

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

יום הכִּפּוּרִים

by Avram Yehoshua

The SeedofAbraham.net

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Unlike Passover, which celebrates Israel's divine deliverance, in the springtime, from Pharaoh's cruel oppression and slavery, *Yom HaKipurim*¹ (also known as *Yom Kipur*), the Day of Atonement, centered around the high priest's ceremony that cleansed both him and his House, as well as the nation of Israel, from their sins of the past year, and the Tabernacle. It comes on the tenth day after *Yom Truah* (the Feast of Trumpets) and five days before the eight day autumn feast of *Sukote* (the Feast of Tabernacles).² Leviticus 16 gives a detailed account of what happened in the days of Moses and Joshua, etc., with Lev. 23:26-32 declaring how serious this day is to God—those who didn't observe it were 'cut off' from Israel. It was the holiest day of the year and nothing approached it in solemnity—the life of the nation's relationship with the Lord hung in the balance.

Sin means separation from God—non-life or death. How can a man in covenant regain his righteous status when he sinned? God provided for the individual Israeli with the Mosaic sacrificial system,³ and once a year, for the nation as a whole through the Day of Atonement. It was a day of affliction and humbling oneself through fasting, and turning one's thoughts upon Yahveh and his relationship to Him who is the holy and awesome God who created the Universe, redeemed Israel from slavery, gave Israel His holy Law, nationhood and the land of Canaan as their inheritance.⁴

Animal sacrifice represents the compassionate, yet costly, penalty that God exacts for sin—the life of the animal being a substitute for the life of the person. The animal dies, but is a picture of what should have happened to the person because of his sin. National atonement for Israel came on this day because of the substitutionary, redeeming sacrifice of a goat, God forgiving and cleansing Israel of all her sins of the past year, since the last Day of Atonement.

The word *atonement* means to be 'at peace' with God or 'at-onement.'⁵ Another word that describes it is reconciliation. God and Israel are in perfect fellowship again, after Israel had broken it. Fellowship is restored as if the sins never happened. The Day is associated with love, mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. The idea behind the Hebrew verb for atonement, כִּפֶּר *kiper*, is that of sacrifice that redeems and restores the nation. It was a substitutionary, representative sacrifice that totally forgave the people of their sins. It wasn't just 'to cover over the sins until the time of Christ,' as too many Christian theologians teach, but a fully effective sacrifice that allowed God to forgive and to cleanse Israel of her sins for the past year (Lev. 16:16-17, 30, 33).⁶

¹ *The Day of Atonement* is found in Scripture in the plural (*Yom HaKipurim*; Lev. 23:27-28; 25:9, the Day of Atonements), although today in Judaism it's spoken of in the singular, and without the article (i.e. *Yom Kipur*). In Lev. 16 the phrase 'the day of' is not found, but the word atonement, in the singular, is found (Lev. 16:6, 10, 11, 16, 17 (twice), 18, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33 (three times), 34.

² See the [2018 Holy Days Calendar](#) for when the Feasts and annual Sabbaths are for this year.

³ See [Mosaic Sacrifice and the Blood of Jesus](#), and also, [Mosaic Sacrifice in the New Testament](#).

⁴ Num. 26:53-54; 32:18f.; 34:2f.; Dt. 15:4; 19:14; 25:19; 26:1; 32:9; Joshua 1:6; 11:23; 13:6-7f., etc.

⁵ J. M. Sinclair, general consultant; Diana Treffry, editorial director, *Collins English Dictionary*, Fourth Edition (Glasgow, Scotland: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 95, 'from Middle English phrase *at onement*, in harmony.'

⁶ R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 452-453. "The root כִּפֶּר *kafar*" (from which the Piel כִּפֶּר

All ancient peoples recognized the need for the giving up of a life for the forgiveness of sin and the restoring of fellowship and blessings from their gods. We see this in the grade B movies where the village virgin is thrown into the fiery volcano as a human sacrifice to appease the anger of the volcano god. In biblical times pagans would sacrifice their newborn infants at ceremonies designed to appease the wrath of the god. It was a high price to pay for good relations with the gods, but most, if not all of the ancient peoples did it—so great was their fear of, and need for their gods. Of course, this was Satan they were worshipping, despite the myriad names of the different gods.⁷ The Lord Yahveh forbid Israel to sacrifice their sons (Lev. 20:2-3). The Prophet Micah alludes to this horrible pagan practice when he asks the question about what can be done in order to be righteous before God, and then answers it:

‘Will Yahveh be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn (son) for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, oh Man, what is good and what Yahveh requires of you—to do justice, to love faithful forgiving-loving-kindness and to walk humbly with your God.’
 (Micah 6:7-8 my translation)

The giving of one’s firstborn son for personal sins springboards off of what the surrounding nations were doing in order to be reconciled with their gods and even Israel succumbed to this horror, too many times.⁸

kipper comes from) “is used some 150 times...There is an equivalent Arabic root meaning ‘cover,’ or ‘conceal.’ On the strength of this connection it has been supposed that the Hebrew word means ‘to cover over sin,’ and thus, pacify the deity, making an atonement (so Brown, Driver and Briggs in their *Hebrew-English Lexicon*). It has been suggested that the OT ritual symbolized a covering over of sin until it was dealt with in fact by the atonement of Christ. There is, however, very little evidence for this view. The connection of the Arabic word is weak and the Hebrew root is not used to mean ‘cover.’ The Hebrew verb is never used in the simple or Qal stem, but only in the derived intensive stems. These intensive stems often indicate not emphasis, but merely that the verb is derived from a noun whose meaning is more basic to the root idea. Every Israelite was to give to the service of the sanctuary the ‘ransom’ money of half a shekel (Ex 30:12). Egypt, in God’s sight, was given as a ‘ransom’ for the restoration of Israel (Is. 43:3). This word ‘ransom’ is parallel to the word ‘redeem’ (פָּדָה *pada*) in Ps. 49:7. There is a warning that a man guilty of murder must be killed—no ‘ransom’ can be given in exchange for his life (Num. 35:31). From the meaning of כֹּפֶר *koper* ‘ransom,’ the meaning of כָּפַר *kafar* can be better understood. It means ‘to atone by offering a substitute.’ The great majority of the usages concern the priestly ritual of sprinkling of the sacrificial blood, thus ‘making an atonement’ for the worshipper. There are forty-nine instances of this usage in Leviticus alone, and no other meaning is there witnessed. The verb is always used in connection with the removal of sin or defilement, except for Gen. 32:20; Prov. 16:14, and Is. 28:18 where the related meaning of ‘appease by a gift’ may be observed. It seems clear that this word aptly illustrates the theology of reconciliation in the OT. The life of the sacrificial animal, specifically symbolized by its blood, was required in exchange for the life of the worshipper. Sacrifice of animals in OT theology was not merely an expression of thanks to the deity by a cattle raising people. It was the symbolic expression of *innocent life given for guilty life*. This symbolism is further clarified by the action of the worshipper in placing his hands on the head of the sacrifice and confessing his sins over the animal (cf. Lev. 16:21; 1:4; 4:4, etc.), which he “then killed...”

G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, editors; John Willis, translator, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, pp. 293-294. “Milgrom distinguishes two basic understandings of atonement: in one, *kipper* (*kipper*) means ‘purify (ritually);’ in the other, it means ‘redeem.’ When used in the latter sense, the purpose of the *kipper* act is to divert God’s wrath, which would strike innocent and guilty alike. This is the understanding behind the scapegoat.” (This understanding, of the second goat being a scapegoat, is false; see p. 8f.) “‘Redemption’ involves the ritual ‘substitution’ of an animal for a human being. In this usage, *kipper* derives from *koper*, ‘ransom,’ as may be seen from the collection of ‘atonement money’ as a kind of head tax...When the idea of averting God’s wrath is involved, the verb *kipper* is to be interpreted as deriving from *koper*: innocent life is protected by the substitution of the guilty party or an equivalent ransom or sacrifice offering.”

