

Which is Easier?

The Feast of Trumpets

The first day of the month (at the arrival of the new moon) of Tishri is a feast day for our people. It is known as the *feast of trumpets*. Ram's Horn trumpets are blown throughout the day. No work is done, and additional sacrifices are offered. It is a day of self-examination in asking how our Father sees each person. When our people kept this feast, it was their tradition that the blowing of the trumpets would cause three things to happen. It would cause our Father to hear and remember His covenant with them, it would awaken the sin-sleepy Israelites to repentance, and also it would alert the Accuser that he must flee from our people as their turned their hearts to our Father.

ROSH HASHANAH (Tishri 1) — The Jewish New Year, now observed for two days in Israel as well as the Diaspora, marks the commencement of the *Ten Days of Penitence* which reach their climax on Yom Kippur. An important observance of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar (ram's horn). Rosh Hashanah is also known as *Yom Hadin*, the Day of Judgment, since, according to tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, mankind is judged by God for its actions during the past year.

It was the Feast of Trumpets that marked the beginning of a ten-day period of self-judgement which ends with Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement.

YOM KIPPUR (Tishri 10) — The Day of Atonement — Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Marked by fasting and prayer, it is the day to ask forgiveness from man and from God and to offer restitution for any wrongdoing. According to tradition, one's fate for the coming year is sealed on this day.

Our Story... (Leviticus 16)

In the days when our Master was a boy, working with his abba in the carpenter shop, he began to learn things just like you do. He did not understand about the feasts of our people. He did not know what they stood for or what was supposed to happen on those days. But when he got old enough to begin to understand things, his abba, Yoceph, started to give him instruction.

One day His abba told our Master Yahshua, "Son, tomorrow we will not be working in the shop, and there will be no training with the Rabbi."

"Why, Abba?" responded Yahshua, a little disappointed because he loved to learn from the Rabbi and he loved to work with his abba.

"Well, son, it is going to be a special day, a feast day! For did you notice the night sky last night? It was almost the new moon. Tomorrow will be the first day of the month, the first day of the month of Tishri. That means..."

"I know, I know, Abba, I remember from last year.... It is the shofars, isn't it? It is the festival of the sounding of the shofars!"

"Yes, Yahshua. I know you are growing older now, and are near to the age of bar-mitzvah. So, now you can begin to understand all about this festival. For it is a very serious festival. It is a time for each of our people to look into their own heart and see if there is anything that is not pleasing there. It is a 'feast of getting ready.' Shofars always announce something to us. So, now we must get ready. For this year I want you to come to Jerusalem with me to participate in the Day of Atonement. That will be ten days from now. Well, it is not mandatory that all the men go to this festival in Jerusalem, like it is other festivals. For this festival has to do personally with the heart of each man. They need not go to the Temple but rather search within their own soul. But I think it will be good for you to be at the temple on the final day — the Yom Kippur — to see what it is like when the sins of our people are atoned for and forgiven. So, you will go with me this year to Jerusalem."

Yahshua was excited to go to Jerusalem, and learn more about the ways of our God.

The next morning when he awoke and heard the shofars start to sound, he was filled with anticipation. He knew that for ten days all the people of his village would seek for ways that they had not been pleasing. He knew that the people had to really look into their hearts to see their sins. He did not understand a lot, but he wanted to. So, all day long on that first day of Tishri, during the feast of Trumpets, he heard the shofars sounding in the village. The family stayed together at home, doing no work. Yahshua could sense that his abba Yoceph and his

Imma Miriam were quietly seeking within themselves to know what was in their hearts. It made him love his abba and imma even more just to see their sincerity. It also made him look forward to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which would be ten days from now, when he would go to Jerusalem. For that is the day when the sincere people would find forgiveness for any sins they found in their hearts.

Those next ten days were very serious and quiet in the small house where Yahshua and his family lived in Nazareth. Though they continued working together in the woodshop after the first day when the Feast of Trumpets was celebrated, still the whole atmosphere was different. Yoceph and Miriam and all the people of the village were thoughtful, not speaking much. Yahshua and Yoceph left in time to make the journey up to Jerusalem. After their long journey, they entered the large city gates just before sundown the eve of Yom Kippur. The city was full of very sober people.

As they settled in for the night, Yoceph began telling his son about how in the morning the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies for the only time that year. He explained how no one could just walk in to that very Holy place before the presence of our Father. The Holy of Holies had a veil in front of it that was only passed through once a year. The High Priest must first make a sacrifice for his own sin and then for the sins of the people. Then he could enter in through the veil with the blood of those sacrifices. The High Priest must be completely without sin, having offered a perfect sacrifice in order not to die when he entered the Holy of Holies.

