

Yom Kippur

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Leviticus 23:26-28 in the New King James reads:

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.'" (NKJ).

Of all the biblical Holy Days, New Covenant believers often ask of *Yom Kippur*: “Why do we continue to observe it? After all, didn't Yeshua die for our sins so that Israel would not have to continually depend on the annual animal sacrifice?” The answer is, of course, “yes,” Yeshua is our atoning sacrifice, but verses 29 through 32 read as follows:

"For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath." (NKJ).

The phrase in the New King James version that has always struck me as curious is: "it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations." I always figured that "forever" means "forever," but now I have a different understanding of the word than I used to have. The Hebrew word that is translated "forever" in the New King James and other translations is "*olam*," and its literal meaning is not "forever" (although it could be), but it is rather "to the distant horizon," or "to a far distant time." In other words, the English translation "it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations" does not have to mean "forever," but could very well mean "it shall be a statute throughout your generations so long as this covenant I am making with you continues to exist." Were it otherwise and "*olam*" really meant "forever," we would still be conducting the *Yom Kippur* animal sacrifice, because the sacrifice is the key component of the Leviticus statute.

God knew that the covenant He gave under Moses would someday change, that there would someday be no Temple in which to sacrifice, and that Messiah Yeshua would become our atoning sacrifice. Still, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us that:

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work." (CJB).

True, we cannot perform the commanded animal sacrifice, but we can comply with everything else in the statute. We can have a holy convocation, we can afflict our souls, and we can abstain

from work. And today, we are here doing all of those things. Still, I do want us to have some deeper understanding of how to reconcile our faith in Yeshua with continuing to observe Yom Kippur.

When the Yom Kippur sacrifices ceased in 70 AD because of the Temple's destruction, only those Jews who believed in Yeshua had a Judaism that remained intact. The majority of Jews who depended on the Temple sacrifices for their forgiveness were catapulted into a crisis, and the outcome was an entirely new religious system that we now call Rabbinical Judaism. Instead of animal sacrifices (which they could no longer have), this new Judaism called for personal sacrifices such as obedience to the commandments of the *Torah*, and good works such as the giving of *tzadaka*.

It should be evident to us why those things are insufficient. First, obedience to the *Torah* was already required even while the Temple stood. Similarly, good works such as *tzadaka* were already required, and third, the *Torah's* requirement of animal blood sacrifice could not be complied with, so one could not completely obey the commandments of the *Torah*. This is especially problematic, because Hebrews 9:22 teaches:

"In fact, according to the *Torah*, almost everything is purified with blood; indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (CJB).

The new Jewish system still had the Holy Scriptures and it still had the Oral traditions, but, in rejecting Yeshua as its sacrifice, it no longer had a blood sacrifice for the remission of sin. What the rabbis said were substitutes were not substitutes at all, because they were already required prior to the Temple's destruction. By contrast, the Messianic Jews of that day had no such crisis, and no need to form a new religious system, because they had their blood sacrifice – Yeshua.

Now there is something very important that we need to do to fulfill our *Yom Kippur* obligation and that is to examine ourselves and repent of any and all sins that we find. That was important for the Israelites of old and the High Priest as well.

As I was preparing this *Yom Kippur* message, I looked back at last year's teaching and was reminded of a comparison I made between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant in regard to sacrifice and repentance. Because it is so foundational for our understanding of *Yom Kippur*, I want to share it with you again, so here goes:

1. In the Mosaic Covenant, the priesthood order was of Aaron. In the New Covenant, the priesthood order is of Mechizedek (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 also become "a royal priesthood, a holy nation," and we have therefore become New Covenant priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5-11; Revelation 1:4-6).

4. In the Mosaic Covenant, shedding the blood of animals was required for the remission of sin. In the New Covenant, shedding of the blood of Yeshua is required for the remission of sin (Hebrews 9:11-12, 18, 22).

5. In the Mosaic Covenant, the blood of animals could not remove sin. In the New Covenant, the blood of Yeshua removes sin (Hebrews 9:25-26; 10:3, 11-12, 17).

6. 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).

7. In the Mosaic Covenant, only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place. In the New Covenant, we who have become priests can enter the Most Holy Place with Yeshua (Leviticus 16:17; Hebrews 9:7, 10:19-22).

8. 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).

I want to read the text of these last-mentioned Scriptures to you to give you a better feel for what was done on *Yom Kippur* in the early years:

Leviticus 16:3-10 states:

"Here is how Aharon is to enter the Holy Place: with a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering. He is to put on the holy linen tunic, have the linen shorts next to his bare flesh, have the linen sash wrapped around him, and be wearing the linen turban- they are the holy garments. He is to bathe his body in water and put them on. He is to take from the community of the people of Isra'el two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. Aharon is to present the bull for the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and his household. He is to take the two goats and place them before *ADONAI* at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then Aharon is to cast lots for the two goats, one lot for *ADONAI* and the other for 'Az'azel. Aharon is to present the goat whose lot fell to *ADONAI* and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat whose lot fell to 'Az'azel is to be presented alive to *ADONAI* to be used for making atonement over it by sending it away into the desert for 'Az'azel." (CJB).

