

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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יום הכּפּוּרִים

Day of the Atonements

Understanding What YHWH Desires from His People

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 23:27

“On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonements; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to YHWH.”

It is in the greatest of fear and trepidation that I undertake writing this study. As you read this study you will understand why. Please pray and listen, and read in His Spirit! I have NO desire to mislead anyone, least of all myself or my family. However, I have come to the place where I am convinced beyond all doubt that something is greatly amiss in this festival as it is traditionally observed in the present day. May YHWH open the eyes of all of us that we may have eyes to see and ears to hear!

The first thing of which we need to adjust our understanding, is the very title of this day, as it is commonly called the “Day of Atonement” or “Yom Kippur” – יום כּפּוּר. Please note that this is not what the text of Scripture actually says. Perhaps it is simply a case of human laziness that caused it to be shortened to יום כּפּוּר – “Yom Kippur” or the “Day of Atonement.” Whatever the reason was for this happening, it simply places a false idea in the head of those who use this title to refer to this day. In Scripture this particular day is always referred to as יום הכּפּוּרִים – the “Day of Atonements.” It is important to note that it is not only one atonement that is being effected upon that day, but rather it is many atonements: one for you, and one for me, and one for each and every member of the people of YHWH our Elohim! We need to submit to the Scriptural record and call this appointed time by its proper Scriptural name, יום הכּפּוּרִים – “Yom haKippurim” (the Day of Atonements).

Let us remind ourselves that this particular day, Yom haKippurim, is one of seven high days in the Scriptural calendar known as mo'edim or feast days or festivals. To understand this let us look at the word "mo'ed" to see what it actually means.

The Hebrew word which is commonly translated into English as "feast" or "festival" is the Hebrew word מוֹעֵד – "mo'ed." This word means "an appointed time or fixed day, a festival or feast day." This word comes from the root word יָאָד – "ya'ad" which means "to appoint or to fix; to set time; to betroth."

It is when we see the meanings associated with the root word יָאָד that we begin to get a true understanding of this word מוֹעֵד. Surely to be betrothed and to be wedded is a joyous occasion for those so engaged in such an activity! When we keep His mo'edim according to the right day and according to what pleases YHWH we are being betrothed to our Beloved.

It is at this very point that my own personal struggle began with this particular day, the Day of Atonements. The question that formed in my mind was along this very line. If this is one of the seven high feast days, how is fasting on this day having a feast? How does fasting coincide with this day? Is it a proper understanding of this day, to fast upon it? Or, has this idea of fasting been added to this day by man, and its true meaning lost?

We hope to answer these questions and more in this study. Surprisingly enough YHWH actually answers these questions rather clearly in Scripture, if we will just turn to Him for the answers.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 23:32

"It shall be to you a Shabbat Shabbaton, and you shall afflict your souls; in the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, shall you keep your Shabbat."

The word which is underlined in the above passage is the word that we need to investigate, in order to discover exactly what this word means. The Hebrew word is אָנָה – "anah" which means "to humble oneself" and "to answer or respond." I have looked in more than four different respected Hebrew sources for the meaning of this word. Not one of them even mentions or hints at or alludes to fasting as a meaning of this word. In fact, in the Hiphil stem it means "to exclaim or to sing." I don't know about you, but I surely don't feel like singing when I am fasting!

But how is this word used in the rest of Scripture? Is there anything in Scripture that would help us understand whether this word is dealing with fasting? The majority of the time that this word is used it is in the meaning of one who answers another. There are other places where it is used in the sense of humbling. Here is one such place.

Shemot (Exodus) 10:3

Moshe and Aharon went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says YHWH, Elohim of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.' "

It cannot be imagined in any way that YHWH was asking Pharaoh to fast before Him! What YHWH was asking Pharaoh to do was to worship Him and serve Him and submit to His authority as the Creator of all. But, as we know, he did not.

Here is another passage where this word is used.

Shemot (Exodus) 22:22

“You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.”

