

## ACHAREI MOT { אַחֲרֵי מוֹת } (After death)

Leviticus 16:1-18:30; Amos 9:7-15; Ezekiel 22:1-19; Hebrews 9:11-28  
A Messianic Jewish Commentary by Hannah Neshet [www.voiceforsisrael.net](http://www.voiceforsisrael.net)



Day of Atonement (painting circa 1900 by [Isidor Kaufmann](#))

**“And the LORD spoke unto Moses, after the death (acharei mot) אַחֲרֵי מוֹת of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD, and died;”** (Leviticus 16:1)

This week’s parashah begins with God’s warnings about entering the Holy of Holies after the death (acharei mot) of Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aaron the High Priest. Not just anyone could enter this most innermost sanctuary, but only the High Priest (Cohen Hagadol) and even then only one day out of the entire year – on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur in Hebrew).

What a striking contrast to the unlimited access that we now have to the very Throne of the Almighty God under the New Covenant sealed in the blood of the Messiah, Yeshua, our High Priest (Cohen Hagadol) who empathizes with our human weaknesses.

**“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Yeshua the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”** (Hebrews 4:14-16)



The Temple in Jerusalem

It seems that the Lord was trying to prevent any more 'accidental deaths' from coming too close to the holiness of God. At this time, the 'K'dosh Hak'doshim' (Holy of Holies) was placed behind a thick, heavy curtain or veil in front of the atonement cover on the Ark. There the Lord would appear in a cloud:

**“The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.”** (Leviticus 16:2)

What happened to this partition when Yeshua died on the cross? It was torn in two from the top to the bottom. Heaven itself rent its garments in grief, as is the Jewish mourning custom of a father who loses a son. Now that the veil is torn, every man, woman or child can have continual access to God through the blood of Yeshua.

**“And Yeshua cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.”** (Matthew 27:50-51)

Holy Garments      **“He shall put on the holy linen tunic...”** (Leviticus 16:4)

After the death of his sons, Aaron, the Cohen Hagadol (high priest), continued preparing for the crucial once a year sacrifice of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Even after loss, life must go on.

In order to minister before the Lord on this holy day, Aaron first bathed in water (immersed himself in the mikvah) and then put on a holy, linen tunic. In the Holy of Holies, he was not to wear his usual golden garments, designed for splendor and beauty; but rather simple, white linen clothing, representing purity and humility, befitting this most sacred of all days.



High Priest in the Holy of Holies.

So, too, do many religiously observant Jewish people, when attending Yom Kippur services, dress in simple, white linen. They also do not wear leather shoes, in remembrance of the sacrifice of the animal, but instead rubber soled sport shoes.

And so you may see a curious sight - elegant women in beautiful white dresses, with sneakers on their feet. ☺

## Attending a Wedding Feast

It is an Israeli custom for at least the men to wear a white shirt to a festival of special occasion. Therefore the rabbis give another reason for the manner of dress on this holy day. When men must appear before an earthly judge accused of some charge, they typically appear downcast and penitent, dressed in black like a mourner; but on Yom Kippur, Israel appears before God dressed in white, as if going to a wedding feast, in faith that those who return to the Lord in sincerity and truth will receive mercy at His hands and not condemnation.



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God instituted the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) as a lasting ordinance to be observed throughout all generations: **“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.”** (Leviticus 16:34)

Since the destruction of the Temple, however, the required Yom Kippur sacrifices are no longer offered up to the Lord. Followers of Yeshua believe that he is our final korban (sacrifice) for our kapparrah (atonement). The Jewish people who do not believe in Yeshua have replaced the blood sacrifice with three substitutes: prayer (t’fillah), repentance (t’shuva) and charity (t’zdakah).

## Clothed in White Garments

**“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”** (Revelation 3:5 ) May God make each one of us to be overcomers, clothed in these white garments, befitting a place in the Holy of Holies; that our names will be written in the Book of Life.

## Written in the Book of Life

The reference here to the Book of Life is the basis for the traditional Jewish belief that on the Feast of the Tru’ah, this book is opened and all our deeds (both good and bad) are revealed. The ten days between this feast and Yom Kippur are called the ‘Days of Awe’; during which God is on His throne and examines what is written here.