Just in case, the other priest tied a bell and a rope around his leg, so that if he was struck dead as he entered the others could pull him from behind the veil. The priest all stood outside listening if they could hear the sound of the bell, meaning the priest was moving around making his offering of incense and sprinkling the blood. If it became silent and the rope no longer moved for a while, they would assume the High Priest had died behind the veil, being struck dead for his sins. They would then pull the rope until the dead man appeared, and then take the body to bury it. If that were to happen no atonement would be made for the sins of the people, for it must be a sinless man who would make atonement. Of course, no man was sinless, but if the High Priest made a perfect, honest sacrifice before he entered the Holy of Holies he would not be struck dead. He could then offer the sacrifice for all the sincere people's sins and it could be accepted.

Yahshua lay in the darkness next to his abba Yoceph, listening to his words. He found it difficult to sleep, even when his abba finished speaking and said, "Layla Tov" to his son. Yahshua only thought and thought. He pondered upon the things his abba had told him.

In the first light of morning the people stood outside the temple awaiting the morning minchah. They saw the High Priest come out, dressed differently than usual. He wore only simple white linen clothing. He first must make his sacrifice of a big young bull for his own sins. There also stood two very fine young goats before the altar. A lot was cast for the two goats. One was chosen to be "for YHWH" and the other "for Azazel." The one which was chosen "for YHWH" was then killed as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The blood of the bull and the goat were taken together along with some fire from the altar in the hands of the High Priest. The other goat stood tied to the altar waiting.

The High Priest walked alone to the Holy Place where he used the fire to light incense, and then he opened the curtain to enter the Most Holy Place. The incense filled the area. Behind the curtain the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the slaughtered animals.

Yahshua stood with his abba in the Temple court along with many others. They all stood in silence. The High Priest was now behind the veil. The priests had secured a rope and bell on his legs before he entered.

Yahshua wondered at all that was going on before his eyes. He was in awe of the greatness of what he witnessed. He knew that daily all year long many, many sacrifices were made here in the temple. There were innocent animals slaughtered daily for the sins of our people. And the sacrifice today was what would validate all the other sacrifices – for if the priesthood was not pure, then neither would be the sacrifice. If everyone had been searching their heart, like his abba and imma had been doing the last ten days since the Feast of the many shofars, then surely this sacrifice for their sins would be received.... that is, if the High Priest Himself were free from sin.

It seemed that everyone around him was holding his breath, awaiting the High Priest's exit from behind the great veil. Suddenly the veil came open and the High Priest came down to the altar where the other goat was

tied. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief as they watched the High Priest bend solemnly over the other young goat, laying his hands on the animal, confessing over it the sins of all the people, putting the guilt of all the sins upon the animal. The goat was then lead out of the temple by a young priest.... It was carrying the guilt of the sins to the wilderness.

“Where does the young goat go, Abba?” said our Master to Yoceph.

“The man will lead him to the desert, Son, where they will let it go.... Alone to die!”...

Yahshua felt the pain of death as he watched the young goat descend the steps just as his abba described his fate.

Then to the surprise of Yahshua, the watching crowd began to shout and yell and spit at the goat, hurling abuse at it as it passed through the center of the people. The guilt of them all was upon the goat. **This is their scapegoat.** They put all the blame on the young goat.... out and out it was led. Until in the far distance it was released into the bleak, empty space of the wilderness. There he would find no food or water. It would slowly die, bearing the guilt of a whole nation.

All this was very hard for Yahshua to bear.

“Abba, it is hard to forgive sins, isn’t it?”

“Yes son, all the blood of sacrifice. Young sheep and goats, and bulls... the work of the priesthood daily, that we could be forgiven. It is very difficult!”

Yahshua was quiet, very quiet as they left the Temple and began their long journey home to Nazareth. Yoceph saw the sober look upon the face of his young son. He wondered what the boy was thinking, but he did not want to ask. Yoceph remembered the words, “Abba, it is hard to forgive sins, isn’t it?”

Yahshua, the Man

Many years passed, and many Feasts of Trumpets and many Days of Atonement, until Yahshua, our Master became an adult, and the fullness of time had come.....

Things were already becoming very clear to him, but when Yohannan was baptizing and called out to Yahshua, “Behold, he lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” our Master was understanding much more. For he never forgot that first Feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur when he came to really see all that went into “forgiving sins.” It is not an easy thing for a man to have his sins forgiven. And he knew what meant the words, “lamb of God”...

So, our Master began walking among the people, doing amazing things. He was healing people and a few men even stayed with him and became his disciples.

