

Yom Kippur, or 'Day of Atonement' as it is oftentimes translated, is a somewhat perplexing day. It's a day when you are to do no work and have a complete (no food, no water) fast. In addition, there are a number of sacrifices including a sacrifice that is somewhat hard to understand.

In this study, I will briefly discuss a couple of the key elements regarding the observance of this day, then discuss a key element of the day that, up until recently, I did not truly understand. That key element is the meaning of the 'two goats'.

Before getting into the focus of the study, let us cover some of the 'Yom Kippur' basics.

The Fast -

The instructions pertaining to Yom Kippur are found in Leviticus 16 and the specific commandment to fast is in vs. 29 -

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 16:29** " This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.

The scripture does not explicitly call for a fast, but instead says that you are to "afflict your souls" which is translated from the Hebrew term "te-annu et-naphes-takem" (תַּעֲנִינָה אֶת נַפְשֵׁי תַיְכֶם). This phrase is used 4 times in Leviticus¹ and once in Numbers, and each time in regards to Yom Kippur. The key words in the phrase are "anah" (אָנָה – 6031) which is typically translated "afflict" and 'nephesh' (נֶפֶשׁ – 5315) which is the physical bodies of both man and animals.

Though "annu" is often translated "afflict", it is also translated "humbled" as well as "sing"². Nevertheless, there are a number of passages³ where one can make a clear connection between "annu" and "fasting". One is found in the book of Ezra –

^{NKJ} **Ezra 8:21** Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble (annu) ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.

Here, "annu" is translated "humble" and is clearly connected to the idea of fasting. Unfortunately, it does not provide the mechanics of the fast, i.e. abstaining from food and water. We have to go to Esther to find that⁴ –

^{NKJ} **Esther 4:16** "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise.

In addition to Esther, Isaiah makes it clear that 'afflicting your soul' means fasting.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 58:3** 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.

¹ Lev. 16:29,31; 23:27,32; Numbers 29:7

² Ex. 32:18; Isaiah 27:2

³ Also Psalm 35:13; Isaiah 58:3-7

⁴ see also 2 Sam 12:21



In this passage, the phrase 'afflicted our souls' is much the same as in Lev. 16:29 quoted above, but here, it is coupled to the word 'fast' (Hebrew 'tsuwm' - צוּמ - 6684) which clearly means 'fast'.

Though this provides good evidence that 'afflicting our souls' means a food and water fast, the evidence that is more often used is the fact that Moses fasted 40 days (without food and water) while making atonement for the sins of Israel in regards to the golden calf⁵. A case can be made that Moses made at least three trips up the mountain, and in each case, he fasted⁶, and that the last trip ended on Yom Kippur.

With all that in mind, it seems evident that God expects us to have a food and water fast on this day.

the Sabbath -

The fact that this day is a day where no work should be done is very clear. Besides the fact that you will be fasting and will not feel like working, God clearly states that we should not do any work –

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 23:27-32** 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 . . . ²⁸ "And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement . . . ²⁹ "For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ "And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ "You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² "It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

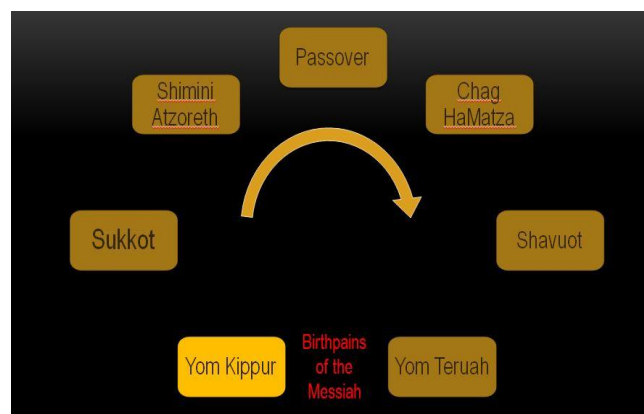
Yom Kippur -

The phrase "Day of Atonement" comes from the Hebrew "yom haKippurim" (יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים) which literally means "day of the coverings". The Hebrew word "kippur" (כִּפּוּר – 3725) comes from the root word "kaphar" which means "to cover". In the story of Noah, 'kaphar' is the 'pitch' that covered the ark. 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 kopher – is what saved Noah and his family because Noah's work of putting the wood planks on the side of the boat was not enough. The kopher – the covering - is what saved them from sinking.

