

Yom Kippur 18

“Holy as I am Holy”

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the most important day for Israel. The book of Leviticus gives the instruction to Israel of their holiness to Yahweh — *kadosh* (Lev 19:2; 20:26). “You — the Twelve Tribes of Jacob (Israel) — shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations and peoples to be *Mine*.” Lev 19:3 is explicit on what they, His possession, are to do to keep themselves holy, and if any are *not* doing verse 3, then Yahweh has provided a way to be forgiven in order to carry on in their holiness to Him as a witness to the world (Lev 19:1-3; 20:22-24).

Lev 20:24 — “I am Yahweh, your Elohim, who has separated (#914) you from the peoples — made you holy to Me — to make a distinction between you and the nations” — to preserve their ethnic integrity as a nation. Thus Lev 20:26 — “You are to be holy to Me.” *Holy* is #6918 (adjective) or #6942 (verb) — to keep clean by separation from the world (Jn 17:15-17). Sanctify — set them apart; it takes a community, as our Elohim provided for the first Edah so that they could be an Edah, a witness of the truth (Jn 17:17-19; 18:37; Lev 20:26). Understand?!

So our Father desired Israel to live sanctified lives, as a sanctified people among the peoples/nations, “...for I have set you apart [sanctified you] to be Mine.” So our Father gave Israel the Law or instructions (*torah*) to instruct His people how to live like His people, not like the peoples whom they are set apart from (Lev 20:23). Therefore (verses 25-26) His people were to be like their Father in heaven, separated from the sin of the heathen (worldly) influences.

So the two kinds of sin which needed to be confessed on their sacrificial animal on the Day of Atonement were committing an unlawful act (against their Father’s instructions) and failing to do what He commanded or instructed — the sin of

commission and the sin of omission (Jms 4:17). Israel was charged with this responsibility, and included was their attitude of bringing a sacrifice for these two kinds of sin which work against their vocation — to serve Yahweh night and day (Acts 26:7).

The laws were given to instruct His people to live as His very own representation, to instruct them in holy living in the principles of grace, since He knew that His people could never maintain perfect standards. So in His grace He provided a sacrificial system, a way that Israel, His people, could be reconciled to Him and maintain their covenant with Him.

The sacrificial system, especially on the Day of Atonement, was an expression of His love and compassion for His people, as Paul says in Rom 7:12. The Law is good; His instructions to keep His people holy are good. The Law of Moses provides a provision. The core of His laws provided atonement for their sins. Otherwise Israel’s God would be a hard taskmaster. But He gave a way for His people to keep themselves holy to Him. He knew they would not be able to keep the Law without a sacrificial system included in the Law also, to keep a repentant heart and soul. Their sacrificial system provided a way for His grace to be extended to His people, and shows His willingness to forgive the sins of His people.

So He set aside an entire day to make atonement for their souls, one day each year when His people — everyone who came with a sacrifice — could find forgiveness for their past sins for that year as set in their conscience. All of us know for ourselves the sins we have committed, so we can be forgiven (1 Jn 1:6-7; 2:2) and restored to our Father — sins that hold us back (Pr 28:13; Heb 10:26-31).

Yom Kippur is the culmination of ten full days to remember, to bring back their sins of commission or omission, and the greater sin can be in *how* they offer up the atoning sacrifice on their behalf.

Jn 1:17 — He wrote what some have interpreted as saying that the Law did not have any grace in animal sacrifices, or as if grace were non-existent in the Old Covenant.

But John here is teaching that the grace and truth expressed in the Old Covenant was realized in the One who would now offer up the sacrifice to end all sacrifices for sin. He, the *man* (1 Tim 2:5), was our Father’s living example of the grace and truth foreshadowed in the Old Covenant.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was only effective as long as the Israelite remained perfectly and completely obedient to the Law (God’s instruction), and that could not have been for long. The Yom Kippur sacrifice needed to be repeated year after year. This day foreshadowed the day when forgiveness would be made for the whole world besides Israel (Jn 3:16).

This day in the Old Covenant meant the day of covering or concealing, the day every sincere Israelite would look to and long for to rid himself of his guilty stain. The sacrificial system was designed to cover sin until it could be finally put away (2 Pet 1:9; Heb 10:17-18; etc.). Atonement in the Old Covenant covers or hides sin rather than removing it from God’s sight. The covering was total, which allowed God to look upon the Israelites as if their sin were removed. He provided a shelter of sacrificial blood representing the blood of His Son who would come in due time. The life-for-life principle is the foundation of the Good News of Messiah’s salvation (Mk 8:34-37; Jn 12:25-26). Ex 21:28-36 — The Law has grace.

