

# THE DAY OF ATONEMENT - "YOM KIPPUR"

By Abri Brancken, 16 Sept 2018

## INTRODUCTION

The Day of Atonement is one of the central focusses of the book. The Day of Atonement is different from the other festivals in several ways. The Day of Atonement is a special holy day with great meaning. The rituals described in Leviticus 16 help us understand its meaning in God's plan. The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur in Hebrew, is the second last Biblically mandated feast. The Day of Atonement and Passover both teach us about the forgiveness of sin and our reconciliation with God through Christ's sacrifice, but the Day of Atonement reveals other aspects of salvation not revealed in the Feast of Passover.

## WHEN IS THE DAY OF ATONEMENT?

The day of Atonement takes place on the tenth day of the seventh month (named Tishri). This year it begins the evening of Tuesday, 18 September and ends in the evening of Wednesday, 19 September.

## MEANING OF YOM KIPPUR

Yom means "day" in Hebrew and Kippur comes from a root that means "to atone, to cover" (Kafar, to cover).

### Leviticus 16:29-31

And let this be an order to you for ever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day, you are to keep yourselves from pleasure and do no sort of work, those who are Israelites by birth and those from other lands who are living among you: For on this day your sin will be taken away and you will be clean: you will be made free from all your sins before the Lord. It is a special Sabbath for you, and you are to keep yourselves from pleasure; it is an order for ever.

## FASTING ON THIS DAY

For one thing, God commanded His people to fast (not eat or drink, Esther 4:16) on this day to draw close to Him, while all the other festivals involved enjoying food and drink. (In the New Testament, Atonement was even referred to as "the Fast" in Acts 27:9.)

## HIGH PRIEST WOULD ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES ONLY ONCE A YEAR

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and perform a very important ritual.

### Leviticus 16:2

"And the LORD said to Moses: 'Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat'".

## Sacrifices

The High Priest will also offer a bull and take some of the blood of the bull that is offered and sprinkle it on the "mercy seat" or the covering of the Ark of the Covenant. Later, the blood of the goat that is killed for the offering's blood is also sprinkled on the "mercy seat". The tabernacle stood in the centre of the camp. The 12 tribes camped around the tabernacle in a very specific way.

## **THE TWO GOATS**

The rituals God gave ancient Israel for the Day of Atonement included one involving two goats. The high priest was to present them before God, and God would show which one was 'for the Lord' to be sacrificed (representing Jesus Christ) and which was for Azazel (the Hebrew word translated as 'scapegoat' in the New King James Version). The goat for Azazel was left alive.

They would bring a box with two tiles in it which the High Priest would take out. One tile was marked for the Lord and the other as scape goat. The High Priest would reach into the box and take a tile in each hand. The goat selected as the scape goat would be taken and they would put a red cord around the scapegoat's neck to identify it so that they don't get mixed up again. The High Priest would then sacrifice the goat that is for the Lord and the blood would be taken into the Holy of Holies representing the sins of the nation. It would be sprinkled on the Covering of the Ark of the Covenant (Mercy Seat).

### **Leviticus 16:7-10**

And he is to take the two goats and put them before the Lord at the door of the Tent of meeting.

And Aaron will make selection from the two goats by the decision of the Lord, one goat for the Lord and one for Azazel. And the goat which is marked out for the Lord, let Aaron give for a sin-offering.

But the goat for Azazel is to be placed living before the Lord, for the taking away of sin, that it may be sent away for Azazel into the waste land.

### **THE FIRST GOAT – “UNTO THE LORD”**

The first goat was killed as a sin offering. The blood from the sacrifice was then taken by the High Priest into the tabernacle's (later, the temple's) Holy of Holies. Once in the Holy of Holies, the priest sprinkled the blood from the sacrifice on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

### **Leviticus 16:15-16**

“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness”

The blood of the goat was symbolic of the Blood of Jesus covering our sins. Aaron was the physical high priest then, but the New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ has now ascended to heaven and become our High Priest at the very throne of God. “We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1).

Jesus is not only the Great High Priest, but the blood of the goat represents His blood that covers our sin. There are multiple symbolic references and fulfillments here. We find layers within layers here.

### **THE SECOND GOAT – “THE AZAZEL”**

#### **Leviticus 16:21-22**

“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.” “And he that letteth go the goat for Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water” (Leviticus 16:21-22, 26, JPS).

The High Priest would turn to the scapegoat, known as Azazel, also called the goat for sending away. After transferring the sins of the people to the goat, the goat is led out of the camp. In later years the children of Israel were concerned that the goat might just wander back, so later on they actually killed the goat by throwing the goat off a cliff to kill it so that the goat could not walk back into Jerusalem.

