

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Acharei Mot  
May 4, 2024 \*\*\* Nisan 26, 5784

[Acharei Mot in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/75890/jewish/Acharei-Mot-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/75890/jewish/Acharei-Mot-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/75890/jewish/Acharei-Mot-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

The name of the Parshah, "Acharei Mot," means "after the death of" and it is found in Leviticus 16:1.

Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, G-d warns against unauthorized entry "into the holy." Only one person, the kohen gadol ("high priest"), may, but once a year, on Yom Kippur, enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketoret to G-d.

Another feature of the Day of Atonement service is the casting of lots over two goats, to determine which should be offered to G-d and which should be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.

The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing korbanot (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual relations.

[Haftarah in a Nutshell: Amos 9:7-15](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/663392/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/663392/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/663392/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

This week's haftarah foretells the exiles and punishments that will befall the Jews because they strayed after the ways of the heathens — behavior that this week's Torah reading proscribes.

The prophet Amos delivers G-d's message, reminding the people of G-d's kindness to them — taking them out of Egypt and singling them out as His chosen nation. Nevertheless, because of their misdeeds, G-d will destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel; but will not completely destroy the house of Jacob. The Jews will be scattered amongst the nations, but eventually they will return to their land — on the day of the redemption. G-d will then reinstall the House of David to its former glory and there shall be peace and abundance upon the land.

The haftarah ends with G-d's promise: "And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce. And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land, that I have given them, said the L-rd your G-d."

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[Holy People, Holy Land by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z'l](https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/acharei-mot/holy-people-holy-land/)

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/acharei-mot/holy-people-holy-land/>

I had been engaged in dialogue for two years with an Imam from the Middle East, a gentle and seemingly moderate man. One day, in the middle of our conversation, he turned to me and asked, "Why do you Jews need a land? After all, Judaism is a religion, not a country or a nation."

I decided at that point to discontinue the dialogue. There are 56 Islamic states and more than 100 nations in which Christians form the majority of the population. There is only one Jewish state, 1/25th the size of France, roughly the same size as the Kruger National Park in South Africa. With those who believe that Jews, alone among the nations of the world, are not entitled to their own land, it is hard to hold a conversation.

Yet the question of the need for a land of our own is worth exploring. There is no doubt, as D.J. Clines explains in his book, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, that the central narrative of the Torah is the promise of and journey to the land of Israel. Yet why is this so? Why did the people of the covenant need their own land? Why was Judaism not, on the one hand, a religion that can be practised by individuals wherever they happen to be, or on the other, a religion like Christianity or Islam whose ultimate purpose is to convert the world so that everyone can practise the one true faith?

The best way of approaching an answer is through an important comment of the Ramban (Nahmanides, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Girondi, born Gerona, 1194, died in Israel, 1270) on this week's parsha. Chapter 18 contains a list of forbidden sexual practices. It ends with this solemn warning:

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. The land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep My decrees and My laws . . . If you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. [Lev. 18:24-28](#)

Nahmanides asks the obvious question. Reward and punishment in the Torah are based on the principle of *middah kenegged middah*, measure for measure. The punishment must fit the sin or crime. It makes sense to say that if the Israelites neglected or broke *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz*, the commands relating to the land of Israel, the punishment would be exile from the land of Israel. So the Torah says

in the curses in Bechukotai:

“All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.” [Lev. 26:35](#)

Its meaning is clear: this will be the punishment for not observing the laws of *shemittah*, the sabbatical year. *Shemittah* is a command relating to the land. Therefore the punishment for its non-observance is exile from the land.

But sexual offences have nothing to do with the land. They are *mitzvot hateluyot baguf*, commands relating to person, not place. Ramban answers by stating that all the commands are intrinsically related to the land of Israel. It is simply not the same to put on tefillin or keep kashrut or observe Shabbat in the Diaspora as in Israel. In support of his position he quotes the Talmud ([Ketubot 110b](#)) which says:

“Whoever lives outside the land is as if he had no God” and the Sifre that states, “Living in the land of Israel is of equal importance to all the commandments of the Torah.” [Ketubot 110b](#)

The Torah is the constitution of a holy people in the holy land.

