



THE DAY THE PEOPLE DREW NEAR

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement

◆
REPENTANCE • FORGIVENESS • RECONCILIATION
◆

JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
◆

COVENANT LIFE MINISTRIES
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Welcome to the Family Study

Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—invites us to slow down and consider holiness, sin, mercy, and the gift of drawing near to God. It is the most solemn day of the Jewish year and remains a living, sacred observance for Jewish communities today.

For Christian families, studying Yom Kippur opens the background of Hebrews and helps us understand Jesus Christ as our great High Priest. This booklet does not teach that Christians must keep Yom Kippur to earn forgiveness. It invites us to learn respectfully, repent honestly, pursue reconciliation, and thank God for Christ's sufficient sacrifice.

CENTRAL TRUTH

Sin is serious, forgiveness is gracious, repentance is necessary, and God provides the way for His people to draw near.

How to Use This Booklet

- Read the Scripture from your family's preferred Bible translation.
- Let younger children draw while older participants write.
- Choose the questions that best fit your age and setting.
- Never require anyone to disclose private sins publicly.

UNDERSTANDING THE SETTING

What is Yom Kippur?

Yom Kippur is Hebrew for “Day of Atonement.” It is observed on the tenth day of Tishrei, the seventh month of the biblical festival calendar. It follows Rosh Hashanah and concludes a season commonly called the Ten Days of Repentance or Days of Awe.

A BIBLICAL MOVEMENT

Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) → Ten Days of Repentance → Yom Kippur → Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

For a Christian teaching series, this sequence creates a meaningful movement: awakening, repentance and cleansing, then thanksgiving and joy in God's presence.

Read Together

Leviticus 16:29–34 • Leviticus 23:26–32 • Numbers 29:7–11

KEY SCRIPTURE

“For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may

be clean from all your sins before the LORD.” — Leviticus 16:30, KJV

THE STORY BEGINS

The Day the Camp Became Quiet



Artistic representation of the wilderness camp and Tabernacle; not an exact reconstruction.

Morning light spread over the wilderness, but this was not an ordinary morning. Work stopped. Meals were not prepared in the usual way. Voices softened throughout the camp. Families remembered that the God who lived among them was holy—and that sin could not be treated as though it did not matter.

At the center of the camp stood the Tabernacle. On this day, the high priest would approach God according to instructions the Lord had given. He could not enter carelessly, proudly, or on his own terms. Before representing the people, he first needed cleansing and a sacrifice for himself and his household.

THE STORY CONTINUES

Atonement and Cleansing

Once each year, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with sacrificial blood. He made atonement for the people and cleansed the sanctuary from the uncleanness connected with Israel's sins. Outside, the people humbled themselves and rested from their ordinary work.

Two goats were presented before the Lord. One was used as a sin offering. Over the living goat, the high priest confessed the sins of Israel, and it was sent into the wilderness. The ceremony gave the people a visible picture: sin brings guilt and separation, yet God provides atonement and carries guilt away.

The animals were not magical. The ceremony worked because God graciously appointed it within His covenant with Israel. It taught the people to take sin seriously, depend on God's mercy, and never approach His holiness casually.

PAUSE AND NOTICE

The central character in this story is not the high priest or the goats. It is the holy and merciful God who provides a way for His people to draw near.

Talk Together

- What words describe the mood of the camp?
- Why could the high priest not approach God carelessly?
- What does the ceremony teach about God's holiness and mercy?

WHAT HAPPENED?

The Biblical Ceremony

Leviticus 16 gives the fullest description. In simple order, the high priest:

PREPARE: He washed and put on sacred linen garments.

OFFER: He presented a sacrifice for himself and his household.

ENTER: He entered the Most Holy Place with sacrificial blood.

MAKE ATONEMENT: The high priest entered the sanctuary to make atonement for the people and for the sanctuary itself, cleansing it from the uncleanness caused by the sins of the **Israelites**

CONFESS: He confessed Israel's sins over the living goat.

SEND AWAY: The living goat was led into the wilderness.

IMPORTANT

The Bible gives the ceremony's theological meaning, but illustrations cannot reproduce every historical detail with certainty. Images in this study are teaching aids, not exact reconstructions.

The People's Response

The congregation rested, humbled themselves, and treated the day as sacred. The Hebrew expression translated "afflict yourselves" or "deny yourselves" became associated in Jewish tradition with fasting and other forms of self-denial.

A VISIBLE LESSON**What Did the Two Goats Teach?**

The goats are shown as equals; their appearance carries no spiritual symbolism.

The Sin Offering

One goat was sacrificed as a sin offering. It taught that sin is not harmless and that atonement requires God's provision.

The Living Goat

The high priest confessed Israel's sins over the living goat, which was then sent away. It gave the people a visible picture of guilt being carried away from the community.

REMEMBER

The two goats communicated related truths: sin requires atonement, and God desires to remove His people's guilt.

A LIVING JEWISH HOLY DAY

Jewish people continue to observe Yom Kippur because the Torah identifies it as an annual sacred day. Since the Jerusalem Temple no longer stands, the original sacrifices and high-priestly ceremony cannot be performed.

