



The Day of Atonement — also known as Yom Kippur — is one of God’s appointed Holy Days, outlined in Leviticus 23: 26-32, and it is a day set apart for deep reflection, fasting, repentance, and spiritual renewal. Atonement means reconciliation with God. It is a day when we humbly acknowledge our sins and the need for forgiveness, not only for ourselves but for all of humanity. We are commanded to “afflict our souls” (Leviticus 23:27), a physical act of fasting that serves to remind us of our dependence on God’s mercy and grace.

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish Year. In fact God calls it Shabbat Shabbaton, Sabbath of Sabbaths, for it was on this day in both the first and second temple periods that the Cohen Gadol, or high priest, would enter the Holy of Holies in the temple (or the Tabernacle in the pre-temple period) to make atonement for the nation. In contrast to today, we know that Yeshua’s blood was offered for personal atonement for every sinner that turns to Him. So, why is this day still important? Is there any reason today for believers in Yeshua to observe Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement? What meaning should it hold and what does observing the day look like for believers in Yeshua?

²⁶ ADONAI spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷ “However, the tenth day of this seventh month is *Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)*, a holy convocation to you, so you are to afflict yourselves. You are to bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI. ²⁸ You are not to do any kind of work on that set day, for it is *Yom Kippur*, to make atonement for you before ADONAI your God. ²⁹ For anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. ³⁰ Anyone who does any kind of work on that day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You should do no kind of work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² It is to be a *Shabbat* of



solemn rest for you, and you are to humble your souls. On the ninth day of the month in the evening—from evening until evening—you are to keep your *Shabbat*.” – Leviticus 23:26-32

According to scripture, the *cohen gadol* made atonement for the nation by calling on the name of YHWH and offering the blood sacrifice at the Mercy Seat from one of the two goats chosen. The blood was used to stain a thread or ribbon which was tied to the other goat, who was then sent out into the *midbar*, or wilderness. Thus, the sins of the people were atoned for and the sins were sent “outside the camp”. Yeshua, after His death and resurrection, carried His own blood into the Holy of Holies in the heavenly tabernacle and atoned for our sins (Hebrews 9:28, Romans 6:10, 1 John 2:2).

Scripture states both in Leviticus 16 and Leviticus 23 that this Feast is to be celebrated “forever”, so that should impact this discussion. But how? Since the temple does not exist today, the sacrificial aspects cannot be observed. We know also from the scriptures, that believers in Yeshua (Jesus) can come confidently before God, knowing that His atoning sacrifice cleansed us from our sins. More on this later.

Jewish tradition calls the 10 days leading up to Yom Kippur *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe. The Days of Awe begin with Yom Teruah when Jewish tradition says judgment begins, a day of blowing the shofar. The following ten days are typically spent seeking repentance until Yom Kippur when the Book of Life Is opened. It is a time of reflection when God’s people are to reflect on this temple practice and turn to God, asking for atonement for their sins. In Yeshua, we can and should ask whenever the Spirit prompts us. But this practice is a time of denying oneself and turning to God, a good idea, every year. A Messianic Rabbi stated recently when discussing the National Day of Prayer where people of faith are asked to spend one day a year in prayer and fasting, “Did they never hear of Yom Kippur? We Jews already have this covered”. These are key attributes of the day that is important to believers today – prayer, repentance, and drawing closer to the Father.

The three pillars of Judaism are (or used to be) tefillah, teshuvah, and tzedekah – prayer, repentance, and charity (or righteousness). Without prayer and repentance, there could not be true charity. That is why Yeshua stated in Matthew 5:23-24:

²³ “Therefore if you are presenting your offering upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

We are to have short accounts with our fellow man. We are to have even shorter accounts with our Savior. If we are following Yeshua, then the Lord will prompt us whenever we are headed in the wrong direction or are storing up something in our heart that is not of the Lord. We have to

be listening though. Yom Kippur is also about listening, asking forgiveness of our brothers and sisters and *teshuvah*, or repentance, and turning to God in all things.

Many will be inclined to say, “why should we care about Jewish tradition. Didn’t Jesus turn away from tradition?”. Tradition, where it is contrary to scripture, or replaces scripture, is to be shunned as Yeshua taught us. Tradition that truly brings us closer to God can be good. Tradition that is directly stated in scripture, though, isn’t just tradition. We may not always understand why something is listed in scripture, but we can be obedient regardless of our understanding. The central verse in all of Judaism is Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”. The word “Hear” is “shema”. It means much more than “hear” as it contains the ideas to listen, heed (or hear with intent to understand), and do. It can also mean to obey and take action. There was no concept in Hebrew of hearing without action, they were one and the same. So, if there is something listed in scripture, it is assumed we will obey.