As we saw earlier, it is a "day of the coverings" – plural - meaning that there is more than one atonement, or covering, made on this day. We'll get to that later.

Festival Cycle –

Yom Kippur is the fifth moed⁷ in the festival cycle. It is sandwiched in between Yom Teruah and Sukkot. Rehearsing the meaning of the festivals, they tend to define how God is going to save His people.



⁵ Exodus 32:30

⁶ Deut. 9:9; 9:18; 9:25; 10:19

⁷ appointed time



In a nutshell:

- Passover = Israel redeemed
- 7th day of Hag-haMatzah = Israel saved
- Shavuot = giving of the Torah to a redeemed people, the betrothal of God to Israel
- Yom Teruah = fetching away of the bride / beginning of the Birthpains
- Yom Kippur / Day of Atonement = repentance
- Sukkot = the wedding supper / the World to Come / Messianic Kingdom
- Shemini Atzoreth = new beginning

Israel Lost Her Virginity

From the order of the festivals, we see that God became betrothed to Israel on Shavuot, but the actual wedding will not take place until Sukkot – sometime yet in the future. Unfortunately, some time after the betrothal, the bride did a terrible thing - she lost her virginity. Jeremiah speaks of it. He said -

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 18:13** "Therefore thus says the LORD: Ask among the nations, Who has heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a very horrible thing.

As the passage continues, it speaks of how the bride committed spiritual adultery with the nations. So how does God reconcile that in His heart? Is he willing to take a bride who has a proclivity toward other men? I don't think so. God, like all men, wants a bride who is committed to him. Obviously, there has to be repentance on the part of the bride, and something has to be done to - at least in YHVH's eyes - restore her virginity.

The "Birthpains of the Messiah" are what YHVH gives to bring Israel to a state of repentance. From the festival cycle we see that Yom Kippur comes at the end of the Birthpains. It is understood to be a 7-year period of great trials on those Israelites who have not turned to God. Though it's designed to bring Israel to repentance, it will affect the entire world.

As the birthpains draw to a close, a spirit of mourning and remorse will come over the people as they realize what they and their forefathers had done, and the calamity it brought upon the earth. Those who endure the Birthpains will have lost a lot, especially those who are caught in them due to rebellion, indifference, or simply their casual approach to God and His way. They will mourn for their friends and family - some of whom died during that time. They will regret what they had done that had brought this trial upon their family. In their trial, they will turn to God and repent of their ways, but the pain and sorrow for what they had done will continue.

According to the festival cycle, the period that includes the Birthpains is followed by Yom Kippur, and shortly thereafter by Sukkot – the time of Joy. Apparently, somewhere between the close of the Tribulation and the beginning of Sukkot, something happens that turns all their sorrow into Joy.

The following portion of the prophecy of Isaiah speaks of a time when the sorrow of God's people will be turned to Joy. Because of its mention of proclaiming liberty and the opening of the prisons, it appears to be set in the time of the Jubilee year which begins on Yom Kippur.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 61:1** "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, ³ To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."



The passage speaks of removing the sackcloth and ashes, comforting those who mourn, and providing a garment of praise to cover the spirit of heaviness of heart – apparently something that will take place on Yom Kippur

Let's look at a few more scriptures that speak of a time of comfort as Israel transitions toward Sukkot.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 14:1** . . .the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land . . . ³ It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve,

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 35:10** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 31:13** "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together; For I will turn their mourning to joy, Will comfort them, And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.