The Book of Life

Jewish people take this time to examine their lives and repent for any sins that they either know of, or have committed unintentionally or unknowingly. Yom Kippur is the day that God pronounces judgment, administering either the rewards for good deeds (mitzvot) or the punishments for evil deeds.

Judaism is sometimes misunderstood as a ‘religion of works’; however there is merit in our faith being expressed through works of good deeds. Yeshua also promised that when He returns, He will reward each one according to their works.<sup>1</sup> James also tells us that our faith, if not accompanied by works is dead and cannot save.

## Faith and Works

**“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?**

**Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”** (James 2:14-24)

Even the demons ‘believe’ - and tremble<sup>2</sup> and surely they are not going to heaven! We must bring these important issues of faith and works back into balance. The sacrifice was important, yes - it was vital - crucial; but works must also accompany our faith. If not, we may cause Jewish people to stumble through their misperception of Christianity as a religion that teaches people it’s okay to live anyway they choose (including a life of sin) and still depend upon the blood of Yeshua for their atonement.

We must also be careful in judging Jewish people who come to God in deep devotion and repentance. Most perceive ‘Jesus’ as a ‘Gentile, foreign God’, and therefore refuse to put their faith in this ‘Gentile Jesus’ out of loyalty to God. Would a just God damn someone to eternal hell for attempting to stay loyal to Him and avoid the sin of idolatry?

Would a faithful God condemn those with the same faith as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (and others of similar courageous faith) who were willing to be martyred rather than bow to a ‘foreign god’? We must leave the issue of who is ‘saved’ and who is ‘going to hell’ to the only One who is the perfect, all wise Judge, and keep our own conscience clear before Him.

God is well able to reveal His son to the Jewish people; and one day He will – in His perfect way and timing. His arm is not too short to save. At the same point, however, He will use us; if we are willing to be the instruments of this precious revelation to many whose hearts have already been prepared by the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit).

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 16:27

<sup>2</sup> James 2:19

Just the other day, while I was out at an appointment, my daughter, Liat, had a deep conversation with her Israeli piano teacher about spiritual issues: what it means to be devoted to God, why we believe in the Messiah Yeshua, and how we live out our faith while keeping the written Torah but not most of the man-made rules of the rabbis.

Liat was so excited to tell me about this when I got home and I rejoiced with her in how God will use whoever He chooses to speak into the hearts of His people, Israel.

## The Connection between Yom Kippur and Pesach

Today's parashah is not read in the fall at the time of Yom Kippur, but rather in the spring, around the time of Passover. Why? What is the connection between Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and Passover (Pesach)? For those who know Yeshua it is clear that He is the Passover lamb who was slain to make atonement for all of our sins.

We need to keep in mind, however, the rest of the story as well – after being saved from Egypt, only two individuals made it into the Promised Land. The rest perished because of their sin, complaining and unbelief. We, too, after being saved by the blood of the Lamb, need to live a godly life of faith and obedience.

## The Scapegoat (Azazel)



The [Scapegoat](#) (1854 painting by [William Holman Hunt](#))

**“And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for Azazel **לְעִזָּאֵל**.”** (Leviticus 16:8)

Aaron would cast lots over two goats - only one of which would be offered to God as the sin offering. The High Priest would lay his hands upon the other goat, symbolically laying all the sins of Israel upon this ‘scapegoat’ (azazel). The goat would then be banished into the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the sins of Israel along with it.

Azazel is an interesting word - a rare Hebrew noun meaning, 'dismissal' or 'entire removal'. The entire removal of the sin and dismissal of the guilt of Israel was symbolized by Aaron laying both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel.

All their transgressions were laid upon this chosen 'azazel', who was then banished into the wilderness, having taken Israel's sins upon itself.



Liat holding baby goat at Biblical Zoo Jerusalem, 2010

**“But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.”**  
(Leviticus 16:10)



Mount Azazel (Jabel Muntar) in the Judean Desert, to which the goat was sent

**“He (Aaron) is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.”** (Leviticus 16:21-22)

What a beautiful picture this is of what is described in the most well-known Messianic Prophecy in the Old Testament from the fifty-third chapter of the book of Isaiah. The Lord has laid upon Him (the Messiah) the sins of us all.

