Ten booths from Jerusalem to the cliff – Mosheh Sheintil

Background

Priest escorting the scapegoat. A booth can be seen in the background.

NOTES

Ninety riš – This is a proof for the opinion that the Shabbat limit of twelve mil’s is by Torah law. Consequently, the location chosen for this mitzva was not accessible on Shabbat and Festivals (Rashash).

He stands from a distance and observes – Perhaps he understands the term the Torah uses to describe the one who leads the goat, meshale’a, in the sense of the verse (Job 36:12) “They shall perish fi between Jerusalem and the edge of the desert, where people hated to escort the designated man on his journey. Food and water were available in each booth, and if the man was weak and needed to eat, he would. Those waiting in the last booth stood and observed his actions from a distance. He first divided the strip of crimson into two, tying half of it to a rock and half of it to the goat’s horns. He then pushed the goat backward, and it fell off the cliff and became dismembered. The designated man then rested in the last booth until nightfall (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 3:7).
GEMARA The Sages taught: There were ten booths, and the distance between Jerusalem and the cliff was twelve mil; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehuda says: There were nine booths and the distance was ten mil.

Rabbi Yosei says: There were five booths and the distance was ten mil, and all of them were able to escort the one leading the goat by establishing a joining of boundaries [eiruvin tefumin] before Yom Kippur, allowing those at each booth to walk to the next booth.

Rabbi Yosei said: Elazar my son told me! If they were able to walk to the next booth by establishing an eiruv, I could even make two booths suffice for the distance of ten mil. With the proper placement of an eiruv, an individual is permitted to walk a distance of two mil, which is four thousand cubits. Consequently, the people of Jerusalem could escort the one leading the goat a distance of two mil, and the people of the first booth could walk two mil from the booth toward Jerusalem to meet him, and escort him back to their booth. Others at that booth, who had established their eiruv in the direction of the second booth, could then escort the one leading the goat two mil toward the second booth, where he would be met by people from the second booth, who would escort him the remaining two mil to the booth. This booth would be located only two mil from the cliff.

The Gemara comments: In accordance with whose opinion is that which was taught in the baraita: People from all the booths would escort the one leading the goat, except for the last person in the last booth, who did not reach the cliff with him; rather, he stands from a distance and observes his actions? In accordance with whose opinion is this statement? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, as he holds that the last booth was too far from the cliff for the people there to escort the one leading the goat the entire way.

It was taught in the mishna: At each and every booth people there say to him: Here is food; here is water, if you need it. It was taught: No man who escorted the goat ever needed this food and water. However, they would offer it to him anyway, because one who has bread in his basket is not similar to one who does not have bread in his basket. One who does not have food available to him is concerned that he will not be able to find any if he really needs it, and he therefore feels his hunger and thirst more acutely.

It was taught in the mishna: What did the person designated to dispatch the goat do there? He divided a strip of crimson into two parts, half of the strip tied to the rock, and half of it tied between the two horns of the goat. The Gemara asks: Let him tie the whole strip to the rock. The Gemara answers: Since it is a mitzva to push the goat from the cliff. If he tied the whole strip to the rock, perhaps it would turn white quickly, and his mind would be eased with the knowledge that the sins of the Jewish people had been forgiven. He would then not fulfill the mitzva of pushing the goat off the cliff. He therefore tied part of it between the horns of the goat and looked to see if it became white. Once he was actively involved with the goat, he would remember to push it off the cliff.

BACKGROUND This diagram illustrates the different approaches with regard to the placement of booths along the route taken by the scapegoat and the man designated to lead it. Solid arrows show the two thousand cubits, or one mil, that one may walk on Shabbat. The exception is the last arrow in Rabbi Meir’s opinion, which represents two mil. The dotted arrows indicate the additional mil that one may walk using an eiruv tefumin. The direction of the arrows shows the path of those escorting the designated man.
The Gemara asks: If so, let him tie the whole strip between the goat's horns. The Gemara answers: Sometimes the goat turns its head and he will not know if the strip turns white or not.