In Yom Kippur our Father, for old Israel, set apart a day for atonement for His people — the tenth of Tishri (the seventh month), ten days following the day of repentance, the Feast of Trumpets, for repentance must precede atonement. For Yom Kippur the Israelite was able to act on his repentance by offering a sacrifice for his sins. Animal sacrifices were only valid when presented with a contrite heart (Ps 51:16-19). Only then can he repent and his offering be acceptable as a ransom for his sins. Otherwise Heb 6:4-6 and 10:26-31 and 1 Jn 5:16-17 applies to us, as Esau in Heb 12:16-17.

The Day of Atonement was to be kept as a “perpetual statute.” It was to be observed “throughout your generations in all your dwelling places” (Lev 23:31). Forever is until the end of the age — perpetual, a statute forever (KJV). This includes the nation of Mt 21:43, in a new and living way to avoid Rev 3:4. We now, as Acts 26:6-8 says, do it *for them* to bring about the promise.

Our Father placed Yom Kippur before the Feast of Tabernacles, “the season of joy,” since they could only rejoice once their sins were covered from God’s sight. God could only pour out His blessings as joy on a forgiven people. But when they did not observe Yom Kippur, He was forced to dole out judgment upon them.

The four things we must remember about the Day of Atonement are:

- 1) On exactly the tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement;
- 2) It shall be a holy convocation for you;
- 3) You shall humble your souls to present an offering by fire to Yahweh;
- 4) You shall not do any work at all on that day (Lev 23:27-28).

The Day of Atonement was a day of true worship and devotion, drawing their attention to the altar of their God’s mercy. The holy God called His people to gather in His presence and give their undivided attention exclusively to Him. All work, such as food preparation, was not even considered, since it was a fast to Yahweh that day. They had afflicted their souls for the ten days, searching for all that needed to be confessed, even what they had remembered to write down during the year as they had already repented and mourned over their sins, waiting for the Day of Atonement.

Lev 23:29 goes for all of us on that day, in the Race, until the end.

Lev 23:31-32 — the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

Lev 16 — As Paul warned in 1 Cor 11:24-32, and Luke in Acts 5:1-11, Lev 16 begins and recounts the death of the two sons of Aaron (Lev 10:1-5) who were punished for offering strange fire before Yahweh. Strange fire, pride, unauthorized offering, not commanded or ordained, lawless action (Mt 12:30, as Ex 19:12,21 and Lev 7:21).

Lev 10:1-5 presented a solemn warning and lasting reminder that the commandment or law of worship — His instruction — must be followed. By Lev 10:3 we conclude that our Father knew something we don't know about them — to offer up a different kind (2 Cor 11:4) of fire than they were commanded, not due to ignorance, but unbelief, without faith or respect for Yahweh, as if He would not see them.

Lev 10:2,8-11 — Fire came down from the presence of Yahweh, a “measure for measure” principle. Those who sinned by fire are punished by fire. Lev 10:1 — Unholy fire or profane fire or strange fire — they were not commanded and they offered it anyway, on their own initiative or in a forbidden manner. The new priests were anxious to begin the more honorable portion of their priestly function, so they offered incense when they had not been commanded to do so, not sweet incense as Ex 39:38. So they were guilty of offering strange incense (Ex 30:9), as they may have been drunk (Lev 10:9). So their punishment came quickly and completely — another fire came forth from God and consumed them. As in Acts 5:1-11, it was a proverbial lesson for the new priesthood in Lev 10:1.

Lev 10:8-11; Eze 44:21-23 — Teaching these distinctions is essential to the priestly function. Aaron, you are to teach the people, Israel, the statutes, or teachings, or traditions that Yahweh imparted to Israel through the mediation of Moses.

Such immediate correction was necessary at the beginning of Israeli life under the covenant to make a proverbial lesson to impress upon the people how serious it was to obey their God who leads them to be the light of the world. Eternal life was the motive for the sobering effect Acts 5:1-11 had on the people.

Aaron's sons were careless about following the commandments or instructions for the laws of the sacrifices. In response, God destroyed them with a blast of fire. Performing the sacrifice was an act of obedience. Doing them correctly showed respect for Yahweh. It is so easy to grow careless and inadvertent about obeying our Master and live our way instead of His way. But if one way was just as good as another our Father

would not have commanded us to live His way. All Christians live their way and they could sing with Frank Sinatra, “I did it my way.”

But our Father always has good reasons for His commands and His law (instruction), and we place ourselves in danger when we consciously or carelessly “do our own thing” — “my way” in disobedience to His way. The first Edah was called “The Way” from Gen 18:19, for the cause to restore and to bear the fruit of the Kingdom (Mt 21:43).

Lev 10:1 — Nadab and Abihu (Ex 24:1) were in the select group of representatives of the people who were close to Moses and were able to see the glory of Yahweh. A conflict may have come up within the priesthood between a group led by Nadab & Abihu and a group of the priests mentioned here who remained faithful to the sacred worship, led by Mishael and Elzaphan (Lev 10:4). The nature of their sin — to offer strange or profane fire or foreign fire — seems to make reference to idolatrous worship. Apparently, they had taken fire for their censers from a place other than the altar fire, which was the only legitimate fire for the worship, or they may have just been so disrespectful as to be intoxicated (Lev 10:9), coming before Yahweh in this state.

