

4) What does God expect from a fast day according to Isaiah (58:6-8)? What realm are these actions taken from?

5) More actions are listed in 58:9-10. How do they differ from the previous ones? Which action in vv.6-10 do you think is the most difficult? Why?



Wishing our Torah Sparks community, a happy, healthy and sweet New Year!

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The weekly Haftarah Commentary
By Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Senior CY Faculty in Talmud and Midrash,
may be found at: <http://www.uscj.org.il/learn/commentaries/>

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TORAH SPARKS

Yom Kippur

September 29-30, 2017 • 10 Tishrei 5778

Torah (Leviticus: 16:1-34)

Maftir (29:7-11)

Haftarah (Isaiah 57:14-58:14)

Minhah – Torah (Leviticus 18:1-30)

Haftarah (Jonah 1:1-4:1; Micah 7:18-20)

This marks the final edition of Torah Sparks edited by **Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb**, former Director of the Conservative Yeshiva. Rabbi Goldfarb has made an invaluable contribution to the world by sharing words of Torah with countless *kehillot* (communities) and individuals during his years of service to USCJ. We are deeply grateful for all he has done.

Yasher Koach ve-Todah Rabbah!



Dr. Stephen Hazan Arnoff, Executive Director, Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center

Yom Kippur – From E-goats to Egos

Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, retired Director and Faculty, CY, Jerusalem

In the good old days of the wilderness the atonement of Yom Kippur was a pretty straight-forward process. Leviticus 16 describes the ritual in detail. Aaron lays his hands on the head of the goat which had been chosen by lot for this purpose (in verses 8-10), confesses over it all the sins of the children of Israel, “puts them upon the head of the goat, and sends it into

the wilderness. And the goat shall carry all the people's sins into the wilderness" (vs 21-22). The sins of the people are collected and discarded, an annual ceremony of spiritual waste removal. At this stage in our history the process was technical, not in small part because, in the ancient view, sinfulness, like ritual impurity, was an *external* force that somehow had clung to us and could be, and had to be, detached and purged.

Yom Kippur "for the ages," as prescribed in the chapter's last six verses, introduces a new element. The atonement process is still carried out by the priest, no goats mentioned, but the people are twice told to do *inu'i nefesh* – some form of self-denial or deprivation, what we observe as fasting today, along with other forms of abstinence. The individual Jew was now involved physically in the process, even if still secondarily.

The scapegoat ceremony apparently continued into Second Temple times. The Mishnah (Yoma 6:8) indicates the concern to get word back to the Temple that the goat bearing the sins had in fact "reached the wilderness," signaling "mission accomplished." But a new element was introduced, "a strip of crimson wool was tied to the door of the Sanctuary and when the he-goat reached the wilderness the strip turned white; as it is said, *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as the snow*.'" The first Twitter? Perhaps. But more important, while the atonement for the people's sins was still measured in "technical" terms (when the goat reached the wilderness), a subtle but significant change followed. The Gemara tells that people waited anxiously to see if the crimson wool would turn white or not, rejoicing if it did and getting sullen (depressed?) if it did not. It no longer sounds purely technical.

The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Shabbos* 9:3) even tells of people actually putting the crimson threads *in their windows*, "but this was discontinued because of the embarrassment it caused other individuals whose strip did not turn white." The atonement process has become particularized, for each person, and it is no longer purely administrative or technical. The focus has moved from the wilderness to the heart; each of us, rather than the High Priest or the goat, is the key player. Long before Freud, Judaism identified the source of sin *within*. And if the fault, dear Brutus, is indeed "in ourselves," that actually is empowering, because then the potential for *tikun*, the corrective process which we call *tshuva*, is in our hands. Yom Kippur teaches that we need not be stuck in our old ways; we can hope, and work, to do better.

Epilogue – this is the last Torah Sparks on my watch. It has been an intriguing challenge to revive this parashah weekly for USCJ and to share Torah with you these last two years. Particular thanks to Vered Hollander Goldfarb (*Table Talk*) and to Elyse Kryger of the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center (tech support) for their efforts every week. *Shabbat shalom, tsom kal* (easy fast) and *shana tova*, Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb.

A Vort for Yom Kippur

Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, Editor, Torah Sparks

R' Hanoch Henich, the son-in-law of R' Shalom Rokeach, the founder of the Belz Hasidic dynasty, once extended the Yom Kippur *Musaf* prayer far beyond the normal time. Before *Mincha* he told the anxious davveners exactly when he would finish *Ne'ilah*, the closing prayer. But here too he was late, only about half-way through by the time he had announced. At that moment the people noticed something very strange - the hands of the clock stopped moving and stood still till R' Hanoch finished *Ne'ilah*. DTTAH - Don't Try This at Home; or at your local synagogue. There's no assurance that Job (22:28): "What you decree will happen," applies to those whose piety is less than that of R' Hanoch.

Table Talk

Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty

The Haftara of Yom Kippur (Isaiah 57:14-58:14)

The Haftara of the morning of Yom Kippur, while not as famous as the book of Jonah (that is read as Haftara in the afternoon), should give us plenty to think about. Let's study part of it.

- 1) The prophet is told to raise his voice like a shofar (58:1). Why is image of the shofar used?
- 2) The prophet describes the behavior of the community (58:2-3). How do they behave and how do they perceive their own behavior? How would you rate their actions? How would you define the realm in which the people excel?
- 3) What does the prophet see under the surface of this God-seeking community (58:3-5)? What has the community apparently not understood about being God fearing?