The idea of the animal’s innocence or sinlessness is pictured in that it must be without spot or blemish (i.e. it must not be diseased, lame or malformed, etc.; Ex. 12:5; 21:9; Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 21:16-25; Malachi 1:8). It doesn’t mean that the animal has to be pure white.

⁷ See Alexander Hislop’s Christian classic, [The Two Babylons—The Full Hislop](#).

⁸ Dt. 12:31; 2nd Kings 16:3; 17:17; Isaiah 57:5; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Ezk. 16:20-21, 26, 31; 23:37, etc.

Satan is a very cruel master and those who walk with him, walk in perversion and death. The God of Israel demanded a substitute (an animal). Satan demanded human sons and daughters.

The phrase *Yom HaKipurim*, literally, the Day of Atonements or Ransoms, suggests two things:

1. The plural is seen to refer to both Aaron and his House (all the sons of Aaron and their families) and Israel being atoned for, and
2. to emphatically declare that atonement for Israel was made. Yahveh, the God of Israel, forgave Israel's many sins by the substitutionary death of a goat, which was given as a ransom for Israel.

The goat is an apt picture for stubborn and rebellious Israel (Israel 'after the flesh;' 1st Cor. 10:18). It also symbolized Yeshua as our substitutionary Ransom, giving His life for the sins of Israel 'after the Spirit' (believers in the Body of Messiah; cf. Gal. 6:16) that we, too, might be forgiven of our sins for the past year and remain in vital covenant relationship with the Father,⁹ which allows the Father, the Son and the Spirit to continue to dwell within our sinful flesh or carnal nature (John 14:23).

WHAT THE HIGH PRIEST DID ON THE DAY

The greatest function of the High Priest of Israel was done on the Day of Atonement as he reconciled sinful Israel with her holy God, Yahveh. The High Priest was not to come into the Holy of Holies, where Yahveh literally dwelt above the Ark of the Covenant, in the midst of the Shekinah Glory Cloud, on any day he chose. He could only come in on one day of the year—*Yom HaKipurim* (Lev. 16:2, 29).

Aaron was commanded by God to bathe and to put on simple linen garments to perform his high priestly function on this day (Lev. 16:4). These were not the majestic and glorious clothes that God had assigned to him that he usually wore (Ex. 28:1f.), which reflected his esteemed position in Israel (and Messiah Yeshua in His glory).

Aaron then sacrificed a bull for his sins and those of his House (Lev. 16:3, 6) and brought it, as well as incense, into the Holy of Holies. The incense cloud would render it hard for Aaron to actually see God, above the gold Ark lid, so that he wouldn't die (Lev. 16:13). He would sprinkle the blood of the bull on the gold lid of the Ark of the Covenant (translated into English as the *mercy seat*) seven times (Leviticus 16:13-15). Then he would also sprinkle the blood of the sacrificial bull seven times upon the ground in front of the Ark.

He would then receive two goats from the community and whichever the lot fell on would be the sin sacrifice for Israel to Yahveh (Lev. 16:5). He would repeat the same procedure, as he had with the blood of the bull, with the sacrificial blood of the goat (16:3, 11-15). After this Aaron would place the goat's blood on all the articles of the Tabernacle,¹⁰ cleansing each item from the defilement of having been in the midst of sinful Israel for the past year (Lev. 16:16-19).

Once atonement was made for all of Israel and the Tabernacle (Lev. 16:16, 20), Aaron would take the live goat, sometimes referred to as *Azazel* or the 'scapegoat,' and placing his hands upon its head, confess all the sins of Israel upon it (16:21).¹¹ The goat would *not* be sacrificed, but be led into a barren place in the

⁹ Yeshua, as the Passover Lamb (John 1:29), allows believers to enter into covenant with the Father. Inherent in His covenantal sacrifice are the themes of the five major Mosaic sacrifices (cf. Is. 42:6).

¹⁰ The seven branched gold Lampstand, the wooden-gold Altar of Incense, the wooden-gold Table, which held the Bread of Yahveh, the bronze Wash Basin and the bronze Altar of Sacrifice.

¹¹ Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, p. 295. "The hand laid on the animal (Lev. 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13, etc.) identifies the sinner with the sacrificial victim to be slain and symbolizes the offering of his own life. The treatment of the blood (Lev. 4:25, 30, 34; 16:14f; Ezk. 43:20, etc.) completes the symbolism: by applying the blood to the altar, the priest carries out the symbolic surrender of the worshipper's own life to the

Wilderness (Lev. 16:8, 10) bearing the sins of Israel ‘on its head’ (16:22).

Aaron would then bathe a second time, change his clothes into his high priestly garments (Lev. 16:23-24) and sacrifice two rams as whole burnt sacrifices; one for himself and his House, and one for Israel.¹² Both the bull that Aaron had used for his own sin sacrifice and the goat that was sacrificed for the nation were not offered up on the bronze Altar of Sacrifice, but taken outside the Camp of Israel and burned in their entirety (16:27).

This ceremony for the Day of Atonement took place midway through the biblical year, six months after Passover, in the seventh biblical month on the tenth day of the month (Lev. 16:29). It’s a day when Yahveh states that Israel is cleansed from all her sins (16:30). The number seven denotes holiness, perfection and completion (as in the perfect and complete seven days of creation, with the seventh day being blessed and holy; Gen. 2:1-3); and the seven days of consecration to the priesthood of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:1–9:1f., esp. 8:35). The number ten speaks of total completion, and so, the two numbers together picture the total, complete and holy redemption–reconciliation of Israel from her sins to her God on the tenth day of the seventh biblical month—*Yom HaKipurim*.

Israel for her part, humbled and afflicted herself (by fasting and a heart attitude of humility) on this ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’ (Lev. 16:31).

Cease from Striving

Three times the Lord emphasizes the sanctity of the Day of Atonement by stating that all Israel *must* afflict themselves (Lev. 23:27, 29, 32), which was interpreted as pertaining to the physical realm as ‘fasting’ (cf. Isaiah 58:3-5). Anyone who didn’t would be cut off (i.e. killed).¹³ Also three times, within four verses, Yahveh states that Israel must not work on this day, with the penalty being that those who did would be destroyed by Him (Lev. 23:28-29, 31).

To afflict oneself spiritually meant that Israel was to realize that they didn’t have anything in themselves (pride, rights or accomplishments) to boast about before God for their atonement. They were to be grateful to the Lord for the substitute that He had provided for their forgiveness and reconciliation. This was the proper attitude, along with humility, to appear before the holy and awesome God.

Fasting, going without food and water,¹⁴ was the way that the physical meaning of the word ‘to afflict’ has been understood for thousands of years because fasting is a way of setting apart that which is absolutely essential for physical life, and which was pleasurable, in order to seek God in a most emphatic and focused way. It spoke of their setting apart their carnality, their flesh, their physical life itself, to beseech God, that they would be acceptable to Him. Fasting is the greatest picture of humility and death to self—if you don’t eat you die.

On this day we are to cease from our strivings ‘do to’ for God, die to self and ‘rest’ and trust in Him, that He might work His work through us by His Spirit. Fasting for one day weakens us. We don’t want to do

sanctuary and thus to the deity.”

¹² Aaron would also offer up other sacrifices on this day for the nation (Ex. 29:38-46; Num. 29:7-11).

¹³ There are exceptions to this that pertain to pregnant women, nursing women, young children, the infirm and the elderly, etc.

