



The Feast of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The Feast of Yom Kippur/The Day of Atonement was established as a Feast of the Lord in Leviticus 23:27-28, 31-32. We also see this Feast of the Lord mentioned in Leviticus 16:30-31 and Numbers 29:7. It is to be "celebrated" on the 10th of Tishrei - 10 days from Rosh HaShanah. Leviticus 23:27-28 tells us - *"Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. 28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God."*

I would like to make mention at this point that the Bible is clear to refer to these "feasts" as "**Feasts of the Lord.**" These seven feasts mentioned in Leviticus are not to be thought of as "Jewish Feasts." God explicitly declares that these are **His** feasts, "Feasts of the Lord," and that it is He that is giving the invitation to **everyone** to come and partake of them. Leviticus 23:1, 2 and 4, tells us very clearly that these are "**Festivals of the Lord,**" not "feasts of the Jews." They are for Him and His purposes. They are for everyone "who has ears to hear" to hear with spiritual understanding and not religious ritualistic concepts.

Yom Kippur is the second of the three "Autumn Feasts of the Lord." All three of the "Autumn Feasts" - Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) - are yet to be fulfilled and will be fulfilled by Jesus at His second coming in the end times. The first four feasts, Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of First Fruits (Bikkurim) and Pentecost, take place in the spring. All of these "spring feasts" have been prophetically fulfilled by Jesus at His first coming through His crucifixion and resurrection and by the infilling of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

As we discuss Yom Kippur, it is important to first get a proper understanding of the term "atonement." The term "atonement" as used in Leviticus comes from the Hebrew word "*kaphar*" which means - cover over with pitch; to purge or make reconciliation for sin and/or for wrongs done by people through a legal rite or rituals. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "atonement" - as reparation; a payment for or satisfaction for an offense or injury.

The concept of "atonement" as established by God was to free the people from the "wages" or consequences of their sin. The major consequence was separation and a breach in relation from God. God told the Israelites to sacrifice an animal as a substitute for their sins which if not "atoned" for would sentence them to spiritual death and destruction (Romans 6:23, *"The wages of sin is death..."*). This "life for a life" principle is the foundation of the Levitical sacrificial system.

In Jewish tradition, Yom Kippur is also referred to as "Yom HaDin" (Day of Judgment). It is to be a day dedicated to atonement, abstinence/fasting and no work. In Leviticus 23:29-30, it clearly states that any deviation from this would cause that person to be "cut off from his people..." - *"For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people."* Therefore, God looks at this "feast" very seriously and so and He wanted His people to take it seriously.

We must remember that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are very much connected with each other. (Please, see my discussion on Rosh HaShanah found at <https://simplysimpleworship.com/Rosh%20HaShanah.pdf>.) On Rosh HaShanah it is traditionally believed that the "Gates of heaven" and the "books" of that past year are opened. There is then a ten day span between these two feasts called "the Ten Days of Awe." These "Ten days of Awe" are to be days of solemn reflection, self examination, true repentance and used to perform charitable deeds (mitzvahs) in preparation for Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is the culmination of the "Ten Days of Awe" leading to how God will judge one's life and lot for the coming year. On Yom Kippur it is traditionally believed that the "Gates of Heaven" as well as the "books" of one's life and lot for the coming year are then closed. Hence the term used, "Day of Judgment."

Leviticus 16 specifies the "10th of Tishrei" as the date on which the high priest shall conduct a special ceremony/ritual to purge sin from both the Tabernacle (Moses' day)/ Temple (Solomon's) and from the people as a nation. The High Priest would bring a bull and two goats as a special offering. First, the bull would be sacrificed to purge the temple from any defilement caused by misdeeds of the priest himself and/or of his household (Leviticus 16:6).

Secondly, one of the goats is chosen "by lot" to be sacrificed (slaughtered) and its blood would be sprinkled on the "Mercy Seat" of the ark of the Covenant found in the "Holy of Holies." This was done to purge the Temple (the dwelling place of God) and the people (the nation) of their sins. (Leviticus 16:7-8). Finally, the second goat is sent away. It was not slaughtered.

Prior to this second goat being sent out, the High Priest would lay both his hands upon its head and "confess" and transfer all the iniquities and sins of the Israelites over to that goat. Leviticus 16:20-22 tells us, *"The goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region..."* The goat is marked with a red cloth tied around the horns and it is called in Hebrew, "Azazel" or "scapegoat." The goat is then taken out of the city to "wander" in the wilderness/dessert. The goat was then led to a steep cliff in the wilderness, which was considered to be an abyss, and shoved off the cliff.

We must remember that everything in the Jewish scriptures which we refer to as the "Old Testament," points to Jesus. More importantly is that every aspect of the sacrificial system initiated by God to the Jewish people, the animal sacrifices, the grain sacrifices, water sacrifices, etc., were symbolically pointing to Jesus. Hebrews 10:1 tell us, *"For the law having a **SHADOW** of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."*

In all that Jesus did while on the earth, ultimately His life was to be the "Final Sacrifice" acceptable to God that would be applied to and would satisfy **every one** of the different sacrifices as describe within the scriptures. In and through Jesus, every sacrificial offering was accomplished in its fullest capacity and its purpose in restoration, redemption and/or anything else was fulfilled. There is absolutely no longer any need for the restoration of the Levitical sacrificial system.

Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD by the Romans, the Jewish sacrificial system has never been reestablished. There have been absolutely no sacrifices offered because they all had to be done within the Temple complex and with the articles found within the Temple. Is this a coincidence? Absolutely not!!! Jesus fulfilled the role of all the sacrifices as well as completing the role of the High Priest in the sacrificial system. Jesus is and forever will be, both - the Final Sacrifice and our High Priest.

Hebrews 9:26,27, *"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."* However, it is very important to remember that Jesus **did not** put an end to the "behavioral" or "lifestyle" commandments of living a life of holiness and sanctification.

Jesus fulfills all aspects of the sacrifices that were to be accomplished on Yom Kippur. He became the "bull sacrifice" for the priests to be able to be cleansed so that they can enter in to the Holy of Holies. Jesus is our High Priest. As High Priest He offered Himself as the sacrifice for all priests. Through Jesus, we as "a holy priesthood" unto the Lord, now have access into the presence of God.

Jesus became the sacrifice of the "scapegoat." Again, as our High Priest, He placed upon Himself and took upon Himself the sins of the nation of Israel as well as the world. He symbolically was "banished" to the desert place and "shoved off" the cliff into the depths of Hades taking all our sins and its penalty as a propitiation for all our sins through His blood. (Romans 3:25)

Jesus was the sacrificed goat who was "chosen by lot." Pilate had the people choose between Barabbas and Jesus. The people chose Barabbas. Jesus was the sacrificial goat whose blood was sprinkled upon the "mercy seat" within the Holy of Holies by the High Priest for not just the sins of the Jewish people but for the sins of the world. (Hebrews 10:4; Hebrews 9:12)

Referring to our definition of "atonement" we must remember that part of the Hebrew definition of the term "atonement" was "to cover over with pitch." We see that Jesus died on the cross as a substitute that "covered" our sins with His blood for us. We all deserved death because we all sinned against God. (Romans 3:23) The price of atonement or the "ransom price for blood" (a person's life) to make atonement for the guilty party as well as for sin, was 30 pieces of silver. (Exodus 21:32; Zechariah 11:13-14) The priests "paid" Judas 30 pieces of silver. The priests themselves called it "blood money." (Matthew 27:3-6)

There is a great spiritual significance concerning the Feast of Yom Kippur to believers today that we must grasp. Please, note that I am not saying that we must keep these feasts with all its rituals but I do believe that if we as believers today have a good understanding, not just of Yom Kippur but of all the Feasts of the Lord, it will enrich our relationship with our God and we also would get a better understanding of the times that are coming for believers and all the earth— the "end times." Let's see.

On Rosh HaShanah the shofar would blow one long blast. That sound of the shofar is called in Jewish tradition, "The Last Trump." Remember Rosh HaShanah's significance and what it symbolizes.

- It was the Day that the "books" were opened and names were "written" in them concerning the "destiny" of each individual for the coming year.
- It was representative of "heavens gates opening."
- It was symbolic of the coming and coronation of the true appointed king.
- It is a "call" to awaken from our "spiritual sleep" and repent and turn towards Him. It ushers in a time called the "Ten Days of Awe." A time of true preparation for Yom Kippur.

As I had mentioned in a previous discussion, I believed that in the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" Jesus was referencing things concerning Rosh HaShanah and the Ten Days of Awe. In the same way, I believe that in His final parable to His disciples, The "Parable of the Sheep and the Goats" (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus was referencing Yom Kippur. Let's see.

The last three of His parables as found in Matthew 25 were used by Jesus to emphasize the importance of being a true believer and a true disciple of His as they would be awaiting His second coming. The parable prior to this last parable was "The Parable of the Talents." Jesus was telling His disciples through that parable that they were to not only be watchful of His return but they were to "occupy" and bring forth the works of the Kingdom and preach the Good News until He returns. By "works" He did not just mean healing, and other signs and wonders.

He meant that they were truly to be His ambassadors in their **character and lifestyle** of love, grace and mercy. In the "Parable of the Talents" Jesus referenced these "works" as "talents." They were the characteristics of a Christ like lifestyle in which Jesus role modeled. His disciples would be "given" these "talents" (characteristics or we can say also say the fruit of the Spirit) through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. These were the "works" (His characteristics) that Jesus was more concerned about. These would be the true "fruit" which would expose and reveal who is a true disciple of His and who was not.

As with the previous two parables, "The Ten Virgins" and the "Parable of the Talents," Jesus was expressing the end times. In these last three parables Jesus was also placing His whole time that He has been with these twelve disciples (these past 3½ years) into perspective. Jesus was revealing to them the blessings those who believe in Him as their Messiah, their Lord and their Savior and choose to live their lives as such.