**“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** (Isaiah 53:6)

Just as this Scapegoat took all of our sins upon himself and carried them away into the wilderness; so too did Yeshua 'carry away the sins of the world'. When John the Baptist saw Yeshua coming to the Jordan River, he said, “*Hinei seh ha'Elohim, hanoseh chatat*

***ha'olam* (Here is the Lamb of God who carries away the sins of the world.)**" (John 1:29)

Once we begin to see these Scriptures in their Hebraic context, not only do they make more sense but they also bring a richness to our faith that we cannot have without this understanding of the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Yeshua became a curse for us

This Hebrew word, 'Azazel' is also used, even today in Israel, as a rare curse word. The book of Enoch (one of the books of the Apocrypha) mentions **Azazel** as one of the chief of a group of fallen angels who married human women and were responsible for the increase of violence and wickedness.<sup>3</sup>

This account is described in the bible as well, but without any mention of 'Azazel':

"That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. [...] There were giants in the earth in those days; and also afterward, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." (Genesis 6:2&4)



One imagining of **Azazel** (from Collin de Plancy's 1825 *Dictionnaire Infernal*)

Because of his corrupt influence upon the people of the earth, the fate of this fallen angel, Azazel, is to be cast into the lake of fire on the Day of Judgment:

"On the day of **the great judgment** he shall be cast into the fire. [...] The whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin." (1 Enoch 2:8)

We can be so thankful that Yeshua the Messiah took upon Himself all this sin and actually became that curse (azazel) for us, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**"But The Messiah has redeemed us from the curse of The Written Law, and He became a curse in our place, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)**

We may see a striking similarity between even the language used in this account of the azazel (scapegoat) in this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus and the well known Messianic

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Enoch

prophecy in the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah. In both instances, the sins and iniquities of the people are laid upon the head of this substitutionary offering. When they put the crown of thorns upon the head of Yeshua, even without knowing what they were doing, they were symbolically carrying out this prophetic act of the Cohen Hagadol – laying all the sins of Israel (and of all humanity) upon the head of Yeshua.



## Yeshua the Suffering Servant

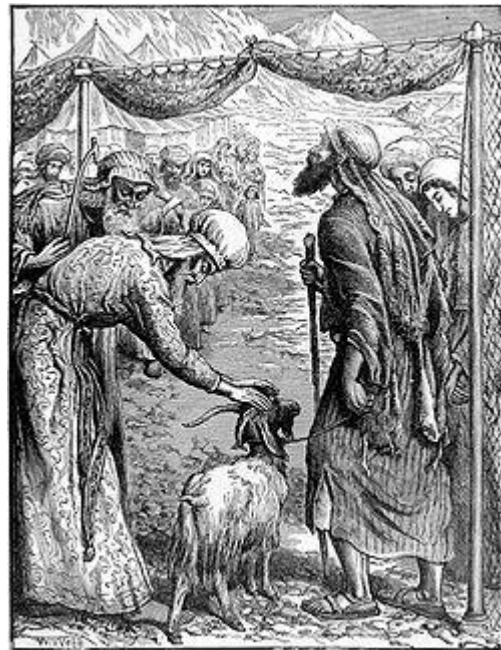
**“But He was pierced through for *our* transgressions, He was crushed for *our* iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**  
(Isaiah 53:5-6)

The Crown of Thorns by [Maarten van Heemskerck](#)

When someone first read these Scriptures to me, explaining how Yeshua died as a guilt offering for the transgressions of Isaiah’s people (Israel); and how He bore our sins and made intercession for us by pouring out his life unto death, I was shocked! I couldn’t believe that these Scriptures were taken from a Jewish bible and written by a Hebrew prophet!

This prophetic portion of Scripture is the subject of much controversy even today. These verses from Isaiah chapter 53 have been effectively hidden from most Jewish people (even those who faithfully attend synagogue services) by omitting the entire chapter from the prescribed selection of Sabbath Torah and Haftarah readings.

Why? Because they so perfectly describe the atonement Yeshua made for us through the sacrifice of his own life as the suffering servant. This would challenge the entire Rabbinic Jewish establishment; forcing them to admit that they have been wrong for centuries – an admission which would take a great deal of humility.