¹⁴ Scripture speaks of four times that men fasted for 40 days: twice for Moses (Dt. 9:9-18), where it states that he didn’t eat or drink water, and *that*, over a period of 81 days (Ex. 32); once for Elijah (1st Kings 19:2-8), where it says that he didn’t eat any food and implies that he didn’t drink any water, either, and of course, our Lord Yeshua (Luke 4:2), where it says that He didn’t eat anything. With Moses being the greatest prototype of Messiah in the Old Testament, it’s reasonable to think that Yeshua didn’t drink anything, either (cf. Paul; Acts 9:9; and Esther’s three day fast of no food, nor water, which all the Jews did at that critical time; Esther 4:15-16).

anything and our pride is perforated as we realize that we don't have much, in the way of our own strength and holiness. With this understanding of our carnal condition it makes it easier for us to give way to Him in all things, every day.

In Leviticus 16:31 and 23:32, speaking of the Day of Atonement, we find the term שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן *Shabat Shabatone*, a Sabbath of Sabbaths or a Sabbath of *absolute* rest or ceasing from work.¹⁵ The second Hebrew word, *Shabatone*, is God's way of emphasizing the holiness of this Sabbath¹⁶ and speaks of *perfect trust* in Yahveh, 'resting' and not striving in ourselves for the forgiveness of, and freedom that He has provided for sin and guilt. It speaks of not trying to please or impress God with what we have done (good works), but of being totally dependent and reliant upon Yahveh and His way of obtaining righteousness.

When God speaks of *rest* on *Shabat* (Hebrew for Sabbath) it's not confined to the physical and it's not a state 'of doing nothing,' as many Christians wrongly think. The rest, in the physical realm, speaks of not working so that one can completely devote himself to God, family and ministry.¹⁷ In the ancient world, in the glory that was *civilized* Greece and Rome, there was no weekly day of rest, but Yahveh specifically says that even during times of planting and harvesting of crops, Israel was to cease from her work to enter into the Sabbath and honor Him (Ex. 34:21). The Sabbath pictures God as Creator (ceasing from His creation; Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11) and the Redeemer of Israel from Egyptian slavery (Dt. 5:12-15),¹⁸ as well as the Kingdom of Satan. God's Sabbath (both the weekly and the annual) is a divine 'oasis in time,'¹⁹ taking us from the work and stress of this world into the peace of God. Inherent within every Sabbath is the first Sabbath of Creation, the theme of redemption from slavery (both Egyptian; Dt. 5:12-15, and satanic), and the final Sabbath of eternity in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1f). Every Sabbath reflects these three points.

Yahveh was saying to Israel that she had to learn to trust Him for her very life, her food, her clothes and her well-being. *This* trust would bring her true peace and rest, even in the midst of her enemies, whom Yahveh would fight against (Ex. 23:22, 27; Num. 10:9). She couldn't make atonement for herself and she had to realize this in the depth of her being, at least once a year. It pictured Israel accepting, by way of obedience and trusting in her God, the forgiveness of her sins that God provided through the sacrifice of a goat—a perfect symbol of carnal, stubborn and rebellious Israel.

For Israel to realize Yahveh's graciousness in this total and complete forgiveness once a year was a very precious source of life for her. Every Israeli who trusted in Yahveh knew that he stood in good fellowship with his God and was 'at peace' with Him. Yahveh removed all the sins of Israel and everyone was to

¹⁵ (*Shabat*) *Shabatone* is also written of the weekly Sabbath day (Ex. 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Lev. 23:3), as well as *Yom Truah*, the first day of the of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24, The Feast of Trumpets), the first and eighth days of *Sukote* (Lev. 23:39 [twice], The Feast of Tabernacles), and the sabbatical year (Lev. 25:4).

Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, p. 903, "shabbaton...The ending, *on*, is characteristic of abstract nouns in Hebrew such as זְכָרוֹן 'remembrance.'"

¹⁶ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 1412. "See Ex. 16:23 where שַׁבַּתוֹן *Shabatone* is explained as שַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁ *Kodesh Shabat*" (a holy Sabbath); "an association between שַׁבַּתוֹן *Shabatone* and קֹדֶשׁ *Kodesh* is also made in Ex. 31:15; 35:2, see further Lv. 23:3, 24 שַׁבַּתוֹן *Shabatone* and מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ *Mikra Kodesh*" (a holy assembly).

¹⁷ Ministry to others is the kind of (redemptive) work that Yeshua speaks of that is acceptable to the Father on the holy Sabbath day because it pictures redemption, one of the two themes that God impregnates the Sabbath with (the other theme being Creation; Ex. 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12-15). This is why Yeshua could say that He saw His Father 'working' on this day (the Sabbath) and so, He was 'working,' too (John 5:17; see also Mt. 12:1-8). For more on how the Sabbath is a day for ministry, see [From Sabbath to Sunday](#).

¹⁸ For why the Sabbath is a perfect picture of the Lord Yeshua, and why the penalty for breaking it is death, see [The Sabbath and Yeshua](#).

¹⁹ Oasis, 'a fertile spot in a desert where water is found; a pleasant or peaceful area or period in the midst of a difficult, troubled, or hectic situation: *an oasis of calm in the center of the city.*'

cease from his work and his striving to be holy, and allow God to cleanse him and make him holy (Ex. 31:12-17). Yahveh was setting them free again, but this time, not from physical slavery, as in what Passover signifies, but from the guilt and shame of slavery to sin—a picture of the redemption in Yeshua’s sacrifice.

Yom HaKipurim was not established to appease an angry God, but quite the contrary—Yahveh, the holy and loving God was providing freedom from sin for His people Israel. This also allowed Him to continue to literally dwell in the midst of His people. Israel’s godly response was gratefulness, thanksgiving and a life that desired to love Him with all her heart, soul and strength, and her neighbor and the stranger in her midst, as herself (Dt. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18c, 33-34).

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE DAY

The Letter to the Hebrews declares Yeshua to be what Aaron symbolized—the eternal High Priest of Israel, the one who has made a way for us, by His Passover sacrifice, to come into an eternal covenant with the Father.²⁰ Aaron’s bathing on the Day of Atonement pictured the purity and sinlessness of Yeshua. Aaron’s simple linen garments pictured Yeshua as the humble and pure God-Man—God the Son taking on humanity. Aaron needed to sacrifice a bull for himself before He could offer the sacrifice of the goat for Israel. This spoke of him as a mediator with sin, needing to be cleansed from sin himself so that he could be ‘sinless’ before Yahveh, in order to reconcile God and sinful Israel. Yeshua, sinless (2nd Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15), offered Himself as the sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:12) for sinful Israel.

Aaron could only come into the Holy of Holies one day a year, and in this, he *stood* to perform his duties and left. Yeshua, once He had given His own life’s blood, is *seated* in the very presence of the Father *forever* (Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2). Not even the angels sit in the presence of the Father. Yet, Israel’s eternal High Priest has sat down in the Father’s presence. This points both to Yeshua’s deity and that His responsibility for bringing Israel and the Father together is complete, or as Yeshua said at His death, ‘It is finished!’ (John 19:30) He doesn’t have to repeat His sacrifice, as Aaron did. His Work, as the covenant torn (Is. 42:6; 49:8), and as mediator covenant-maker, purifier and glorifier of Israel is accomplished (Mal. 3:3; Jn. 17:4).

