

The Holy Day Of Atonement

God's instruction to the Levitical priests; "It will be a statute to you forever. In the seventh month (Tishrei or Ethanim – September/October (1 Kings 8:2), on the tenth day of the month you will afflict your souls (by fasting) and will do no manner of work ... for on this day will atonement be made for you to cleanse you from all your sins so you will be clean before God. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you ... The priest who is anointed and who is consecrated to be priest in his father's place will make the atonement. He will put on the linen garments, the holy garments. He will make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, he will make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar, he will make atonement for the priests and for all of the people of the assembly. This will be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel once in the year because of all their sins" (Leviticus 16:29 to 34). More details regarding the priest's dress code and the Temple services in the Holy of Holies can be studied in Leviticus 16:1 to 34. The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year in the Hebrew calendar. The Shabbat (Sabbath) is the holiest day of the week. When the two dates fall on the same day it adds an extra sense of solemnity and sanctity to that day. Our prayers and afflictions are a form of worship. The fasting or 'afflictions' mentioned here are abstaining from food, sexual activity, bathing/swimming for enjoyment or any form of activity for fun, plus any kind of manual labour, just for the day. Yom Kippur is a very solemn day. It is called the 'Shabbat Shabbaton' or 'The Sabbath of Sabbaths', a day for solemn rest.

When Aaron's two eldest sons took the day lightly, disobeying the instructions from God and making 'strange' fire, God killed them outright. 'Nadab and Abihu, the (eldest) sons of Aaron each took his censer and put fire in it, they laid incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them to do. Fire came forth from before God and devoured them so they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what God spoke of saying, "I will show Myself holy to those who come near Me and before all the people I will be glorified." Aaron held his peace' (Leviticus 10:1 to 3). Aaron would have been very shocked at the sudden deaths of his sons and he would have been grieving for them so the verse saying 'Aaron held his peace' would have been an understatement. 'The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron when they drew near before God and died. God said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the Most Holy Place within the veil before the mercy seat which is on the Ark lest he die, for I will appear in the cloud on the mercy seat"' (Leviticus 16:1 & 2). In referring to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu as a result of an inappropriate approach to the holiest section of the Tabernacle, God reminds Moses and Aaron the approach to the Holy of Holies is limited and sacred. God made it very clear, Aaron may only approach this holiest place once a year, and that time of the year is the Day of Atonement.

The most important element of the holiday is the atonement connected to it. 'You will be clean before the Lord from all your sins' (Leviticus 16:30), and, 'This will be a statute forever for you so atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins' (Leviticus 16:34). 'On the tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It will be a Holy Convocation (assembly or meeting) to you and you will afflict yourselves (with fasting) and you will offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. You will do no manner of work on that same day for it is a Day of Atonement to make atonement for you before the Lord your God' (Leviticus 23:27 & 28). This day was so holy, if anyone disobeyed God's instructions for the Day of Atonement, their punishment was severe. 'Whoever it is who will not deny himself in that same day will be cut off from their people. Whoever it is who does any manner of work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among their people. You will do no manner of work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It will be a Shabbat of solemn rest for you and you will deny yourselves. In the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you will keep your Shabbat' (Leviticus 23:29 to 32). Since the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD, and the special yearly entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies was no longer possible during the Day of Atonement service, prayers in the synagogue have taken the place of what was performed in the Temple thousands of years ago. As a remembrance of that special service, Jewish people all over the world read Leviticus 16 on the Day of Atonement every year. Over time, the memory of what took place in the Temple has faded but through the prayer service it has been kept alive in the hearts of the Jewish people.

Why is the Day of Atonement so very special to God, He would instruct His people to keep it holy? Our Saviour Jesus/Yeshua was born on or about the Day of Atonement. Just like the sacrificial lamb was slain to bring atonement for the Jewish people, so Jesus came as the Holiest Sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29; Revelation 5:6) to make atonement for all humanity. Every one of the Holy Feasts of the Lord are forerunners to the initial appearance of Jesus on earth when He came to atone for our sins. The layout of the furniture inside the Tabernacle and the Temple was in the shape of a cross. The ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are known as the 'Ten days of Awe'. They are ten days set aside for soul-searching and repairing relationships between families and between individuals and God. The Scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves and our attitudes before partaking the bread and wine (1 Corinthians

11:28), which we are to take in remembrance of the Lord until He returns (Luke 22:19). The Day of Atonement is a special day of fasting and repentance, chosen and set aside by God Himself. "As we all know, Jesus did not take hold of (fallen) angels, but He did take hold of the fallen descendants of Abraham. It was necessary that He become like His Brethren (Jewish people) in every way, so He may become a faithful High Priest to make atonement for our sins" (Hebrews 2:16 & 17).

Jesus' atonement made it possible for all sinners to be saved by repentance rather than being condemned by God's wrath in His righteous judgement. Jesus opened the way of salvation for us but it is our choice to choose His way. Salvation is not by force but by our own choice. Jesus will be our Righteous Judge (2 Timothy 4:8) at the end of time but He first came to atone for all who choose to come to repentance and follow Him. Our atonement came through the blood of Jesus so His offering of bread and the cup makes sense. 'As they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it and broke it. He gave to the disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is My body." He took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "All of you drink it, for this is My blood of the New Covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins"' (Matthew 26:26 to 28). Jesus was using the image of His blood in two ways. He was explaining the shedding of His blood on the cross was a substitution of His life for ours, granting us redemption from our sins. He was also saying His blood ratifies a New Covenant between God and mankind. We can have a covenant relationship with God if we personally partake of Jesus' atonement. Each time we take communion we remind ourselves we have been brought into a loving fellowship with our Creator God because of the New Covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus, the Precious Son of God, also called the Son of His love. 'Give thanks to the Father Who made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in Light (all Godly people), Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation' (Colossians 1:12 to 15).

It is a glorious thing to be a genuine, born-again Christian, the most exalted privilege of mankind. To accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, and to devotedly follow in the way of salvation which He taught us, is by far the most satisfactory way to live. Living with God gives us peace and freedom from sin, peace of mind, contentment, forgiveness, hope, life here and for eternity. Though our bodies of flesh will perish, our Spiritual lives will never end and we will enjoy fellowship with God, Jesus, holy angels, cherubim, seraphim plus other redeemed people forever and ever. All because Jesus chose to come and save our souls. Thank you Lord Jesus for what you have done for mankind. We all appreciate what You have done. 'God proves His own love for us, for while we were yet sinners Jesus died for us. Much more than being justified by His blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through Him. If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, by being reconciled, we will be saved by His life. We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus, through Whom we have received the atonement' (Romans 5:8 to 11).

Amen and God bless you.

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