

# A Family Observance: The Day of Atonement



## Welcome to the table!

Hi Grown Ups!

We are so thankful you desire to engage your family in observing Yom Kippur, and we are praying that you all experience a truly meaningful High Holiday season together.

Our desire at The Sabbath Table is to empower you with this guide for rich, approachable discipleship conversations and experiences with your kids around Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement).

This guide is meant to provide you not with another "should," but instead with some freedom and clarity for how to focus in around the table with your child/children in a fun way that enriches their understanding of God through this holy day.

This guide includes opportunities for you all to **engage**, **experience**, and **encounter** the love of God in this Holy Day.

- **Engage:** A brief telling of what Yom Kippur is, time in Scripture, and formative questions to encourage meaningful family conversations about God's holiness and love for His creation.
- **Experience:** A practice for noticing God and resting in Him.
- **Encounter:** A fun and meaningful family activity around the idea of Tzedakah (charity).

This requires minimal preparation and would be great to do this Wednesday or Thursday evening during Yom Kippur (but could be done any night this week).

### Engage:

- Psalm 130
- Atonement

### Experience:

- *Sabbath Seeking*

### Encounter:

- Tzedakah activity

## Engage:

### The Day of Atonement & Psalm 130

*Share with your children:*

One of the ways God helps His people understand His love for them is by setting special days on the calendar with them... just like we have birthdays or anniversaries to remember and celebrate, God set *appointed times* to be with His people. In the book of Leviticus in the Bible, God's Word, we see a list of His special days... today, we will be focused on one of them. It's called *Yom Kippur* - this is Hebrew for the *Day of Covering or Atonement*. This day is considered the **holiest** or *most set apart* of God's appointed times. What is atonement and why is this day so holy? Let's discover why!

When God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai where He gave them all they would need to be a light to the world for Him: **His calendar, His Law, and His Word**. This included instructions for His Tabernacle (*His house that could travel with them until the Temple was ultimately built in Jerusalem*) and how to connect with Him.

See, God is perfectly holy - meaning **He is entirely without and completely separated from sin and all creation**. To be able to connect with God, the *sins of the people cannot stay in the presence of God*. **Sin requires penalty according to God's justice**, and we see in God's Word (Lev 17:11, Rom. 6:23, Heb. 9:22) that *this payment is only fulfilled with life (or blood)*. Because God LOVES His creation SO much, **He had a big rescue plan to make a way for them to be alive in His presence forever**. That plan *began* with covering the sins of the people through *special sacrifices*. A sacrifice was something the people offered up to God *in the way His Law required* to **cover** their sin. They would offer up sacrifices throughout the year to cover their sin individually and express their worship; however, on Yom Kippur, *the entire sin nation would have their sins atoned for!*

Israel's **High Priest** was the person responsible to offer the sacrifices on Yom Kippur, and *he was the only one who could go into the innermost part of the Tabernacle or Temple to a place called the Holy of Holies*. The Holy of Holies was where The Ark of the Covenant was- the lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat (or Throne of Grace). **This represented where God's presence was**.

The High Priest followed specific instructions for offering sacrifices to cover his own sins and the sins of the other priests. He also offered the sacrifice of a goat for the people of Israel. He then had to enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices onto the Mercy Seat.

After returning to the outer court of the Tabernacle, the High Priest would put both his hands on a second goat - he symbolically transferred all the sin onto this goat. Then, that goat - called the scapegoat- would be sent out into the wilderness, never to be seen again.

Today, we see how this was a shadow or glimpse of God's ultimate rescue plan for all of us in the good news of Jesus (Yeshua). Jesus is our High Priest and our perfect sacrifice! He completed every part of covering us forever with Himself. When we put our faith in Him, Scripture tells us He removes our sin as far as the east is from the west. There is no greater love in the world than His!