The goat that was sacrificed for the sins of Israel pictured Israel and Yeshua—our humanity and His. We are all like goats, very stubborn. Yeshua overcame His Adamic nature by dying to self by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, *in Yeshua*, we, too, can die to self, that our pride and stubbornness may not determine our eternal existence. The alternative, as carnal believers, is to continue to be stubborn and goat-like, and on Judgment Day, they will be sent to Hell for not *truly* believing in the Father and His Son, even though they went to church and may have done many miraculous things ‘in His name.’²¹

The spiritual symbolism of Aaron sprinkling the blood of the sacrificial goat seven times upon the gold Ark lid and seven times upon the dirt in front of the Ark, pictured the Father and Israel being brought together by the sacrificial blood of Yeshua. The gold Ark lid pictures the Father because it’s pure gold, and gold symbolizes deity. The dirt pictures Israel, what Adam was made from. The Father and Israel ‘after the Spirit’²² have now been brought together on *Yom HaKipurim*, Israel’s sins for the past year being cleansed and forgiven by the blood of Yeshua. In a spiritual sense, the Father has been sprinkled with the blood of His Son to effect this reconciliation so that you and I can be forgiven of our sins, as believers.²³

²⁰ Heb. 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5, 10; 7:26, etc., see also Ps. 110:4, Is. 42:6 and Zech. 6:12-13.

²¹ Mt. 7:23; 25:41; Luke 13:27, see also Ps. 6:8; 119:15; Jer. 17:13.

²² Gal. 6:16; Rev. 21:12; see also Eph. 2:11f.

²³ Ron Wyatt believed that he found the Ark of the Covenant in a cave, as well as other Temple items, 20 feet below the site where Yeshua was crucified (<http://www.wyattmuseum.com/arkofthecovenant.htm>). He taught that

The Mercy Seat,²⁴ as it's known in English (Lev. 16:2, 13, 14 twice, 15 twice, etc.) is not really a seat, and the word for mercy is not part of the Hebrew term. It's actually *a lid of gold* (Ex. 25:17) that was placed upon the Ark (with a cherubim at each of its ends; Ex. 25:18).²⁵ Twenty seven times the word כַּפֹּרֶת *ka-poret* (a noun from the same verb that *Kipu'rim*, to reconcile/atone, comes from), is used of this gold lid,²⁶ which in Hebrew is called כַּפֹּרֶת זָהָב *kaporet zahav*, the gold lid of atonement/ransom/reconciliation because it received the blood of the bull to atone for Aaron and his House, and the blood of the goat to redeem and atone for Israel.

Aaron would bathe again and put on his glorious priestly garments to appear before Israel, which pictures Yeshua being raised from the dead by the Father to His present glorified state as Israel's eternal High Priest. Aaron would finish the Day of Atonement's ceremony by sacrificing two rams, one for himself and his House, and one for Israel. These dedication sacrifices symbolized that Israel was wholly dedicated to her God, Yahveh,²⁷ and pictured Israel 'after the Spirit,' as such, because of Messiah's sacrifice. The bull and the goat that had been used for forgiveness for Aaron and his House, and for Israel, respectively, were taken outside the Camp and wholly burned, also symbolic of total dedication to God. Why outside the Camp? Because they reflect Messiah's crucifixion which happened outside Jerusalem proper.

The writer of Hebrews, in speaking of the carcasses of the bull and the goat that were taken outside the Camp and burned (Heb. 13:11-13; Lev. 16:27), relates this to the humiliation of Yeshua in being rejected by the Jewish leadership, and tortured and crucified by the Romans. Yeshua was sacrificed 'outside the Camp,' meaning the city walls of Jerusalem,²⁸ but also symbolically, the author of Hebrews wants us to realize by his use of the phrase, 'outside the Camp,' that Yeshua was treated like a leper (i.e. not part of Israel; Lev. 13:45-46).²⁹ Yeshua was totally rejected by the sinful leadership of Israel that day. Yet, the Father used something ignominious and very shameful,³⁰ the rejection, torture, crucifixion and death of His

Yeshua's blood actually dripped unto the Ark's lid below, through a crack made in the earth at the crucifixion site by the earthquake. The blood, mingling with the rainwater, made its way downward to the Ark's gold lid (Mt. 27:51-54).

²⁴ The phrase, 'mercy seat' comes from the idea that God is sitting upon it and that Israel's sins are forgiven on the Day of Atonement; God being merciful.

²⁵ The NET Bible has 'atonement lid;' the NIV has 'cover,' and the Shocken Bible has 'purgation-cover.'

²⁶ Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I, p. 453. The "noun כַּפֹּרֶת *kaporet* is used twenty-seven times and always refers to the golden cover of the sacred chest in the inner shrine of the tabernacle or temple. It was from *above* the mercy seat that God promised to meet with men (Num. 7:89). The word, however, is not related to mercy, and of course, was not a seat. The word is derived from the root 'to atone.' The Greek equivalent in the LXX is usually *hilastaerion* ἱλαστήριον, 'place or object of propitiation,' a word which is applied to Christ in Rom 3:25. The translation 'mercy seat' does not sufficiently express the fact that the lid of the ark was the place where the blood was sprinkled on the day of atonement. 'Place of atonement' would perhaps be more expressive."

The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* speaks of it as an 'atonement piece,' and states that, "The translation, 'cover,' used by some versions, is inappropriate, being based on Arab. *kafara*" (Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, pp. 297, 291 respectively).

²⁷ Aaron would have already done, in the morning, the daily morning sacrifices, and would do the daily evening sacrifices after the rites for the Day of Atonement, as well as an additional seven lambs, with their grain and wine offerings for the Day of Atonement (Ex. 29:38-44; Num. 29:7-11).

²⁸ The first time that a bull is burned outside the Camp for Aaron is the first day of his investiture and consecration as High Priest (Lev. 8:14-17). This, of course, is also significant for Yeshua as His high priesthood seems to have begun after His being sacrificed 'outside the Camp.'

²⁹ Interestingly enough, the ancient Rabbis called the Servant of Yahveh (Is. 52:13-53:12) the Leprous Messiah because it says that He took our sins upon Himself (Is. 53:5) and that He was *stricken* by God. The Hebrew word for *stricken* נָגַף (*nagu'ah*, Is. 53:4) is used of God striking someone with leprosy (2nd Kgs 15:5), and hence, why this Servant of Yahveh (Is. 52:13) was called the Leprous Messiah by the ancient Jewish sages.

³⁰ Leprosy in Scripture is seen as a typical picture of sin. Leprosy literally eats away or rots the flesh while one is

Son, to call all those who desire to be cleansed from their sins and transformed into a new creature (2nd Cor. 5:17), to identify with Messiah in His rejection and death (Heb. 13:7-16). The author encourages us ‘to join Yeshua’ outside the Camp, meaning that we are to strengthen ourselves with the same attitude that Yeshua had, and not be concerned when the world comes against us, even and especially if part of that world speaks of believing in Jesus Christ:

“Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Yeshua, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, *endured the cross, despising the shame*, and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners” (Jewish men who ‘believed’ in God) “against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” (Hebrews 12:1-4)

The dating for the Day of Atonement, the *tenth* day of the *seventh* Hebrew month, conveys a sense of total and complete removal of sin for Israel. Original holiness was restored on this day and the Father was able to continue to dwell in the midst of His people. This was the reason for the sacrificial death of one, so the other (Israel) could be freed (from sin) and live. The Day of Atonement symbolized the total removal of sin from Israel, both in terms of those Hebrews who trusted in the Lord and those who didn’t, and this is where the live goat (called Azazel in Hebrew) comes in. The Father’s penalty for non-observance of this day was death because it pictured the crucifixion of His Son for the redemption of Israel, and hence, why God calls this day שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן *Shabat Shabatone*, a Sabbath of Sabbaths, but what of those Hebrews who didn’t really believe, and yet, ‘went through the motions’?

