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MINISTRIES

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The Mo’edim: Yom Kippur

As we learn about what it means to apply the whole Word of God, one of the first topics of interest is the *mo’edim*. That is, YHWH’s appointed days—his holy days, or holidays, if you will. These are the days our Creator gave us in his Word, and each of them prophetically teaches us about what our Messiah did and still must do.

While there are many opinions concerning the holy days, we want to do our best to present a general overview. We simply want to help you understand these important days in the eyes of YHWH.

Many people say that these days are just for the Jewish people. However, we know that these days were given to all who chose to follow YHWH, including Gentiles.

For instance, in this teaching we will be discussing Yom Kippur, or more popularly known in English as the Day of Atonement. YHWH commands that both the native Israelite, as well as the stranger that dwells among them, is to observe this holy day:

Leviticus 16:29-31

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. For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord [YHWH] from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever.

For more on how there is one law for all, please watch our teachings, [*The Mixed Multitude*](#) and [*Grafted In*](#).

In this teaching, we will present some basics on Yom Kippur and how we observe this holy day.

Yom Kippur is a *mo’ed*, or an appointed day, but it is not a feast day. As covered in the Passover teaching in this series, there are three feast days according to the Torah. All feast days are *mo’edim*, but not all *mo’edim* are feast days.

Let's start by looking at what Scripture says about this day.

Leviticus 23:23-24

Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord [YHWH]. And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord [YHWH] your God. For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.”

Some quick points:

- We are not to work on Yom Kippur because it is a Day of Atonement.
- If we don't rest, we are to be destroyed.
- It is a permanent regulation.
- It is to be obeyed no matter where we live.
- It is to be a Shabbat of complete rest.
- We are to afflict ourselves.
- It is to be a complete day, from sunset to sunset.

For this day, we are to rest, and we are to afflict ourselves, which we believe to be a reference back to the rest as the centerpiece of obedience on this day as an act of denying ourselves. However, it is more than just obedience to resting.

Fasting is traditionally associated with afflicting oneself, which appears even in Scripture (Acts 27:9), and many people choose to fast on Yom Kippur by tradition—but focusing on just fasting is sort of missing the point. Scripture technically does not even command us to fast on Yom Kippur. The emphasis should be on the spiritual dynamic of humbling ourselves. What do we mean by that?

A literal translation of “afflict yourselves” is “deprive your throats.” The most basic meaning of *nephesh* is “throat,” which is one of the big reasons the idea of fasting on Yom Kippur was traditionally derived from this commandment. The antonym of “afflict” (*anah*) in Hebrew is *saba*, which means to “feed” or “satisfy.” It's used in reference to feeding the hungry “soul” (Isaiah 58:10), which further establishes the connection between fasting and afflicting oneself. There is metaphorical value here.

But as Isaiah 58 teaches us, YHWH chose a fast for us that was not centered on denying ourselves food and reveals that such a fast was not the intended point of the commandment. While fasting can be a form of affliction, the Hebrew word for fast is nowhere to be found in connection to Yom Kippur in the Torah. While it is ok to entertain the tradition of fasting on Yom Kippur, and it could be argued to be a good thing as it offers metaphorical value, we need to make sure we observe the day as YHWH intended.

While *nephesh* has a basic meaning of “throat,” we see in the creation of man account in Genesis that *nephesh* is defined as dust/body + spirit. Since your whole life and body depends on what comes in and out of your throat, the idea is that *nephesh* could also be used to refer to the whole person, just like we see in Genesis. The whole of who and what we are is *nephesh*.

We often see that the authors of Scripture use *nephesh* to refer to themselves. For example, consider Psalm 119:175.

Psalm 119:175 (NIV)

Let me [*nephesh*] live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me.

Here, *nephesh* is being emphasized as their entire being, their life and body.

Our life and body, our flesh, is often against wanting to humble ourselves into obedience to the law of God.

Romans 8:7

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Thus, obedience to God is afflicting our soul, our flesh, our body. We are to deny feeding the desires of the flesh, since feeding our flesh is contrary to obeying God. While we can deny the flesh literally by not eating, that is not the main, or perhaps, even the intended lesson of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is about the relationship between repentance and atonement. Denying ourselves food can be a metaphor to denying the flesh, but the real lesson and literal application of Yom Kippur is repentance leading to denying the flesh that is against the law of God.

Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

To fast on Yom Kippur is metaphorically “putting to death the body,” which could serve as a reminder to the main lesson of not “feeding the flesh” or “making provision for the flesh.” We do not want to gratify the desires of the flesh, but humble ourselves in obedience to God despite the contrary desires of the flesh.

Romans 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua], and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

For more on the subject of Yom Kippur and fasting, please see our teaching “[*Is Yom Kippur a Day of Fasting.*](#)”

It should be noted that Yom Kippur is a permanent statute, contrary to any suggestion that Yom Kippur no longer applies today.

Leviticus 23:31

You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

It is exactly ten days from the start of Yom Teruah. As mentioned in the Yom Teruah teaching, Yom Teruah appears to begin a call to repentance, or teshuva, and it appears to culminate into the prophetic meaning of Yom Kippur.

According to Jewish tradition, Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year. The reason for this is that man's purpose is to turn back to God and follow his instructions (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Thus, Yom Kippur is the appointed day that highlights God's purpose for man.