Jesus was expressing that the "Kingdom of God" which He was bringing to this earth and now entrusting to disciples until He returns, is all about living a "Christ-like" lifestyle and expressing the character and nature of God to anyone and everyone that they would come in contact with. That was the real "power" that He was to give to His disciples.

Once relationship was restored through the blood of the final atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the Holy Spirit would now come within the believer and empower the believer. This was the "power," or rather I should say, **the ability**, to live the lifestyle taught in the Torah and lived out by Jesus. It was the lifestyle of holiness and obedience that is pleasing to God. It is a lifestyle that can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers in Jesus. His entire ministry on this earth was based on this premise.

Jesus was to reveal to the Jewish people the true intent of the Law. The Law was to be their "schoolmaster" to teach them how a people of Yahweh, were to live their lifestyle. It was to be a lifestyle that expressed the character of their God. They were to express His character of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, kindness, peace, faithfulness and self control to every nation, tribe and tongue. If they would live this lifestyle, they would experience all the blessings and goodness of God.

Rosh HaShanah and the ensuing "Ten Days of Awe" were to be days of deep reflection and repentance by the people as they would hear the sound of the shofar. This sounding of the shofar was to bring them to recognize their failure in living that lifestyle expressed through the Torah – the book of teachings and instruction. They were to use this time period to reflect, repent and turn towards living the lifestyle in which God had intended for them as His people.

Remember, on Rosh HaShanah, it is thought that the "Gates of Heaven" would be opened. On Yom Kippur it was thought that the "Gates of Heaven" are closed. This ultimately, represented that judgment was brought forth. This is revealed in the "Parable of the Sheep and the Goats." The "sheep," the true children of God, would be separated from the goats, the pretenders and everyone else.

Notice, Jesus makes a direct relationship between the actions of the people and their "reward" or "judgment." It was their lifestyle and actions towards others. A person's lifestyle and actions reflect and reveal the person's attitude of heart. If their sinful ways and actions were not repented of then they would be considered "goats." If they did act and did live a lifestyle as taught by the Torah and ultimately role modeled by Jesus, they were considered as "sheep" to be placed on the "right hand" just as Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. They are the true "sheep of His pasture." (Psalm 95:7)

The "Parable of the Sheep and the Goats" brings a concluding thought to everything - it reveals what will take place just prior to the "closing of Heaven's gates" as expressed through Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur points to the "Day of Judgment." In the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" the door is shut and Jesus tells those who did not have the oil that He did not know them. Jesus in these parables gives His disciples a little glimpse into the events of "that Day of Judgment."

We see this expressed further in the Apostle John's vision of "that Day" in Revelation 20:11 - *"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were*

in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

It is important to make mention that **Jesus never tells us that the "good works" mentioned in these parables are the cause of a person's salvation.** The thought that He was expressing was that **these actions and other similar actions would be the causative affect of salvation** within a person's heart and then manifested in their lifestyle.

In Matthew 25:13, Jesus states it clearly, *"...and they were judged every man according to their works."* Why? Because it is the "lifestyle" and character of a person that truly reflects what the inner attitude of heart of that person truly is. Everything will be exposed. All hearts will be revealed. The true disciples of Jesus will be revealed.

- For the "sheep," those who have been faithful, ready, prepared, watchful and true disciples of Jesus - *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.."* (Matthew 25:34)
- For the "goat," the pretender, the hypocrite, the covetous, the self-righteous and those who reject Jesus for who He is as the Lord, Savior, Messiah and Son of God - *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* (Matthew 25:45)

In concluding this brief discussion on Yom Kippur, the important aspect to keep in mind is that in "Jewish tradition," Yom Kippur is considered the most solemn day of the year. It is to be a day to strictly observe its commands of fasting and doing nothing but praying and turning towards God. On Yom Kippur, the next shofar blast is to be sounded. In Jewish tradition, this shofar blast is called, "The Great Trump." Again, this is a blast that declares "Final Judgment." This is the day, as stated previously, when the "gates of Heaven" are closed and judgment has been sealed. We can now understand than the solemnity of Yom Kippur.

Paul refers to this in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17, *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout**, with the voice of the archangel, and **with the trump of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* Jesus referred to this as well in Matthew 24:31, *"And he shall send his angels with **a great sound** of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Yom Kippur is also referred to as the "Day of Face to Face." This was the only day that the High Priest would be able to "meet with God face to face" as a representative of the people. He would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the "mercy seat" of the "Ark of the Covenant" with the blood of the sacrificed lamb. This would bring forgiveness and God's mercy upon the nation for another year. However, today as believers we have the ability to have a "face to face" relationship with our God every day because of the final sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Jesus, through His final atonement, tore the "veil of separation" that separated people from their God. Mark 15:38) Yom Kippur points to the day when we shall truly behold our God face to face. *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."* - Revelation 1:7

Yom Kippur commemorates times of deep reflection and repentance. It points to the Day that is soon coming when those who are true believers, the true sheep, will hear those words that we all long to hear as we are directed to the right hand of the Father, *"Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* Oh, what a day that will be!!!!