The holiness of the worship was in jeopardy when the priest offered fire other than that commanded by Yahweh. The same manifestation of fire which earlier had shown approval was now sent by God in judgment (Lev 9:23-24; 10:2).

There are a few different viewpoints. Aharon was warned not to set foot into the Holy of Holies at any other time (Lev 16:2; Ex 33:20) but on the Day of Atonement, and only on that day. On Yom Kippur the high priest was commanded to enter into Yahweh’s presence (*shekinah*) in the Holy of Holies and make atonement for the sins of Israel. When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, he saw the presence of Yahweh as a bright or brilliant cloud hovering over the Ark of the Covenant, above the mercy seat. The word *mercy seat* is the seat of atonement (*kafar*).

The mercy seat stood upon the Ark of the Covenant, but was not a part of it (Ex 35:12). This place of atonement is described in detail in Ex 25:17-22 and 37:6-9. It was surrounded by the cherubim who stood as guardians of the divine presence. The mercy seat was so identified with the Holy of Holies that in 1 Chr 28:11 the Holy of Holies is referred to as “the room of the mercy seat.” It seemed that the mercy seat was the most important part of the Holy of Holies, because it was over the mercy seat that the presence of Yahweh dwelt in the cloud. This was the place in the tabernacle where Moshe met and spoke with Yahweh face to face (Ex 25:22; 30:6; Num 7:89), where atonement was to be made for the sins of Israel. It was in this precise location that God’s dwelling place in heaven reached down to earth enabling man to make peace with Him.

Heb 10:19 — To enter the Holy of Holies the high priest was first to bathe his entire body, going beyond just the washing of hands and feet required on other occasions. The high priest had to be personally pure if his intercession was to be accepted. This washing was the symbol of the purification we now must live in the reality of (Heb 10:22). We stand in the place of the high priest, making intercession for the people of the world in our morning and evening sacrifices (Rom 12:1; 1 Tim 2:1-8; 1 Chr 23:30; Mal 1:11; Acts 26:7). We the priesthood, all in the place of the high priest, enter the Holy of Holies twice daily and in the Breaking of the Bread (1 Cor 11:24-32; Heb 10:16-31). Heb 5:1-5 — We stand on earth in His place as high priest.

The priests’ clothing (Ex 39:27) was designed to reflect the holiness and purity desired by Yahweh (Lev 16:4-5; Heb 10:22). Aaron, the high priest, was commanded to wear special garments, the same fabric worn by angels of Yahweh (Eze 9:2,3,11; 10:2,6-7; Dan 10:5; 12:6-7), and our Master in heaven (Rev 1:13-15 — that it was linen goes without saying). So Lev 16:4 it is intended to instruct us to wear this kind of fabric which signifies eternity. Linen is an eternal fabric, signifying righteousness — pure, clean, without sin — holy garments, of holy linen (Lev 16:4). We wear the shirt, pants, belt, and diadem in assumption of being crowned (2 Tim 4:8).

On the Day of Atonement, Aaron was charged by God to enter the Holy of Holies. Aaron was accustomed to having his brother, Moshe, speak to Yahweh, appearing personally before him. His first time must have been terrifying for him, since he feared a similar fate that his two sons experienced. Would he be struck down in the presence (*shekinah*) of Yahweh? Aaron had often witnessed God’s judgment on those who rebelled against Him. A great responsibility fell upon Aaron’s shoulders. If he did not perfectly execute the intricate Yom Kippur sacrifice, he would subject the people of Israel to God’s wrath (Lev 16:6,11).

Aaron was commanded to take two handfuls of incense and place them in a fire pan full of coals taken from the altar of God. The cloud arising from that incense would cover the mercy seat with the sweet fragrance of Aaron’s prayers for forgiveness. Only then was he ready to present the sin offering for himself and his household (Lev 16:6,11). The glory of Yahweh shone brilliantly, enshrouded by the clouds of incense. Aaron, in fear and trembling, took the blood of the bull and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, first on the east side, then on the front seven times. With that offering completed and his sins atoned for, Aaron was ready to present the sacrifice for the nation (Lev 16:5,15), trusting that Yahweh would accept the sacrifice as an atonement for the people of Israel (Lev 16:16-18,33).

Then Aaron would do as Lev 16:21-22 (Ps 103:11-14). The two goats foreshadowed the sacrifice of Messiah, when our Master died on the cross and went into death to pay the penalty for our sins in death, as did the goat that was slaughtered. He also removed sin, as John the Baptist combined the idea of the *azazel* with the Passover lamb (Jn 1:29). Not only was our Master the slain lamb who protects us from the wrath of God (Ex 12), but He is also the *azazel* (Lev 16) who went into death. The two goats represent just one goat — our sins are completely removed, taken into death with Him (2 Cor 5:21).