And continuing at Leviticus 16:21-22:

"Aharon is to lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the transgressions, crimes and sins of the people of Isra'el; he is to put them on the head of the goat and then send it away into the desert with a man appointed for the purpose. The goat will bear all their transgressions away to some isolated place, and he is to let the goat go in the desert." (CJB).

Hebrews 9:6-15 refers to this as well, and explains how the Levitical sacrifice was a mere shadow of Yeshua's greater sacrifice:

"With things so arranged, the *cohanim* go into the outer tent all the time to discharge their duties; but only the *cohen hagadol* enters the inner one; and he goes in only once a year, and he must always bring blood, which he offers both for himself and for the sins committed in ignorance by the people. By this arrangement, the *Ruach HaKodesh* showed that so long as the first Tent had standing, the way into the Holiest Place was still closed. This symbolizes the present age and indicates that the conscience of the person performing the service cannot be brought to the goal by the gifts and sacrifices he offers. For they involve only food and drink and various ceremonial washings- regulations concerning the outward life, imposed until the time for God to reshape the whole structure. But when the Messiah appeared as *cohen gadol* of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which is not man-made (that is, it is not of this created world), he entered the Holiest Place once and for all. And he entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus setting people free forever. For if sprinkling ceremonially unclean persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer restores their outward purity; then how much more the blood of the Messiah, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God as a sacrifice without blemish, will purify our conscience from works that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God! It is because of this death that he is mediator of a new covenant [or will]. Because a death has occurred which sets people free from the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promised eternal inheritance." (CJB).

Notice that the burnt offering was for the sins of the High Priest and for the "sins committed in ignorance by the people," but the sacrifice of the scapegoat was for ALL sin. But you say ... "The scapegoat had to be presented alive before the Lord, and Yeshua died." Yes, Yeshua died a physical death (as did the scapegoat in the wilderness), but Yeshua came back to life, and He presented Himself live before the Father where, even now, He is alive and at the Father's right hand.

So now we have the entire background of *Yom Kippur*, from both Mosaic and New Covenant perspectives. In the Mosaic Covenant, there was a covering over of sin – hence the word *kippur* that means “covering.” Jeremiah 31 tells us that the New Covenant is based on better promises, and one of the best of those is that, in Yeshua, our sins are not just covered over – they are entirely taken away. Many of our Jewish people do not know Yeshua, and therefore cannot get their sins entirely taken away. If any of you in this room, Jew or non-Jew, have not yet invited Yeshua into your heart and life, this is the time God wants you to do it. Just pray silently and ask Yeshua into your heart. Tell him that you want Him to direct your life, and that you want to enter His kingdom right now, here on earth. If you pray that prayer He will do it, because John 3:16 tells us that God:

“.. sent His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him will have eternal life.” (NKJ).

And Yeshua Himself said in Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (CJB).

And He is also quoted in Revelation 3:20-21:

"Here, I'm standing at the door, knocking. If someone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me. I will let him who wins the victory sit with me on my throne, just as I myself also won the victory and sat down with my Father on his throne." (CJB).

So let's now pause.

If anyone here prayed to receive Yeshua, he came into you, through the Holy Spirit, at that very moment. If you did not, the opportunity is not lost. Come speak to any of our leaders after the service and ask them about Yeshua – how you too can be His, and have eternal life with God.

In a few minutes we will have a short period of prayer intercession for Israel where we will ask God to reveal Yeshua to the Jewish people and bring us to a decision of salvation.

Notice I said "us" and not them. That's because as Jews and Gentiles in a Messianic Jewish community, we consider all Jewish people – not only believers in Yeshua – to be part of our Jewish family; hence we pray as "us" – not "them." Before we do that, however, like the High Priest of old, we must examine ourselves and repent of our personal sins, and so let us begin our intercession with an "*Al Chet*" prayer, confessing the individual sins of Israel, and asking God to forgive. Once again, we will intercede for Israel in the first person -- "us" – not "them."

A Modified *Al Chet* prayer was given to you earlier. *Al Chet* needs to be approached with a certain mindset, since the prayer contains a lengthy list of sins that we confess whether or not we believe we have personally committed them. The reason we pray this way is that we are praying this prayer corporately – not individually. We are confessing the sins of our people Israel, wherever in the world they may be, the assumption being that surely each and every one of the listed sins has applied to at least one of us some time within the past year. Of course, if we come across a sin that applies to us personally, we need to pause and repent before going on. Finally, there will always be sins that were committed in the course of the year that did not find their way onto the list. For that reason, we should think of the listed sins as sin categories, and recite them with a heart understanding that any sins not explicitly mentioned are, nevertheless, intended.

So let's now stand and pray *Al Chet* with heart-felt *kavanah*, knowing that in Yeshua, our sins are forgiven. Anyone who cannot stand comfortably may remain seated.