Sending Out the Scapegoat (illustration by William James Webb (1830–1904))

Even Yeshiva students (those who study in Rabbinical educational institutions) are denied the truth by keeping them busy studying the Talmud (a compilation of Rabbinical interpretations of the scriptures) rather than focusing on the study of the prophetic written Scriptures themselves. My own nephew, who had studied in an American Yeshiva<sup>4</sup> for

<sup>4</sup> Yeshiva is a Rabbinic school of learning where they study the Talmud (Oral Law) and Torah



several years, admitted that he had never read the book of Daniel, which reveals the timing of the coming of the Messiah.<sup>5</sup>

Those who do know the passages, such as trained anti-missionaries, disregard it by means of attributing these passages to the nation of Israel, rather than an individual person – the Messiah.

Numerous Rabbinic commentators, however, take for granted that these passages from the Prophet Isaiah (52:13-53:12) refers to the Messiah. The following references are gleaned from traditional rabbinical sources, as in the Talmud (oral law).<sup>6</sup>

*“He, Messiah, shall intercede for man’s sins, and the rebellious, for his sake, shall be forgiven.”* – Jerusalem Targum commentary on Isaiah 53:12

*“and when Israel is sinful, the Messiah seeks for mercy upon them as it is written, ‘By his stripes we were healed’ (Isaiah 53:5), and ‘he carried the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors’ (Isaiah 53:12) Genesis Rabbah.*

The interpretation widely promoted today among rabbinic teachers (that Isaiah 53 speaks not of the Messiah but of the nation of Israel) seems to have gained serious adherents only in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A contemporary, Rabbi Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin, responded to this theory with rather strong words:

*“(In contrast to those) having inclined after the stubbornness of their own hearts and their own opinion, I am pleased to interpret the parashah (Isaiah 53) in accordance with the teachings of our rabbis, of the King Messiah...*

*and adhere to the literal sense. Thus I shall be free from forced and far-fetched interpretations of which others are guilty.”*<sup>7</sup>

R. Moses Alshech (16<sup>th</sup> century) apparently ignored the ‘Nation-of-Israel’ interpretation altogether, stating flatly: *“Our rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet (Isaiah) is here (chapter 53) speaking of the Messiah.”*

In case you don’t have a Bible, here are the passages of which the rabbis refer to:

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants?

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<sup>5</sup> The Book of Daniel is considered a forbidden book by some Orthodox Jews

<sup>6</sup> Rabbinic comments on the Messiah, compiled by Hannah Newman.

<sup>7</sup> S.K. Driver and A. Neubauer, The Suffering Servant of Isaiah, p. 199ff

For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life, and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities,

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:6-12)

### Israel the Azazel (Scapegoat) for the Nations

The anti-missionaries have attempted to discredit this important messianic prophecy which describes the death of Yeshua as atonement for our sins. They claim that these verses speak of the nation of Israel as a whole – that Israel has suffered as a 'scapegoat' for the nations. In a limited sense this is true.

Because of the blindness with which the Lord temporarily afflicted Israel with regards to their Messiah, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

**“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**

**And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” (Romans 11:25-27)**

Against all warnings, a portion of the Gentile Christian Church has remained ignorant of this mystery, and therefore become 'wise in their own opinion' with regards to the Jews, rather than acknowledging the great debt they owe Israel and the Jews for their Messiah and the Bible, and a place in the Covenant with God.

There are two real problems with ascribing the passages from Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel:

- 1) Israel cannot make atonement for her own transgressions. One cannot be one's own scapegoat. "For the transgressions of My people He was stricken."

2) Israel as a nation does not generally suffer silently or willingly but the one referred to in these Scriptures remains silent: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth...so he opened not His mouth.” Jewish people are renowned for many wonderful qualities, but keeping our mouths closed and suffering in silence is definitely not one of them! ☺

### Though Our Sins be as Scarlet...

In Hebrew, the use of the word iniquities means ‘*crooked*’ and signifies a willful departure from the law (Torah) of God. The ordinary sacrifices were limited to atone for involuntary or unintentional sins. But this special sacrifice also atoned for willful sin.

Only Yeshua’s death fulfills that described in Isaiah 53 of God’s suffering servant: who was like a lamb led to the slaughter; who opened not His mouth; and who bore our iniquities even unto death. The Messiah Yeshua, acting as the High Priest (Cohen Hagadol), came into the heavenly Holy of Holies not with the blood of goats and calves; but with His own blood. This final sacrifice atones for all of our sins – even willful ones.

