

Christian Faith and Practice Through...Yom Kippur

“This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. “It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. (Leviticus 16:29-31, NASB)

This is another in a series of articles designed for the rookie who has decided that all of the Father’s Word belongs in every area of his or her life. These are just introductory articles with some practical starting points and are not meant for a thorough, all-encompassing understanding of every aspect of each subject. But if you are at all like me, the Law at first seems like a mountain just waiting to fall on you if you do something wrong, and I am trying to help you avoid that feeling by lightly introducing you to the enjoyable and easy-to-do aspects of the Father’s Will. Our “papa,” I believe, is much more concerned with the desire to learn His Will than how perfectly we perform every tiny nuance.

That is not to say that each and every Word He speaks is not heavy with His Holiness. So please do not hear that I am suggesting a frivolous approach to anything He says. Every command, every Law, even the smallest utterance is worthy of every bit of attention and reverence we can muster at all times. His Word should be the center of our existence (and it is if Yahshua has taken up residence), our very life-blood. As we take in His Words and act on them, we take in His body and blood and we connect with Him in ever newer and more satisfying ways.

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. “For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:53-56 NASB)
“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63 NASB)

This awareness of His Holiness, however, goes hand-in-glove with Yom Kippur. I am sure most of you know that Yom Kippur means “Day of Atonement,” and it is indeed a day of great solemnity and reverence. This day is the tenth of what our Jewish brothers and sisters often refer to as the “Days of Awe.” The specifics are few but to the point in Leviticus 23.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD.

You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people.

As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath."

It is a "great Sabbath," meaning that absolutely no type of work whatsoever is supposed to be done, even the normal work connected with making a meal (allowed on the weekly Sabbath). Which is a good thing anyway because we are supposed to "deny ourselves" (humble your souls) and go without food (or pleasure). A "holy convocation" is English for the Hebrew *miqra qodesh* (me-kraw co-desh), which means a "sanctified gathering" or sometimes "solemn assembly." A lot of misguided people call this a "church service," but it has a richer and more pointed meaning than the type of meeting we have reduced it to on Sundays. Yahshua (Jesus) referred to something similar when He said, "Where two or more are gathered, there am I in the midst."

This appointment with our Father, YHVH, Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, starts on the tenth of Tishrei (this year September 16th, eve of the 15th), the tenth day of the month. Traditionally (from extensive Biblical associations), the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah – the first of the month) is intended as a "wake up" call to repentance, and one of the themes associated with that day is an "open door" in heaven. This communicates to us that YHVH is receptive to the repentant person. However, one of the themes associated with Yom Kippur is a "closed door," showing that the time for repentance is over and the time for Judgment has come. You could think of this as one of the original "turn or burn" messages from the Ruler of Everything. We are reminded through the rehearsal of this day that on another day all too soon there will be an accounting for every wrong action or attitude that does not match up to His Holiness.

Fasting usually starts at the evening meal the night before and goes to the end of the day, which is the evening (also the start of the next day). If you cannot fast because of medical conditions or lack the will to proceed, there is no shame in this. Try taking a small meal a little earlier in the evening before, and perhaps some small tidbits like bread and water at various times during the next day. If you are pregnant, a higher Law must be observed first, that is, do not harm yourself or the baby. You must be the judge of what is a good practice, and what is too extreme. Our Father would not ask us to harm ourselves, and a little self-denial is good for the soul. Maybe at the next Yom Kippur you will be more able to participate. Sometimes it just takes some "building up" in the Word

before we are strong enough to plunge in. I don't know about you, but I was so malnourished by conventional Christian doctrine for so long that I had trouble the first few times going the whole day without eating, from sundown to sundown. If you were fed the same then you know what I mean. We "fasted" under that system for a long time.

Notice also that this is a "permanent statute." I don't know about you, but the last time I checked, "permanent" meant, um, "ain't ever goin' away." There are actually a bunch of different Laws that are listed as permanent if you would care to look.

In the verses at the head of this article, another interesting point is made by the Father. The holy day of Yom Kippur also requires participation by the "alien" (which also means "stranger"). I don't know if the Father just meant me (I'm about as strange as you can get), or ANYONE who joins themselves to Isra'el, like, oh I don't know, through the Messiah's blood for instance. Wouldn't these people be regarded as "children" of Isra'el? I realize this can be seen as a rather simplistic viewpoint, that the Word means what it says, but I tend to go with the plain meaning as often as possible. It tends to work out better in the end. I don't think we can go wrong just taking YHVH at His Word.

Yom Kippur is a day of smoke and fire, a day of wrath.

Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire; His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin. Isaiah 30:27,28 NASB

It is a day of atonement for sins committed since the last time atonement was (hopefully) made. It is a day that in some ways is reminiscent of the giving of Torah from the Holy Mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. Leviticus 19:18-20

The message is roughly the same – line up with YHVH or face His wrath. You are either for Him or against Him; there is no other position.

"Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people." Deuteronomy 32:43 NASB

Those who want to draw near do not have to be afraid, because the Father wants to cleanse us so we can stay near Him.

*“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts.
“But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Malachi 3:7 NASB*

Returning to Him is the same as keeping His statutes (uh huh, you got it, the big scary Law!) We should desire to submit ourselves to His judgment, because it is meant to lead us to Him. Technically, the blood of the Messiah atoned for us once at the time it was offered.

*For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.
Hebrews 7:26,27 NASB*

But even as His children we do not remain clean and pure, obviously, so from time to time we need to examine ourselves and repent from any practice that is contrary to the Will of the Father. John tells us:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. (I John 1:8-10, NASB)

Can we confess anytime? Of course we can, and we should, every time we know we have done something that doesn't please Papa. Yom Kippur is only a little different in that a day is picked by our Father as both a definite time to reflect and a time to do it together. And, atonement is also made on this day for all the sins we DON'T remember. Sort of a “general purpose” appointment for any and all sins committed, whether we know about them or not. Prayerfully consider whether and how to implement this appointment with YHVH into your life, and discover the blessings that doing what He told us to can bring.

“I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. “The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. Joel 2:30-32 NASB

The Father receive you through the acceptable sacrifice of our Messiah

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