In the Torah, Yom Kippur is actually written in the plural as *Yom Ha-Kippurim*. This could be explained in such a way that the plural should be understood as a superlative "full atonement" or "complete purgation." The plurality functions grammatically to intensify the word.

The English word "atonement" translates the Hebrew *Kippurim*. The root of this word, "*kafar*," is related to purifying or cleansing.

As Dr. William Lane Craig explains:

In the Old Testament, "atonement" and its cognates translate words having the Hebrew root "*kpr*." Best known of these expressions is doubtless *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. To atone in this sense takes as its object sin or impurity and has the sense "to purify, to cleanse."

-William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 4

Interestingly, the English word Atonement actually comes from the Middle English phrase, "at onement," designating harmony or reconciliation between humans and God, which is a major theme of the New Testament.

The offering to YHWH on this day included an offering made by fire. Fire sacrifices were often for sins.

For example, Numbers Chapter 15 verses 27-31 says if an individual sins unintentionally, he is to offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. The priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven—no matter whether he is a citizen of Israel or a foreigner living with them.

Yom Kippur is the only time the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and call upon the name of YHWH to offer blood sacrifices for the sins of the people. This is a "life for a life" principle that is the foundation of the sacrificial system and marked the great day of intercession made by the High Priest of Israel.

The great majority of usages in the Old Testament concern "making an atonement" by the priestly ritual of sprinkling of the sacrificial blood to remove sin or defilement.

The life blood of the sacrificial animal was required in exchange for the life blood of the worshipper (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 (Leviticus 16:21; 1:4; 4:4, etc.), which was then killed or sent out as a scapegoat.

On Yom Kippur, the High Priest would bring a bull and two goats as a special offering, and the bull would be sacrificed to purge the temple for the defilements caused by the misdeeds of the priests and their households (Leviticus 16:6).

The blood of the bull would be sprinkled inside the veil of the Holy of Holies, upon the cover of the Ark of the Covenant.

Lots would be drawn to select one of two goats to be a sin offering on behalf of the people. The High Priest would lay both hands upon the head of the second goat while confessing all of the sins of the people. This goat was then driven away into the wilderness, carrying on it “all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Leviticus 16:22).

So, Yom Teruah appears to start the alarm or call to repentance, and Yom Kippur provides the means for reconciliation or atonement with him.

Messiah Yeshua became our High Priest who offered atonement for our sins by offering his own blood in the Holy of Holies made without hands.

It is significant that even rabbinic Judaism acknowledges the importance of the life-for-life principle, as documented in the Talmud:

Yoma 5a

“There is no atonement without blood.”

As followers of Messiah, we know that Yeshua offered up his own body to be the perfect sacrifice for sins. By his shed blood we are given complete atonement before YHWH.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The Levitical system of animal sacrifice, including the elaborate Yom Kippur ritual, was meant to foreshadow the sacrifice of Yeshua as the means of our reconciliation with our Lord.

This is actually a point of focus in the Book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 9:23-28

*Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own (Yom Kippur), for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared **once for all** at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

It is about how Yeshua became our High Priest, and he fulfills Yom Kippur in the heavenlies on our behalf.

According to Jewish rabbis, on the 6th day of the third month, seven weeks after the Exodus, Moses first ascended Sinai to receive the Torah (on Shavuot). Just forty days later, on the 17th of the fourth month, the tablets were broken. Moses then interceded for Israel for another forty days until he was called back up to Sinai on the 1st day of the sixth month and received the revelation of the name YHWH (Exodus 34:4-8). Keep in mind that First Fruits and Shavuot do not always fall on the exact same days. This is

how it simply may have occurred for Moses that particular year, according to Jewish speculation. For more on this, please see our teaching, [How to Calculate First Fruits](#).

After this, he was given the second tablets and returned to the camp on 10th day of the seventh month, which was called Yom Kippur.

This explains why Orthodox Jews begin the “*Season of Teshuvah*” beginning with the 1st day of the sixth month and continuing through to the 10th day of the seventh month—for the 40 days that Moses was upon the mountain receiving the second set of tablets.

Here we also find the first mention of the Book of Life. Moses asked to be stricken from “*the Book you have written*” if God would not make an atonement for his people (Exodus 32:32-33). The willingness of Moses to be “*stricken from the book*” on the people’s behalf is a powerful image of the mediating role of Yeshua our Messiah (Hebrews 9:15).

The Day of Judgment

The whole future prophetic lesson of the Day of Atonement is twofold:

First, judgment is coming to Israel. As Peter wrote,

1 Peter 4:17-19

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

This great day of judgment will begin shortly after the second coming of the Messiah.

Revelation 14:14-16

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

All Israel will be judged, according to their works.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

But in that coming judgment, there is forgiveness and mercy and grace through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, who gave his life as ransom for us.

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ. (Messiah Yeshua) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua), through whom we have now received reconciliation.

What about you?

Where do you stand?

Yom Kippur represents forgiveness and pardon for the people of God and wrath and eternal judgment for those who reject God's forgiveness.

Do you stand with the righteous of God's people?

Or with the wicked?

Are your sins covered by the blood of Yeshua, the Messiah and Redeemer?

Or are you still covered with the scars and sins of rebellion and wickedness?

Have you had your own personal "Yom Kippur" yet?

Have you made peace with YHWH?

Do you believe upon Messiah Yeshua and follow him as the living Word of God?

If not, no time is better than now.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you,

and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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