

סלה Selah

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May your name be inscribed!

In the words of Sheldon Harnick's song, Sunrise, Sunset, 'swiftly fly the years...one season following another...!' This year has flown by and we suddenly find ourselves in September, and with that come the three autumn High Holy Days: New Year, Yom Kippur and Succoth. Each one of these Holy Days is laden with spiritual import and we couldn't possibly discuss all three in one article! So, let's see what we can glean from the most solemn of these three: Yom Kippur; the Day of Atonement.

Yom Kippur, which falls on September 19th this year, is, without a doubt, the most important day in the Biblical calendar and attracts the highest synagogue attendance of any other holiday. On this day, according to what is commanded by God in Leviticus 16, the High Priest cleanses the tabernacle/Temple and seeks forgiveness for himself and for the entire nation of Israel. The role of the people, meanwhile, is to 'afflict their souls (by fasting) and to do no work at all,' as they wait for the High Priest to complete the rituals and offer the sacrifices commanded by God. It is a Shabbat Shabbaton – a Sabbath of Sabbaths.

This High Day will have been preceded by the New Year, with the intervening 10 Days of Awe, during which the people of Israel will have searched and prepared

their hearts unto contrition, confession and repentance on this day. The humbling of themselves and the cessation from doing any work would be their 'contribution' to the proceedings. The rest was done by the priest. The hope, at the end of this sombre Holy Day, would be that God would forgive all their sins and that their names would be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Leviticus 16: 33, records that the priest was to make atonement for the holy sanctuary, the tabernacle of the congregation, the altar, for the priests and for all the people of the congregation.

The most curious and mysterious of all the priest's duties is this: a sin offering for the people, comprised of two goats! Scripture records that lots were cast upon them both and the first goat – the one 'for the Lord' - was killed, and its blood used, along with the blood of the priest's bullock, to cleanse the Holy Place and its furnishings.

The second goat, known as the Scapegoat (from the word 'escape'), was let go alive, bearing the sins of the nation. The High Priest would lay both his hands upon its head and confess over it all of the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the nation of Israel, before sending it away into the wilderness, to 'bear...all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.' (Lev. 16:22)



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While the Scripture tells us that this Scapegoat was to be 'sent away' unto an uninhabited land, traditions are recorded that, in order to prevent the goat from finding its way back, it was taken to a rocky precipice and cast down, hopefully to its death.

So, if Jesus is the Messiah, where did He fit in? If, as it is written, He 'took away the sin of the world' (John 1:29), how did He fulfil the Day of Atonement and its requirements, especially as He died at Passover?!

It is written that the two goats formed ONE sin offering. So, with regard to Yeshua, can we see these two strains exhibited?

Caiaphas, the High Priest in Jesus' day, declared that one should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not (John 11:50)! This is 'Day-of-Atonement' language, when one goat would die for the whole nation, whereas at Passover, each family sacrificed their own lamb.

If we take a look at Isaiah 53 in Hebrew, we find that the Servant of the Lord fulfils *all* of the sacrifices commanded by the Lord, including the Yom Kippur scapegoat. Note the language:

Isaiah 53:4 - Surely he hath borne (נשא) our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Isaiah 53:12 - He shall bear the sin of many (חטא-רבים נשא)

Lev 16:22 - And the goat shall bear (ונשא) upon him all their iniquities

And:

Isaiah 53: 8b – For He was cut off out of the land of the living (כי נגזר מארץ חיים)

Lev 16:22 - Unto a land 'not inhabited' – Lit: a land cut off (אל-ארץ גזרה)

Why mention Isaiah 53?

The Musaf (Additional) prayer for Yom Kippur was written in the 7th century. Part of this prayer reads:

'Messiah, our righteousness, is departed from us; horror hath seized us, and we

have none to justify us. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities, and our transgressions, and was wounded because of our transgressions. He beareth our sins on his shoulder, that he may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed by his wound, at the time the Eternal will create Him (the Messiah) *as* a new creature. O, bring Him up from the circle *of the* earth. Raise him up from Seir, to assemble us the second time by the power of Yinon.'

Here, the Musaf prayer draws from Isaiah 53 and distinctly applies it to the Messiah, stating that he had departed. This presumes that he previously came, and had already suffered on behalf of the Jewish people, bearing their sins on his shoulders. The prayer hints at Messiah's resurrection and asks earnestly for Messiah to return a second time!

An interesting point to make is that this prayer follows the congregational declaration that God is thrice Holy and the communal recitation of the Shema, that God is One (Echad – a composite unity, as opposed to a singularity). The combination of these proclamations shows the tri-unity of God.

Some years ago, while attending my first Reform service of Yom Kippur here in the UK, I was astonished to read aloud – along with at least 500 others – the entire chapter of Isaiah 53, as part of the Musaf service! (RSGB Mahzor, 1985, p. 510)

Pick a Holiday, Any Holiday

Indeed, one of the requirements of Yom Kippur was for the priest not only to cleanse the various areas of the tabernacle/Temple, but to enter the Holy of Holies. This was done only once a year! Before Jesus died at Passover, He went into the Temple area and cleared out the moneychangers. Then later, when He yielded up His spirit, the Scripture says that the Veil in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom! (Matt 27:51 – Mark 15:38 – Luke 23:45) As the High

Priest was only, ever, allowed to enter the Holy of Holies ONCE A YEAR, on the Day of Atonement, consider the message here!! ALL of God's required sacrifices were summed up – and accepted - in the complete sacrifice of the Messiah! The proof of this was that the Holy of Holies was opened, by God – on Passover!

Some have asked, 'But if Yeshua is the ScapeGOAT, how does John say that He is the LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world? Why didn't he say, 'Behold, the GOAT of God...?' In my opinion, John is not making a mistake! Isaiah 53 presents the suffering Messiah as a lamb, but the verbs used, as we have shown, are 'scapegoat' verbs! I believe that John simply reiterated this 'mixing of metaphors' from Isaiah, which shows the Messiah's fulfilment of ALL of the sacrifices, including the major ones of Passover and Yom Kippur.

Isaiah said, 'Who would believe it?!'

As the High Priest laid both his hands on the head of the Scapegoat and confessed all sins committed by the nation, the people refrained from all *their* works and believed and trusted that God would forgive their sins. In this same way, we pray that you, dear reader, will know that by putting your faith in Messiah Jesus, confessing and laying all your sins *upon Him*, you will know Kapparah (Atonement) and your name inscribed in the Book of Life!

Chrissy Rodgers

