

A Personal Day of Atonement

Thought for the Week:

Passover this year comes immediately after Shabbat. This Shabbat's Torah reading is about the rituals of the Day of Atonement. The juxtaposition of Passover and the Day Atonement should remind us of Yeshua, our Passover lamb who died on Passover in order to work atonement for us in the heavenly Temple.

Commentary:

He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities. (Leviticus 16:16)

The rituals for Yom Kippur teach us about the distance between man and God. There is a deadly conceit in the heart of man. It is the idea that "I'm generally a pretty decent person. God isn't really that upset with my sin."

The Bible teaches that God cannot abide sin. All men are sinners, and therefore, all men are forced out of the presence of God. Just like Adam and Eve, who were forced out of the Garden of Eden, we are all separated from God.

Our sin is as filth before the Almighty. Shame and disgrace ought to cover us every time we open our Bibles. We have sullied the very parchment of Torah with our sins and trodden on the shed blood of Messiah. Our worthy deeds are utterly eclipsed by our transgressions and sins. Yom Kippur reminds us that this is a real problem. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that "in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year" (Hebrews 10:3).

The Day of Atonement reminds us that salvation and relationship with God cannot be attained by being good enough or scoring points with God. You cannot keep the Torah well enough. You can try keeping the commandments perfectly and working tirelessly for the kingdom and running from one good deed to the next, but in the final judgment, it will still be inadequate. The Day of Atonement teaches that we cannot be good enough to merit salvation, to win God's favor or to earn a reprieve from punishment. We have no worthy deeds before Him, and our sin is like uncleanness before Him. Sin forces us out of His presence. We cannot get past the veil to enter the Holy of Holies. "When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, 'Then who can be saved?'" (Matthew 19:25).

Salvation and relationship with God depend on a person acknowledging that he cannot make the distance. A man needs atonement. He needs a sacrifice for purification.

On Yom Kippur, the high priest set out to cross the distance between us and God by entering the Holy of Holies. The book of Hebrews teaches that, in the heavenly Temple, the death and resurrection of Messiah was the equivalent of the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies on earth.

For Messiah did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. ... He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)

God has made a way of redemption for us through the death and resurrection of His righteous Son. For everyone who places faith in Him, there is redemption, salvation and the forgiveness of sins. This is the hope of our faith: the forgiveness of sins through faith in Yeshua. To experience this forgiveness, we need to have a saving relationship with God through Yeshua, His Son. We need to be born again.