Once again we see that there can be no idea of fasting in this word. It just will not fit!

Notice this next passage, for in it are several things of great importance pertaining to our present discussion. It will show to us that there is no idea at all of fasting in this word ענה.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:3

“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of YHWH.”

Notice that in this passage we learn that to be humbled (anah – ענה) is different and separate from being hungry, which one normally is when fasting. Notice also that part of the humbling process Israel went through was that they were made to eat manna and this eating of manna humbled (ענה) them. In this case, the act of being humbled was and is associated with eating, not fasting.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:16

“In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.”

Once again we see the idea that to be ענה is to eat manna. To associate ענה with fasting is to ignore the Scriptural record!

Now here is what I find to be of great importance: there is a Hebrew word which does mean “fast.” It is the Hebrew word צום – “tzom” which is commonly translated as “fast.” One of the interesting things about this word is that it is not found in the Torah. Its first occurrence in the Tanak is not found until the book of 2nd Sh’muel when David fasted.

Now here is a question to ponder deeply which I have done for several years. Since there is a separate and different Hebrew word that actually means “to fast” (צום), then if YHWH wanted us to actually fast upon that day, would he not have used such a word? The evidence in Scripture seems to indicate that it would have been, and was, very dear as to what he desired from us. He did not desire for us to simply

stop eating food for one day, particularly when He commanded us NOT to ענה the widow and the orphan.

Shemot (Exodus) 22:22

“You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.”

Since we are not to afflict (ענה) the widow and the orphan, then we can see the implication of this in this next passage.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 23:29

“If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people.”

Surely YHWH does not want for us to cut off from His people on a yearly basis all the widows and orphans. This would actually go against the very idea of NOT afflicting them! We cannot have it both ways. And YHWH certainly did not contradict Himself in this matter! Surely you can see that the idea of forcing a fast upon the widows and orphans will actually afflict them, something which YHWH commanded us not to do!

So, if we are not commanded to fast on יום הכיפורים then what are we to do? What does it mean to humble oneself? To answer that question let us go to the words of YHWH Himself as recorded by the prophet Yeshayah.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:1-3

1 “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Ya’aqov their sins.

2 Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways; as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their Elohim, they ask of Me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to Elohim.

3 ‘Therefore have we fasted,’ say they, ‘and You do not see? Therefore have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you find your own pleasure, and exact all your labors.”

We need to pay particular attention to what is being said in this chapter, which we will go through entirely. YHWH sets the stage by telling us that there were and are those who say they are seeking to do His ordinances. However, YHWH begins chastising them because they have set up their own day of fasting in which they delight. However, as we will see, YHWH does not delight in nor take any pleasure in this day of fasting which man has set up. On a side note, please note that in verse three, to fast and to be humbled or afflicted are two different things, not the same thing as so many teach. YHWH has some very strong words to say in this chapter on this matter.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:4-5

4 “Behold, you fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; you fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is this the fast that I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to YHWH?”

YHWH is quite displeased with the way they conduct their set-apart day of fasting. He chides them; yea, He even mocks them for how they have made their rulings on how to afflict (ענה) themselves. YHWH asks the question at the beginning of verse five: is the fast that He has chosen? His answer is that He has not chosen such a fast!

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:6-7

6 “Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

7 Is it not to give your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out into your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?”

The true fast of YHWH is not about going a day without eating food! The true fast of YHWH according to His own words is to help those in need. In fact, YHWH commands us in this passage to bring them into our home and feed them and give them shelter. Brothers and sisters in Mashiach Yeshua, this is the true meaning of יום הכיפורים – Yom haKippurim, the Day of Atonements.

Let us take special note of what Yeshua taught us concerning this matter!

Matithyah (Matthew) 25:34-40

34 “Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

35 for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in;

36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’

37 Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, ‘Adonenu, when did we see You hungry, and feed You? Or, thirsty, and gave you drink?

