

Yom Kippur (יום כיפור) (Day of Atonement)

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Leviticus 16:1-34, Numbers 29:7-11, Isaiah 57:14-58:
2 Corinthians 5:10-21

"It shall be a statute to you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and shall do no kind of work, the native-born, or the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you. (Leviticus 16:29)

The feasts of Israel can be called 'chagim', חגים a Hebrew word which means holidays or festivals but also 'to revolve around'. The Biblical cycle of feasts and festivals is a never ending circle that we keep revolving around and around year after year.

Ten days following the festival commonly called Rosh Hashanah (biblically Yom Teruah), we come to what is traditionally considered the holiest day on the Jewish calendar - Yom Kippur יום כפור (or Yom Hakippurim) – The Day of Atonement.

Most Jewish people, even those who are generally not religiously observant, fast from all food or drink, deny themselves all pleasurable activities, and pray in the synagogues on this holy day.



Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, by Maurycy Gottlieb (1878) (Wikipedia)

In Israel, no one drives their car on this day, leaving the streets totally empty for many Israeli boys and girls to play safely in the streets or ride their bikes, thereby fulfilling an ancient prophecy given through Zechariah:

“I will return to Jerusalem, my holy city, and live there.... And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets....”
(Zechariah 8:1,5)



All Vows

Before the sun sets on the eve of Yom Kippur, Jews will gather in their synagogues to hear the cantor chant Kol Nidre (All Vows):

All personal vows we are likely to make, all personal oaths and pledges we are likely to take between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce. Let them all be relinquished and abandoned, null and void, neither firm nor established. Let our personal vows, pledges and oaths be considered neither vows nor pledges nor oaths.

The reason for starting Yom Kippur with such a strange prayer came from the times when Jews had to take an oath to change their religion in order to save their life, so this prayer was recited to release them from those vows.

This is followed by the leader and the congregation reciting three times together "May all the people of Israel be forgiven, including all the strangers who live in their midst, for all the people are in fault."

Although the prayer service begins with **Kol Nidre** before sunset, it continues after sunset with the evening prayers and an extended time of Selichot (penitential poems and prayers).

In the morning Jewish people return to the synagogue for the morning prayer service. The Haftorah (prophetic portion) from Isaiah 57 & 8 and the entire Book of Jonah are read during the afternoon service.

Neilah – Locking the Gate

This Yom Kippur service concludes shortly before sunset with the **Neilah** prayer, from the Hebrew word, 'na'ul' which means 'locked'. This is traditionally considered to be the last moment for repenting before one's judgment is sealed for the year to come.

Peoples' names are sealed in God's book for sickness or health, life or death, blessing or calamity.... Therefore the Neilah service is a solemn moment as people stand before God the Almighty Judge of the Universe. Yom Kippur ends at nightfall with a final blowing of the shofar.

We must continue to pray for our loved ones that (no matter how far from God they may seem); they will still enter into the Kingdom of Light while there is still time. In Israel, everything closes and is locked on Friday afternoon before Shabbat begins. I was driving home from our Messianic Congregation at this time and had one of my children strongly on my heart. At this time he was not walking with the Lord and I felt such a burden for him and was weeping in intense intercession.

It was then that I heard the beep indicating the gas tank was empty and needed to be re-fueled so I pulled into a gas station alongside the highway, hoping that it would still be open at this late hour on a Friday afternoon.

Thankfully the station was open and I was able to fill the tank with enough gas to get home; but immediately after my car pulled into the gas station, the attendant pulled the heavy metal entrance gate closed and locked it! No one else could enter. I could only get out through the exit.

The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart that it will be this way with my child who had become lost. He would enter through the gate at the very last moment – but he would still make it into the Kingdom! Halleluyah! It may be this way with some of our prodigals who have yet to come running home to the open arms of their loving Heavenly Father.