Ramban explains this mystically but we can understand it non-mystically by reflecting on the opening chapters of the Torah and the story they tell about the human condition and about God’s disappointment with the only species – us – He created in His image. God sought a humanity that would freely choose to do the will of its Creator. Humanity chose otherwise. Adam and Eve sinned. Cain murdered his brother Abel. Within a short time “the earth was filled with violence” and God “regretted that He had made human beings on earth.” He brought a flood and began again, this time with the righteous Noah, but again humans disappointed Him by building a city with a tower on which they sought to reach heaven, and God chose another way of bringing humanity to recognise him – this time not by universal rules (though these remained, namely the covenant with all humanity through Noah), but by a living example: Abraham, Sarah and their children.

In [Genesis 18](#) the Torah makes clear what God sought from Abraham: that he would teach his children and his household after him “to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.” Homo sapiens is, as both Aristotle and Maimonides said, a social animal, and righteousness and justice are features of a good society. We know from the story of Noah and the Ark that a righteous individual can save themselves but not the society in which they live, unless they transform the society in which they live.

Taken collectively, the commands of the Torah are a prescription for the

construction of a society with the consciousness of God at its centre. God asks the Jewish people to become a role model for humanity by the shape and texture of the society they build, a society characterised by justice and the rule of law, welfare and concern for the poor, the marginal, the vulnerable and the weak, a society in which all would have equal dignity under the sovereignty of God. Such a society would win the admiration, and eventually the emulation, of others:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws . . . so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will be your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" . . . What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? [Deut. 4:5-8](#)

A society needs a land, a home, a location in space, where a nation can shape its own destiny in accord with its deepest aspirations and ideals. Jews have been around for a long time, almost four thousand years since Abraham began his journey. During that period they have lived in every country on the face of the earth, under good conditions and bad, freedom and persecution. Yet in all that time there was only one place where they formed a majority and exercised sovereignty, the land of Israel, a tiny country of difficult terrain and all too little rainfall, surrounded by enemies and empires.

Jews never relinquished the dream of return. Wherever they were, they prayed *about* Israel and *facing* Israel. The Jewish people has always been the circumference of a circle at whose centre was the holy land and Jerusalem the holy city. During those long centuries of exile they lived suspended between memory and hope, sustained by the promise that one day God would bring them back.

Only in Israel is the fulfilment of the commands a society-building exercise, shaping the contours of a culture as a whole. Only in Israel can we fulfil the commands in a land, a landscape and a language saturated with Jewish memories and hopes. Only in Israel does the calendar track the rhythms of the Jewish year. In Israel Judaism is part of the public square, not just the private, sequestered space of synagogue, school and home.

Jews need a land because they are a nation charged with bringing the Divine Presence down to earth in the shared spaces of our collective life, not least – as the last chapter of Acharei Mot makes clear – by the way we conduct our most intimate relationships, a society in which marriage is sacrosanct and sexual fidelity

the norm.

This message, that Jews need a land to create their society and follow the Divine plan, contains a message for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. To Christians and Muslims it says: if you believe in the God of Abraham, grant that the children of Abraham have a right to the Land that the God in whom you believe promised them, and to which He promised them that after exile they would return.

To Jews it says: that very right comes hand-in-hand with a duty to live individually and collectively by the standards of justice and compassion, fidelity and generosity, love of neighbour and of stranger, that alone constitute our mission and destiny: a holy people in the holy land.

[Acharei Mot: Elevating the Physical by Baruch Herschkopff \(edited by Grow Torah\)](https://www.growtorah.org/vayikra/2022/04/29-parshat-acharei-mot-elevating-the-physical)  
<https://www.growtorah.org/vayikra/2022/04/29-parshat-acharei-mot-elevating-the-physical>

One of the holiest offerings brought in the Beit Hamikdash and in the Mishkan before it, was the ketoret, the special blend of incense. The burning of the ketoret comes to its zenith in this week's parsha, where it becomes the offering of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur as he enters the Holy of Holies.[1] The incense offering of the Kohen Gadol is contrasted with the failed offering of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, which resulted in their deaths. The difference between the sacrifices can help us understand a perspective on a proper relationship with the environment and our responsibilities to the world around us.

