

REFLECTIONS ON YOM KIPPUR

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth *day* of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it *is* a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul *it be* that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul *it be* that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It *shall be* unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth *day* of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath” (Leviticus 23:25-32 KJV)

The “Day of Atonement” is called by modern Jews “Yom Kippur”. The word “yom” means “day”, and the word “kippur” means “atonement”. “Kippur” comes from a root word which means to “cover”. Just as Adam and Eve saw the need to cover themselves because of their sin, the Day of Atonement featured the High Priest sprinkling blood on a golden slab that “covered” the Law which was in the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant, as you know, was located in the Holy of Holies. No one was permitted to enter this sacred room but the High Priest, and he could only do it one day of the year. That day is known as the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur.

The following list of the activities of the High Priest on this special day come primarily from Leviticus 16. As you will see, he had a busy day.

- He bathed.
- He dressed in holy garments of white linen.
- He offered, or presented at the door of the tabernacle a bullock for a sin offering for himself and his house.
- He presented at the same place two goats for a sin offering for the congregation.
- He cast lots on the two goats. One was to be sacrificed and the other was to be let go in the wilderness.
- He sacrificed the bullock.
- He passed from the court, through the Holy Place, and into the Holy of Holies. He was to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense. The smoke of this incense was to conceal the atonement cover so that he would not die..
- He returned to the court for blood from the bullock and passed again within the veil to sprinkle ~~WHAT~~ blood on the mercy seat and seven times before it.
- He returned to the court and killed the goat upon whom the lot had fallen to be sacrificed.
- For the third time he returned to the Holy of Holies and did the same with the goat’s blood as he had done with the blood of the bullock.
- He purified the outer part of the tabernacle by sprinkling of blood and placed some of it on the

horns of the altar of incense (Ex. 30:10).

- He returned to the court and placed the blood of the bullock and goat upon the horns of the altar of burnt offerings and sprinkled it seven times.
- He offered to God the remaining goat, laid his hands upon it, and confessed the sins of the people.
- He consigned the goat to a man who was to take it to the border of the wilderness and release it.
- He bathed and changed his linen garments for the regular high priest's clothing.
- He sacrificed two rams as burnt offerings for himself and for the people.
- He burnt the fat of the sin offering upon the altar.
- He saw to it that the remainder of the sin offering should be burnt without the camp.
- These are some of the major activities of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DAY FOR THE HEBREW PEOPLE?

- Every other day of the year the Hebrew people were filled with insecurity.
- Based on Leviticus 5:1 - 3 the devout Hebrew could become unclean by touching something unclean even though he was not aware of it.
- This insecurity prompted the saying "Touch not, taste not, handle not" (Col. 2:21).
- This insecurity was compounded by the fact that according to Le. 4:3 the anointed priest could sin and bring guilt upon the people. David, you recall, though he was not a priest, was still anointed by God. David sinned and brought guilt upon the whole nation. Because David sinned by numbering Israel, 70,000 innocent people died (2 Sam. 24:15).
- While every other day of the year was filled with insecurity and doubt, on this day the people could feel secure in their relationship with God because at that very time the High Priest was in the presence of God making atonement for their sins.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DAY FOR THE CHRISTIAN?

- The peace and confidence the Hebrews felt one day of the year, is felt by the followers of Christ every day of the year.
- Unlike other high priests, Jesus does not die and therefore has a permanent priesthood (Heb. 7:23, 24)
- Consequently, our Great High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
- Unlike other high priests Jesus does not need to offer many sacrifices for sin, because He offered Himself for our sins once and for all (Heb. 7:27).
- Understanding the ministry of our Great High Priest helps us to understand why there is "no condemnation" to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).
 - If at the present moment there is sin in your life you are condemned. It is our sin that separates us from God (Is. 59:2).
 - Since there is no condemnation to those in Christ there must not be any sin.
 - The reason there is no sin is that Jesus, our Great High Priest, is atoning for our sin at this very moment in the presence of God.

- David, however, pronounced a blessing on those whose sins are covered. He continued that the man is blessed to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:6 - 8).
 - Note that this blessedness does not come to those who never sin, for in that case no one would ever be blessed . As you know, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).
 - Neither are Christians free from making mistakes. If we say that we have not sinned we make God a liar and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:10).
 - The eternal ministry of Jesus to make atonement for our sins helps us to understand how it is possible to be so blessed that even though we sin our sins are not imputed to us.
- Because the ministry of our Great High Priest we are at this moment without a spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27).
- Because of the ministry of our Great High Priest He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).
- Because of the ministry of our Great High Priest you can be presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God (Col. 1:22).

THESE ARE AT LEAST SOME OF THE BLESSINGS BELIEVERS CAN GLEAN FROM REFLECTING ON YOM KIPPUR!