I Am the Gate

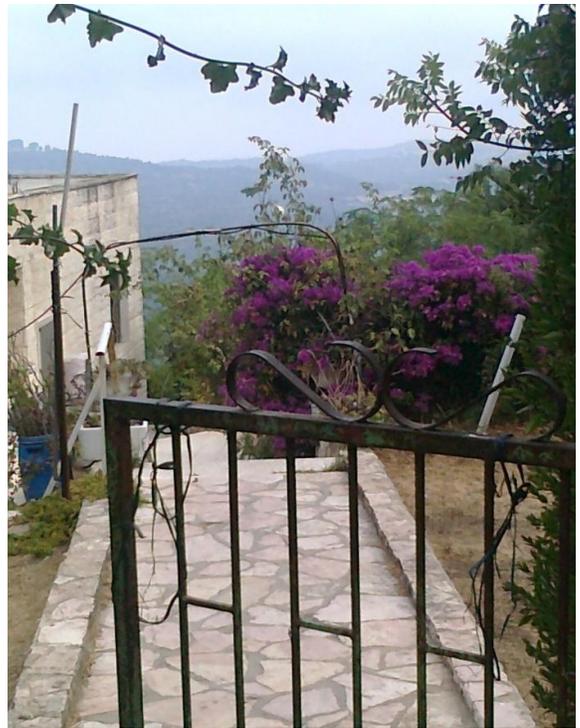
What (or who) is this gate? Yeshua (Jesus) said He is **the gate** for the sheep. **"I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved."** (John 10:9)

What does Yeshua mean by this? What is a gate and what are its' purposes?

* A gate gives us access to a place; we go through the gate to get to what is on the other side. When we go through Him, by faith, we get to access eternity:

"Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish." (John 11:25-26) (NLT)

*A gate also provides a way through a barrier. Our sins separate us from God, but through Yeshua, we may all, Jew or Gentile, have access to the Father.



A gate to a home in our moshav (village)

Yeshua said, "I am the way, the truth and the Life; **no one can come to the Father but through me.**" (John 14:6) Yeshua tells us that anyone trying to climb in by some other way is a thief and robber:

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

*A gate may control who is allowed to enter in and who is shut out.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may **go through the gates into the city**. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts (occult), the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." (Revelation 22:14-15)

God, the Father, has turned over all judgment to His son, Yeshua Hamashaich (The Messiah). **"And the father leaves all judgment to His Son."** (John 5:22)

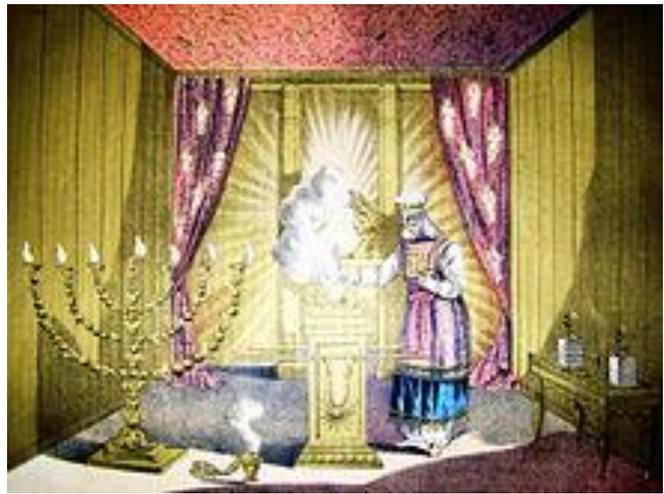
Yeshua, however, did not come to judge or condemn the world, but to save us.¹ God's desire is that not even one should perish but that all would come to repentance.² Even while dying on the execution stake between two criminals, Yeshua offered the one who placed his last minute trust in the Messiah, a place in Paradise (Gan Eden).

He said to the thief, **"This day you will be with me in paradise."** (Luke 23:43) We must remember that even until someone's very last breath, the gateway to salvation through Yeshua is still open.

Entering into the Holy of Holies

Why is this day so holy? Only on this one day in the entire year was the Jewish High Priest (the Cohen Haganadol) allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies (K'dosh Hak'doshim) to make atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel.

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)



Jewish High Priest wearing Hoshen and Ephod in the Holy of Holies.

But when Yeshua died on the execution stake, that restrictive veil was torn, from top to bottom. The tearing of one's garments is a Jewish custom that signifies grief or mourning. So when Yeshua's father saw that His son was dead, He tore the curtain from top to bottom - from the heavens to the earth.