**“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.”** (Hebrews 9:12)

Our sins were symbolically transferred to the Messiah, who became our ‘scapegoat’. The blood of bulls and goats can never fully remove sin; only cover it for a time. A perfect, absolutely sinless one was required to pay the price for our rebellion and uncleanness. Yeshua the Messiah willingly gave his life as the perfect korban (sacrifice) to make kapparah (atonement) for our sins.

Rabbinic tradition states that the Cohen (Jewish priest) would tie a scarlet cloth to the horn of the goat & the scarlet cloth became white. This symbolised God’s gracious promise: **“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.”** (Isaiah 1:18)

Tradition also adds that this miracle did not take place for forty years before the destruction of the temple. <sup>8</sup> Why? Because Yeshua was already sacrificed, the ritual of the Azazel was no longer necessary nor accepted by God.



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<sup>8</sup> Edersheim, Alfred, The Temple, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 249)

## A Lasting Ordinance

“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must afflict your souls<sup>9</sup> and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you— because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a day of Sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance.” (Leviticus 16:29-31)

In Israel on Yom Kippur, virtually everyone (even secular Jews) refrains from eating in public, playing music or driving a vehicle. This leaves the roads and highways virtually free of all traffic, giving way to a rare opportunity for many of the children to play in the streets.



***"There will yet be children playing in the streets of Jerusalem..." (Zechariah 8:5)***

Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) is declared to be observed forever, not just until the Messiah comes. Some question whether we are still to fast and ‘afflict our souls’ if Yeshua has given us atonement, or if it should instead be turned into a joyous feast.

I believe that, in remembrance of the terrible price that He paid to redeem us, the suffering He endured, Yom Kippur should not be changed into a light or jovial celebration, although there is a prophecy that one day this will happen:

**“This is what the LORD Almighty says: "The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.” (Zechariah 8:19)**

Even so, we cannot treat the blood lightly. A period of fasting and critical self-examination is good for our spiritual walk with God. This is declared to be observed, not only by the native-born Jews, but also by any stranger who sojourns with the Jewish people. Many non-Jewish Believers have begun to observe this day, in obedience to the Holy Scriptures and commandments of God.

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<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew does not specifically use the word for fasting, ‘tzom’ , but it is generally the custom to observe a complete fast from all food and water and to pray on Yom Kippur.

## The Life is in the Blood

**“I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people.”** (Leviticus 17:10)

This parashah states that no one among God’s people is ever to eat blood (as pagans do). Whoever eats blood in their food is to be cut off from God’s people. This makes the consumption of rare meat or any meat with blood still in it a sin. Even the Jerusalem Council<sup>10</sup> which many Christians offer as the reason why ‘they don’t have to keep all those Jewish laws’, affirms the prohibition against blood as binding upon Gentiles.<sup>11</sup>

When I was a little girl, I sometimes helped my mother cook and bake (not often enough apparently by my lack of culinary skills, but...☺). I noticed that whenever she broke open an egg, she placed it first into a separate bowl and examined it before mixing it in with the rest of the ingredients. I thought this an unnecessary inconvenience, and wanted to just crack it right into the batter. But my mother told me we must never do this in case there are any blood spots in the egg. I never questioned this further; just assumed I suppose, that blood spots are ‘gross’, and she didn’t want to contaminate her baking.

It never occurred to me that this may actually be a Biblical prohibition, nor did my mother ever explain this to me. I’m not even sure if she knew herself. Not until after I received Yeshua and started reading the Bible for myself, did I find out the reason for cracking that egg into a separate bowl.

It is because God’s word states,

**“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”** (Leviticus 17:11)

I had no understanding that it is only blood that makes atonement for our sins. This I did not know, even after observing the Day of Atonement for over thirty years! But I was not alone in my ignorance. Most Jewish people are also not aware of this spiritual truth.



