

# A Short Explanation of Yom Kippur

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Of all the biblical Holy Days, New Covenant believers often ask of *Yom Kippur*: “Why keep it?” After all, didn’t Yeshua die for our sins so that the Israelites would not have to continually depend upon the annual animal sacrifices for themselves and their Nation? The answer, of course, is “yes,” so why do we still keep *Yom Kippur*? It is because Leviticus 23:31 says:

*".. it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."*

Without the Jerusalem Temple, without Levitical priests, and with Yeshua already having sacrificed Himself for us, it is a challenge to know how to keep the Leviticus *Yom Kippur* statute today is a challenge. That is probably why most of the body of believers minimizes its importance and thinks of it as a mere "shadow" of the fulfillment brought by Yeshua. But we who are Jewish and *K'rov Yisrael* disciples of Yeshua must not ignore what God says is "*a statute forever.*" We believe that if God said it, He meant it, and that there is therefore a proper way for us to keep *Yom Kippur* even now in the New Covenant.

There are a few instructions in the Leviticus statute that we can keep without question – treating the day as a Sabbath, afflicting our souls (which we interpret as fasting), and having a holy convocation which is what we are doing right now. But they are not the main purpose of the day. The purpose at the time of Moses, was for Aaron, the High Priest, to first atone for his own sins and for those of his family (Leviticus 16:6) and then, having been rendered spiritually clean, to conduct sacrifices to atone for the sins of all the children of Israel (Leviticus 16:30-34).

Today, in the New Covenant, we have something analogous but better. Instead of animal sacrifices, we have Yeshua's once-and-for-all sacrifice. We also have *Him* as our High Priest, and we have a new "royal priesthood" that Scripture tells us is the Body of Believers (1 Peter 2:9-10). In Exodus 19:6, we read that Israel was also made "a kingdom of priests" by God, so we who are Messianic Jews and *K'rovei Yisrael*, serve in two priesthoods and therefore have a double responsibility for rendering priestly service on *Yom Kippur*. Today, *Yom Kippur*, we do this by identifying ourselves with Israel, confessing Israel's sins corporately, and praying for the salvation of the Jewish people who do not yet know Yeshua as Lord and savior. We also pray that the Gentiles of the Nations who do not know Him will receive Him as well.

As I said previously, what we do on *Yom Kippur* is analogous to what was commanded to Moses and Aaron, except that our High Priest, Yeshua, has conducted the ultimate *Yom Kippur* sacrifice and has delegated to us, responsibility to intercede for the Jewish people, and also for others. Yeshua's sacrifice is effective for all time, and does not have to be repeated each year as did Aaron's sacrifice of animals. Priestly intercession for Israel is, in my opinion, how God wants us to keep *Yom Kippur* throughout our generations.

Last year, I gave seven points that compared *Yom Kippur* in the Mosaic Covenant with *Yom Kippur* today; I will repeat them for you:

1. In the Mosaic Covenant, the priesthood order was of Aaron; in the New Covenant, the priesthood order is of Malki-Tzedek (Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10, 7:11).
2. In the Mosaic Covenant, Aaron was High Priest; in the New Covenant, Yeshua is High Priest (Hebrews 5:9, 6:20).
3. In the Mosaic Covenant, Israel was described as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” in which Aaron and his sons were appointed the priests; in the New Covenant, we who are believers in Yeshua, have become “a royal priesthood and a holy nation,” and we have become its New Covenant priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5-11; Revelation 1:4-6).
4. In the Mosaic Covenant, the blood of animals covered over but could not remove sin; in the New Covenant, the blood of Yeshua completely removes sin (Hebrews 9:25-26; 10:3, 11-12, 17).
5. In the Mosaic Covenant, the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place in the earthly Tabernacle once each year with animal blood; in the New Covenant, Yeshua entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Tabernacle, once, for all, with His own blood (Hebrews 9:6-7, 11-12, 25-26, 28; 10:12).
6. In the Mosaic Covenant, only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place; in the New Covenant, we who are priests can enter the Most Holy Place along with Yeshua (Leviticus 16:17; Hebrews 9:7; 10:19-22).
7. Finally, in the Mosaic Covenant, the High Priest placed the sins of Israel on a scapegoat; in the New Covenant, Yeshua, the High Priest, takes the sins of Israel upon Himself. (Leviticus 16:3-10, 21-22; Hebrews 9:6-15).

To summarize, it is our responsibility, as a New Covenant Jewish community, to individually and corporately seek God on how to comply with commandments that were given in the former covenant and during a previous time. Israel was declared by God to be a kingdom of priests, and we who are Jews, and also Gentiles who are covenantally joined to Israel, are part of that kingdom. But there is more. We who are New Covenant believers have been made into a priesthood under Yeshua, our High Priest (Hebrews 6:19), and it is logical that, on *Yom Kippur*, we should be doing priestly service for God analogous to the Levitical priests of old. Levitical priests could not enter the Most Holy Place with *their* High Priest, but that has changed for us in the New Covenant, for we read in Hebrews 10:19-22:

*"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."*

Recalling that Aaron laid his hands on the scapegoat while confessing over it “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins,” it becomes clear that our chief role as New Covenant priests on *Yom Kippur* is to engage in priestly intercession for Israel – for its protection, for its survival, and especially for the salvation of its people.

So, Ohev Yisrael’s *Yom Kippur* services will be geared first to proclaiming Yeshua as Lord and savior; second, seeing to our personal repentance; and once having done those things, asking God to lead all of Israel to repentance, forgive its sins, and bring it to salvation in Yeshua. Though our prayer intercession is directed chiefly to Israel, its effect is to bless all nations by hastening Yeshua's return; for we recall that He said in Matthew 3:39:

*"I tell you, from now on, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI.'"*