

Parashat Acharei Mot אַחֲרֵי מוֹת

Torah: Leviticus 16: 1–18:30

Haftarah: Ezekiel 22: 1–19

Once and For All

General Overview

Parashat Acharei Mot is one of the pivotal portions of the Torah. The main section is chapters 16 and 17 that discuss Yom Kippur and the place of blood in the atonement process. This commentary will focus on these teachings.

Knowing the context of chapter 16 is critical to fully understanding the teaching concerning Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Verse 1 links this chapter with chapter 10 and the sudden judgmental deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Moshe reminds us that it was because Nadav and Avihu “approached before the Lord” in a sinful way that they died. To avoid future problems, Moshe gives clear and specific instructions to Aaron about how to come near the Lord, so he could do so without losing his own life.

However, chapter 16 is also connected with chapters 11–15, the instructions about tam’ei and tahor. Accordingly, we read in 16:16 that the High Priest

He will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

When we see the word “uncleanness,” we know that we are in the realm of tahor and tam’ei.

Exposition

In addition to the contextual connection with the content of the previous chapters, chapter 16 offers new revelation. Here we see the Divine institution of a single day specifically set aside to make atonement for the entire house of Israel, Yom Kippur. As already stated, this will be the primary focus of our study. As we examine the teaching about Yom Kippur, let us approach it in this fashion:

- I. The Purposes
- II. The Person
- III. The Procedure
- IV. The Blood
- V. The Pictures

In this excerpt from Parashat Acharei Mot, we will focus on section V, The Pictures.

V. The Pictures

The Day of Atonement provides the historical and spiritual basis for much of the doctrinal teaching concerning the death of Yeshua. Particularly, the book of Hebrews contrasts the work of the Messiah with the sacrificial system, making specific reference to the Yom Kippur ritual.

We shall just scratch the surface in this brief commentary. In order to learn more, we would like to refer you to an older book which has been recently republished called *Types in Hebrews* by Sir Robert Anderson, Kregal Publications: Grand Rapids, 1978. Now, let us look at some of the comparisons between the ritual of Yom Kippur and Yeshua's death. First, we will compare Yeshua with the High Priest. Then we will compare Yeshua's death with the death of the sacrificial animals on Yom Kippur.

A. Yeshua and the High Priest

1. Aaron, the sinner, needed to make atonement for himself — the Messiah was perfect and needed no atonement! (Hebrews 7:26)
2. There were many High Priests, but one Messiah, who was a Priest forever. (Hebrews 7:28)
3. The High Priest always ministered in an earthly Mishkan. However, Yeshua ministered in the original, heavenly Mishkan, the pattern for the earthly Mishkan. (Hebrews 9:1–12, 23–28)

B. Yeshua's Sacrifice

1. The High Priest entered once a year, but the Messiah was “offered once to bear the sins of many...having one sacrifice for sins for all time.” (Hebrews 9:28; 10:2)
2. The atonement of Messiah is more efficacious than that made in the Mishkan. His death actually *accomplished* the atonement for all who trust in Him. (Hebrews 9:11–15)
3. Yeshua died once and for all. Here are some examples of the use of the Greek word translated “once,” or “once for all” (απαξ, εφραπαξ):
 - a. once for all — Messiah **died for sin** once for all (Romans 6:10). It's history!
 - b. once for all — Messiah **offered Himself** once for all (Hebrews 7:27). It's history!
 - c. once for all — Yeshua **entered the holy place** once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). It's history.
 - d. once for all — **We have been sanctified** once for all by Yeshua's atonement (Hebrews 10:10).
 - e. once for all — **Messiah died for sins** once for all (1 Peter 3:18). It's history!

C. The Scapegoat

The Renewed Covenant does not mention the scapegoat. However, the function of the scapegoat pictures what Yeshua's death did for our sins. Remember that there were two goats, but they were considered to be *one* sacrifice. The goat that was slaughtered, pictures the bloody sacrificial death of Yeshua. Because of it, God atones for our sin. The debt we owed to God because of sin was fully paid for by the blood of Yeshua.

The second goat was sent far away. It pictures the second part of what God did concerning our sins when atonement was accomplished. He forgave our sins and took them away. Based on the Hebrew words usually translated "to forgive," forgiveness means that our sins were lifted off of us.

So, just as the scapegoat took the sins far away into the wilderness, never to return, God did the same with our sins. They were removed from us, never to be brought back again. There is no condemnation for us, and we are saved for all eternity!

D. What About Yom Kippur Today?

Since the text informs us that Yom Kippur is to be observed forever, how are we to understand this — especially in light of the fact that there is no Mishkan or Temple?

Some observant Jews carry on the tradition of making atonement by the practice known as *kaparot*, where a chicken (a rooster for men and a hen for women) is waved around the head three times, slaughtered, and then given to charity. This is done in remembrance of the sacrifices. In addition, money is often donated as a means of securing atonement. Unfortunately, there is no atonement apart from the shed blood of a sacrificial substitute as prescribed in the Torah. That is why the practice of *kaparot* is not a biblically accepted custom. There is only one way for Yom Kippur to be continued today; that is by trusting in the atoning sacrifice of Messiah. When one approaches Yom Kippur with this belief, then the day takes on a different atmosphere.

We think that Yom Kippur, as a *mo'ed*, can still be observed in this day and age. However, because of the biblical doctrinal teaching, we believe that our observance can be radically different from traditional Orthodox Jewish people's observance of the day. For example, when God's people gather today to observe Yom Kippur, biblical doctrine calls for us not to beg God to forgive our sins, but rather to thank Him for the atonement already accomplished by Messiah. This would, by the way, tend to make the day one of great rejoicing!

Yom Kippur can also be duly observed by using it as a time for personal reflection and to repent of any pattern in the flesh, which we need to forsake. Furthermore, in keeping with the injunction to "afflict our souls," we also fast and use the time for prayer, especially intercession for our people Israel, that they might come to know the true atonement found in Messiah Yeshua.

The vital thing to remember is that Yom Kippur is an important part of God's holy day cycle. It is placed there specifically by the Holy One for particular purposes. Nowhere does the Scripture tell us to stop observing it. However, we are to observe it with the Renewed Covenant realities instead of only the Torah shadows.