Through the service in the Beit Hamikdash, humans had the ability to refine and elevate the physical world for spiritual service.[2] The ketoret in particular was a blend of spices from the far reaches of the globe, which were ground and burnt together for worshipping Hashem. Hashem describes the special components of the ketoret to Moshe soon after the Exodus from Egypt: "And the Lord said to Moses: Take for yourself aromatics, [namely] balsam sap, onycha and galbanum, aromatics and pure frankincense; they shall be of equal weight." [3] The Talmud explains that according to tradition there are 11 spices in the ketoret.[4] Some are native to the Middle East: balsam was produced in Israel, most famously in Ein Gedi.[5] The aromatic gum resin of galbanum is procured from plants native to Persia, or modern-day Iran.[6] The various resins of frankincense are all native to the lands of Arabia.[7] Myrrh, also an aromatic resin ingredient of the ketoret, is native to Yemen, Somalia and the eastern parts of Ethiopia.[8]

However, several of the spices must have originated in the farthest attainable locations. Cloves are native to Indonesia.[9] Cassia, similar to cinnamon, is an evergreen tree native to southern China and Vietnam.[10] Spikenard could be a

member of the Valerian family that grows in the Himalayas of China, or it could be lavender, which is also native to Israel.[11] Saffron, from the stamens of the saffron crocus, is native to southwest Asia.[12] Costus is native to Europe, and much of Asia, especially the Himalayas.[13] Lastly, cinnamon is native to south India and Sri Lanka.[14] The in-gathering of all these components into one blended spice offering on the holiest day of the year offers a worldwide spiritual connection. By bringing with him the essence of plants grown around the globe, the Kohen Gadol does not "leave the world behind" as he enters the Holy of Holies, rather he elevates the most refined representation of the entire world. Physical offerings and spiritual prayer intertwine to result in our kaparah.

This balance of physical and spiritual is accentuated in Bnei Yisrael's sin in Sefer Amos, the Sefer from which our haftarah is taken. The prophecy recorded suggests a misalignment in the proper use of the world in at least two major ways. Firstly, there is a description of excess personal consumption. The prophet speaks to, "those who lie on couches of ivory and stretch out on their beds, and eat lambs of the flock and calves out of the stall..."[15] He warns them, "The Lord G-d of Hosts says: I abhor the pride of Jacob, and I hate his palaces, and I will deliver the city and the fullness thereof." [16] Over-investing in and becoming distracted by the material world forces Bnei Yisrael out of a consciousness upon which proper use of the earth is predicated.

A second theme of Sefer Amos is the use of the physical world where people hoard resources for themselves and ignore their responsibilities towards others. Amos speaks to, "...those who rejoice over a thing of naught, who say, 'with our strength we have taken horns for ourselves.'"[17] He criticizes the use of personal power to accumulate a private gain, for "ourselves," but not for others, calling us to recognize, instead, the shared need and the common good. The explicit harm that comes to others when we prioritize physical gain is highlighted when the Navi warns that destruction will come, "for they are selling a righteous man for money, and a poor man for a pair of shoes." [18] When personal accumulation of physical property and the resources of the physical world are held as the highest priority, then even the most basic social justice is threatened.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu has given us a magnificent world to use for our benefit and to maintain. But as long as we see the physical world as merely a means to satisfy our own desires, the pitfalls of unsustainable living will continue to threaten us. Our drive to hoard and consume, along with our fears of never having enough, will constantly strain our relationship with the environment. The more we are able to shift our view of our relationship with the earth towards one of partnership with

Hashem, even in our consumption and use of the physical world, the more we will be able to be joyfully sustained and supported in our way of living.