The other side of the “Shema” is “understand”. Often, our modern bias creeps in and tells us, “We don’t need that anymore”. Certainly, in Christ Jesus there is nothing that we HAVE TO do. But what about things that are still GOOD to do if we love God. If God states something is forever, don’t you think that He thought about the consequences? The other argument that makes us set side such things is “This is for the Jews”. Really? Galatians 3:28 tells us clearly, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for you are all one in Messiah *Yeshua*.” So, nothing is specifically for the Jews under Messiah Yeshua and no New Testament teaching or passage is specifically for just Jews. Before you think, “no Jew? – well then it (insert subject of choice) isn’t valid anymore”. Think again because Paul was contrasting to make sure that people didn’t separate into factions. Romans 3 tells us that we are all one IN Israel. Indeed this entire plan was that Israel may stumble if only to provoke them to jealousy.

Romans 11:

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who support the root but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ True enough. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear— ²¹ for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. ²² Notice then the kindness and severity of God:

severity toward those who fell; but God’s kindness toward you, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off!

²³ And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.

²⁴ For if you were cut out of that which by nature is a wild olive tree, and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer shall come out of Zion.

He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

²⁷ And this is My covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.”

²⁸ Concerning the Good News, they are hostile for your sake; but concerning “chosenness”, they are loved on account of the fathers— ²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you once were disobedient to God but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ in like manner these also have now been disobedient with the result that, because of the mercy shown to you, they also may receive mercy. ³² For God has shut up all in disobedience, so that He might show mercy to all.

Paul makes it clear here that the Gentiles have been grafted into the tree of Israel and to not be prideful against the root of the tree or the natural branches, Israel. If a tradition or teaching states in scripture that it is forever, then it can't be for just Jews today, it has to be all who accept the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and His Messiah.

Always approach any practice you want to consider incorporating into you life with prayer and petitioning to God. The only real traditions associated with Yom Kippur though, are prayer, fasting, reading scripture, and taking the day as a High Sabbath - a day of rest. None of those, I think, should sound “out of bounds” to the follower of Yeshua.

Modern Jewish practices include the affliction of the soul in five ways:

1. We don't eat or drink;
2. We don't wash;
3. We don't use lotions or perfumes;
4. We don't wear leather footwear; and
5. We abstain from marital relations

Despite these prohibitions, the observance of this day in the Jewish world is characterized by a sense of peace because of our confidence in our relationship with God and His provision for atonement.



The night of - or “erev” – Yom Kippur the Jewish people will gather in the synagogue to hear the cantor chant Kol Nidre (All Vows) and recite penitential prayers.

In the morning, they return to their synagogues for the Morning Prayer service in which several sections of the Torah portion are read. The entire Book of Jonah will be read during the afternoon service.

This service concludes shortly before sunset with the Ne’ila (Closing of the Gates) prayer, which is the last moment for repenting before God is said to seal His judgments in His Book.

After Yom Kippur ends that night at nightfall with the blowing of the shofar, we will return home to enjoy a festive meal. Many of us will also begin building our Sukkah for the holiday of Sukkot, which is just four days away.

Many religiously observant Jewish men will dress in simple, white linen garments while attending their Yom Kippur service. One of the reasons given is that Israel comes before God, not in drab clothing like a penitent sinner, but arrayed in white as if going to a feast, confident that they will be pardoned as they come in sincere repentance.

In the Book of Revelation, we see a connection with the tradition of wearing white and the Book of Life:

The one who overcomes thus will be dressed in white clothes; I will never blot his name out of the Book of Life, and will confess his name before My Father and His angels. – Revelation 3:5

That lets us know that this Feast, or Appointed Time, is a rehearsal, looking forward to the return of Messiah. Some Jews still sacrifice a chicken, called a *kapparat*, to atone for their sins. It is sad that so many today do not recognize Yeshua as their Messiah, but at least many still understand that

indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. – Hebrews 9:22

On this special day, the cohen gadol, or high priest, would cast lots for two goats. One would be chosen to be “for the Lord” and sacrificed as a sin offering while the other was chosen as the

scapegoat, or Azazel. The word "Azazel" means dismissal or entire removal. This removal was accomplished by the high priest laying his hands on the head of the goat and confessing all the transgressions of Israel over it. The goat was then released, usually led, into the wilderness, or *midbar*, so as to physically carry all of Israel's sins away.