How does God turn sorrow into joy? I believe the two goats of Yom Kippur are the vehicle by which that is accomplished. Let me explain:

Besides the normal 'morning and evening' sacrifices that are made every day of the year, on Yom Kippur there are additional sacrifices. The text says -

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 16:3-4** "Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering. ⁴ "He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.

Aaron was to provide his own sacrificial victims – a bull and a ram – one of which would be a sin offering (the bull) and the other (the ram) a burnt offering.

Reading further we find additional offerings –

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 16:5** "And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.

These three sacrificial victims were provided by the Israelite people. They apparently chose them from their herds and flocks and brought them to Aaron. The two goats would be a sin offering, and like it was with Aaron, the ram would be a burnt offering.

Looking back at the sacrificial system as it was laid out in Leviticus chapters 1 through 7, we find that sin offerings when accompanied by repentance and restitution, would provide forgiveness of unintentional sins – that is, sins committed in ignorance (Lev. 4:2; Numbers 15:22; Hebrews 9:7).

Thus Aaron's bull provided atonement – a covering – for his unintentional sins. Likewise, Israel's goats provided atonement for the unintentional sins of the people in general. In addition, the combination of sprinkling the bull's blood and then sprinkling the goat's blood provide atonement for the Tabernacle itself as well as the Altar of Burnt Offerings.

In addition to the two sin offerings, Aaron also offered two rams as burnt offerings on behalf of himself and his household as well as for the people in general. These rams also provided a covering for the offerers.

Two Goats –



Whereas Aaron's sin offering was a single bull, we find that the sin offering for the people consisted of two goats.

In other words, both animals made up one sacrifice. This is similar to the offering made for the cleansing of a leper or a leprous house where two birds were used, one is killed and the other is dipped in a mixture of water and the dead bird's blood and then turned loose.



Why two goats for one sin offering? Because there are two parts to sin – the infraction and the record of it. Even though a sin may be repented of and forgiven, there is still something that is imbedded in our minds. Sin oftentimes includes mental pictures that come back to haunt us, thoughts we cannot erase, and feelings that cannot be removed. Though God may have forgiven us, we have not forgiven ourself.

To better illustrate this thought, let's consider this example -

When a person commits a crime, charges are filed against him and he goes to court to face judgment. If he is found guilty, he is made to pay a penalty – monetary, prison, or even death. Once the penalty has been paid, He is set free, but even though he's free, there is still a record of his crime. That record can often be used against him if he later commits a similar crime, it may weigh negatively in regards to a job interview, and may even affect where the person may or may not live. On the other hand, a legal authority can give the person a "pardon" and then the crime is removed from his record and can never be used again.

In regards to the sins of Israel or even our personal sins, the laws pertaining to the sacrificial system may have provided a covering for the sin, but they could not remove the 'record' of that sin. The sin is embedded in our minds and we cannot escape it. As the writer of Hebrews says –

^{NKJ} **Hebrews 10:1-4** For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

Though the atonement sacrifices on Yom Kippur could purify the offerer, they could not remove the sin. There would still be a record of it. And that's where the two goats come in.

Let's go back to the text where the offerings are described -

^{ESV} **Leviticus 16:8-10** And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. ⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, ¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

What we see is that lots are cast to determine which goat serves a particular function in this offering. The choice is not Israel's, nor is it Aaron's. God will decide and make it known to Aaron.



There is a question about the meaning of the word “azazel” (אַזָּזֵל – 5799), but the meaning is not that hard to understand. The Strong’s Concordance defines it as “goat of departure” by taking the two root words “ez” (עֵז – 5795 – she-goat, kid) and “azal” (אָזַל – 235 – to go, to go away). The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon says it means “entire removal⁸.” These definitions not only fit with the Hebrew, but also align with the instructions in Leviticus 16.