But then one day, as our Master’s fame began to grow among the people, something very clear happened. The house he was staying in became very, very full of men who had come from all over the area just to see and hear this “healer.” They had heard about Yahshua. They wanted to hear his words, and see his deeds. There were Pharisees there, and teachers of the Law who had come from every village in Galilee, from Judea and even from Jerusalem. They were all sitting there at this small house listening to our Master talking about the Kingdom of God. The place was so full not one more person could enter.

But, in fact, there was someone else outside who wanted to come in. For just outside the door was a little group of young men. These young men had a friend who had been paralyzed for a long time. He could only lie there on his bed. He could not even move a tiny finger. He was paralyzed. When his friends heard of this man, Yahshua, who was a very good man, and was healing people, they decided that they would let nothing stop them from bringing their friend to see him.

So when they arrived carrying their friend on a stretcher they found the tiny house jammed full of people, until not one more man could enter. But they would not let their zeal wane. They looked all around the house for a way to enter.

Finally one of them climbed up on the roof. Signaling to his friends, they joined him up there. He showed them his plan. They could remove the heavy clay roofing tiles and lower their friend down through the roof right down in front of the Master!

The paralyzed man was not so sure of this plan, but really he had no other hope for his life. And seeing that his friends were *SO SURE* that this would work, and *SO SURE* that when the Master saw their paralyzed friend that he would no doubt heal him.... The suffering man agreed to the plan. The men went to

work, removing the roof.

Down below small pieces of dirt and clay began to fall into the room. Yahshua and the others looked curiously toward the ceiling to see what was going on. The four men worked very quickly and soon the afternoon sun was shining right down into the center of the room where our Master was teaching. And just as quickly they began to see the stretcher of the paralyzed man being lowered down right into the center of the room...

Everyone stopped talking and silently watched as the stretcher carrying the paralyzed body came to rest just in front of our Master. An air of expectation filled the room. All the men who had **traveled** so far to see this man were feeling quite satisfied to be able to see a real "sign." Everyone was sure that compassion would come forth from this great man in their midst to heal this suffering man.

Everyone only waited and watched...

Our Master gazed at the man before him on the stretcher. The paralyzed man looked toward our Master helplessly and then up toward his friends for encouragement. Our Master too turned his gaze toward the roof, only to meet the smiling faces of his four friends looking down, full of assurance, nodding expectantly.

Seeing their faith Yahshua said to the paralyzed man, "My friend, your sins are forgiven you!"

A gasp filled the room as all the Scribes and Pharisees were shocked at what Yahshua had said. Though they said nothing aloud, they were all thinking, "Who is this man, talking blasphemy? Who but God alone can forgive sins?"

But our Master, aware of their thoughts, made them this reply, "What are these wicked thoughts you have in your hearts? **Which of these is easier to say?** "Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, "Get up and walk"?"

So which is easier to say? Is it easy to say that your sins are forgiven.... Is it easy to say get up and walk?

Which is easier? Remember the day of the blasting of the many shofars. What was that day called? The feast of Trumpets. And what did the people do on that day and for the next ten days? And then Yom Kippur comes and then what had to be done? Remember when Yahshua and his Abba went to the Temple? Remember all they saw that day? The sacrifices, the High Priest, the scapegoat, heading for the wilderness? Remember how our Master realized how hard it was for a man's sins to be forgiven? It is not easy to forgive sins? But which is easier to say.... "Your sins are forgiven", or "Get up and walk"? That is what he asked them that day. Can you answer?

He went on to say, "But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins," our Master turned toward the paralyzed man and spoke, "I order you, get up and pick up your stretcher and go home."

Well, the one whom He called, "My Friend," who had so long been paralyzed, felt suddenly a surge of strength in his limp body. Suddenly all he knew was that he needed to obey this command, spoken with the most wonderful authority he had ever heard. There was not one fiber in his being that wanted to be disobedient to what our Master told him to do.

He sat up!! He moved his legs around, and he stood to his feet.... And he felt SO GOOD! Beginning to praise our Father at the top of his voice, at the same time being obedient to turn and pick up his stretcher, walking deliberately toward the door, heading home as he was commanded. Before he went out the door he made one deliberate, thankful, extra turn toward our Master, smiling and praising YHWH, and signaling toward his friends through the roof to join him.....

Closing the door as he left the room, those remaining behind sat looking up at the noonday sun, crowded as they were in the small house. In awe the unnatural silence broke as they all began to praise the God of this Man who had just healed the paralyzed man. They all said, "We have seen strange things today!"

But did they answer His question, "Which is easier to say," "Your sins are forgiven you," or, "Get up and walk"....

The One who has authority on earth to forgive sins just proved it.... "Rise up and walk," He had said. Based on the foundation of His certain, atoning sacrifice which would soon be completed, the Lamb of God, the sinless High Priest, the Scapegoat.....

He could forgive with authority.

But which was easier to say?

Remember this on Yom Kippur!