Isaiah 53:6 and 11 seem to directly reference this though it is looking forward to Messiah:

"And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... For He shall bear their iniquities...."

The Hebrew word for "iniquity" here is "Avon" and differs from the typical word for sin which means "to miss the mark". "Avon" comes from the root "avah" and means to *twist or distort*. It carries the connotation of an inner crookedness, of being *bent – perversity as well as willful departure from Torah*. While the regular sacrifices were for unintentional sin, the sacrifice on Yom Kippur atoned for the willful sins of the nation of Israel. The sages would state clearly that this and other sacrifices could only cover sin, but never fully remove it. We needed Messiah for that.

In a limited sense, however, Israel has suffered as an azazel "scapegoat" for the nations.

Because of the blindness with which Adonai temporarily afflicted Israel with regard to their Messiah, salvation (Yeshua) has come to the Gentiles.

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in... and so all Israel shall be saved.... (Romans 11:25–27)

Jewish tradition tells us that a scarlet chord was tied around the Azazel. Later, the goat was often found and the chord had turned white. The reason why this story is significant is that Jewish writers around the 70AD recorded that about 40 years earlier (we know as the time of the crucifixion), the scarlet chord stopped turning white. They had no explanation for this. We who are in Messiah Yeshua certainly know why this would be if true.

For us as Christians, the Day of Atonement points to the ultimate sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. The high priest in ancient Israel would enter the Holy of Holies once a year to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people, but Christ, as our eternal High Priest, entered the heavenly Holy of Holies

with His own blood, offering Himself once for all as the perfect atoning sacrifice (Hebrews 9:12). Through His death, we are reconciled to God, and through His resurrection, we are given the hope of eternal life.

The Day of Atonement also points forward to the time when Satan, the source of sin and deception, will be bound and removed from the world. Revelation 20:1-3 tells us that Satan will be restrained for 1,000 years, no longer able to deceive or influence humanity. This will mark the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ, a time of peace, righteousness, and restoration as God's Kingdom is established on earth. This step in God's Master Plan — the removal of Satan — is essential for the world to experience true peace. Without Satan's influence, humanity will finally be able to live in harmony with God and with one another.

So what precisely is this Appointed Time a rehearsal for besides what we just mentioned? If Yom Teruah is a rehearsal for the coming of Messiah and Sukkot (Tabernacles) is a rehearsal for the gathering on Mount Zion (Jerusalem) and the Marriage Supper, then Yom Kippur, long held to be when God sets His judgements, is a rehearsal for, in my opinion, His judgement upon mankind – the Day of the Lord. It is a day of prayer, fasting, affliction. It is a day when believers spend pouring out prayer for God's mercy.

The Spring feasts were accomplished at Yeshua's first coming on the literal days and in that single spring. The summer feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) was completed on the day of Shavuot 49 days later. Will the Fall feasts be completed on their literal days as well and in order in one season? I won't hazard that guess but we are called to be ready for Messiah at all times as we cannot know with any certainty the timeline of fulfillment of scripture. In Jewish tradition, Yom Kippur is essentially **your last appeal, your last chance to change "the judgment of God" and to demonstrate your repentance and make amends**. The books are "written" on Yom Teruah (Rosh Hashanah), but our deeds during the Ten Days of Awe can alter God's decree.

²⁹ For anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. ³⁰ Anyone who does any kind of work on that day, that person I will destroy from among his people. – Leviticus 23:29-30

The future fulfillment of the Day of Atonement may be directly connected to the "great and terrible Day of the LORD," or Judgment Day. If so, it will be both a Day of Vengeance and also a Day of Deliverance.

When Yeshua Messiah returns in all His glory, He will judge and repay all of His enemies by treading the winepress of the fury and the wrath of Almighty God. All the nations who align themselves with the satanic forces of darkness and the armies of the Antichrist will be brought to nothing on that Day.

The Day of Vengeance is a Day of blood, and it is Jesus Himself who will be leading this great judgment of the wicked nations who will be united against God in the last days. Consider some of the primary passages that convey this coming "Day!"