"And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." (Mark 15:38)

In contrast to this time when only the Cohen could come into the Holy of Holies and only once a year (on Yom Kippur), as followers of Yeshua, we now have 24/7 access to our Heavenly Father through a new and living way. Halleluyah!

"By his death, Yeshua opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place." (Hebrews 10:20)

¹ John 3:17

² Matthew 8:14

And yet, Yom Kippur holds tremendous significance for us as New Covenant Believers. It can be a somber time of fasting and prayer, but also a joyful one in remembrance of our Covenant relationship with God.

It is a time when we can remember to be thankful that we have kapparah כפרה (atonement) for all of our sins through the precious blood of the Lamb, Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah). It is a time to make peace with our Maker and to experience, not just intellectually, but deep within our hearts that we are forgiven, redeemed, and free.

The Hebrew word for atonement (כפר k-p-r) means ‘to atone or forgive’. It is related to the words for ransom and reconcile. Through the atonement of the sacrificial death of Yeshua the Messiah, our souls have been ransomed from death and hell.

The cover or curtain for the Holy Ark is called the ‘kaporet’, as was the name for the ‘mercy seat’ of pure gold, bookmarked by two cherubim, in the tabernacle. **“You shall make a mercy seat (kaporet) of pure gold;”** (Exodus 25:17)

This would be the place where God would meet with His people – from above the kaporet (mercy seat) from between the two cherubim. (Exodus 25:22) The blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifice would be sprinkled towards this mercy seat. It is through the blood of atonement of Yeshua the Messiah that we find Divine mercy and access to God the Father.

In fact, some claim that the hidden location of the Ark of the Covenant, which is covered by this mercy seat is directly below the place where Yeshua died on the cross; and that His precious blood would then have been sprinkled upon the kaporet of ancient times.



*Statue of Jewish priests carrying Ark of the Covenant
(Mamilla Mall, Jerusalem)*

Holy Garments

The parasha (scripture portion) for this Shabbat opens with Aaron, the Cohen Hagadol (high priest) preparing for the crucial once a year sacrifice of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

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.

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



Jewish people also abstain from all food or drink, even water, all bathing and any enjoyable activities, including sexual relations between husband and wife.

The rabbis give another reason for the manner of dress on this holy day. When men are called to appear before an earthly judge to defend themselves against some charge, they often appear downcast and dressed in black like mourners. Israel appears before God arrayed in white, as if going to a feast, confident that all who return in sincere repentance to their Maker will receive not condemnation but pardon at His hands.

Overcomers Clothed in White

The Book of Revelations tells us that "**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.**" (Revelations 3:5)

Obviously, if those who overcome will be clothed in these white garments, befitting a place in the Holy of Holies, some will not overcome and will not be so clothed. May we each be overcomers who will be clothed in white garments and have our names written in the Book of Life.

May Your Name be Inscribed

The Scriptures contain many references to this Book of Life. The common Jewish greeting at this time is, "*May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life.*" The Hebrew Prophet, Daniel, wrote that "**Everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered**" (Daniel 12:1)

May it truly be so for all our family and loved ones – and for all Jewish people who do not yet know their Messiah Yeshua; may He reveal Himself so that their names will be inscribed in the Lamb’s Book of life for eternity.

“Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

Yom Kippur is the considered in traditional Judaism as day that God pronounces judgment, administering either the rewards for good deeds (mitzvot) or the punishments for evil deeds.



Although we know we are saved by grace alone, and have faith that those who truly put their faith in Yeshua as Messiah and Savior shall not perish but inherit eternal life, Yeshua also promises that when He returns, He will reward each one 'according to their works.' (Matthew 16:27)

James also tells us that our faith, if not accompanied by works is dead and cannot save. **“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)

We must be careful in judging Jewish people who come to God in deep devotion and repentance, who perceive 'Jesus' as a Gentile, foreign God, and who therefore refuse to put their faith in Jesus out of loyalty to God, as being eternally damned to hell.

Would God condemn those with the same faith as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and others of Jewish faith, 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 perfectly Righteous Judge, and keep our own consciences clear before Him.