<sup>10</sup> Acts 15

<sup>11</sup> See Kashrut (Biblical Dietary Laws) by the author available through website: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

A niece of mine (when she was a little girl) was boasting about how long she fasted that year on Yom Kippur. When my Mom asked her if she understood why she was fasting, she had no idea. It had become sort of a contest to see who could fast the longest. Most Jewish people, even the very religious, also have very little comprehension of this concept, but the Tanach makes it clear. It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

Yeshua is ‘The Way’ to Salvation

**“Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”** (John 14:6)

Yeshua boldly declared Himself the Messiah. He warned us that He is the only way to the Father. There are not many paths to God. We may only draw near to Him under the covering of the blood of atonement for our sins. There is no difference between the way of salvation for a Jew or for a Gentile:

**“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By God’s grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous before Him, through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Yeshua.**

**God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement (kapharah) through faith in His blood.”**(Romans 3:23-25)

The Jewish sages recognized that every man is in need of atonement for his sins, as it is written, **“For there is not a righteous man upon earth who does good and sins not.”** (Ecclesiastes 7:20) – Sanh. 46b.

A story is recorded in which Yohanan ben Zakkai’s disciples gather around his deathbed and find him weeping. They ask,

*“Rabbi, you are the light of Israel, the pillar on which we lean, the hammer that crushes all heresy. Why should you weep?”*

In answer, the tzadik<sup>12</sup> confessed that he was afraid to die, because he was not sure whether he would end up in heaven or hell.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, Messiah son of David, who saves Israel is called, ‘The Lord our Righteousness’ (*Yehovah Tzidkeinu*). (Jeremiah 23:5-6) In Him we have assurance of salvation - knowing that our names will be written in the Lamb’s book of Life.

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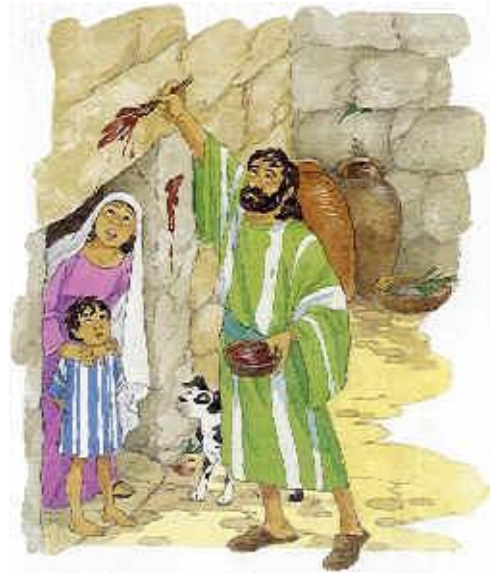
<sup>12</sup> Tzadik – righteous man

<sup>13</sup> Berakhot 28

This is God's way – a blood sacrifice to atone for sin. Who are we to question God? This is consistent with the faith of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. They applied the blood of the slain lamb to the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses, according to God's instructions through Moses, so that the destruction of God would 'Pass-over' them.

**“The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass-over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt...**

**When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.”(Exodus 12:13, 23)**



This was a perfect foreshadowing of how the blood of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who was slain, protects us from God's wrath and judgment.

When John (Yochanan) saw Yeshua coming towards him, he said, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”**(John 1:29)

When Abraham offered up his beloved son, Isaac, upon the altar, the Torah portion read on the second day of Rosh Hashanah (Akedat Yitzchak), Abraham showed that he understood the entire episode to be prophetic, especially when he declared, **“G-d will provide for Himself the lamb...”** (Genesis 22:8)

Note the name that Abraham gave to the place after the Akeda is not “The Lord provided”, but rather “The Lord will provide.” Isaac, at this time, was at least a young man. Rabbinic tradition places him at around age forty. He could have easily resisted his father's attempts to bind him and offer him up, but the apparent absence of any struggle demonstrates that Isaac willingly offered up his life.

Note the startling comparison of the sages: *“Isaac carried the wood (for the sacrifice) like a man who takes up his cross.”* – Pesiqta Rab. 54a.

Yeshua, as the beloved only Son of God, also willingly offered up His life. He entered Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, was inspected and assessed by the people for the required four days before the Passover, found to be without blemish, and was then slain in order to fulfill the words of the prophets.

**“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity (sin) of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)**

If you are convinced by these ancient Hebrew Scriptures from the Tanach that this is the Truth, it makes no difference whether you are Jew or Gentile, you may pray to the God of Israel asking Him to forgive your sins through your faith in Yeshua. God has freely offered you salvation through your acceptance of the sacrifice of His Son as the atonement (Kippur) for your sins.

