



Yom Kippur

A Covering for the People of God

by Tim Kelley

For many Christians, the Passover is the most important day of the year, for we believe that on this day God provided the way for forgiveness of Sins, and indeed Messiah Yeshua did die that our sins might be covered. But in Judaism, Yom Kippur is the most important day of the year, for by the actions of the High Priest and the two-fold sacrifice of the Atonement victims – the bull and the two goats – God provided forgiveness of sins and a way for Israel to be restored to God as His people.

In reality, both Christianity and Judaism are right, but for different reasons.¹

Unfortunately, much is lost in the name “Day of Atonement”. Many of the Jewish people associate the fact that they are fasting with the forgiveness of sins. For instance, from the Jewish Virtual Library you read this:

“The name ‘Yom Kippur’ means ‘Day of Atonement,’” and that pretty much explains what the holiday is. It is a day set aside to ‘afflict the soul,’ to atone for the sins of the past year.”²

From this statement, a person may perceive that the Jewish people believe that going without food and water for one day removes sin. If it were that easy, why not sin throughout the year then fast one day to get rid of the sin? I hope that was not the thinking of the person who wrote that article.

Instead of *atonement* being something an individual does, *atonement* is something done for you. To get a better hand on the word *atonement*, we should go back to the Hebrew. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement is first mentioned in scripture in Lev. 23:27 –

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 23:27** “Also the tenth *day* of this seventh month *shall be* the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls . . .

The Hebrew word for atonement is kippur (כִּפּוּר Strong’s 3725). This word comes from the Hebrew root word kaphar (כָּפַר Strong’s 3722), which means *to cover*. **The first place** the word is used in scripture is in Genesis 6:4 where Noah is told to ‘cover’ the ark with pitch.

^{KJV} **Genesis 6:14** Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

ALL three of these words have a common understanding, that of being ‘covered’. What we see is that Noah built a boat out of wood, but the wood itself would not keep the water out. The boat needed something to cover the wood that would seal out the water. Without the covering sealer, the water would seep into the boat and cause it to sink. In essence, the covering – the kophar – is what saved Noah; Noah’s work of putting the wood planks on the side of the boat was not enough. The kophar – the covering - is what saved them from sinking.

This is the same with us today. All the repentance, fasting, and prayers that a person can offer will not save us if we don’t have a covering. Let’s talk a little bit about our covering.

¹ Those who believe they are saved because of their redeemer will reach the promised land because of belief, those who believe in salvation by works will suffer affliction before

² <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holiday4.html>

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We all have coverings. Coverings are what protect us. We get under the ‘covers’ at night in order to stay warm; We put on clothing to ‘cover our nakedness’, we ‘cover’ our house with a roof in order to keep out the rain, and if you are in battle and want to advance toward the enemy, you will ask your companion to “cover me” in order to protect me from the enemy’s arrows.

In all these cases, your covering is what protects you, and the covering that is closest to us is our clothing, our garments.

In Numbers 15, Moses instructed the people in regards to un-intentional sins and intentional (defiant or high-handed) sins. He follows that with an example of a person who apparently committed a ‘high-handed’ sin, and then gave them instructions regarding something they must do with their garment.

^{ESV} **Numbers 15:37-39** The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸ "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make **tassels** on the **corners** of their **garments** throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. ³⁹ And it shall be a tassel for you **to look at** and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and **your own eyes**, which you are inclined to whore after.

Simply put, God wants the Israelite people to attach tzit-tzit to the edges of their clothing. Let’s talk about these words:

- tassels = ‘tsiytsith’ (תצ"ת – 6734)
 - from ‘tsiyts’ (צצ – 6731) – a flower or bloom; a shiny thing.
 - from the verbal root ‘twuwts’ (צוץ – 6692) which means to ‘blossom’.

Though the word ‘tsiytsith’ is only used in regards to the fringes, ‘tsiyts’ is the word used for the solid gold plate worn by the High Priest that has engraved on it “Holiness to YHVH” and it became a part of his head covering. as well as the blossoms that appeared on Aarons rod that budded. The tsiyts were the representations of new life that came from a dead stick.

When you think of something that had been dead for a while and then came back to life and combine it with the concept to being Holy to YHVH, what do you come up with?

- corners = ‘kanaph’ (קנף – 3671) – wing, extremity, edge, border
 - from verbal root ‘kanaph’ (קנף – 3670) – to be thrust into a corner for the purpose of being hidden from view (because it is not being used)

The first place we see this word is in Genesis 1:21 where it is used as “winged fowl”, thus based on the “Law of First Use”, a ‘kanaph’ is a wing. When you think about a bird’s wings, they are out of sight unless they are being used and thus the secondary meaning of ‘extremity’ or ‘corners’. But in the passage in question, ‘knaph’ is used in relation to a garment, and thus the portion of the garment would be the part that is not normally be seen, i.e. – the lower edges or hem. But there is another tiny detail that we have to consider, and that’s other mention of tsiytsith in Deuteronomy were it says to attach them to the “arba kanpe-ot” or four corners.

Thus we have a garment with four extremities or four corners. This could be a coat that is split in the back, a vest, a shirt that is split so as to have four corners, or a tallit.