Isaiah 63:1-6

“Who is this coming from Edom,
in crimsoned garments from Bozrah?
This One splendid in His apparel,
pressing forward in His great might?”

“It is I who speak in righteousness,
mighty to save.”

² “Why is Your apparel so red,
and Your garments like one who treads in a wine press?”

³ “I have trodden the winepress alone—
from the peoples, no man was with Me.
I trod them in My anger,
and trampled them in My wrath.
Their lifeblood spattered My garments,
so I stained all My robes.

⁴ For a day of vengeance was in My heart,
and My year of redemption has come.

⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help.
I was amazed, but no one was assisting.
So My own arm won victory for Me,
and My wrath upheld Me.

⁶ So I trod down the peoples in My anger,
and made them drunk in My wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Joel 3:11-16

¹¹ Rouse yourselves and come,
all nations around, and gather there.
Adonai, bring Your mighty ones down!

¹² “Let the nations rouse themselves
and go up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
For there will I sit
to judge all the surrounding nations.”

¹³ Swing the sickle,
for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread, for the winepress is full
—the vats overflow—
for their wickedness is great!

¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes,

in the valley of decision!
For the day of *Adonai* is near
in the valley of decision.
¹⁵ The sun and the moon become dark,
the stars withdraw their brightness.
¹⁶ *Adonai* will roar from Zion
and give His voice from Jerusalem.
Heaven and earth will shudder,
but *Adonai* will be a refuge for His people,
and a safe place for the children of Israel.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

(⁶ For after all, it is right in the sight of God to pay back trouble to those who trouble you, ⁷ and relief to you who suffer trouble along with us. At the revelation of the Lord *Yeshua* from heaven with His mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, He will command judgment on those who do not know God and do not heed the Good News of our Lord *Yeshua*. ⁹ They will pay the price of eternal ruin, away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power— ¹⁰ on that Day when He comes to be glorified among His *kedoshim* and marveled at by all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.)

Revelation 19:11-16

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One riding on it is called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and many royal crowns are on His head. He has a name written that no one knows except Himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is “the Word of God.”

¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword—so that with it He may strike down the nations—and He shall rule them with an iron rod, and He treads the winepress of the furious wrath of *Elohei-Tzva’ot*. ¹⁶ On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

To summarize, Jesus is our Faithful High Priest, dressed in fine linen, is coming from heaven to earth in wrath, but as He comes to judge the nations, His pure white vesture is spattered in the blood of His enemies. This is a picture of the high priest entering the Holy of Holies and sprinkling the blood on the altar, which would have spattered on his all white garments.

The Day of Atonement will not be completely fulfilled until the Lord returns on that DAY.

The Day Atonement ALSO is associated with the redemption and restoration of the entire nation of Israel as discussed above. Whereas Passover emphasizes individual salvation, Yom Kippur is the Day of corporate salvation, as the high priest would offer an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all the people.

The future fulfillment of the Day of Atonement will also be a national salvation of all the survivors of Israel. As the Jews endure the Great Tribulation and God begins to bring them repentance through the time of Jacob's trouble, all of Israel will be saved in the end at the second coming of Christ. Romans 11, Zechariah 12, Jeremiah 30,

Daniel 12:1

“At that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has never occurred since the beginning of the nation until then. But at that time your people—everyone who is found written in the book—will be delivered.

Jeremiah 30:7

Oy! For that day is monumental.
There will be none like it—
a time of trouble for Jacob!
Yet out of it he will be saved.

Hebrew 9:27-28

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, ²⁸ so also Messiah, was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation.

Romans 11:25-27

²⁵ For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer shall come out of Zion.
He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.
²⁷ And this is My covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.”

As we observe the Day of Atonement each year, let us take time for deep personal reflection. Are we striving to walk closely with God? Are we living in a way that reflects the sacrifice Christ made for us? This day offers us an opportunity to humble ourselves, repent of our sins, and recommit to living according to God's will.

Though it is a solemn day of fasting, it is also a day of hope and restoration, and solemn expectation. Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God, forgiven, and set free from the bondage of sin. And we look forward to the greatest events in human history; a time when we will be united with Christ, a time when Satan will be removed, and all humanity will have the opportunity to experience the fullness of God's Kingdom.

May the Day of Atonement draw you closer to God and deepen your appreciation for the incredible love and sacrifice of our Savior. As we humble ourselves before Him, may we be renewed in spirit, and may we find hope in the knowledge that His Kingdom is soon coming.