A good representation of the term is used in Young’s Literal Translation –

^{YLT} **Leviticus 16:8** 'And Aaron hath given lots over the two goats, one lot for Jehovah, and one lot for a goat of departure;

A question also arises in regards to the meaning of the phrase “for the Lord” and “for Azazel”. Some believe that the phrase indicates that the two goats represent two different personalities – God and Azazel. In other words, one goat represents YHVH and the other goat represents Azazel. There is a problem with that view because neither the Hebrew nor the underlying message of the scripture supports that theory. To get a better understanding, let’s examine the two phrases.

“For the Lord” in Hebrew is simply “la Yahwey” (לַיהוָה), the personal name YHVH with the particle preposition “la” attached to it. “La” can mean “to, for, unto, belonging to” and a number of other similar things. The first time it’s used in conjunction with the personal name “YHVH” is in the story of Cain and Abel.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 4:3** And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

When we look at that phrase, we don’t take it to mean that the ‘fruit of the ground’ represents YHVH. It simply means that the fruit of the ground was to be given to YHVH. The phrase “la Yahwey” is used 577 times in the Tnakh and 98 times in all the Torah leading up to the Yom Kippur instructions. I read all 98 of those passages, and in no case is it implied that something or someone represented YHVH.

On the other hand, the phrase “for the Lord” can mean “for the purpose”. The purpose of one goat was to satisfy God’s requirement that a sacrificial victim be a substitute for the person who committed a sin because “the wages of sin is death”⁹. The other goat carries the sin away and removes it from sight.

Here’s the process that Aaron followed in regards to the Azazel . . .

^{ESV} **Leviticus 16:21** And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.

With the laying on of hands, the High Priest would confess the sins of the people upon the head of the ‘azazel’ – the ‘goat of departure’ - and the goat would be lead out to the wilderness.

Continuing on, it says -

^{ESV} **Leviticus 16:22** The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

As the Hebrew implies, the goat of departure carried¹⁰ the sins of the people to a remote area where he and the sins were ‘let go’.. In fact the word for “let go” is actually “shalach”¹¹ which means “sent away” or

⁸ pg. 736b

⁹ Romans 6:23

¹⁰ Hebrew = ‘nasa’ – Strong’s 5375 which means to ‘lift up’ or ‘carry’



“sent out”. Also in this passage, the phrase “remote area” (“land not inhabited” in the KJV) comes from the Hebrew word “gezarah” (גִּזְרָה – 1509) which means “separation” or “a separate place”. It comes from the root word “gazar (1504) which means “to cut, divide, cut down, cut off”. The word “gazar” is first used in the story of King Solomon where his answer to the woman fighting for a child was to cut (gazar) the child in two.

Isaiah uses “gazar” to speak of Yeshua’s death –

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 53:8** He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off (‘gazar’) from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

And in Lamentations, Jeremiah says that –

^{NKJ} **Lamentations 3:54** The waters flowed over my head; I said, "I am cut off!"

Jeremiah’s cry was that he was covered with water, which in most cases means drowning followed by death; and according to King David, a dead person has no memory.

^{NKJ} **Psalms 6:5** For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks?

So if the “goat of departure” takes our sins to “the land cut off, and if “the land cut off” pictures a place where there is no remembrance, then that place is where sins are forgotten; and when sins are forgotten, there is no longer any remorse or sadness for our sins.

The writer of Hebrews explains –

^{NKJ} **Hebrews 9:13-14** ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Yeshua’s sacrifice, as pictured by the two-part sin offering of the two goats, does both. It purifies the sinner and completely removes the memory of the sin.

YHVH says -

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 43:25** " I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

And Jeremiah writes about Israel and Judah, saying -

^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 31:34** ⁴ "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

God’s desire for Israel is that she be a virgin bride. A woman as pure and white as a linen gown, but for that to happen, not only will her sins need to be forgiven, they will need to be forgotten as well. Israel will have to forget her old lovers, and God will have to forget what she has done to Him. Only then can the marriage be truly successful.

The sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua, as painted by the two-goat sin offering of Yom Kippur, is the way God makes this happen . . . AND IT WILL HAPPEN!

¹¹ Strong’s 7971



^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 31:4** Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

Shalom Alechem!