

## Erev Yom Kippur

*Yom Kippur* in the Bible was the only day the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies and procured forgiveness for the sins of the nation and its citizens. Therefore, *Yom Kippur* is considered the holiest day of the Hebrew sacred year. After the ceremonies, the Aaronic benediction was pronounced with the sacred Name being spoken. It was the only time that the Name was actually verbalized.

*Yom Kippur* is a full public holiday in Israel, and nearly all establishments will be closed. There will be no radio or television broadcasts, Ben Gurion International Airport will be closed and all public transportation will come to a halt and no one drives a car. Families walk and play on the streets that otherwise would be nearly impossible to walk in. *Yom Kippur* is a day of introspection, completely separate from the normal course of daily life; the physical aspects of life are sublimated while the Jewish people concentrate on spiritual concerns. According to *Halakhah* (traditional Jewish law), eating and drinking, the wearing of leather shoes, the use of make-up, bathing, and marital relations are forbidden throughout the fast. Messianic Jews are urged to participate in the fast and self-denial.

A central point in *Yom Kippur* is to *afflict your soul*. Some translations render it as *deny yourselves*, or *humble yourselves*. In the JPS it is translated as fasting. Fasting, however, was not the main point of the holiday. The main points were the sacrifice, the scapegoat, and the entering of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies.

The Talmud details a miracle that would happen every year at *Yom Kippur*. A scarlet thread called *Lashon haZehorit* would turn white if God forgave their sins, matching with the verse, “*Though your sins be like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they will become like wool*” (*Isaiah 1:18*). So if it did turn white, people would know that their sins were forgiven. If it didn’t, they would know that something wasn’t right, and that they might need to be more careful in how they performed the sacrificial system, making sure to follow the *Torah* better during the coming year.

However, the same source also states that about forty years before the destruction of the temple, the thread stopped turning white altogether. The destruction was in 70 AD, so the scarlet thread stopped turning white right around the time of *Yeshua’s* death and resurrection! From that moment, the atonement was already done, and God stopped the miracle.

Many Christians say that *Yom Kippur* is now irrelevant because *Yeshua atoned* for our sins. We have forgiveness of sins available 24/7. But should we really cease observing *Yom Kippur* altogether? I can’t find any scripture that supports a full cessation of keeping the Holy Days God gave us in Leviticus 23. This holiday carries the *forever* tag. If nothing else applies, we should keep it in obedience to the Father.

How do we find the true meaning of *Yom Kippur* for the Messianic Jew today? It is not just THE day to ask *Yah* to forgive our sins, nor is it just a day to celebrate the forgiveness we have. But in keeping with the entire *Elul* theme that culminates at *Yom Kippur*, this is a day to put the *finishing touches* on repentance. We take one day a year for fasting, praying, repenting and take stock of our life. Ask ourselves where we are on our walk with *Yah* and where we want to be. How can we do better next year? Where do we wish our spiritual life to be next *Yom Kippur*? It is a day to reckon all matters recognizing that *Yeshua* is the High Priest of our lives who has entered the Holy of Holies and makes continual intercession for us before the Throne of His Father.

Yes, *Yeshua* obtained for us eternal forgiveness. Yes, our sins can be forgiven. But we are still required to *confess our sins – to bring them before The Almighty*. We can do this daily, but having one day a year that is separated for *fasting and prayer* is good medicine. It gives us a yearly opportunity to do what Paul told the Corinthians to do: “*5 Test yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Examine yourselves!*” (*2Cor 13:5*). *Yom Tov!*