God is well able to reveal His son to the Jewish people; and one day He will - in His timing. His arm is not too short to save. He will use us, if we are willing, to be the instruments of this revelation to many whose hearts are already prepared.

Since the temple is no longer standing and no sacrifices being offered, we who know Yeshua trust in the sacrifice that He made of His own self as our atonement. But the Jewish people who know not Yeshua yet as their Jewish brother and Savior, believe that the blood sacrifices have been replaced this day with prayer (tefilah) , repentance (t'shuvah), and charity (tzedakah).

However, our repentance must be real and sincere in order to be accepted by God, as is written in the traditional haftarah reading for Yom Kippur, it is a heart which is broken and contrite over one's sins that God will accept.

“For this is what the high and exalted One says— He who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (Isaiah 57:15)

There is a saying that confession is good for the soul and indeed the Word of God confirms this truth in the proverbs of King Solomon:

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)



Although we should be continually confessing our sins and walking in humility and repentance, Yom Kippur gives us a special opportunity to stop all the busy-ness of life and to attend to this important spiritual virtue.

Even in the New Testament, we are promised healing if we will confess our sins one to another: “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

Although the Jewish custom is to observe a total fast on Yom Kippur, God's word warns us of the hypocrisy and worthlessness of this religious observance if not accompanied by a sincere heart and acceptable conduct.

Actually, the Hebrew word for ‘fast’, **tzom, צום**, never appears in the commandments regarding Yom Kippur; rather we are commanded to ‘*afflict our souls*’.

Fasting alone is not enough – the haftarah for Yom Kippur reminds us that practicing justice and acts of loving kindness and mercy, especially towards the poor and needy is what God is truly seeking from His people.

The people of Israel complained that they had sought God, worshipped Him, fasted and prayed and yet seemingly to no avail.

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ (Isaiah 58:3)

What was God’s answer to their accusation? God makes it clear what kind of a ‘fast’ He has chosen and will receive as pleasing unto Him:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58:6-7)



In modern daily life, we can become so occupied with our own personal cares and concerns that our religious observance becomes more of a ritual than an engagement of the heart. We can all too easily forget this important work of aiding the oppressed and providing food, shelter and clothing to the needy.

But God does not forget them; and He wants us to be involved in humanitarian works. This is not just an ‘Old Testament’ commandment. The New Testament also tells us that this is what God considers ‘true religion’. It is not reading our Bibles every morning and going to church each week; but also to help widows, orphans and the poor of this world.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)

So vitally important is our attitude and conduct, especially towards the helpless and oppressed, that it is based upon this criteria that the Son of Man, Yeshua the Messiah, will separate the sheep from the goats – those who go to spend eternity with God in Heaven, and those who are cursed – who go to eternal condemnation.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.” (Matthew 25:31-33)

How does the Lord choose who is a sheep and who is a goat? It is based upon whether or not they did works of mercy, justice and loving kindness. When we give food, shelter and clothing; and visit those who are sick or imprisoned, then the Lord said we are actually ministering to Him.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’” (Matthew 25:34-36)

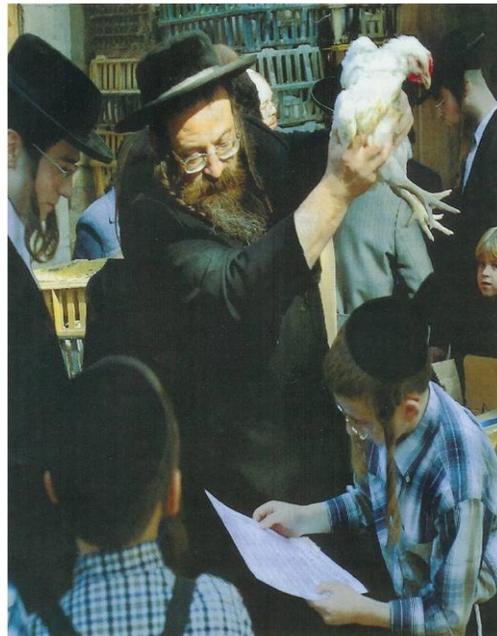
We are promised great rewards of healing, guidance and divine protection when we obey the Lord in these commandments, as written in the Haftarah (Prophetic portion of Scripture) for Yom Kippur:

“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.” (Isaiah 58:8-9)

“...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.” (Isaiah 58:10-11)

We must always keep in mind, however, that no matter how hard we try to do good works, these cannot save us. Even the blood sacrifices of bulls and goats (or chickens) in the Temple could only cover but never completely take away our sins.

