

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-34)

Review

In our study of the Feasts of the Lord, the seven observances or festivals given to Israel in the Law, we have seen: The spring feasts are all in some way related to and were a picture of the First Advent

Passover – His death

First Fruits – His resurrection

Unleavened Bread – the call to live a life free from leaven (spiritual walk)

Pentecost – God reveals Himself to Israel (and the Church)

The fall feasts, as we are seeing, are related to the Second Advent. Last week we looked at Rosh HaShanah, which is the beginning of the Jewish civil calendar (Passover was the beginning of the religious calendar).

Rosh HaShanah is a picture of the Rapture of the Church. But, you say, “This is a Jewish feast? The Rapture is really about the Church....” True, but Jews are believers during the CA, and the rapture is an event that signals God’s return to dealing with Israel after the removal of the Church. That makes it very important to Israel.

Leading to Rosh HaShanah was a month-long call to examine the Scriptures and to repentance or you will find yourselves in the Days of Awe (Tribulation). The Days of Awe, High Holy Days, come immediately after Rosh HaShanah and run through Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur, also called the Day of Atonement

Lev 16:1 The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died, ² and the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ³ But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body,

and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. ⁵ And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

⁶ “Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. ⁷ Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁸ And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. ⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering, ¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

¹¹ “Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. ¹² And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil ¹³ and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die. ¹⁴ And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

¹⁵ “Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. ¹⁶ Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

¹⁷ No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. ¹⁸ Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. ¹⁹ And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger

seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

²⁰ “And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. ²¹ And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.

²² The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

²³ “Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there. ²⁴ And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar.

²⁶ And he who lets the goat go to Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire. ²⁸ And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

²⁹ “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰ For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins. ³¹ It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever. ³² And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. ³³ He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴ And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.

It is the one day of the year in which the High Priest and only the High Priest can go behind the veil in the Temple into the Holy of Holies.

Lev 16:2 ...and the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

Heb 9:6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷ but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

No others were allowed behind the veil on the pain of death. Tradition holds that the High Priest had a rope tied around him so that if he should die while in there, his body could be pulled from behind the veil.

Yom Kippur is the day in which the sins of Israel are “atoned for” and the word means “covered”. The idea is that the blood of the sacrifices that day “cover” or “hide” the sins of Israel both corporately and individually. Israel’s sins are hidden for one year only, and the ritual must be repeated 12 months later, year after year after year. This is, of course, a picture of what Christ would do on the Cross once and forever.

It is celebrated ten days after Rosh HaShanah on Tishrei 10, the tenth day of the seventh month. (Lev 23:27; Num 29:7). Why ten days? Why not seven if this span between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur represents the seven year tribulation? Because the number 10 is associated with human government, and this is a period of human government completely run amok.

Dan 7:23 “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and

another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings

Rev 17:12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

And to the Jewish people, the number ten represents a legal congregation known as a *minyan* or one body that can represent a group. So, the number ten represented the nations and the congregation of Israel (Lev 16:2-3,17,19). The tribulation is the final judgment on Israel and the unrepentant nations, but does not include the true church.

***Yom Kippur* is a day of fasting and affliction of the soul** (Lev 23:27,29; Num 29:7). This day was set aside as a day of national fasting mentioned in Joel 1:14-15; 2:12-18; and Ezra 8:21. The spiritual understanding for us is given in Isaiah 58:1-12. Fasting is one of the most important of the commandments leading to atonement.

The Torah says no less than three times, "And this shall be to you a law for all times: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you shall practice self-denial" (Lev 16:29; 23:27; Num 29:7). This is another of the Feasts of the Lord that will be carried out forever.

The traditional Jewish understanding interprets self-denial as fasting. *Yom Kippur* is known as "The Fast Day."

The Great Shofar

As mentioned, there are three primary *shofarim* (trumpets) to the Jewish people and these three trumpets are associated with specific days in the year. These three trumpets are:

- "The First Trump," blown and associated with Pentecost
- "The Last Trump," the last of a series of trumpets blown daily leading up to and is associated with *Rosh HaShanah*
- "The Great Trump," blown and associated with *Yom Kippur*.

It is on *Yom Kippur* when the Great Trumpet, known in Hebrew as the *Shofar HaGadol* is blown. This is referred to in Isaiah 27:13 and Matthew 24:31. (Some translations say “great” some say “loud”).