[1] Vayikra 16:12-13 [2] In fact, the Sfat Emet, a 19th century Polish, Chasidic commentator, explained that the Hebrew word for sacrifice is "korban" which comes from the root "lekarev" or to bring close. In his explanation of the Temple service in the Portion of Vayikra, he points out that all sacrifices are meant to bring the physical world closer to Hashem. [3] Shemot 30:34 translation from chabad.org [4] Babylonian Talmud (200 C.E.-~500 C.E.) tractate Kritot 6b [5] Dalby, Andrew (2000), *Dangerous Tastes: the story of spices*, British Museum Press, 2000. especially pp. 33-35 [6] Encyclopædia Britannica Eleventh Edition [7] Groom, Nigel, *Frankincense & Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade*, 1981. [8] Ibid. [9] *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*, Third Edition by Dan Bensky, Steven Clavey, Erich Stoger, and Andrew, Gamble 2004 [10] Paterson, Wilma. *A Fountain of Gardens: Plants and Herbs from the Bible*. Edinburgh, 1990. [11] Dalby, Andrew, "Spikenard" in *The Oxford Companion to Food*, 2nd ed. by Tom Jaine. Oxford University Press, 2006 [12] McGee, H, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, Scribner, 2004. [13] From Wikipedia [14] Corn, Charles. *The Scents of Eden: A Narrative of the Spice Trade*. New York: Kodansha International, 1998. [15] Amos 6:4 [16] Amos 6:8 [17] Amos 6:13 [18] Amos 2:6

### [The Goat Man: Acharei Mot by Rabbi David Kasher](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/KasherParashatAhareiMot5784.pdf)

[https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh\\_torah\\_source\\_sheets/KasherParashatAhareiMot5784.pdf](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/KasherParashatAhareiMot5784.pdf)

With the mishkan operational and the priesthood now in place, Parashat Aharei Mot begins with a description of the service that will be the pinnacle of that system: the Yom Kippur Avodah. At first, the sacrifices involved appear to be typical of what we have seen in Leviticus so far: a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. Then come two goats, also named as sin offerings. But here, the Torah takes a surprising turn:

#### [Leviticus 16:8](#)

[Aharon shall place lots on the two goats, one marked for the Eternal, and one marked for Azazel.](#)

This procedure appears to contravene basic Jewish theology. Why are we suddenly drawing lots, as if casting our offerings into the hands of fate? And who is this Azazel, with a name that sounds like a god? None of this seems "kosher."

The 20th century Rosh Yeshivah of Chaim Berlin, R. Yitzhak Hutner, in his signature work on the holidays, *Pahad Yitzhak*, briefly suggests a connection that has the potential to completely reframe our understanding of this central Yom Kippur ritual:

#### [Pahad Yitzhak Purim 6](#)

[The goat that preceded these two goats of Yom Kippur is the first "goat man" \(ish sa'ir\)—none other than Esav, the "ish sa'ir."](#)

R. Hutner appears at first to be taking some creative license, for the connection he

makes between Esav and goats is based on a bit of wordplay. It is true, Esav was described as an "ish sa'ir" back in Genesis, but that meant something else entirely. When Rivkah comes up with a plan to send Ya'akov in to his father Yitzhak to steal a blessing meant for Esav, Ya'akov protests that this trickery will never work:

Genesis 27:11-12

Ya'akov said to his mother Rivkah, "But my brother Esav is a hairy man (ish sa'ir) and I am a smooth man! Perhaps my father will feel me and I shall appear to him as a trickster, and then I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

When we see the description of Esav in context, it becomes clear that R. Hunter is playing a bit loose with the language. Sa'ir here does not mean "goat" (a noun) but "hairy" (an adjective). The link between the words is not coincidental. A male goat (a buck) is called a sa'ir because he is a hairy creature. But that doesn't make hairy Esav a goat-like man.

Yet if we look just two verses earlier in the same scene, we find there is a rather remarkable "goat connection" in this story. When Rivkah begins explaining her plan, her first instructions to Ya'akov are:

Genesis 27:9

Go to the flock and take for me two young goats, good ones, and I will make them into a dish for your father, just the way he likes.

Now we have not just one goat, but a pair of goats in this story and a pair of goats in the Yom Kippur ritual:

Leviticus 16:7

And from the congregation of the Children of Israel take two male goats as a sin offering and one ram as a burnt offering.