- garment = ‘begeg’ (בגד – 899) which means “treachery, deceit, garment, or clothing.”
 - from the verbal root ‘bagad’ (בגד – 898) with means to act treacherously or deceitfully

What connection is there between a garment and treachery or deceitfulness? It’s real simple – much of the treachery and deceit that took place in the scripture had something to do with clothing. Here are a few examples –

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- Rebecca and Jacob deceived Isaac into thinking he was talking with Esau by ‘clothing’ Jacob’s arms with hairy animal skins
 - Tamar deceived Judah into thinking she was a harlot by dressing like one
 - Joseph’s brothers deceived Jacob into thinking Joseph had been killed by an animal by dipping Joseph’s coat in blood
 - Joseph’s garment was the evidence that got him convicted of treachery in regards to Potiphar’s wife
 - Joseph concealed his identity (he deceived them) from his brothers by dressing as an Egyptian
 - The Gibeonites deceive Joshua into thinking they were from a far country by wearing worn-out clothing
 - after haSatan deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, God had to put garments on Adam and Eve
- to look at = ra’ah (ראַה – 7200) which means “to see, look at, inspect, perceive, consider”

This is a verbal root that is used the first time in Genesis –

^{NKJ} **Genesis 1:4** And God saw the light, that *it* was good . . .

In this case, God did more than just notice that there was light; He also thought about the light and determined that it was good; that it was fulfilling the purpose for which it was created.

Now that we know a little more about the words God gave to Moses in regards to the tsiytsith, let’s see if there is more to it than just attaching tassels to our belt-loops.

So what does God want us to do with the tsiytsith? Based on the meaning of the words, He’s wanting us to attach them somewhere on our 4-cornered garment where they are not in our face, but always with us. They are to be a representation of our renewed life of being holy to YHVH, and they are placed on our garment at such a place where when we look at them, we have to handle our garment and consider the treachery that we may be getting ourselves into if we follow our eyes (as did Eve³) and fail to remember the gift of Torah sustains our life (Deut. 32:47). You might say that the garment now protects us - it becomes a barrier to sin.

Unfortunately, most of us don’t wear 4-cornered garments on a daily basis, and thus we do the best we can and wear our tsiytsith on our belt loops. But if we did have such a garment, it would probably look like a tallit.

So what is a tallit? The word is Aramaic (ללט) and it simply means ‘cover’. Basically, it’s a multi-use garment that can wrap around yourself to provide warmth in the winter and can place on top of your head to shade you from the sun in the summer. It’s a covering that a person could use as a garment or as a blanket. It appears that when God gave the tsiytsith instructions to Moses, He assumed everyone had one.

But while tallit is simply a covering, when we attach tsiytsith to its ‘wings’ (kanaph), we have a garment that has a set apart, or may we say, a holy purpose. Though it can still provide us with warmth and comfort, it also reminds us of the spiritual covering and protection that’s available through Messiah Yeshua when we ask Him to be our husband and ask for His covering.

Notice the example of Ruth and Boaz. In trying to provide security for her daughter-in-law, Naomi encouraged Ruth to take a bold step to provoke Boaz to take her as his wife. You know the story . . . Naomi told her to lay down at Boaz’s feet that night at the threshing floor. In so doing, she was indicating something special to him. Let’s read the story –

³ Gen. 3:6

Ruth 3:3-9 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ And she replied, "All that you say I will do." ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

In this passage the word "wings" is 'kanaph', just like the corners of a tallit; and being that Boaz 'sat at the gates' and was probably a leading Jew in his day, it is very likely that his tallit had tsiytsith attached to it.

So when Ruth uncovered his feet, she probably lifted up the tallit he was sleeping under and slipped her feet under a corner of it as well.. She was telling him that she wanted him to be her covering – her husband, and as the story goes, he also became her ga'al, her kinsman redeemer.

God showed Himself to be our covering all through our Israelite history, the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day was our covering. We were covered by his strength and power. Did you ever notice the reason Ruth wanted Boaz's covering? Look at the previous verses –

^{ESV} **Ruth 2:21-22** ²¹ And Ruth the Moabite said, "Besides, he said to me, 'You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'" ²² And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted."

Boaz had already told Ruth that she should stick close to his women servants for protection, and when Naomi found that Ruth had met Boaz, she reiterated his concern.

The concept of being covered is not as familiar to us today as it was even 100 years ago when men were considered to be the 'covering' for their wives. 130 years of the "feminist" movement has changed the way men look at their marriages and their wives, and as a result, women and families have suffered. Back then, at least in many "anglo-saxon" cultures, men were responsible for their wives. They were to provide for them, protect them, and in many cases, take the punishment for them in a court of law. That was the culture of early America, and the culture of Biblical Israel.

The adversary is always lurking to strike at the bride of the Messiah and he will have his day with the children of Israel. God, as He has always done, will once again use affliction to cause His people to repent and return to him. This day pictures the end of a 7 year period of affliction on Israel called the Chevlei Mashiach – the Birthpains of the Messiah. It started when Israel was eating and drinking as in the days of Noah, but comes to a close when Israel is in deep affliction, fasting and praying.

We don't have to share in that affliction. Instead, we can have the protection of our Saviour, Messiah Yeshua. We can have our feet under His tallit and enjoy His covering.

Have you ever considered what a tallit looks like when you set it up on 4 poles? It becomes a chuppah – a wedding chamber – a place of protection for the people of God.

We need his covering, His protection. Messiah Yeshua is our covering, our protection. He was the one that was afflicted so that our sins could be covered. Now we are covered by His blood, so that when the adversary attacks, he has to attack Him to get to us. We don't have to be afflicted again because He was afflicted for us.

^{KJV} **Isaiah 53:3-4** ³ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴

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Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

On this day, we afflict our souls in memory of the affliction He endured to cover our sins and redeem us back to Him.

^{KJV} Psalm 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Shalom Alecheim