Azazel—The Faithless Hebrew

The Hebrew word אֲזַזֵּל *Azazel* is found only four times in Scripture—all in the chapter on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8, 10 twice, 26). Some believe that it’s a name for Satan, or a fallen angel or a demon god. This would make *Azazel* a proper noun, but it would be foolish to think that on Israel’s holiest day of the year, Yahveh would command a goat to be given to Satan, or a demon, and that, supposedly for Israel’s sins! Confirming that it’s not Satan nor a demon, etc., is the commandment of God, in the very next chapter after the ceremony for the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), where He expressly states that Israel was *not* to offer any sacrifices to goat headed demons (satyr)s:³¹

still alive. This is an apt description of what sin does to our soul and our relationship with God. Sin eats away or rots the soul while one is still ‘in covenant’ with God, but the relationship is far from what it should be.

³¹ Although Greek mythology uses the horns of a bull, it seems that one of Satan’s most popular pictures in paganism is as a goat-headed demon-god. For example, “The *Goat of Mendez*” (another name for Satan) “is the god of the witches. (Mendez is another spelling of Mendes, a city of ancient Egypt where fertility worship—Baal worship, was practiced.)” From <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Wicca%20&%20Witchcraft/pentagram.htm>.

Fertility worship speaks of sexual orgies, where the cultic priests/priestesses had intercourse with the ‘worshippers’ to reenact, on a symbolic level, what the gods had done to allegedly bring about rain for the land so that crops would be abundant, and therefore, people would have food to live.

Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p. 335 states, ‘The rainfall of winter and the drought of summer were believed to indicate that Baal had died and that there was a need for him to be brought to life again by magic rites.’ The ‘Canaanites believed that the gods could be helped to bring about fertility of the soil *if the people fertilized one another* in the places of worship. Therefore, there was a crude sexuality in the name of religion’ (ibid., p. 334). Satan knows how to lure man away from the true God—just equate worship with sex (Rom. 1:18f.).

‘They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.’ (Lev. 17:7)³²

The understanding that *Azazel* was a fallen angel (an evil spirit) comes from a Jewish tradition, prevalent in Yeshua’s day.³³ It was adopted by some Christian theologians in ancient times and is still taught today, but *Azazel* is not a name for Satan, nor a fallen angel, nor a satyr.

Some Rabbis see *Azazel* as a description of ‘the place to which the goat was sent—a desert, a solitary place,’³⁴ while some other Christian theologians define *Azazel* as an ancient technical term meaning the ‘entire removal of sin,’³⁵ making it a scapegoat that totally removes all the sin and defilement from Israel.³⁶ A scapegoat is one who bears the sin of another, with the connotation that Israel’s sins were being graphically removed by the departure of the goat. In this case, *Azazel* would be ‘the goat that totally removes sin’ from the Camp of Israel.

In the days of Aaron the High Priest they would take this goat, that Aaron had confessed the sins of Israel over, far out into the Wilderness and leave it there. It wasn’t part of Israel any longer. In the days of Yeshua it would taken to a cliff outside Jerusalem and pushed over it so that it would die and not return to Jerusalem. *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* states that *Azazel*,

“may mean, ‘to make expiation with it...to serve for the sin...to transfer sin to it, or to perform rites of expiation beside it.’”³⁷

The *TDOT*, KJV and the NASB, as well as Benjamin Davidson,³⁸ and others, speak of *Azazel* as a ‘scapegoat,’ but *Azazel* is not a scapegoat. None of these meanings present the correct understanding of what God was doing with the live goat because none of them realize who the goat pictured—the Hebrew *whose sins were still upon himself* because of his unbelief and goat-like stubborn rebellion to God. It was the goat that was *sacrificed* that atoned for all the sins of *believing* Israel, not unbelieving Israel. The sacrifice of the goat was not magic—one had to have faith in the God of Israel.

The second goat, *not sacrificed*, and therefore, not able to atone for anyone’s sins,³⁹ was led *out of the Camp of Israel* (Lev. 16:22) and *separated* from Israel, to live in a place *cut off* from Israel and God. This goat pictured the Hebrew who, although ‘believing in God’ with his mouth (cf. Mt. 15:1f.), didn’t believe and trust in God with his heart. This second goat pictured the Hebrew whose sins *remained upon himself*, symbolically seen in Aaron confessing the sins of unbelieving Israel upon the head of this goat. It says that the goat would bear those sins *upon itself* (Lev. 16:21-22). As such, the stubborn and unbelieving Hebrew was symbolically removed from Israel.

What was different about the second goat on the Day of Atonement was that it wasn’t sacrificed. It re-

³² HCSB, NASB, NRSV and SB (*Schocken Bible: The Five Books of Moses*)—‘goat demons.’

³³ Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, p. 658, אַזַּאֵל.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dr. Francis Brown, Dr. S. R. Driver, Dr. Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Professor Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, Translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), p. 736, אַזַּאֵל. Among others ideas, *BDB* states that *Azazel* means the ‘entire removal of sin and guilt from sacred places into (the) desert on (the) back of (the) goat, symb. of entire forgiveness.’

³⁶ Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, p. 658, אַזַּאֵל.

³⁷ Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, p. 297.

³⁸ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 593, אַזַּאֵל. Even he, though, states that it literally means ‘goat of departure.’

³⁹ God says in Lev. 17:11 that sacrificial blood is needed to atone for sin. Yes, there is an asterisk for a poor person who wasn’t able to offer an animal for his cleansing from sin (Lev. 5:11-13), but that’s exactly what it was—a special condescension of the Lord to the poor.

mained alive, and so, no propitiation or atonement could be made for whom it pictured, unlike the first goat, which provided atonement for Israel's sins by its substitutionary sacrificial death. As such, *Azazel* symbolized the *total removal* of all the unbelieving Hebrew from the Camp, not their sin—their selves!⁴⁰ *Scapegoat*, then, is not a good term for the second goat, *Azazel*,⁴¹ because it pictures the rebellious, goat-like Hebrew who was being far removed from his people and their God.

The concept for today is of the believer who says that he 'believes in Jesus,' but doesn't truly walk with Yeshua, like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). In this the believer is stubborn and 'goat-like' toward the Holy Spirit.

The first goat, although stubborn by nature, pictures the true believer, who, with the power of the Holy Spirit dies to self and becomes a new creature (2nd Cor. 5:17), a lamb like Yeshua. This is brought out by what Paul says about the two different kinds of believers:

“Do not be deceived! God is not mocked! For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap! For he who *sows to his flesh* will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Galatians 6:7-8)

Yom HaKipurim is a picture of Judgment Day, and as such, it reveals what will happen to the Body of Messiah—Yeshua will separate the true believers from the false ones—the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:31-46; cf. 7:13-20, 21-23). *Azazel* prophetically pictures the departure and total removal of all carnal believers from the Body of Messiah on the Day of Judgement (Rom 8:6). The faithless Christian (Mt. 25:14-33f.) will be sent into what the barren or solitary place in the Wilderness symbolized—Hell. It will be the total removal of faithless Christians from the eternal Camp of Israel—the New Jerusalem.

Eliyahu de Vidas (1518–1592), a Kabbalistic rabbi,⁴² conceptually said the same thing in that a Jew who didn't believe that the Messiah took upon Himself his sins, would have to carry them himself. Quoting the first part of Is. 53:5 and commenting on it he wrote:

“‘He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities’...since the Messiah bears our iniquities, which produce the effect of His being bruised, it follows that whoso will not admit that the Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities *must endure and suffer for them himself*.”⁴³

Another parallel with the 'stubborn believer' is that of the unclean Hebrew leper. The leper was sent to live *outside* the Camp all the days of his uncleanness. God states that the leper was to live alone, away from Israel:

‘He must remain unclean. All the days during which he has the disease, he is unclean. He must live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the Camp.’ (Lev. 13:46)

The leper's uncleanness, symbolically seen as sin, separated him from Israel. In Revelation, those people

⁴⁰ For example, of the 603,550 Sons of Israel whom God saved from Egyptian slavery, only two, Joshua and Caleb, made it into the Promised Land. All the other died in the Wilderness because of their unbelief (Numbers 1:46; 14:11-12, 26-35).

