fallen angels to Azazel to a gathering place of demons from old of which a man (Enoch) spoke words of righteousness reprimanding these fallen beings. Azazel in the Book of Enoch represents the rebellious giants preceding the flood and Azazel was the one who taught men about warfare, making swords, knives, shields, and coats of mail. He taught women to be deceptive in their ornaments, coloring the hair, painting their faces. He also taught the people how to perform witchcraft and all forms of corruption, rebelliousness, and impurity. It was at the Lord's command that Azazel was bound hand and foot by the archangel Raphael and chained in the rough and jagged rocks of Beth Hadudo where he abides in utter darkness until the great day of judgement. (*Enoch 7, 9, 10, 54, 88*) The Jewish encyclopedia states the following:

*The story of Azazel as the seducer of men and women was familiar also to the rabbis, as may be learned from Tanna d. b. R. Yishma'el: "The Azazel goat was to atone for the wicked deeds of 'Uzza and 'Azrael, the leaders of the rebellious hosts in the time of Enoch" (Yoma 67b); and still better from Midrash Abkir, end,*

*Yalk., Gen. 44, where Azazel is represented as the seducer of women, teaching them the art of beautifying the body by dye and paint (compare "Chronicles of Jerahmeel," trans. by Gaster, xxv. 13). According to Pirke R. El. xlvi. (comp. Tos. Meg. 31a), the goat is offered to Azazel as a bribe that he who is identical with Samael or Satan should not by his accusations prevent the atonement of the sins on that day. (Jewish Encyclopedia)*

Various authors who have studied this figure (Azazel) state that this figure was known in Mandæan, Sabean, and Arabian mythology. Azazel was also associated with Samael (Satan), and Nahmanides associates Azazel with the spirit of Esau and heathenism. A strong case can be made for translating the term as the name Azazel. Ancient Jewish texts show that Azazel was understood as a demonic figure associated with the wilderness where the goat carrying the sins of the nation was his bride. This is what is suggested at by Moshe's statement in *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:7*, וְלֹא-יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת-זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשֹׁעִירִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים, 17:7 and that they may offer their sacrifices no more to the goat-demons after whom they stray. *This shall be to them a law for all time, throughout the ages.*

The Talmud states in the Gemara that the goat chosen for atonement (to be sacrificed) atoned for the impurities of the children of Israel and atoned for the sanctuary (HaKodesh) from the defiling of anything sacred. (*Talmud Bavli Shevuot 8a*) This is the point of the verse in *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:16*, וְכִפֶּר עַל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְּמֵאתָּ בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמִפְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל-חַטָּאתָּם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד הַשִּׁכָּן אִתָּם בְּתוֹךְ טְמֵאתָּם: 16:16 *Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.* The Mishnah taught that the High priest sprinkled from the blood of the bull on the curtain opposite the Ark from the outside of the Holy of Holies. (*Talmud Bavli Yoma 56b*) What is interesting is how the *Mishnah Yoma 6:6* records that the goat for Azazel was led to a cliff and pushed over, ensuring it would die and not return. Note also this connection to the Evil One (Satan) being associated

with the wilderness was where Yeshua met the devil (*Matthew 4:1*) being tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. This is an important point since the people's sins and their evil consequences were to be sent back to the spirit of desolation and ruin, the source of all impurity, illustrated by sending the goat with the sins of all the people into the wilderness. We are told the Spirit led Yeshua to this desolate place in the desert to be tempted by the sins of an entire nation, and he did not sin! Yeshua had a conversation with the Devil as the evil one tempted him to sin in the flesh.

Following the verses on Yom Kippur (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16*) we read in *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:1-7* that some Israelites had been accustomed to sacrificing offerings to “*demons.*” (לְשֵׁעִיָּרִים) The Day of Atonement replaced this illegitimate practice and the command was to bring all sacrifices to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The goat that was pronounced all of the sins of Israel and sent out into the wilderness, was set as a symbol of sending all of the sins of the people to where they belonged, to the demonic realm. The idea is one goat sacrificed to bring purification and access to God and one goat sent to carry the people's sins to the demonic domain, this annual ritual reinforced the identity of the One True God that is coupled to His mercy and holiness.

There are many things we can learn from this week's Torah portion on Yim Kippur and the wilderness. What we are being taught here is to be careful not to offer sacrifices upon an altar of our own making (personal altars) because these are synonymous to sacrificing to foreign gods. The reason this is the case is related to what Ezekiel states in *Ezekiel 14*, men set up idols in their hearts. Note the connection between avodah<sup>3</sup> zara and sacrificing to demons. Worship is important to God's people, and we must worship God in the way in which He is pleased. The reason being, if we set up idols in our hearts (*sin, pride, pornography, sexual immorality, sports, all of these things and more are idols*), we will not have fellowship with God. According to *Tehillim / Psalms 115:1-9*, the worshiper begins to resemble (to become like) that which he trusts in. The physical idols which were so prevalent in those days were made from silver and gold, the work of man's hands. These idols are helpless, mute, blind, deaf, and lame, and these idols are impotent, unable to communicate or meet the needs of the worshiper. Today we do not struggle with worshiping a physical idol per-say as they did in

ancient times. Today men struggle with the idols that are created in the heart. There is a great stumbling block that is rooted in the rebellious heart. The Torah describes these things in relation to Pharaoh, he was hard of heart; he was like the Egyptian idols he worshiped, cold, blind, and dumb because he did not worship the one true God of Israel. In the Yom Kippur festival, we are directed to trust and worship the one who is Faithful and true. To trust in the One who is able to take away the sins of the nation, and drive out the evil one into desolate places! Consider the NT description when Yeshua went to the cross taking upon himself our sins, he was crucified outside of the city which parallels the sins of the people being cast to the wilderness via the goat of Azazel. The Lord God we serve is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, all things created are subject to His lordship. These things reveal to us how important it is, according to the Torah, to walk in the way of God, and follow the leading of His Anointed One (the Messiah). As faithful followers of God we are chosen to submit ourselves to God's authority and to His reign in our lives! Have you submitted your life to God in heaven and to His Messiah Yeshua? Notice how the Torah draws us back to these things, humbleness, faith, prayer, and faithfulness in God and His anointed one. We see the power of God in the Apostolic Writings to cast out the devil, and deliver men, women, and children from the power of the evil one. If we consider all of these things that we have been learning about, specifically the significance of *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:7* on personal altars, demons, and avodah zara, one point that comes to mind is how the evil one wants to influence each and every one of us at a personal level. What also comes to mind, is how setting up an idol is connected to sacrificing to demons. If you sets up an idol in your heart, how much ground are you giving to the evil one to come and take up residence in your life? In Yeshua the Messiah we are set free from this, however, if you are setting up an idol, bowing down at the feet of whatever it is that takes precedence over the Lord God of Israel and Yeshua, how much ground is being given to the demonic realm to influence your life? These are very significant questions for us today! All of these things connect back to the Torah, and why the Torah is so important for us to study and place the Words of the Torah (God's Word) and the words of he Messiah Yeshua upon our hearts, daily. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message are intimately connected!