The Hebrew term Azazel occurs four times in Lev 16 but nowhere else in the Bible. Who is Azazel? Azazel is the name of a demon in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient Jewish books. In fact, one scroll (4Q 180, 1:8) Azazel is the leader of the angels that sinned in Genesis 6:1-4. The same description appears in the book of 1 Enoch (8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1; 54:5-6; 55:4; 69:2).

Azazel is a fallen angel whose evil influence led to the corruption of humanity. The book of Enoch describes Azazel as one of the chief fallen angels that corrupted humanity.

Jewish texts of the Intertestamental period show that Azazel was understood as an evil spiritual being, a demonic figure. This association of the wilderness with evil is evident in the NT, as this was where Jesus met the devil (Mat 4:1). The act of sending the live goat out into the wilderness—unholy ground—was to send the sins of the people where they belonged—the demonic domain, dry places, away from God's creation, His people. Sin could not be tolerated in the camp of Israel, for it was holy ground. Sins had to be “transported” to where evil belonged—the territory outside Israel under the control of gods over the pagan nations. Rather, Azazel was getting what belonged to him: the ugly sinfulness of the nation.

### **THE PROPHETIC PICTURE**

The Day of Atonement should be understood as a day of justice! The forgiveness of sin and the removal of sin from the people. A day is coming when God will remove the evil influence that is at the core of the problems of this present world. The Bible states that there is an evil power—“the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)—that is constantly trying to thwart the plan of God and attempting to cause mankind to lose out on salvation. The fact that the devil and his cohorts will be removed from power will result in a world that no longer has an unseen evil power causing problems. Satan and his demons have separated mankind from God since the beginning.

### **THE EARTHLY IS A COPY OF THE HEAVENLY**

The earthly tabernacle is a copy of the heavenly tabernacle. God did not physically live in the Holy of Holies, it was a type, a picture of Heavens reality.

### **Hebrews 8:4-5**

Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly

things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

The sacrifices did not remove sins, it covered it temporarily. Also, the High Priest had his own sin. Jesus the Perfect High Priest had to come without sins to bring the sacrifice.

### **Hebrews 10:1-4**

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The reason there is no more temple in Jerusalem is because the complete offering has been made by Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle. After Jesus rose from the dead, He presented His own blood, in heaven in the holy place to bring His own blood to God's mercy seat.

### **Hebrews 9:12**

And has gone once and for ever into the holy place, having got eternal salvation, not through the blood of goats and young oxen, but through his blood.

### **Hebrews 9:24**

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

God is going to confirm to Israel that their salvation has been accomplished, they will turn to Him.

### **SATAN "Azazel" REMOVED**

At the end, Satan will bear the responsibility for the sins of humanity because of the deception he has foisted on mankind. After Christ returns, one of the first steps taken will be the binding of Satan for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). Why is this action so important?

### **Revelation 20:1-3**

And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And he cast him into the abyss and shut him up and set a seal on him, that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be fulfilled. And after that he must be loosed a little time.

Throughout humanity's generations, from Eden to the present, Satan the devil has deceived all people into following a way of life that is contrary to God. He is described as the one "who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

"Sin is lawlessness," the apostle John wrote (1 John 3:4). What is the result of human sin? Separation from God, as we read in

### **Isaiah 59:2**

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

### **SATAN BOUND FOR 1000 YEARS**

Shortly after Jesus returns to earth, Satan the devil, will be removed or restrained so that he can no longer influence humanity into living a way that is contrary to God's righteous commandments and laws. The apostle John saw this future event in a vision described in the book of Revelation:

### **CONCLUSION**

The Day of Atonement involves not only the forgiveness of sin; it pictures the removal of the primary cause of sin—Satan, fallen angels, evil spirits and demons. Until God removes the original instigator of sin, mankind will simply continue to fall back into disobedience and suffering. Although sinful human nature has a part to play in our sins, Satan the devil, "the tempter" (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), bears great responsibility for influencing mankind to disobey God.

Since Satan has not yet been removed, people who respond to God's calling during this age must resist Satan's negative influences. As James notes, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

The "azazel" goat of Leviticus 16—the one released alive into the wilderness—foreshadowed, among other things, this removal of Satan, symbolically pictured by what occurred on the Day of Atonement.

### **Questions for Life Groups**

1. Why is it important that we understand the Biblical Feasts?
2. The punishment for humanity's sin was upon Jesus Christ. How does that relate to the two goats of the Day of Atonement?
3. Talk about all the all symbolic references that you can think of contained in the Day of Atonement. Are there other elements, rituals, etc. that is pointing towards Jesus? Feel free to give your own opinion.