"Take for me two young goats" and "take two male goats"—not only is the phrasing similar, but these are the only two pairs of goats mentioned in the Torah! Now it seems the Pahad Yitzhak is onto something. In fact, he has precedent, for his connection was made many centuries earlier in a midrash from Bereishit Rabbah:

Bereishit Rabbah 65:14

"Take for me two young goats, good ones..." R. Helbo said: "good ones," [in the plural], meaning good for you (= Ya'akov), for through them you will take the blessings [from your father], and good for your descendants, for through [these goats] they will be atoned on Yom Kippur.

R. Helbo notices the parallel, and suggests that the two goats that Ya'akov uses to secure his father's blessing are a precursor to the two goats at the center of the

Yom Kippur service. Further on in the same midrash, R. Yitzhak takes the connection a step further, making the same connection to Esav we saw R. Hutner propose above, and then introducing yet another play on the words in our parashah, one that serves to bring Ya'akov, too, into the mix:

[Bereishit Rabbah 65:15](#)

"The sa'ir [that goes to Azazel] carries upon itself..." (Leviticus 16:22)—this is Esav, as it is said, "This is Esav my brother, a hairy man (ish sa'ir)." "... all of their sins (avonotam)"—the sins of the quiet one (avonot tam), as it is said, "Ya'akov was a quiet man (ish tam)" (Genesis 25:27).

That last move is extremely clever. The last letter that makes the plural for "sins" (ַת) combined with the letter for the suffix meaning "their" (־ם) together make up the sound, "tam" (ַתם). Taken as a separate word that means, "quiet," "simple," or "pure"—and is a word that the Torah once used to describe Ya'akov. So now we have Esav, ish sa'ir, the hairy man (or the goat man), and Ya'akov, ish tam, the quiet man (or the pure man). Read into the verse in our parashah, it means that the goat that goes to Azazel will carry off the sins of the "pure" man (an ironic usage)—that is, the sins of Ya'akov, which now means all sins of Israel. And that is just what this goat in the Yom Kippur ritual does.<sup>1</sup>

Those linguistic connections might awaken us to a larger parallel between the scene of blessing theft in Genesis and the Avodah service of Yom Kippur. For both settings involve a selection between two fates, one of which leads to God, and the other away from the covenantal community.

How, then, do we read that connection into our understanding of the Yom Kippur Avodah? If one of the goats represents Esav, then the other surely represents his twin brother Ya'akov. Just as Ya'akov once secured the covenant with God, the goat that is selected to be dedicated to God (לִיהוָה) represents the continuation of that covenant.

Where does the other one, "Esav's goat," go? It is, remember, strangely designated "to Azazel" (לְעִזָּאזֵל). But what (or who) is Azazel? Rashi tells us it was the name of a place, "אַרְץ גְּזֵרָה - a jagged land." But the name has unsettled our commentators, because it sounds eerily like a foreign God; the word itself could be read to mean "powerful (az) god (el)." But whose god would that be? With all this talk of goats ("עִזִּים - izzim") perhaps we will notice that the word, Azazel (לְעִזָּאזֵל), also functions as kind of visual pun, for it looks like it might mean, "the goat god."

The mention of goat gods brings us to one final meaning of the word we have been tracking all along, שְׂעִיר, that comes just a chapter later in our parashah:<sup>2</sup>

[Leviticus 17:7](#)

And they [the Israelites] must no longer make sacrifices to the se'irim that they lust after—that is a fixed law for them, throughout the generations.

Se'irim here means more than goats, but something like “satyrs,” or “goat-demons,” as it has sometimes been translated. It seems to be a reference to one of the local deities, a kind of ancient near eastern version of Pan or Baphomet. The idea of goat-worship was clearly known to the Israelites—they had even, somewhere in their checkered past, fallen prey to it.

So they would recognize that if one goat represented their own bond to God—one that was promised to them eternally, despite their sins, and despite the sins of their “quiet” forefather—then the other goat represented the brother, and then the nations, that were not selected by God and wandered off, instead, down the path to idolatry.

However—and this is the critical thing about the Yom Kippur ritual—the two goats are selected for their two very different fates at random. The Mishnah (Yoma 6:1) tells us they were supposed to be nearly identical beforehand, equal in size and in value—interchangeable. Then two lots are drawn, and now one is dedicated to God and one is off in the wilderness, following after false deities. One of these creatures has been chosen and one has not.

