

## A Short Explanation of Yom Kippur

by  
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*Yom Kippur* literally means “day of covering,” but it is more commonly known as Day of Atonement because, under the Covenant given to Moses, the sins of Israel were to be covered over or atoned for on that day. *Yom Kippur* always occurs on 10 *Tishrei* on the lunar calendar, which is today.

As with all commandments given under the Mosaic Covenant, New Covenant believers have to prayerfully seek God’s direction in order to know how to observe *Yom Kippur* today, given our changed circumstances. A good place to start is with the Scriptures that command us to keep *Yom Kippur* forever; there are several, but let’s look at Leviticus 16:29-34:

*This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.*

Scripture gives great detail of how Aaron, the first Levitical High Priest, was to conduct the *Yom Kippur* sacrifices. He had to wash a certain way and dress a certain way and, only then, could he enter the Most Holy Place in order to sacrifice a goat and a bull. The bull was to atone for Himself and his family, while the goat (one of two chosen by lots) was sacrificed for the entire assembly of Israel for sin that any of them may have committed unintentionally. The goat that was not sacrificed on the alter was brought alive before the Lord “to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness” to carry all the sins of Israel out of the camp – not just the unintentional ones; we read in Leviticus 16:21-22:

*Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.*

Clearly, for us who are in the New Covenant, complying with those instructions is not possible for various reasons that include the absence of the Temple, a non-functioning Levitical priesthood, and the fact that our atonement is through the blood of Yeshua and no longer through

the blood of bulls and goats! Let's therefore compare the two covenants – the Mosaic with the New:

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 was 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 are priests can enter the Most Holy Place with Yeshua (Leviticus 16:17; Hebrews 9:7; 10:19-22).
8. 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 16:21-22; Hebrews 9:11-12).

As I have said, it is our responsibility as New Covenant communities and individual believers, to prayerfully seek God on how to comply with commandments that were given in a former covenant and during a previous time. Since Israel was declared by God to be a kingdom of priests, and we who are New Covenant believers have been made priests under Yeshua, it is logical that, on *Yom Kippur*, we should be doing priestly service for God similar to the priests of old. Levitical priests could not enter the Most Holy Place with their High Priest, but that has changed 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.

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