**Read Psalm 130 as a family.**



## Formation Questions: *(after reading Psalm 130, ask:)*

- The word for mercy in verse 2 means “to bend down in kindness toward something inferior.” Have you ever felt like you’ve needed mercy from someone or from the Lord? When?
- How does it feel to give mercy to someone? When is it hard? When is it easier?
- What does it feel like to receive mercy?
- What do you think it looks like for our souls to wait for the Lord?
- How can someone “hope in the word” of God?
- In verse 7, the word for lovingkindness or steadfast love in Hebrew is *chesed*. This word pictures the idea of God chasing after us and bringing us home when we are lost. How does it feel to hear about God’s love looking like that? How do you see this in Yom Kippur?
- Is there anything in your life you want to tell God you’re sorry for? How can we help one another live out God’s Word and the way of Jesus more?

## Experience: Sabbath Seeking

The Day of Atonement is a Sabbath... *but not just any Sabbath!* It is actually called the **Sabbath of Sabbaths** (*Shabbat Shabbaton*) based on how it is set apart in the Torah, emphasizing its extraordinary importance.

To Sabbath is to rest- meaning we set aside ordinary things (work and the mundane) and focus our whole selves on the gift of God’s presence, worshiping Him, reflecting on His Word, and enjoying the true rest we have in Him. On Yom Kippur, we are commanded to sanctify (set apart) this practice even more.

If you’ve never experienced a Sabbath together as a family, this is an especially meaningful time to consider experiencing a block of time or a full 24 hours to embrace the spirit of Sabbath in your home.

It is a day of  
sabbath rest,  
and you must  
deny yourselves;  
it is a lasting  
ordinance.

-Leviticus 16:31 NIV

### Sabbath Seeking Ideas:

- Put all your devices in a drawer for screen free time.
- Go on a family prayer walk. Invite your kids to notice God’s creation and to thank Him for what they see. Encourage them to pray for the families in the homes you pass.
- Have a family worship time. Let each person lead a song that is meaningful to them. Don’t forget to dance!
- Encourage a nap time or quiet time for everybody to have room to rest/reflect.
- Paint or color your favorite Bible story and share with one another about what you created.
- More into Legos? Build your favorite Bible story!
- Try memorizing a family Bible verse together. Have fun with it!
- Try spending one-on-one time with each member of the family if you’re able to do so. Use this time to connect in meaningful ways you might not usually get to.

## Encounter:

### Tzedakah Activity [Charity]

#### Introduction:

**Tzedakah**, a Hebrew word which literally is translated as *justice* and *righteousness*, is the Jewish tradition of giving charity... but not just for the sake of doing something good. It is the act of healing the world, or putting things back as they should be, from a sense of responsibility for acting in justice and righteousness.

As you begin to unpack the idea of Tzedakah with your children, here are a few things you can discuss:

- Sin broke the world as God created it to be. Sickness, pain, and poverty are the product of sin. As those who love God and are now His sons and daughters, we have a responsibility to represent His healing righteousness and His loving justice.
- We are trusted by God to not only be His disciples, but to also be His ambassadors of reconciliation. This means we intentionally look for ways to put things back the way they were meant to be, and we invite others to experience the love of God for themselves.
- The motive or reason for our charity matters. We do not give or serve out of pity, because it makes us feel good, or because we want to appear good (Matthew 6:1-4). Our motives offer dignity/respect to others and honor for the example of Jesus.

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

-1 John 3:17-18 ESV

## Activity

After discussing the idea of Tzedekah with your kids, invite them to think about your community and what you all could do to show love to your neighbors. Here are some ideas:

- Make a meal for an elderly or sick neighbor.
- Offer to do a lawn clean up day for a neighbor who might find it challenging to do themselves.
- Clean up garbage along a road near your home - use gloves, grabbers, and trash bags. Be sure to wear bright clothing and only do with older children.
- Paint smooth rocks and write messages like "God loves you!" on them. Leave them around local parks and playgrounds.
- Find out what your local food pantry is in need of and gather a bag together of these items to drop off together.
- Set up a lemonade stand and donate the money that is made to a charity you all select. Be sure to have signs that tell people about what you're raising money for. It's a great opportunity to connect with neighbors!
- If you're a musical family, visit a local nursing home and see if you can put on a short concert for residents during a meal time.
- If you have a children's hospital near you, drop off homemade get well cards with encouraging Bible verses on them for patients and their families.