“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:14)



Orthodox Jews holding up a chicken for the kapparot ceremony

Only the blood of Yeshua, the Lamb of God, can make perfect atonement (kapharah) for our sins. Therefore on this day we can only praise and worship Him in adoration.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Messiah, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

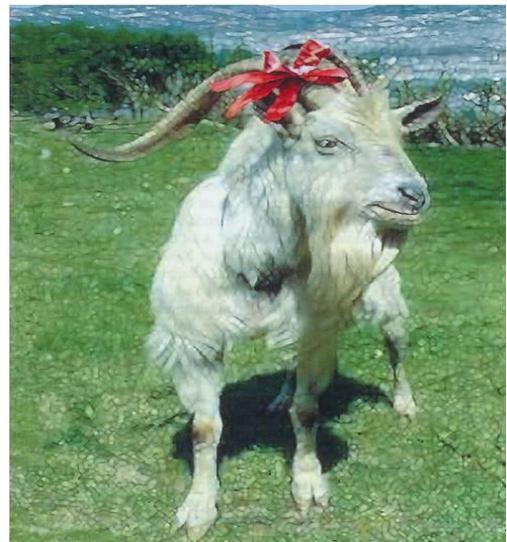
Please pray for the salvation of all the Jewish people who do not yet know their Messiah, who are fasting and praying on this special holy Day of Atonement, that they will come to see that He alone is the way the truth and the Life and that no one comes to the Father but by Him. (John 14:6)

The Azazel

Aharon cast lots for two goats on Yom Kippur. One was offered as the sacrifice. But the other goat was chosen as the 'Azazel'. This is an interesting word. It is a rare Hebrew noun meaning, **'dismissal' or 'entire removal'**.

**OUR SINS ARE NOT JUST ‘COVERED’ –
THEY HAVE BEEN REMOVED - AS FAR AS
THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST!**

In today's modern Hebrew, azazel is used as a curse word on television!



The entire removal of the sin and guilt of Israel is symbolized by Aharon **'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 are **laid upon the azazel**, who is then sent away into the wilderness. **"and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land which is cut off..."** (Lev. 16:21-22)

Notice the striking similarities between these verses and those of Isaiah 53: **"And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...For He shall bear their iniquities..."** (Isaiah 53:6,11)

Whomever these verses are speaking of, He willingly offered himself as the 'scapegoat', the azazel, for the people. The rabbis of ancient times considered **this a definite Messianic prophecy. Most agreed that Isaiah 53 speaks of the Messiah of Israel.**

ISAIAH 53 - THE SUFFERING SERVANT

This prophetic portion of scripture is the subject of much controversy today. They have been effectively hidden from most Jewish people, even those who faithfully attend synagogue services by omitting the entire chapter from the proscribed selection of Sabbath Torah and Haftorah (prophetic) 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. This would take a great deal of humility.

Even Yeshiva students, those who study in Rabbinical educational institutions, are denied the truth by keeping them studying the Talmud, a compilation of Rabbinical interpretations of the scriptures, rather than focusing on the study of the prophetic word itself.

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

"He, Messiah, shall intercede for man's sins, and the rebellious, for his sake, shall be forgiven." - Jerusalem Targum on Isa. 53:12 *"and when Israel is sinful, the Messiah seeks for mercy upon them as it is written, 'By his stripes we were healed' (Isa. 53:5), and 'he carried the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors' (Isa 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 13th 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 parasha (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." (S.K. Driver and A. Neubauer, *The Suffering Servant of Isaiah*, p. 199ff)

R. Moses Alshech (16th 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 (ch. 53) speaking of the Messiah."

I was absolutely shocked, the first time a Christian read to me these Scriptures. I had certainly never read them before in the Siddur (prayer book) we used in the synagogues or in the weekly Torah readings. I found it incredible that a Hebrew Prophet had described the death of Yeshua by crucifixion hundreds of years before it happened.