⁴¹ Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, p. 658, brings up a 'parallel to the scapegoat' in the cleansing of the leper, in the two birds of cleansing (Lev. 14:1-9), but while there are two goats for *Yom HaKipurim* and two birds for the cleansing of the leper, the two symbolize totally different things. In the ceremony for the cleansing of the leper, one bird was sacrificed, and the living bird had the dead bird's sacrificial blood placed upon it, and the blood was also placed upon the former leper. The live bird was then *set free to its natural habitat*, and so was the leper. There was no blood of the first goat placed or sprinkled upon the second goat and it went to a solitary place. The sins that were placed upon that second goat weren't atoned for, redeemed or removed. The Hebrew remained in his sins.

⁴² Kabbalah is not of God. It's Babylonian pagan mysticism 'in Jewish clothes.' See my article [Kabbalah](#).

⁴³ David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit; originally published in 1922; 2000), p. 13.

who are unclean (sinners) won't be allowed into the heavenly city of Jerusalem, but must live 'outside the Camp:'

'But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the Lake that burns with Fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' (Rev. 21:8)

'and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it' (the holy City), 'but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.' (Rev. 21:27)

'Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life, and may enter by the gates into the City. *Outside* are the dogs' (male cult prostitutes) 'and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.' (Rev. 22:14-15)

Symbolically speaking, Yeshua is not the second goat, commonly misnamed the scapegoat, as many teach, nor is the goat Satan or for Satan. The scenario for the Day of Atonement has Israel's sins already being forgiven by the sacrificial death of the *first* goat, whose blood was sprinkled on the Ark and also on the dirt in front of it, which represented Man (i.e. Israel). This allowed Israel's guilt and sins to be totally forgiven and for God to continue to dwell in the midst of carnal, yet believing, Israel. The second goat pictures the Hebrew and the Christian who, because of their stubborn goat-like nature, choose to not believe in God and His way of dealing with sin, and so their sin remains (cf. John 9:41).

The Prophetic Picture of the Day of Atonement

Unlike the spring and summer Feasts, with the Passover deliverance from Egypt and death and resurrection of the Lord, and the giving of the the Ten Commandments and the Holy Spirit to Israel on the same day,⁴⁴ respectively, the Day of Atonement has yet to see its prophetic fulfillment. The Day reflects the Great White Throne Judgment in Heaven:

'Then I saw a great white Throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence Earth and Heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the Throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. And they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.' (Rev. 20:11-15)

For the prophetic picture of *Yom HaKipurim* one must have the blood of the Lamb of God upon their soul to be written in the Book of Life. Before Judgment Day, though, Yahveh will save Israel 'after the flesh.' This should happen when Yeshua returns to reign for a thousand years as the heir to the Throne of Israel, being the Son of David (Luke 1:30-33). The Apostle Paul wrote of Israel's future salvation and said:

'For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this Mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so, *all Israel will be saved*. Just as it is written,'

'The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.'

⁴⁴ See [Pentecost—Shavu'ot](#) to understand that both the Word of God and the Spirit were given to Israel on this holy feast.

This is My Covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’ (Rom. 11:25-27)

The Prophet Zechariah writes what will happen to the Jewish people, and the nations that come against her:

‘And in that Day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. I will pour out on the House of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me, whom they have pierced. And they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son (who has died), and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.’ (Zech. 12:9-10)

‘In that Day a Fountain will be opened for the House of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.’ (Zech. 13:1)

When Israel looks upon Yeshua, the Pierced One, they will know both their blindness and their sinful hearts, and what God has done for them. They will be overwhelmed by their new understanding of who Yeshua is and they will weep bitterly over their past hatred, ignorance and blindness. The Father will not leave them there. His Fountain of Life will cleanse them from their sins and bring them into His Kingdom. Their past sins will be atoned for. The ‘sign’ that Yeshua spoke of will be His return to rule:

‘And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the Heavens, and then all the tribes of the Earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the Clouds of the Heavens, with power and great glory.’ (Mt. 24:30)

The traditional interpretation of ‘all the tribes of the Earth will mourn’ should be translated as, ‘all the Tribes of the Land (of Israel) will mourn.’⁴⁵ There’s no need for the ‘tribes of the Earth’ to mourn as many, if not most ‘tribes’ have people who already believe in Jesus. The Hebrew word for Earth and land (of Israel; ארץ ha’ah’retz) is identical. In this context the Lord is speaking of Israel recognizing Him; their Messiah.

The prophetic picture of the autumn Feasts should unfold like this:

1. First, the Tribulation. Israel, like much of the world, will be devastated, although God will not afflict every true believer with all of the plagues.⁴⁶
2. *Yom Truah* (The Feast of Trumpets): The King comes on this day to establish His rule in Jerusalem for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6). This is the Day of Joy Unspeakable expressed by tremendous shouting and praise (i.e. what *Yom Truah* is all about).⁴⁷
3. *Yom HaKipurim*: There are ten days from *Yom Truah* and *Yom HaKipurim*. This equates to the thousand year reign of Yeshua before what *Yom HaKipurim* symbolizes—the Day of Judgment, which should come right after the fiery judgment upon Gog and Magog (Ezk. 38:2, 3, 14f., Rev. 20:8).

Yom HaKipurim pictures the Day of Judgment for all mankind, immediately after the thousand year reign of Messiah Yeshua in this earthly Jerusalem (Rev. 20:4-6).

⁴⁵ David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 74. This also has implications for what Yeshua says in Mt. 5:5, 13, etc. Yes, it can also mean ‘the earth,’ but context determines whether it’s the land of Israel or the earth/world.

⁴⁶ See [The Feast of Trumpets](#) for how the Tribulation is an amplification of the plagues that God brought upon Egypt through Moses and Aaron, and also, a detailed picture of the end times.

⁴⁷ See [The Feast of Trumpets](#) for why Yeshua will return on this Day and not the Feast of Tabernacles.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM AND THE DAY

In 70 AD the Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by Roman legions under the command of Titus. With no Temple, the Rabbis said there could be no sacrifice.⁴⁸ With no sacrifice, God's way to forgive sin, either on a daily basis or for *Yom HaKipurim*, was negated. Also, the sacrificial functions of the Aaronic Priests, as designed by Yahveh, could not continue. The Rabbis became the sole religious authority for the Jewish people and they filled the vacuum and carnally devised another way to deal with sins. This is when and why 'Orthodox Judaism' or 'Rabbinic Judaism' rose to prominence over the Temple, its sacrifices and the Aaronic Priesthood, which God had ordained, under Moses, to be the religious authority. Orthodox Judaism is not what God gave to Israel. It lacks the very center or core of Israel's relationship with Yahveh: Tabernacle (and later Temple), priests and sacrifices for forgiveness of sins, with the priests as the God-ordained authority teaching the people, not the Rabbis (Lev. 10:8-11; Dt. 33:8-10).

The Rabbis substitute for sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, the doing of good works or justice (throughout the year), continually 'returning to God' through prayer, and fasting and prayer on the Day of Atonement and the reading of the ceremonial passage on atonement in Lev. 16 in the synagogue. They say that God will accept this reading of the passage as though the High Priest had offered up the prescribed sacrifices for the day. Of course, God never said.

