



Chosen by God

The Jewish Roots of Christianity

Day of Atonement

Jews have a little different understanding of sin than Christians do. The word used for sin, “*kheit*” is a word used in archery, and means a shot that doesn’t make it to the target. It misses the mark, or falls short. (Robinson 96)

My brother was into archery when I was small, and I tried to shoot an arrow on his bow. The bow was heavy, and as tall as I was, so just holding it was a challenge for me. I propped the long bow on the ground, and placed the groove of the arrow on the taught cord. I pulled the feathered end of the arrow and the cord back with all my might, and took careful aim at the bull’s-eye like my brother showed me. When I released it, the arrow dropped about a foot from my feet! It fell far, far short of the mark, even though I had made a valiant effort!

When Isaiah says that our righteous deeds are like filthy rags, and certainly not the white linen of righteousness, he means that even our best efforts fall far short. We all sin, and **fall short** of the glory of God. We can’t try hard enough to be successful in hitting the mark. The Israelites that we meet in Leviticus were finding that out. Not only did they have their intentional rebellious sins to worry about, but also their unintentional sins, and the unavoidable “sins” of becoming unclean.

When we try to live godly lives, it can be easy to think we are on firm footing in the land of clean living. By living obedient lives before God, we have additional dangers to battle—pride, arrogance, misplaced trust in our success, lack of love and compassion for those “beneath” us on the perfection ladder,... The reality is, none of us can be successful in remaining unstained by sin.

And what does God expect when we come to Him for atonement, or a covering over, of our short fall? Nothing but a broken and contrite heart. Humility, and nothing more. All He asks of us is the realization that we didn’t hit the mark. For the sake of being named clean enough to enter His presence, nothing matters except a bulls-eye. No amount of whining, or bragging will do. Nothing but the blood of a sacrifice will atone us. The Day of Atonement is the yearly event where a fresh start is granted, and the ability to enjoy God’s Presence is preserved. It is an event of somber humility and recognition of sin, as well as joyful gratitude for the covering and release of those sins.

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Day of Atonement Lev. 16, 23

What happened to the two sons of Aaron in Lev. 16:1?

What warning was given for Aaron? _____

What offerings was Aaron to bring when he did enter the Most Holy Place? _____

What was to be offered for the Israelite community? (Lev. 16:5) _____

Whose sins was Aaron to take care of first? _____

In Lev. 16:12,13, what was Aaron to do that would prevent him from dying? _____

According to Lev. 16:16, what did atonement need to be made for? _____

The Hebrew word translated “make atonement” is *kaphar*, which is much about appeasing, or covering up, as it is actual cleansing. In Gen. 6:14, the same word is used to describe Noah applying pitch to the outside of the ark—also a life saving action in the face of God’s judgment. Instead of pitch, what is the substance of atonement that frees us from God’s wrath in Leviticus, as well as today? _____

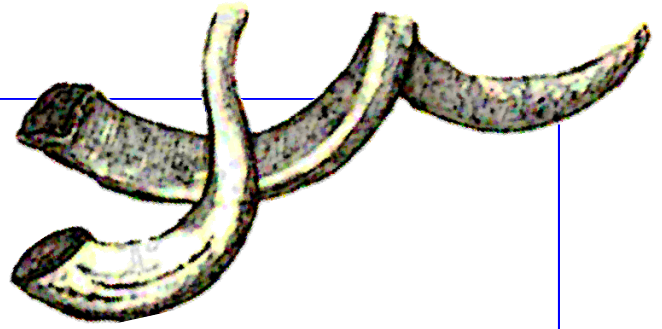
On what day did the Day of Atonement occur? (Lev. 23:27) _____

What things were and weren’t to happen on that day? _____

What was the penalty for failing to observe this day as was prescribed by God? _____

What do you think “a lasting ordinance for the generations to come” means? _____

Of what value is the Day of Atonement for today’s Christian? _____



Linen Garments

In Exodus 28 God gives a detailed description of the priest’s clothing, beginning with the instruction “Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor.” (Ex. 28:2)

Why? Why did it make a difference what the priests wore? What did their clothing have to do with their holiness? What picture is God trying to give us? What was the high priest to wear when he entered the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement? (Lev. 16:4) _____

What was the body of Jesus wrapped in for burial? _____

Who was wearing white linen in Rev. 15:6? _____

What was called “the righteousness of saints” in Rev. 19:8? _____

Now we are God’s holy temple, clothed in Christ. Does it matter at all then how we dress? How do you think we should we dress for worship?



Fasting

Yom Kippur is the most important day of fasting in the year, the only fast day that is not postponed even for the Sabbath. All males over thirteen, and females over twelve are expected to participate, but those whose health would be harmed by a fast are excused by the rabbis.