Present Jewish observance generally centers on fasting, prayer, confession, repentance, rest from ordinary work, seeking forgiveness, and repairing damaged relationships.

RESPECT MATTERS

Yom Kippur is not merely an ancient Christian object lesson. It remains the holiest and most solemn day of the Jewish year. We learn from it without imitating sacred customs carelessly or treating Judaism as a decorative background.

Practices vary among Jewish communities and individuals.

Relationship Lesson

Prayer to God does not remove our responsibility toward people we have harmed. Repentance includes truthfulness, apology, restitution when possible, and changed behavior.

FOR CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

Jesus Our Great High Priest

Yom Kippur provides essential background for the book of Hebrews. Under the former covenant, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place once each year and offered sacrificial blood. Hebrews presents Jesus as the greater High Priest who entered God's presence and offered Himself for sin.

Read Together

Hebrews 4:14–16 • Hebrews 9:6–14 • Hebrews 9:24–28
• Hebrews 10:10–22

CHRISTIAN CONFESSION

Jesus did not need a sacrifice for His own sin. He offered Himself, and His sacrifice is described as “once for all.” Through Him, believers are invited to draw near to God with confidence.

Christians differ in how they relate Israel's festivals to the Church. This study follows the explicit argument of Hebrews: the annual high-priestly ministry helps Christians understand the sufficiency of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice.

UNDERSTANDING HEBREWS

The Pattern Fulfilled in Christ

An earthly high priest served.	Jesus is the great High Priest.
The priest needed cleansing.	Jesus was without sin.
He entered an earthly sanctuary.	Christ entered God's presence.
Sacrifices were repeated.	Christ offered Himself once for all.
Access was restricted.	Through Christ, believers may draw near.

THE GOOD NEWS

The yearly pattern pointed beyond itself. Christians trust that Jesus' sacrifice does not need to be repeated and that forgiveness is received by grace, not earned by observing a day.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Bring the Heart into the Light

Choose one or two questions. No one should be pressured to reveal private details in a group.

1. Where have I excused something, God is asking me to confess?

2. Is there someone from whom I need to seek forgiveness?

3. Is there someone I am struggling to forgive?

4. What does Christ's "once for all" sacrifice mean for the guilt I carry?

FOR CHILDREN

What should we do when we have done something wrong? How can we help repair the hurt we caused?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Lay the Burden Down



You Will Need

A backpack, several smooth stones, paper labels, and an open Bible.

Do It Together

PLACE: Put stones in the backpack and name general burdens such as anger, dishonesty, selfishness, unforgiveness, or guilt.

CARRY: Let someone carry the backpack briefly. Discuss how hidden guilt can become burdensome.

READ: Read 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:19–22.

REMOVE: Place the stones beside the open Bible or near a cross.

PRAY: Confess silently, then thank God for forgiveness through Christ.

The objects are only teaching symbols. They do not remove sin.

FAITH IN ACTION

Practice Reconciliation

Receiving mercy should shape the way we respond when we have harmed another person. Use this five-part pattern:

CONFESS: *"What I did was wrong."*

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY: *"I will not blame someone else."*

ASK FORGIVENESS: *"Will you please forgive me?"*

MAKE AMENDS: *"What can I do to help repair the harm?"*

CHANGE DIRECTION: *"With God's help, I will choose differently."*

SAFETY AND WISDOM

Forgiveness does not require returning to an unsafe situation or removing healthy boundaries. Where abuse, danger, or serious harm is involved, seek help from trustworthy leaders and qualified professionals.

Family Challenge

Before the weekend, take one honest and safe step toward confession, forgiveness, restitution, or a healthier boundary.

DRAW NEAR TOGETHER

Family Prayer and Commitment

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and merciful Father, thank You for teaching us not to hide, excuse, or minimize sin. Give us humble hearts that confess the truth and turn away from wrongdoing. Thank You for Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who offered Himself for us. Help us receive Your forgiveness, forgive others, repair the harm we have caused, and walk in newness of life. May our family be known for truth, mercy, reconciliation, and grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Family Commitment

With God's help, our family will practice truth, confession, forgiveness, repair, and grace. One step we will take is:

Family name or group: _____

Date: _____

REMEMBER AND CONTINUE

Scripture to Carry with You

HEBREWS 10:22

Family Memory

Write or draw one truth your family wants to remember.

Scripture and Study Notes

Primary passages: Leviticus 16; Leviticus 23:26–32; Numbers 29:7–11; Hebrews 4:14–16; Hebrews 9–10; 1 John 1:9.

Short Scripture quotations use the King James Version. Descriptions of present Jewish practice are general and should not be treated as representing every Jewish community. Illustrations are artistic teaching aids.



THE CENTRAL TRUTH

God does not call us to hide from sin.
He calls us to bring it into the light,
receive His mercy, and walk in truth.

FOR CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

Yom Kippur helps us understand
Jesus Christ as our great High Priest.
His sacrifice was offered once for all,
and through Him we may draw near to God.

REPENT • RECEIVE FORGIVENESS
SEEK RECONCILIATION • WALK IN GRACE