38 And when did we see you a stranger, and took you in? Or, naked, and dothed You?

39 And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?’

40 And the King shall answer and say to them, ‘Amein I say to you, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of these My brethren, even the least, you did it to Me.” ’ ”

These words of Yeshua are strikingly similar to those found in Yeshayah 58. We should pay special heed to these verses as we take in the whole counsel of Scripture. Now notice what Yeshua says about those who do not do this.

Matithyah (Matthew) 25:41-46

41 "Then shall He say also to them on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels;

42 for I was hungry, and you did not give Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink;

43 I was a stranger, and you did not take Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

44 Then shall they also answer, saying, 'Adonenu, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 Then shall He answer them, saying, 'Amein I say to you, "Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least, you did not do it to Me."'

46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life."

Please notice that those who do not do these things are not rewarded; but rather, they are punished. This certainly gives new and pointed meaning to this passage that we had looked at earlier.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 23:29

"If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people."

Yeshua actually gives us a very dear window as to why these are being cut off from among His people. Could it be that they did not keep יום הכִּפּוּרִים – Yom haKippurim in the way that was pleasing to YHWH? I submit to you that is exactly what is transpiring in this passage and more!

The human condition is such that we have a tendency to order ourselves into levels of status. We also have a very strong tendency only to socialize within that status level, not going up or down. But let us prayerfully consider what it is that YHWH is actually asking us to do on the Day of Atonements.

Could YHWH mean that when we are to humble ourselves we are going to the social levels below us and inviting them into our home and feeding them and serving them on this day? Would this not humble a person much greater than fasting? To be sure, it would!

Matithyah (Matthew) 22:8-10

8 "Then He says to His servants, 'The wedding is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy.

9 Go therefore to the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage feast.'

10 And those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was filled with guests."

Furthermore, Yeshua commanded us to go out into all the world to bring in those who will come. Yeshua also taught us that He came to serve, not to be served, and called us to go and do likewise. Doing this also lines up perfectly with what YHWH says through the prophet Yeshayah which we have

looked at above. Let us continue on in Yeshayah to see what else we can learn about the Day of Atonements and what it means to truly humble ourselves before YHWH.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:8-11

8 “Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of YHWH shall be your rearward.

9 Then shall you call, and YHWH will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away from your midst the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly;

10 and if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in darkness, and your obscurity be as the noonday;

11 and YHWH will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in dry places, and make strong your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

There are several wonderful promises found in these verses. Please note that these promises are conditional provided one gives himself to the hungry and eases the affliction of those afflicted. This is what YHWH states very clearly is His fast. His fast does not consist of the cessation of eating food for one day and putting upon oneself sackcloth and ashes. Rather, His fast consists of humbling ourselves and moving down a notch or two in our social status to minister to those who truly need ministering to: the hungry, the poor, the naked, and those who are powerless to meet the needs that they have.

Fasting on one day of a year is easy compared to what YHWH is actually commanding us to do. I wonder if there are many who would be willing to humble themselves and obey YHWH rather than man?

Please note with what YHWH now does this chapter. Notice the use of “your” in these verses as opposed to His ways and His commandments.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:12-14

12 “And those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

13 If because of the Shabbat you turn away your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day; and call the Shabbat a delight, and the qodesh of YHWH honorable; and shall honor it, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words;

14 then shall you delight yourself in YHWH; and I will make you to ride upon the high places of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Ya’aqov your father; for the mouth of YHWH has spoken it.”

Yeshua taught us on several occasions the problem with the traditions of man.

Matithyah (Matthew) 15:3

And He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of Elohim because of your tradition?”

Here is the truth of this whole matter. No one can point to any passage in the Torah or in the Tanak which commands us to fast on the Day of the Atonements. Since this is true, then it is simply a matter of tradition. Now traditions are not wrong in and of themselves. I for one think that there are many wonderful and beautiful traditions within Judaism. The problem comes when man begins to elevate those traditions and put them on the same level as a Torah commandment. When this happens, then the Torah itself suffers violence and is reduced. What ends up happening in nearly every case is that the tradition supersedes the commandment of YHWH. This is never good! Traditions are simply not binding upon anyone to do them! We are not obligated to keep traditions. We are obligated to keep the commandments of YHWH if we want eternal life.