There are several aspects to the fast of Yom Kippur:

1. as a penance for wrong committed
2. as a display of self-discipline, a sign of controlling appetites
3. to help in focusing on the spiritual rather than the material
4. to awaken compassion for those experiencing hunger on a regular basis

In Lev. 16:31, KJV says you shall “afflict your souls” in observing the Day of Atonement. In what ways can fasting help put us in touch with our souls? _____

Have you ever practiced fasting, and if so, what were the spiritual benefits of it? _____

Do you think there is biblical indication that the Christian should fast? _____

Scapegoat

Two goats were involved in the sacrifices on the Day of atonement, and lots were cast to determine which goat would be used for which purpose. One was to be sacrificed as sin offering, what would be the fate of the other according to Lev. 16:10? _____

In Lev. 16:20, at what point was the live goat, the one designated by lot as the scapegoat, brought forward? _____

What was put on this goat's head? _____

Someone was appointed the job of escorting the goat out into the desert, far away from people, and then released. Some Jewish traditions suggest that the goat was pushed over a cliff! What did the man who accompanied the goat have to do before he could reenter the camp? _____

From the very start, mankind has always found a scapegoat. Who did Eve try to blame her sin in the Garden on? _____

Who did Adam blame his sin on? _____

How often do you find yourself blaming your own sins on another person? _____

Who serves as our scapegoat, to carry all of our sins away? _____

How do you feel about placing your sins on the head of Christ? _____

What would be the alternative? _____

THE COST OF A SACRIFICE

Imagine if the Messiah had not yet come. To worship God, you would have to join the Israelites in the procedures outlined by God. You would not be able to talk directly to God, but would have to go through the priest and an elaborate set of rituals. If you wanted to be forgiven, even for an unintentional sin, you would have to offer an animal as a sacrifice. If you wanted to praise or thank God, you



would have to offer a sacrifice. Depending on your position and on the purpose of your offering, it could be quite costly. Lev. 5 says that a careless oath or accidental contact with anything unclean would require a sin offering of a female goat or lamb. As near as I could figure, in today's market that could be around \$100, though God did provide a sliding scale system for those who could not afford their sins. A guilt offering is a little more expensive, requiring the offering of a ram in addition to restitution. If a whole community unintentionally sins, or even just a leader (priest) sins, a young bull is the required offering. According to the livestock figures that I looked up, an unblemished healthy young bull would start at around \$1500. If you want to make a peace offering to show your gratitude to God, a goat or lamb would be an appropriate offering. In addition to the cost of the offering itself, would be taking the time to go

have it sacrificed in the proper way, whether it was convenient or not. Even all of that expense and bother still wouldn't get you into God's Presence, since only the highest priest could do that, and only once a year.

Would I be more careful about sin that had a dollar value placed on it? What price would I be willing to pay to worship? Would it make a difference in how I perceived the value? Sometimes we make our kids pay for something just so they will understand its value and appreciate it more. I really wonder if that was God's motive too. The sacrificial system gave us a chance to understand the value of a relationship with Him before it was paid for by someone else. The Messiah **has** come. We **can** enter God's Presence. No need for the blood sacrifices, it's already done. All God wants is for us to come to Him. Can we appreciate the freedom and privilege that we have without knowing what it replaces? Can we appreciate the gift without some idea of the worth of it?

When my kids were really young, the paper and the bow were the best part of the Christmas gift. In fact, they thought that it **was** the gift until they were coaxed to see what was inside. Do we toss aside the true gift in favor of its packaging? Do we understand the value of what we have been given?

How does Heb.7:11-28 help us understand that value? _____

How did Jesus try to communicate the path to atonement to the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:16-30? _____

What was the response of the man? _____

Are there any ways that you are similarly tempted to aim for perfection rather than embrace the atonement of Christ? _____

In which does the cost seem greater? _____

Puzzle Page

This is like SUDOKU, only you will need to use each of the letters in the word JUDGMENT, instead of numbers. Each letter can be used only once in each row, column, and section. Each letter needed to spell the word JUDGMENT must be present once in each row, column, and section. Part of the letters have already been filled in for you.

J			G		N		M
		N		U		G	
	J	G			E		T
E	M		N	J			
D		U		N		T	
	T	M			D		E
	D		U			M	
T		E			G	J	U

Puzzle Answers

J	U	D	G	T	N	E	M
M	E	N	T	U	J	G	D
U	J	G	D	M	E	N	T
E	M	T	N	J	U	D	G
D	G	U	E	N	M	T	J
N	T	M	J	G	D	U	E
G	D	J	U	E	T	M	N
T	N	E	M	D	G	J	U

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Down Victory Road
www.downvictoryrd.com