Is Israel the Scapegoat?

In a limited sense, the claims that Israel has suffered as an azazel 'scapegoat' for the nations 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.

But there are two real problems with ascribing Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel.

1) Israel cannot make atonement for their own transgressions. One cannot be one's own scapegoat. "For the transgressions of My people He was stricken." (v. 8)

2) Israel has not suffered silently or willingly, but with voice complaints and cries. " He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth...so he opened not His mouth." (v. 7)

ATONEMENT FOR WILLFUL SIN

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 atones for willful sin. Only Yeshua's death fulfils that described in Isaiah 53, of God's suffering servant, who was like a lamb, led to the slaughter, who opened not His mouth; who bore our iniquities.

The sacrifice of Yeshua, acting as the High Priest (cohen hagadol), but who came into the heavenly Holy of Holies with His own blood, atones for all of our sins. **"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. Only Yeshua the Messiah could fulfill this role. He willingly gave his life as the Kapparah (atonement), the Korban (sacrifice) for our sins.

Rabbinic tradition states that the Cohen (Jewish priest) would tie a scarlet cloth to the horn of the goat for Azazel and that when the sacrifice was fully accepted, the scarlet cloth became white.

This symbolized God's gracious promise in Isaiah 1:18: **"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow."**

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

3 (Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 249)

EVERLASTING STATUTE

Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) is declared to be observed forever, not just until the Messiah comes. "It shall be a statute to you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month.... (*Leviticus 16:29*)

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.

In remembrance of the terrible price that Yeshua paid to redeem us, the suffering He endured, Yom Kippur should not be changed into a light or jovial celebration. 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.

THE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

When I was a little girl, I sometimes helped my mother cook and bake. 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 not 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 30 years! A little niece of mine was boasting about how long she fasted that year on Yom Kippur, but when my Mom asked her if she understood why she was fasting, she had no idea.

Most of us, even religious Jews, also have very little comprehension of this concept, but the Tanach makes it clear. It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

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 (Kaparrah) through faith in his blood."(Rom. 3:23-35)

The rabbis recognized that every man is in need of atonement for his sins, for it is written, **"For there is not a righteous man upon earth who does good and sins not."** (Eccl. 7:20) - Sanh. 46b.

A story is recorded (Berakhot 28) 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 tzaddik confesses that he is afraid to die, because he is not sure whether he will end up in heaven or hell. In contrast, Messiah son of David, who saves Israel is called, 'The Lord our Righteousness' (Yehovah Tzidkeinu). (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

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."(Ex. 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..."** (Gen. 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 age 40. 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 10th 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, Yitzhak, 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.

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 Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.

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VOICE for
Israel

Yom Kippur Study Questions

1. Why is Yom Kippur considered the holiest day of the year on the biblical calendar?
2. What is a Jewish custom on Yom Kippur that fulfills prophecy?
3. What is the Kol Nidre opening service about? And Neilah - the closing service?
4. What are some of the functions of a gate? Why did Yeshua say He is the gate?
5. What would the Jewish High Priest (Cohen Hagadol) do on Yom Kippur?
6. What changed about the Temple when Yeshua died on the cross? What is the significance of this?
7. What does 'kippur' mean? How does this relate to the mercy seat (kapporet)?
8. How are people to be clothed on Yom Kippur? Why?
9. What is the significance of the Book of Life? Where is it mentioned in the Old Testament? New Testament?
10. As followers of Yeshua, do you believe we will be judged and rewarded on the basis of our deed in this life? Why or why not? Share and Discuss.
11. Do the Scriptures actually command us to fast on Yom Kippur? What are we commanded to do? What does this mean?
12. What kind of a fast has God chosen (that pleases Him). Is this something you are involved with now? If not, how could you become more involved with what God asks of His people?
13. How will Yeshua separate the sheep from the goats? On what basis will he judge?
14. What was the purpose of the Azazel? How does this relate to Yeshua?
15. What is the one chapter of the Hebrew prophets that most clearly speaks of the Messiah?
16. Why is blood needed for atonement? Is there another way to salvation?