The Rabbis authorized their concept for the forgiveness of sins on *Yom HaKipurim* by twisting Scripture from Hosea that says, 'For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings' (Hos. 6:6). With that they set up a system of religion that 'looks like Moses,' but lacks the vital substance. This is Israel 'doing its best,' but it's not good enough.

Some Orthodox Jews, knowing the importance of sacrificial blood for forgiveness of sin (Lev. 16:1f.; 17:11, etc.) will take a rooster or a chicken, a day or two before *Yom HaKipurim*, and slay it for their atonement. This is condemned by most Rabbis, but one can easily see the tension between what the Rabbis offer and what Yahveh demands for the forgiveness of sins.

The synagogues are packed on this Day,⁴⁹ with the whole Jewish community collectively seeking forgiveness from God. For the previous nine days, since the rabbinic, but not biblical, *Rosh HaShannah* (the rabbinic New Year), they have been seeking forgiveness for past sins against their fellow man. On this day, they direct their thoughts wholly to God, although what the Rabbis teach the Jewish people to do is not biblical. The Rabbis say that on *Yom HaKipurim* the judgment for one's life, for the *coming* year, is entered into the 'Book' and is sealed. This, of course, has nothing to do with the Day of Atonement for one's *past* sins, but is rabbinic superstition for the future.

They eat no food nor water on this Day, which is biblical. It's a complete fast, just as Moses, Elijah and Yeshua did.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Jews are not allowed to bathe on this day, yet this is something that the High Priest did twice (Lev. 16:4, 24). If God commanded the High Priest to bathe twice it seems reasonable that Jews should be able to bathe once on this day, but perhaps this reveals that even with the best of intentions, the Jewish people, coming to the synagogue, come unbathed and dirty, and leave 'unclean;' their

⁴⁸ Technically, sacrifice can be made with an altar set up for the priests in Jerusalem. Be that as it may, the Aaronic and Levitical Priesthoods were out of a job and the Rabbis usurped and ascended to their authority, which they retain to this day. That's one reason why many Rabbis don't want the Temple to be rebuilt—their prominence among the Jewish people would be drastically diminished.

⁴⁹ The rabbinic Day of Atonement usually falls a day or two before the biblical date for the Day of Atonement because the Rabbis don't follow the biblical sighting of the new moons to begin the new biblical months. See p. 1, note 2, for the site where all the correct dates for the Feasts of Israel can be seen. Sometimes, as in 2013, the Rabbis (and Messianic Jews which follows the rabbinic dates) can be off by as much as a month (early).

⁵⁰ See p. 4, note 14, for the Scripture cites of their fasts.

sins still clinging to them and weighing them down. They need to know Messiah Yeshua and what He has done for them.

The wearing of cosmetics and deodorants, etc., is also prohibited, along with the wearing of leather shoes, which symbolized luxury in ancient times. On this day, all men and women are equal. Money and status don't matter, at least, theoretically (and hence, no leather shoes).

Most of these restrictions are lifted where a threat to life or health is involved. In fact, children under the age of nine, and women in childbirth (from the time labor begins until three days after birth) are not permitted to fast, even if they want to. Older children and women, from the third to the seventh day after childbirth, are permitted to fast, but are permitted to break the fast if they feel the need to.

The night before, the night of *Yom HaKipurim*, there can be no sexual relations. This finds biblical validity in when Israel met Yahveh at Mt. Sinai. God demanded that for the three days preceding it, no one was to engage in sex (Ex. 19:15). Also, *Yom HaKipurim*, being an annual holy Sabbath, relations between men and women are restricted because God speaks of abstaining from what is pleasurable for us (Isaiah 58:13) and what would make us unclean.⁵¹

It's customary to wear white on this day. It symbolizes purity and calls to mind the promise that one's sins shall be made as white as snow (Is. 1:18). Some people wear a Kittel, a white robe in which they will be buried. Both the color and the fact that it's clothes that one is buried in, convey the sense of one's desire to be white and pure (sinless) before Yahveh and totally focused on Him (dead to self).

The Rabbis have made their Day of Atonement a whole day of prayer in the synagogue. In Orthodox synagogues services begin before sundown and go into the night. The people return early in the morning (about 8 AM or earlier) and continue until about 2 PM, then go home for an afternoon nap and return around 4 PM for the afternoon and evening services, which continue until nightfall. The services end shortly after dark with the blowing of *tekiah gedolah*, a long blast on the shofar. There is usually some form of refreshment, such as watermelon, served before the people go home to eat a meal.

HOW TO OBSERVE THE DAY

Everyone who believes in Messiah Yeshua should fast and pray for forgiveness and cleansing of sins for the past year on *Yom HaKipurim*.⁵² I believe that it's on this day that Yeshua, as our High Priest, seeks forgiveness, every year, for His earthly Bride for all her sins of the past year from the Father. The Apostles, *after* the Resurrection, held this Day in reverence, while keeping all the other Feasts as well.⁵³

⁵¹ In having intercourse the two become unclean until the next evening at darkness (Lev. 15:16-18), which means that if they are intimate on Friday night they cannot go into the Temple compound to worship on Shabat.

⁵² The Rabbis give exceptions to this commandment and I agree with them. They also say that nursing mothers should drink water, and if they need to eat, to eat something. If one is sick or on medication, etc., the fast can be altered to their needs. As in everything, seek Yeshua's counsel in this for either yourself or a loved one.

⁵³ Ex. 23:14, 17; 34:23-24; Acts 20:6, 16; 21:20, 24; 27:9; 1st Cor. 5:6-8. In Acts 27:9, Luke speaks of inadvisable sailing weather because 'the Fast' (the *Jewish Day of Atonement!*, Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32) had already passed. James B. Pritchard, *The Harper Atlas of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), p. 172 writes, 'Uncertain weather made sea travel risky' from 15 Sept. (to) 10 Nov., but from '11 November (to) 10 March because of short days, dense cloud cover, poor visibility and strong winds' it was dangerous 'and the seas were closed.' Luke's use of the Feasts as time markers indicates that all Christians kept the Feasts of Israel during the time of the Apostles. This is indirectly confirmed by Eusebius (260-340 AD) a Church bishop historian-theologian. See his account of the many Christians opposing the Roman Catholic Easter, wanting to keep Passover, about 180 AD, in his *History Ecclesiastical* 5, 23-24. Eusebius became Bishop of Caesarea about 314 AD. For more on this see [Sabbath Denigration](#). Also, ask for the PDF *Passover, Sabbath, Sunday and the Lord's Supper*.

I fast all day from darkness until darkness the following day, not sunset to sunset.⁵⁴ No food and no water. It's an affliction and a humbling before God (Lev. 23:27, 29, 32). On a 'normal fast' one drinks only water, but believe it or not it's actually easier to fast a day without water than with water. This is because the body, once satiated with water, wants food, but if there's no water than that becomes the point that the body focuses on, and food doesn't seem that needful, and the fast seems easier.

As you come up to the fast you might want to eat 'light.' Eat things that day like salad, brown rice, vegetables, brothy soups, fruit and plenty of water. This will help the next day.⁵⁵

Break the fast with water first, then some watermelon or an orange if you can. If that's not possible perhaps some brothy soup. A bowl of soup and a light sandwich, or egg and salad should be enough for the night. Of course, many sit down to a full meal and live to regret it, both before and after the fast.