Mat 24:29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a **loud trumpet call**, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The biblical name for the day of Atonement is *Yom HaKippurim*, meaning “the day of covering, canceling, pardon, reconciling.” God told the Israelites to sacrifice an animal as a substitute for their own death sentence. This life for a life principle is the foundation of the Mosaic sacrificial system.

Messianic Fulfillment.

Yeshua died on the tree as a substitute for us, who deserved death because we sinned against God. *Yeshua* paid the ransom price for us to God (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:5-6; 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). The Greek word *hilasmos*, translated as “propitiation,” has the same meaning as the Hebrew word *kaphar*, which is translated as “atonement” (Rom 3:23-25; 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10). Basically, it means to be appeased or satisfied.

The purpose of the Day of Atonement was to teach us about *Yeshua*, who is our atonement and ransomed us from the bondage of sin with His life (Hebrews 10:1-10)

Understanding the Priestly Service for Yom Kippur

The heart of the ritual is that the high priest (*Cohen HaGadol*) shall bring a bull and two goats as a special offering.

- First, the bull is sacrificed to purge the Temple from any defilements caused by misdeeds of the priest himself and of his household (Lev16:6).

- Secondly, one of the goats is chosen by lot to be sacrificed to purge the Temple of any similar defilement stimulated by misdeeds of the whole Israelite people (Lev 16:7-8).
- Finally, the second goat is not sacrificed but is sent away. This one is to cleanse the people themselves and is called the “scapegoat”. Before the goat is sent out, the high priest lays both his hands upon its head and confesses over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their misdeeds, and so putting them on the head of the goat. Thus, the Torah adds, "The goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region..." (Lev 16:20-22).

Azazel: The Scapegoat

The Hebrew word for scapegoat is *azazel*. The sins of the people and thus the punishment of the people were laid upon the scapegoat. (Lev 16:21-22). Two golden lots are drawn for the two goats; one with the right hand of the high priest and one with his left hand. In Lev 16:8, the first lot said, "*La Adonai*" (To the Lord). The second lot said, "*La Azazel*" (To the scapegoat). The high priest draws the two golden lots and placed one upon the head of each animal, sealing their fate.

According to the Talmud, it was considered a good omen if the lot marked *La Adonai* was drawn by the priest in the right hand, but for 40 years prior to the destruction of the temple in AD70 the lot *La Adonai* was drawn by the priest on the left hand (*Talmud, Yoma 39a*). Except for that 40 years prior to the destruction of the second temple, the lot *La Adonai* came out on the right hand of the priest and the lot *La Azazel* came out on the left hand of the priest.

In the ceremony the two goats were considered as one offering. A crimson sash was tied around the horns of the goat marked *azazel*. At the appropriate time, the goat was led to a steep cliff in the wilderness and shoved off the cliff. In connection with this ceremony, an interesting tradition arose that is mentioned in the Mishnah. A portion of the crimson sash was attached to the door of the temple (*Beit HaMikdash*) before the goat was sent into the wilderness. The sash would turn from red to white as the goat met its end, signaling to the people that God had accepted their sacrifices and their sins were forgiven. The Mishnah tells us that 40 years before the destruction of the temple, the sash stopped turning white. This, of course,

was the forty years between when Jesus was slain on the tree and the destruction of the Temple in AD70.

Additional Aspects to the High Priest Ceremony

In order to enter the Holy of Holies, the high priest was first to bathe his entire body, going beyond the mere washing of hands and feet as required on other occasions. He then took the blood of an animal and with the fingers sprinkling it upon the altar (Num 19:1-4; Lev 8:13-15). The spiritual understanding of this is given in Hebrews 9:11-14, 23-25, and First Peter 1:2.

Heb 9:11 But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The sprinkling of blood upon the altar is also mentioned in Ex 29:1-4,10-12, 16,20-21; and Lev 1:3-5,11; 3:1-2,8; 4:1-6; 5:4-6,9.

Messianic Understanding

Yeshua is the High Priest of God (Hebrews 3:1). In John 20:17, *Yeshua* said to Mary near the empty tomb, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father...." These were the same words that the priest spoke after his purification bath and before he ascended the altar. Rather than wearing his usual robe and colorful garments (described in Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8:1-8), Aaron was commanded to wear special garments of white linen (Lev16:4). *Yeshua* was seen wearing the same thing in Revelation

Rev 1:13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

Daniel also saw this and described it.