The Sages taught: At first they would tie this strip of crimson to the opening of the Entrance Hall of the Temple on the inside. If the strip turned white they would rejoice, as this indicated that their sins had been atoned for. If it did not turn white they would be sad and ashamed. When the Sages saw that people were overly distressed on Yom Kippur, they established that they should tie the strip of crimson to the opening of the Entrance Hall on the inside, since only a few could actually go in to see it. And they would still keep and see: If it turned white, they would rejoice, and if it did not turn white they would be sad. Therefore, the Sages established that they should tie half of the strip to the rock and half of it between the goat's horns, so that the people would not know what happened to the strip until after the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Naḥum bar Pappa said in the name of Rabbi Elazar HaKappar: At first they would tie the strip of crimson to the opening of the Entrance Hall of the Temple on the inside, and when the goat reached the wilderness, the strip of crimson would turn white, and they knew that the mitzva was fulfilled. The verse alludes to the use of the strip of crimson, as it is stated: " Though your sins be as scarlet, they will become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they will be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). This verse indicates that when something scarlet turns white, it is a sign of atonement and forgiveness for the sins of the Jewish people.

It was taught in the mishna that the goat would not reach halfway down the mountain before it was torn limb from limb. A dilemma was raised before the Sages: What is the status of those limbs? Is it permitted to derive pleasure from them? Rav and Shmuel disagreed with regard to this issue. One said they are permitted for benefit, and one said they are prohibited.

The Gemara explains their reasoning: The one who said they are permitted for benefit established his opinion based on a verse, as it is written: "And the goat shall bear upon it all their iniquities to a land which is cut off; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:22). The concluding phrase, "in the wilderness," is unnecessary, and indicates that the goat shall be available for anyone to use, similar to a wilderness. And the one who said they are prohibited based his opinion on the same verse, as it is written, "cut off" [gezeira], which indicates a prohibition.

The Gemara asks: And the one who said they are prohibited, what does he do with this term wilderness, i.e., what does he derive from it? The Gemara answers: He needs it for that which was taught in a baraita: There are three expressions used to describe the location of the procedure with the scapegoat: "Into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:10), "into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21), and "in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:22), to include Nov and Givon and Shiloh, when the Tabernacle was located there, and the Eternal Temple. The mitzva of the scapegoat applied during the time periods when communal offerings were sacrificed in any of these locations.

The Gemara asks: And the other, what does he do with this word gezeira? The Gemara answers: He needs it for that which was taught in a baraita with regard to the word gezeira: Gezeira means nothing other than cut. That is, he must send the goat away to a place cut up by rocks standing upright and sticking out. Alternatively, gezeira is referring to nothing other than something that breaks apart and falls, a reference to the goat, which is torn limb from limb.
The limbs of the goat are permitted – רְשׁוּת אֲנִי דְּבָרִים. Benefit may be derived from the limbs of the scapegoat, in accordance with the opinion of Rava (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Avodar Yom HaKippurim 5:22).

The actions of Uzza and Azael – לֹא מְשַׁלֵּח בבָּהֶן. The main discussion of this issue appears in other sources as an explanation of a statement in Genesis that says the sons of God sinned with the daughters of men (Genesis 6:2). According to this understanding, the Torah is referring to angels who became destructive. The midrash claims that Azael still causes the world to sin with regard to prohibited sexual relations (see Rashi). Some commentators point out that the connection between prohibited sexual relations and the scapegoat which is sent to Azazel is that through prohibited sexual relations a man’s seed is deposited in a place where it does not belong, and so too, the goat that is sent to Azazel is sacrificed in the desert instead of in a sacred place (yosef Yitzkov).

Matters that Satan and the nations of the world challenge – רְשׁוּת יָכוֹל שֶׁהַשָּׂטָן תֹּאמַר. Some commentators have suggested that the common denominator among the items listed here is that they are prohibitions that have an aspect that causes them to appear to be permitted, or mitzvot that seem to be prohibited. Pig meat is prohibited despite the fact that the pig has one of the two signs of a kosher animal, and garments fashioned from diverse kinds are prohibited despite being created from two permitted fabrics. On the other hand, the purification of the leper and the ritual of the scapegoat are sacrificial rites, which are normally prohibited outside the Temple (see Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes). Additionally, these mitzvot might seem to be superstitions rather than acts of service of God, and one might therefore suspect that they are non-sense. Alternative versions of this passage contain a longer list of examples, including other mitzvot that are not understood and that seem illogical (see Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Melila 8:8).

