Goating Over the Cliff

Topic
Yom Kippur

Grade Level(s)
3rd – 12th

Big Ideas
- There are different ways to seek atonement.
- Sometimes the physical and spiritual converge in a meaningful experience/ritual.

Learning Targets
Students will:
1. Learn about the scapegoat ritual
2. Create proxies for *teshuvah*
3. Assess the relative merits of spiritual and physical *teshuvah*

Materials / Technology Needed
- One of the following:
    - Devices with access to Scratch
    - Goat piñata (Check your local party store. Horns can be added to non-goat piñatas.)
    - Materials for papier-mâché
        - Newspaper (pages and strips)
        - Recycled cardboard box
        - Papier mâché mixture
            - Flour
            - Water
        - Bowls for the papier mâché mixture
        - Tape
        - Paint (optional)
        - Paintbrushes (optional)
- Goat cutouts (optional; separate download) or sticky notes

Relevant Vocabulary

בֵּית הַמִקְדָּש *(Beit Hamikdash)*	The Temple in ancient Jerusalem
גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים *(Gemilut Hasadim)*	Acts of Loving Kindness
כַּפָּרָה *(Kapparah)*	Atonement (N.B. This is same root as Kippur)
כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל *(Kohein Gadol)*	The High Priest; he was in charge of the service in the *Beit Hamikdash*
מִשְׁכָּן *(Mishkan)*	The Desert Tabernacle
תְּפִילה *(Tefillah)*	Prayer
תְּשׁוּבָה *(Teshuvah)*	Repentance (from the root for "return")
צְדָקָה *(Tzedakah)*	Charity (but related to the word for "Justice")
וַיִּקְרָא *(Vayikra)*	The Book of Leviticus

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- *Pesukim* (verses) from *Vayikra* 16 (separate download).

Background for Teachers
Scapegoat
> 1 **:** a goat upon whose head are symbolically placed the sins of the people after which he is sent into the wilderness in the biblical ceremony for Yom Kippur
> 2 a **:** one that bears the blame for others
>   b **:** one that is the object of irrational hostility

(Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scapegoat, August 6, 2019)

Goats. In Biblical and post-biblical times, they were integral livestock that provided milk, wool, and leather; and, each year on Yom Kippur, two select goats would take part in a ritual that would give rise to the term, "scapegoat."

Today, Yom Kippur is a day dedicated to reflection and prayer, with the goal of atoning for one's transgressions. The idea that *teshuvah* could effect absolution is an old one that appears as early as the Mishnah (Yoma 8:8 – 9),* and other rabbinic sources posit some different ways of achieving *kapparah* (e.g. *gemilut hasadim*, see *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* 4:5). Perhaps most importantly, the tripartite solution of *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* began to gain traction (e.g. Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 8b, *Kohelet Rabbah* 7:14); and later became a primary focus of the day (e.g. the *Unataneh Tokef* prayer, which offers the most direct statement of the effectiveness of these three actions). However, during the time of the *Tanakh* and while the *Beit Hamikdash* stood, there was a much different and visceral way of achieving *kapparah* for transgressions. On Yom Kippur, the *Kohein Gadol* would take two goats. One goat would be designated for God; this goat would become a *ḥatat*, a sin offering on the altar. The other goat would be designated לעזאזל (*l'Azazel*), and the Kohein Gadol would lay his hands on the goat in order to transmit all of the people's transgressions onto it. The exact meaning of לעזאזל, which appears only in this section of the *Tanakh*, is somewhat muddled;** but, regardless of the exact meaning of the word, the ultimate goal was the same: the goat would take the transgressions into the wilderness and, according to the Sages, over a cliff.***

The goat that was sent into the wilderness was the scapegoat, taking on the transgressions of the Jewish people and providing them with *kapparah*.

* References to returning to God (same root as *teshuvah*) appear in the *Tanakh* as well. There is debate, however, whether the Biblical version of returning is the same as what we call *teshuvah* today.
**The *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, the seminal dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, posits that the word refers to "entire removal," which implies that the goat was responsible for the complete removal of the

transgressions of the people. Others (see for example Everett Fox) understand Azazel to be a desert demon. Still others believe it refers to a place.

***See *Mishnah Yoma* for a detailed description of the Sages' perspective of the Yom Kippur service during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* and what was done with the goats.

Prepare in Advance

- If making papier mâché goats, make the papier mâché mixture and divide it into bowls for each table.
    - Stir together 1-part flour with 2 parts water. Mix until there are no lumps left and add more water or flour until the mixture reaches the appropriate consistency—it should be similar to white glue.

Description of Activities

1. Students discuss the best ways to atone for one's transgressions.
    a. **Tech Option**: Create an open-ended poll on Poll Everywhere and show responses at the front of the room in order to open the discussion to the entire class.
2. Explain that things were done quite differently in the time of the *Mishkan* and the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* (see Background for Teacher).
    a. **With older students**, consider reading the relevant *pesukim* from the Torah.
3. Explain that students will simulate the Biblical/*Beit Hamikdash* ritual of the scapegoat for Yom Kippur:
    a. **Option 1**: Students code goats on Scratch.
        i. Students make one goat for God and one for Azazel.
        ii. The goat for Azazel should go over a cliff and plummet to the bottom with transgressions attached to it.
    b. **Option 2**: Students fill a piñata with goat cutouts or sticky notes with their transgressions written on them.
        i. Students throw the piñata out the window (or another place) to be smashed on the ground with their transgressions.
    c. **Option 3**: Students make papier-mâché goats. This could be two big goats for the full class, or each student makes two individual goats.
        i. To make the goats:
            1. Crumple newspaper into a ball for the head and then tape it together. Crumple newspaper into a body as well. Cut two ear shapes out of the recycled cardboard to match the head. Cut four legs out of the cardboard as well.

2. Cover the ears with tape, and then tape them onto the head. Tape the body and head together. Cover the legs with tape and then tape them onto the body.
3. Repeat these steps to make a second goat.
4. Apply papier mâché mixture, Dip a strip of newspaper into the paste and use your fingers to remove the excess. Apply the strip onto the animal head and repeat this until the head is fully covered. Continue by covering the body.
5. Let dry for at least 24 hours.
6. Optional: Paint the goats however you like.

   ii. Students place one goat in a special place for God. (If using the sanctuary, remember to check with the rabbi or education director first.)
   iii. Students write their transgressions on the goat **לעזאזל** or write the transgressions on goat cutouts or sticky notes and attach them to the goat.
   iv. Students throw their Azazel goats out the window (or from another place) to be smashed on the ground with their transgressions.

4. Ask students:
   a. How did it feel to attach your transgressions to something else and destroy them?
   b. How is it similar/different to get rid of one's transgressions by physically attaching them to something else as opposed to verbalizing them and reflecting on them?
   c. When might one method be better?
   d. How will you experience Yom Kippur differently this year after transferring your transgressions to a scapegoat?

Differentiation Options
Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance
- Have goats prepared and have students attach their transgressions.
- For those who have trouble expressing themselves in writing, students create their coded or papier- mâché goats. Then, students draw their transgressions; or madrichim help them to write their transgressions.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Students learn about *kapparot*, its purpose, and the different ways that it is practiced today. Additional options include: students perform *kapparot* with coins and pick a place to donate the money, students make cut-outs of chickens to simulate the practice, students argue for and/or against the practice of *kapparot* with live chickens.