It's wonderful to have a full 24 hour period to seek our Lord and to just be with Him. To pray and commune with the Master for hours on end is truly a rare privilege, although, theoretically, we can do this on the Sabbath, too. Actually, this Day is what Yahveh made us for—to fellowship and spend precious quality time with the Father and the Son, and to come to know Them in a greater way and to fall in love with Them all over again for what They have done for us. In this humbling or affliction of going without food and water, symbolically we are 'dead to self.' To afflict oneself means not only to forego food and water. It also means to 'stand' before Yeshua as 'dead' or in humility, realizing that we have nothing to offer Him for our salvation but He, Himself. Ask Yeshua, at the beginning of the fast, to lead you as to what to do, how to pray and who to pray for, and how to wait upon Him. Here are some conceptual points for you to consider:

1. It's a time specifically with our Father and to ask for all our sins of the past year to be forgiven. We want to be honest with Him about our sins, our failures and our distractions. We have nothing to boast of or to say that we have earned a favorable judgment on our behalf. It's a total gift from Him. He sacrificed His Son so that we can be forgiven, cleansed and glorified. Ask Him to realize His total forgiveness and cleansing for our sins of the past year. It's on *Yom HaKipurim* that we can come into a greater understanding of the divine love and forgiveness and what it cost Them.
2. It's also a time to meditate on our death so that we can more fully obey Yeshua in this life. This is a greater consecration unto Him as we re-dedicate and re-consecrate ourselves to our King. As He came to do the will of the Father, so we too should have the same desire to do His will.
3. It's a time to be quiet before Him, waiting upon Him, listening for His voice. It's a time to be in His presence.
4. It's a time to express our deep gratitude and thanksgiving for what He has done for us.
5. It's a time to praise and to worship Him and to also read Scripture. Some texts to consider are Lev. 16:1-24; 23:26-32; Mt. 26-28 and Rev. 20-22. Even though Matthew deals with *Pesach* (Passover) it shows us Yeshua and what He went through so that we could have atonement on the 10th day of the 7th month every year, and also, on the Day of Judgment.
6. It's a time to forgive, from our heart, with His help, those who have hurt us and have offended us. If we can't, we can ask Yeshua to help us to do it. He will. He is Faithful and He loves us.
7. It's also a time to pray for others, both believers and unbelievers, and also, the Jewish people, the apple of God's eye (Zech. 2:8; Rom. 11:22f.).

On this Day we pray especially for ourselves first, to be centered in Him, and that we would come to a deeper experiential understanding of where we are at in Him. Ruti and I then turn ourselves to lifting up

⁵⁴ For why sunset is not the biblical line of demarcation between each day see [When Does The Sabbath Begin?](#)

⁵⁵ Upon arising one may rinse his mouth out with water and also brush his teeth, taking care not to swallow any water.

others, our family members, both believers and unbelievers, our friends and acquaintances. As the Lord leads, we pray for each of them and each other.

After that we turn our attention on the Jewish people and pray for them, that Yeshua would remove the veil that blinds them to Him, and that our efforts to bring them to Yeshua would bear much fruit. Also, of course, we're open to anything that the Holy Spirit wants to do through us for others. This guideline is not set in concrete, but is a flexible guideline that we follow, allowing the Holy Spirit to direct us.

The Lord has called us to follow Him, to be obedient and forgiving unto death. At the very least, death to self. For this we must seek Him, continually. Johannes Schneider, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, writes that there are five places in the Synoptic Gospels where it's recorded that Yeshua speaks of picking up our cross and following Him.⁵⁶ We must be ever learning who our Messiah is that 'we believe in' (Mt. 11:28-30; 23:8, etc.). Schneider says that he who lives a lifestyle that doesn't conform to Him is His enemy (Phil. 3:18).⁵⁷ He also says that,

'the proper starting' point 'is the carrying of the cross by the condemned man. This suggests a beginning of discipleship, *which then becomes a lasting state*.'⁵⁸

We must be ready to suffer, even unto death, for the Name of our precious Yeshua. With this heart attitude we will bear much fruit for Him, and when the Day of Judgment comes at the End of Time we will hear Him say,

'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your Master.' (Matt. 25:21)

What a blessing that will be! We are His servants. He has bought us with the price of His own blood (1st Cor. 7:23). We must be about our Messiah's Business. This is the heart attitude to have on *Yom HaKipurim* and every other day thereafter.

Why Do We Observe the Day?

Here are seven reasons why we must observe *Yom HaKipurim*:

1. To obey Yahveh, the God of Israel, our God (Lev. 23:26-32).
2. To follow in the footsteps of Messiah Yeshua. He observed *Yom HaKipurim* all His life.
3. All the Apostles and believers continued to observe the Day, as well as all the Feasts of Israel, after the resurrection (Acts 20:6, 16; 21:20, 24; 27:9, 1st Cor. 5:6-8), and so should we.
4. To 'find out' exactly where we are with Yeshua, taking the whole day to seek Him.
5. To experientially know that our sins are forgiven for the past year and that we are 'clean' before our God.
6. To spend 24 hours (at least our waking hours) seeking His presence.
7. To act as priests of Messiah Yeshua and lift up family, friends and the Jewish people in prayer.

As we enter into the reality of the Day we find Him and ourselves in a way that no other day can bring us. For on this Day we come to sense the complete and total removal of our sins by our High Priest Yeshua, year after year after year. How can the Father continue to dwell within us, we who are a lot like ancient,

⁵⁶ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Editors, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 577. Mt. 10:38; 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23; 14:27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 576.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 578.

goat-like Israel? Because of the ever present blood of Yeshua our Messiah. Let us reverently and gratefully bow down before Him and be silent.

The Father is very serious about our observance of *Yom HaKipurim*. His mentioning that Israelis would be cut off is the most powerful way for Him to express the importance of the day for all of us. It's a time to renew our faith and trust in Him. It's a full day of fasting, praying, praise and Scripture, and of 'lying before Him prostrate,' that we might see afresh our position and place in Yeshua, and what He's done for us in forgiving our sins, as believers, and making us holy. It's a time of reaffirming and receiving from Yeshua our High Priest, a greater understanding of who He is, and what He has done for us. Then, as the Spirit leads, we may pray for Jews and Gentiles to come to believe in Messiah Yeshua, along with our friends, relatives and anyone else the Lord brings to mind.

CONCLUSION

Yom HaKipurim, the Day of Atonement, was the holiest day of the year for ancient Israel, and rightfully so, as God forgave and cleansed Israel of all her sins of the past year by the sacrifice of a goat, reestablishing the initial purity and holiness that originally existed between them (from the first Passover sacrifice in Egypt). Aaron, the first High Priest of Israel, pictures Yeshua, both in His humanity and glory, as his clothes changed from simple linen garments to glorious jewel studded ones. The redemption, atonement, forgiveness and cleansing from sins of ancient Israel on *Yom HaKipurim* was God's way of loving Israel and being able to continue to dwell among them.

Yeshua is pictured in the sacrificial goat because it symbolizes believing Israel, stubborn and rebellious, but with a heart to surrender to God and die to self. In this, Yeshua had the opportunity to be goat-like, but He chose instead to fully surrender Himself to His Father, who gave Him the power to choose righteousness over sin. That same power, the Holy Spirit, is inherent in all of us, to overcome our goat-like nature and choose God instead of self.

The goat that remained alive and which was driven into the Wilderness pictures the Hebrew who didn't truly believe in God, and also the Christian who has chosen to remain goat-like or as Paul writes, carnal:

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8)

They will find out on Judgment Day that they failed to please their Lord (Mt. 7:21-23; Luke 8:5f., etc.), and He will send them to the 'barren Wilderness' of the Lake of Fire.

The Father sacrificed His own Son, Yeshua, so that the guilt and sin that we have, *as believers*, can be corporately forgiven every year, and so, we can have intimate and holy fellowship with the Father, especially on *Yom HaKipurim*, and in the New Jerusalem. Yeshua is truly our precious Redeemer, and oh yes, what a Father we have! What love He has bestowed upon us!

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⁵⁹ This article was updated on 19 October 2018.