It will be the beginning of a brand new life for you as the Spirit of God gives you a new heart, cleanses you from all iniquities, and begins to lead and guide you along a pathway of Truth. As you grow and mature, read God’s word, walk in obedience, and fellowship with other believers, your life will begin to be transformed into one of dignity and purpose.

As you immerse in the waters of the Mikvah, you will be born again spiritually into the Kingdom of God. You have walked through a doorway into eternal life.



**“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14)**

Yeshua is the gate to salvation: **“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” (John 10:9)**

I believe that you may be reading this by a specific, divine plan, not by random coincidence. Especially if you are Jewish, you may never have had the opportunity to read or understand our own Hebrew scriptures, or God’s plan for eternal salvation and restoration of our broken lives here on this earth. Please pray in sincerity and faith:

***God of Israel, of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaacov, please forgive my sins through my faith in the blood of your son, the Messiah, Yeshua. I believe that He willingly sacrificed His life to atone for all of my sins, and that He was raised to life from the dead. Thank you for this precious gift of eternal life as I put my trust in Yeshua. Please lead and guide me by Your Spirit, in all Truth. Give me a new heart and new spirit, that I may follow you all the rest of my days. Restore me, that I would fulfill your plan for my life. Amen.***



## Instructions for Holiness

Can one imagine receiving a complex piece of technology without an instruction booklet? The Torah is our ‘instruction booklet’ for a life of holiness that pleases God. This parashah continues with other instructions for holiness and a warning not to imitate the pagan inhabitants of the Land.

The people of God need to separate themselves from ‘*the ways of the world*’, and present themselves a holy people unto God. The Jewish people, the nation of Israel, were not ‘saved’ by keeping these laws. The Torah was never meant to be the agent of salvation. The Israelites in Egypt were saved by the blood of the Passover lamb. After their salvation, they were instructed in how to live as a holy nation. It is the same with non-Jewish believers.

## Laws of Niddah<sup>14</sup>

God’s instructions on holiness continues with a list of prohibited marriages and prohibited sexual practices that were common among the pagans – among them incest, homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, and sex during a woman’s menstrual cycle. It is the last one that is not well known as a sin.

Most Christians would agree that homosexuality is a sin, as is incest, adultery and bestiality, but how many know or observe the prohibition against sex during a woman’s monthly ‘impurity’ (called the time of Niddah in Hebrew)?<sup>15</sup> I have met Christians who are absolutely shocked when they discover that God would seek to restrain their sexuality during marriage. But God desires our well-being and happiness in all aspects of our lives, even the most intimate, for He is the Creator of man and woman.

A study conducted over a number of years at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, in connection with 80,000 Jewish women who observe niddah laws, showed that the proportion of those suffering from uterine cancer was one to fifteen of non-Jewish women of corresponding social and economic status.”<sup>16</sup>

All of these sexual deviations and perversions are detestable to the Lord and cause the Land to become defiled. It was because of these sexual sins (and other sins) that God ‘vomited’ the people out of the Land.

God warned Israel, **“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled... And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”** (Leviticus 18:24,28)

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<sup>14</sup> This topic is discussed at length in Parashah Metzorah

<sup>15</sup> See article ‘Laws of Family purity’ – Niddah [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

<sup>16</sup> Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Soncino Press, p. 492

By following God's laws and commandments, therefore, we prevent ourselves from becoming defiled and preserve our holiness to minister before God as a kingdom of both Jewish and non-Jewish cohanim (priests).

**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1Peter 2:9)**

### Acharei Mot Study Questions

1. What is the difference between access to God under the Old Covenant and the New?  
What happened when Yeshua died on the cross that signified this change ?
2. Why do people wear white on Yom Kippur?
3. What is the meaning of the Book of Life?
4. Discuss the delicate balance we need to keep between faith and works.
5. What was the function of the azazel and what is its connection to Yeshua?
6. In which Messianic prophecy is this described?
7. Why are most Jewish people not aware of these Scriptures?
8. How has Israel also been an azazel for the nations?
9. Do you believe that followers of Yeshua still need to fast on Yom Kippur? Why or why not?
10. Why are we not allowed to eat blood? What is the spiritual significance of the blood?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

**If you appreciate these teachings, your donations are greatly appreciated. It is through your generous financial and prayer support that we can continue to send the Word forth from Zion and Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3).**

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