

# Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

*Leviticus 16:1-34*

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**Introduction:** This year, beginning on the evening of October 4<sup>th</sup> to the evening of October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Jews celebrate the most solemn holy day of the year. Leviticus 16 gives the Biblical basis for this high & holy day. There the high priest sacrificed an animal to pay for his sins & the sins of the people. He would enter the Holy of Holies 3 times on this day (& no other day of the year). Ryrie suggests the following events of that day: “First, Aaron, the high priest, bathed himself, put on simple clothing, & offered a sin offering for himself & the other priests (Lev. 16:3-4). Next, the high priest presented 2 goats as a sin offering for the people. One was slain, & the other was sent *into the wilderness* (“scapegoat” – verse 10). Literally, Azazel, a combination of the words for “goat” & “depart.” The live goat was the removing goat, symbolizing the removal of Israel’s sins (:5-10). Next Aaron went into the Holy of Holies with burning incense, the smoke from which shielded him from gazing on the glory of God, lest he die. Then he went in a second time with the blood of the bull (:3). On his third trip inside the veil he took the blood of the goat (:9).” What can we learn from this Jewish Yom Kippur?

## I. The **origin** (& description) of Yom Kippur

### A. Biblical teaching:

1. It was established by God to provide an atonement (“a covering”) for sin, “for the holy of holies in the Tabernacle, for the Tabernacle itself, for the altar of incense in the holy place, for the priests, & for the sins committed in ignorance by the people of Israel” (Friends of Israel).
2. It was divinely ordained “*because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, & because of their transgressions in all their sins*” (Lev. 16:16).
3. It is no longer able to be observed in this way since the Temple’s destruction (A.D. 70).

### B. Rabbinical teaching:

1. “It is the day on which God’s judgment of an individual is sealed. Ten days before, on Rosh Hashanah (the civil New Year), it is believed that God decides whether or not a person’s name is inscribed in the Book of Life” (Friends of Israel).
2. “From Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur inclusively, the Ten Days of Penitence, a person is admonished to sincerely repent” (Friends of Israel).
3. On Rosh Hashanah, the greeting is, ‘May you be inscribed [in the Book of Life],’ while on Yom Kippur the greeting is, ‘May you be sealed [in the Book of Life].’ (Friends of Israel). [Yet consider the “Lamb’s Book of Life” > Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; & 21:27.]

## II. The **observance** of Yom Kippur

### A. Dated:

1. Lev. 16:29, “*...in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month...*” Today it is observed on the tenth day of the first month, Tishri (Sept. – Oct.). Why the difference?
2. Tishri is the seventh month of the Jewish religious calendar; it is also the first month of the Jewish civil calendar.

### B. Described:

1. Lev. 16:29, “*...do no work at all...*” > labor is forbidden.
2. Lev. 16:29, “*...ye shall afflict your souls...*” > the word “*afflict*” is found 6 times in the O.T. & literally means to humble oneself. “The idea is for people to put themselves in proper perspective, recognize their absolute spiritual bankruptcy, & acknowledge their total dependence on Almighty God” (Friends of Israel).

3. Today the Jewish people believe that on this day their sins are covered for another year.
4. They also understand the command to “*afflict your souls*” involves fasting (for 24/25 hours).
  - a. Prior to the fast beginning, there is a final meal of soup, chicken, & challah (bread).
  - b. Then 3 holiday candles are blessed & lit, signaling the start of Yom Kippur.

C. Detailed:

1. Many Jews spend the day in a synagogue (one or more of 3 services), praying for forgiveness of their sins (cf. *Machzor* – holiday prayer book; one prayer repeated 10 times).
2. During the afternoon service the Book of Jonah is read (reminder of God’s forgiveness & mercy).
3. They are forbidden to bathe or wear leather shoes on this day (& men often wear white).
4. After the evening service there is a “break-fast” – a light meal of bagels, lox, juice & coffee.
5. Instead of sacrifices, Jews are required to give money to charity. “The word ‘righteousness’ is actually translated from the Hebrew word ‘*tsedaka*’ which means charity... They believe that the giving of charity will ‘deliver them from death’ as stated in Proverbs 10:2 (an old Jewish tradition)” (Lord).

Summary: The Jewish people believe that this “At-One-ment” brings about their cleansing & purity & makes them “at one with God.” See the view of modern rabbinical Judaism in Friends of Israel booklet, pp.12-13. Yet compare Romans 3:21-25 & 5:11.

III. The **object lessons** from Yom Kippur

A. Entrance into the Holy of Holies:

1. The Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by a veil from floor to ceiling. The High Priest could only enter into it once a year, on Yom Kippur.
2. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil was ripped from top to bottom (Luke 23:44-46), signifying that it was the work of God. Christ came as High Priest into the Holy of Holies in heaven to offer His own blood – once for all (Hebrews 9:11-28). There is now a new & direct way open to God & available for all (see John 14:6).

Note: “The Talmud says that 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, the gates (of the Temple) opened of themselves” (Frydland). [Christ’s death was 40 years before.]

B. “Escape” of the “*scapegoat*”:

1. The live goat departing was to symbolize Israel’s sins being removed.
2. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world > John 1:29.

Conclusion: “Jews have been taught that on the New Year it is written, & on the Day of Atonement it is sealed, how many are to pass away & how many are to be born; who shall live & who shall die; who shall perish by fire & who by water; who by hunger & who by thirst; who shall become poor & who rich...but that penitence, prayer, & charity can avert the evil decree” (Everlasting Nation). The Jewish people will once again weep & wail, crying out to God & their departed loved ones, for help – seeking forgiveness. Yet they refuse to seek & find that forgiveness in their Messiah (see John 5:39-40). It is our responsibility to share the sure message, “*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; & that believing ye might have life through His name*” (John 20:31).

“Using Yom Kippur as a type, therefore, God presents a picture of the Messiah’s preeminent, all-sufficient mediation – the ultimate payment for sin accomplished through the ultimate High Priest at a price of ultimate sacrifice. For all who would believe it, this is the good news of Yom Kippur” (Friends of Israel). Will you & I share this Good News with Jews & Gentiles alike?