The one who dispatches the dispatcher – אֲנִי דְּבָרִים: Some commentators suggest that this is referring to the High Priest, who dispatches the one who leads the scapegoat, but is not rendered impure (Korban Aharon).
Large bowl [magis] – Apparently from the Greek μαγις, meaning a kneading tub or a large bowl.

The place designated for burning – תיבת השריפה

**LANGUAGE**

Rabbi Yosei says that the verse states: “And he that dispatched the goat to Azazel shall wash” (Leviticus 16:26), which indicates that his garments are not rendered impure until he has reached Azazel, i.e., the cliff. Rabbi Shimon says: His garments are rendered impure only when he pushes the goat from the cliff, as it says: “And he that dispatched the goat to Azazel shall wash his clothes” (Leviticus 16:26), to indicate that he throws it headlong and only then, once he has fulfilled the mitzva, his garments are rendered impure.

**MISHNA**

After the High Priest passed the goat to the man tasked with dispatching the goat, he came next to the bull and the goat that were to be burned. He tore their flesh but was not required to cut it into pieces, and removed the portions of the offering consumed on the altar and placed them in a large bowl [magis] and burned them on the altar.

He interwove and bound the bull and the goat together into braids as one mass. They were placed in that way upon two poles and carried by four people who took them out to the place designated for burning, outside of Jerusalem. And at what point do the bull and goat render the garments of those who carried them impure? As it is written: “And he who burns them shall wash his garments” (Leviticus 16:28)? They render the garments impure from the moment that they emerged outside the wall of the Temple courtyard. Rabbi Shimon says: They render the garments impure from the moment that the fire has ignited in most of the bull and the goat.

**GEMARA**

It was taught in the mishna that the High Priest removed the portions of the offering consumed on the altar and burned them on the altar. The Gemara expresses surprise: Would it enter your mind to say he burned them? He would not burn them right away, since he had to perform other services first. Rather, say that he placed them in a large bowl in order to burn them on the altar later.

It was taught in the mishna that the High Priest interwove and bound the bull and the goat together into braids as one mass before taking them to be burned. Rabbi Yohanan says: He made them like a braid, whose parts are interwoven. It was taught: He would not dissect the bull and goat in the manner of the dissection of the flesh of a burnt-offering, where the animal is skinned and then cut into parts. Rather, he would leave the skin on top of the flesh and would cut the animal into pieces without skinning it. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? As it was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: It is stated here with regard to the bull and goat, skin and flesh and dung (Leviticus 16:27), and it is stated below, with regard to the bull sin-offerings that are burned, skin and flesh and dung (Leviticus 4:11).

**HALAKHA**

He came next to the bull – תבואת הלחם: After the scapegoat was sent away, the High Priest came to the bull and the goat that were to be burned. He tore their flesh and removed the portions of the offering consumed on the altar and placed them in a large bowl in order to burn them on the altar. The skin was not removed from the flesh of the animals. The flesh was cut into large pieces that remained attached to each other, and the animals were then burned (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 37).

At what point do the bull and goat render the garments impure –瑁ר מטמאין בשר בעז ואילים? The garments of those who carry the bull and goat are to be burned are rendered impure as soon as they leave the wall of the Temple courtyard (Rambam Sefer Taharah, Hilkhot Para Aduma 5:5).

**NOTES**

He interwove the bull and the goat into braids [miklaot] – There are two interpretations of this phrase. One interpretation is that the bull and goat were placed on sticks [muklidi], which were braided together (Arukh; see also Rashi and Rabbeinu Eliezer). The other interpretation is that the bull and goat were cut into large pieces that were braided together (Rambam’s Commentary on the Mishna).