On happier festivals, we often celebrate our chosenness by God. But the Yom Kippur ritual, with its strange reliance on chance, reminds us that our chosenness was not necessarily deserved.<sup>3</sup> And the linguistic echoes that take us back to the first selection of Ya'akov over Esav force us to wonder if, in fact, our chosenness is undeserved. It was Ya'akov who actually sinned, but Esav who—like his goat—bears the burden. No wonder we seek atonement on this day.

The Yom Kippur Avodah is thus meant both to celebrate our gratitude for the covenant, and to keep us humble as we contemplate it. We are to remind ourselves, every year, that we are not deserving, but fortunate to have been chosen. But for a simple twist of fate, we might well have been off in some jagged land, worshiping goats.

1. There is one other prominent usage of the word שעיר in the Torah (though vowelized slightly differently). It is the name of a place, “ארץ שעיר - the Land of Seir,” where Esav eventually makes his home: “וַיָּשֶׁב עֵשָׂו בְּהַר שְׁעִיר” - Esav settled on Mount Se'ir” (Genesis 36:8). Esav, who was described as an ish sa'ir, literally became a man of Se'ir. Indeed, the Book of Genesis makes mention Esav's association with the land of Se'ir no less than eight times. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize Esav's association with Se'ir, which itself echoes the original description of him as an Ish sa'ir. So by the time we come to the Book of Leviticus and begin reading about offerings of se'irim (some kind of goat demon; see below), perhaps we are already, somewhere in our minds, beginning to think of Esav. Then, when we come to the unusual Yom Kippur ritual that features two male goats, “שְׁנֵי שְׁעִירֵי עִזִּים - shenei

se'irei izzim," in that short phrase we have two references back to the earlier scene in Genesis: the two goats, shenei izzim, that won the blessing, and the goat man, ish sa'ir, who lost it.

2. It is the Ibn Ezra who provides us with this connection, albeit in his mischievous, cryptic way. He writes: "And if you were able to understand the secret of the word, 'Azazel,' you would know its secret, and the secret of the name, because it has parallels in the Bible. And I will reveal to you a bit of the secret with this hint: 'When you are 33 years old, you will know it.'" The Ramban reveals what the Ibn Ezra means by that hint, with some mischievousness of his own: "R. Abraham [Ibn Ezra], faithful of spirit, covered up this matter. But I am a gossip, so I will reveal his secret." The verse about the se'irim in chapter 17, it turns out, comes 33 verses after the first mention of Azazel.

3. My colleague, R. Micha'el Rosenberg makes this point quite elegantly in his essay, "Yitzhak and Yishmael: The Arbitrariness of Our Fate," available here: [https://secure.hadar.org/e/1046043/shmael-arbitrariness-our-fate-/92tc/228194248/h/Xg2AjhoV5xBkx3\\_0nKkX5iTdA-5h9uUJCcXgwcYVCSQ](https://secure.hadar.org/e/1046043/shmael-arbitrariness-our-fate-/92tc/228194248/h/Xg2AjhoV5xBkx3_0nKkX5iTdA-5h9uUJCcXgwcYVCSQ) He writes: "The Temple ritual of Yom Kippur, then—the exiling of a goat selected by lot to be excluded, and the inverse selection of an identical animal to be God's choice—demands that we come to terms with the very arbitrariness that has brought us to this moment, for better or worse." I should note that R. Hutner himself draws a very different conclusion from the similarity of the two brothers and goats: "– כשאנו מבחינים בהבדל הנמצא בין שני ענינים דומים בחיצוניותם – ככל אשר תרבינה השכבות כי אז על כרחך כי ההבדל הניתן בהם שרוי הוא בפנימיותם. ככל אשר תרבינה השכבות העליונות אשר בהם שולט הדמוי; כך לעמת זה, להתברר לפנינו עומק מקומה של נקודת ההבדלה."

\*\*\*\*\*

## Yahrtzeits

Len Grossman remembers his mother Charlotte Grossman on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>



---