Dan 10:5-6 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. ⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

By slaying the animals at the altar and applying their blood to the altar, the garments of the high priest became very bloody and God instructed them to be washed (Lev 6:27). However, on *Yom Kippur* God declared in Isaiah 1:18, as it is written, "...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." Spiritually speaking, a white garment represents purity and the absence of sin (Rev 7:9,13-14; 19:8).

Rev 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a **robe dipped in blood**, and His name is called The Word of God.

Is 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This One who is glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
“I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”
2 Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?
3 “I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one was with Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come.
5 I looked, but there was no one to help,

And I wondered
That there was no one to uphold;
Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me;
And My own fury, it sustained Me.

6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger,
Made them drunk in My fury,
And brought down their strength to the earth.”

“Dipped” in the Revelation passage is the same word from which we get baptized. Both in Revelation and Isaiah, we see Jesus, as Our High Priest and dressed as a High Priest with the white linen vestments worn by the high priest on Yom Kippur spattered with blood just like the High Priest’s robes would be spattered with blood on Yom Kippur. In these scenes He is coming back to conclude judgment and deliver the remnant of believers who survive the Tribulation.

Sprinkling

The act of sprinkling the blood on the alter and on the mercy seat has great significance. It implies the hiding of sin and divine protection. The act and the implications associated with it is a recurring theme in the Bible.

Isaiah 52:15 So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

God promised to sprinkle Israel when they returned to the land of Israel from the Diaspora.

Ezekiel 36:24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Face to Face

As mentioned earlier, the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies only once a year (Lev 16:2; Heb 9:6-7). God had issued a warning back in Exodus 33:20 that no man could see His face and live, but on the Day of Atonement, the priest could be in God's presence (Lev 16:2), thus another term for the Day of Atonement is "face to face."

By the time of the second temple, this ritual [the high priest's ceremony] had been somewhat elaborated, and one crucial element had been added to it. That element was that on three separate occasions, in a grand crescendo, the high priest appeared before the people, and three times he recited a formula of confession in their hearing. The first confession was on the account of his own sins and those of his household. The second, was on the account of the priestly tribe of Levi. The third was on the account of the whole people. According to tradition, on this occasion only, in the entire year, the confession included the priest's saying aloud the name of God embodied in the Hebrew letters YHWH (called the Sacred Tetragrammaton). How the name was pronounced on this occasion was so thoroughly protected from record-keeping that we no longer know how it was done so that man might not profane it.

Yom Kippur is the last day of the Ten Days of Repentance after Rosh HaShanah, and it is the most solemn day of the Jewish calendar. Forty days before on Elul 1, was this call to examine oneself, examine the Scriptures, and repent. Failure to repent by Rosh HaShanah meant the Jew would find himself in the Days of Awe. This ten days is the last chance for the unrepentant to come to an understanding of the Gospel of Messiah, or his fate was sealed forever.

Neilah: The Closing of the Gates of Heaven

The last *Yom Kippur* ceremony is called *neilah*, the closing of the Gates of Heaven, and is the concluding ceremony to *Yom Kippur*. At this point, it is too late to make a decision to accept *Yeshua* the Messiah into your life. It is the Jewish tradition belief that the gates of Heaven are opened on *Rosh HaShanah* to let the righteous into Heaven and remain open until the *neilah* service of *Yom Kippur*. Until the final blast of the *shofar* (the *Shofar HaGadol*, the Great Trumpet) is heard at the end of the *neilah* service,

there is a chance at repentance and entering the Kingdom. *Yeshua* spoke of this same event in Matthew 24:27-31.

Matthew 24:27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

In Matthew 24:31, the trumpet that is being blown is called by *Yeshua* the great trumpet, the *Shofar HaGadol*.

Summary

While Rosh HaShanah speaks of the removal of believers before God returns to dealing with Israel and an unrepentant world, the High Holy Days (Days of Awe) between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur speak of the judgments taking place on Israel and an unrepentant God-hating world. Yom Kippur speaks of the final judgment on Israel and the nations and the deliverance of the surviving remnant of believers from out of the Tribulation. Christ the Judge will separate His sheep from the goats and only His Own will enter the promised Kingdom.