Now we are not saying that it is wrong to fast. Many times YHWH leads His people to fast for various reasons. Whenever YHWH leads one to fast, on whatever day, that person should fast in obedience to YHWH. But this is a personal obedience. There are even times when YHWH will lead His nation of people to fast as He did in the days of Queen Hadassah (Esther). But this was for a specific reason for a specific cause. It is good for us to fast at times to bring our flesh into subjection to His Spirit.

However, when a tradition is elevated to the level of a commandment from Elohim, then another Torah commandment is violated, hence our reference to the Torah suffering violence above. That commandment is as follows.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:32

“Whatever I command you, that shall you observe to do; you shall not add to it, nor diminish from it.”

If one is to add even a jot or a tittle or if one is to take away a jot or a tittle from the Torah, then he is guilty of breaking this commandment and doing violence to it. We must be wary of the teachings of man, present teacher not excluded! We are to prove all things with Scripture. Let us be sure that we do this, and that we do it always in an honest manner rightly dividing the word of truth!

Matithyah (Matthew) 16:6

And Yeshua said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

One ignores this warning from our Master Yeshua to his own harm!

Let us be rather skeptical of the teachings of man that are not in harmony with the whole counsel of Scripture. When we feel a tinge of doubt about something, we need to fully investigate it and not ignore it. I am confident that many of you, as I have, have experienced doubts concerning fasting on Yom haKippurim.

Matithyah (Matthew) 15:8-9

8 “This people honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.

9 But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.”

Now who do we want to be following? Why, it is Yeshua our Mashiach of course! Can we not see that those who do not love Him are not our friends? Please consider this passage carefully.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:23

Whosoever denies the Son, the same does not have the Father; he that confesses the Son has the Father also.

Is it a slight thing for a person to seek the counsel of one who does not follow Mashiach? To be sure that it is not a slight matter at all.

Qorintyah Bet (2nd Corinthians) 6:14-15

14 Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion does light have with darkness?

15 And what harmony does Mashiach have with Belial? Or what portion does a believer have with an unbeliever?

There is no true harmony between the talmidim of Mashiach Yeshua and others. Yes, we are called to go out and find the lost sheep of Israel. But, in doing so are we to seek their counsel? No, of course we are not to do this!

So, let us recap with the following verse.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:6-7

6 "Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

7 Is it not to give your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out into your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?"

YHWH clearly states that what He wants for us to do are the following:

1. Remove the bonds of wickedness
2. Remove those things that bind others
3. Set the oppressed free
4. Destroy everything that binds another
5. Feed the hungry
6. Bring the poor and those who are outcasts into our home
7. Clothe those who need it

How each one of us does these things is up to us as individuals. Each one of us must seek Him in this matter and then walk in obedience to His will. Obviously, if we can band together in small groups we can accomplish much more in this matter than we could as an individual. However, we must not lose

sight of the fact that YHWH wants each one of us personally involved in doing these things. If we cannot do all of them, then pick something that you can do and then do it.

As I stated at the beginning of this teaching, I was writing in the greatest of fear and trepidation. Why? I am fully aware that I cannot afford to get this wrong or to lead others astray. It is quite likely that many will stop receiving these teachings because of this particular teaching. In fact, I have been publicly ostracized for it this teaching. But here is what I know: I have done my duty before YHWH and shared with you what He has laid upon my heart. What you do with it is between YHWH and yourself.

We will be looking for and finding others to share with and feed this year. We will not be fasting on the day of Yom haKippurim. In order for me to continue to walk in obedience to His Spirit, I can no longer fast on this high feast day.

May YHWH open the eyes of each one of us that we may see His truth so that we might walk it its fullness.

Amein and Amein.

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