



A Time of Revelation

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The seventh month on the Biblical calendar is commonly referred to as Tishrei. In this month falls The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) and the Eighth Day Assembly (Shimini Atzeret). In this article, I would like to highlight the **Day of Atonement**.

Although the Fall Festivals begin on the first day of the seventh month, the previous month, known as Elul, is very significant. During this month, the Shofar is sounded each day in the Synagogue (except on Shabbat) and this month serves as a time of personal reflection in regard to one's behavior. The primary question is, "*Has one been obedient to the will of G-d?*" The sounding of the Shofar is a call to repentance, but true repentance must be triggered by something. What is this? The answer is **conviction of sin**. It is most unfortunate that there is a tendency today for those who "teach" the Word of G-d to avoid speaking in a manner which causes people to fall under conviction. One way that repentance is expressed in the Scripture is *turning toward G-d*. It is only when a person is truly remorseful concerning his or her sins that this one will repent. This requires a person to be mindful of his sins, and this usually happens when this person is confronted with them.

Yeshua, in speaking about the Holy Spirit said,

*"And when that One comes, He will **convict** the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment."* John 16:8

It is so significant that as Yeshua begins speaking about the Holy Spirit, one of the first things He reveals is that one of the Holy Spirit's primary roles is to **convict** / **reprove** the individual. Not only during the entire month of Elul does one hear the Shofar, but there are also specially constructed prayers whose main purpose is to remind the worshipper of the various sins in order to bring to one's recollection any sinful acts which he may have committed. The tradition on Yom Kippur was (when the Temple stood) that while the High Priest was performing his service, each individual should be confessing his sins. Although there are numerous actions that the High Priest must carry out on the Day of Atonement, there is a clear emphasis on the **two goats**.

Chapter sixteen of the book of Leviticus deals exclusively with Yom Kippur. In verse seven, the reader is told that the High Priest takes two goats and brings them before HaShem at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. In verse eight, by lot, the High Priest must designate one goat for the Lord and the other for *Azazel*. It will be discussed in greater detail what is the significance of these two designations. It is important to know that these two

goats relate to a service that teaches spiritual truth concerning sin. The first goat which is for HaShem must be offered up as a sin offering (see verse nine). One of the purposes of the sin offering is to manifest G-d's judgment. Because G-d is Holy, He cannot ignore sin; rather, He must place His judgment upon it. The fact that there was a Temple sacrificial system informs the reader of the Bible that while G-d must punish sin, He does allow a substitute to be offered.

In studying chapter sixteen and the two goats, it has been stated that the first goat was offered as a sin offering and marked: **to the L-rd ליהוה**. This designation attests to the truth that G-d requires death as the payment for sin. It is the second goat that I would like to focus upon. One learns in verse twenty-one that the High Priest set his hands upon the head the goat which was marked to Azazel **לעזאזל**. While his hands are upon this goat, the High Priest confesses all the iniquities **עוונות**, transgressions **פשעים**, and sins **חטאות** of the Children of Israel. It is clear from the text that there is a transfer of all these sins from Israel onto this goat. Then this goat was led into the wilderness. This symbolizes the sins departing from the people. Some Jewish authorities state that the term L'Azazel means "to the wilderness", but in this usage the idea of wilderness has an idea of emptiness or being abandoned. This can be understood as a place which is most remote, *as far as the East is from the West*.

It is most important for the reader to understand that it is **both of these two goats** that proclaim the message of atonement. This message has three components: **Death, Confession, and Removal**. One can see these same three components relating to the Gospel. First, Messiah died on the Cross for our sins. Second, we must acknowledge our sin through confession. Third, sins are removed from the believer and we are fully forgiven. For the purpose of the remaining of this article I want to emphasize the importance of confession.

My favorite prayer in the Bible is found in Daniel Chapter nine. In this chapter, Daniel knows that the time for the Babylonian Exile is ending and HaShem wants to renew His relationship and purposes with His people. It is for these reasons that Daniel confesses not only his sins, but the sins of the people, even going back into the previous generations. This fact teaches the reader that Daniel understood that unconfessed sin can indeed hinder future generations. Probably the best known verse of Scripture dealing with confession is found in 1 John.

"If we confess our sins, faithful is He and just; in order He may forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Confession of sin should be part of our spiritual life. As I mentioned, prior to the Feast of Trumpets, prayers are said which are too called Selichot סליחות. The literal meaning of this word is “forgiveness”. Not only do these prayers prepare one spiritually for the Feast of Trumpets, they also aid in getting one ready for the period between the Feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur. During this time, one is called to remember with Awe how great the grace and mercy of G-d truly is.

Hasidic Judaism has an interesting way of expressing the significance of this time. They refer to this as “*The King in the Field*”. What is the message of this saying? Access to a king is difficult. It is **not** easy to enter into the palace and even if one does make his way into the palace, there is no guarantee that the king will see him. The statement “*The King in the Field*” implies that the king has left the palace and he is outside in the field where he is most accessible to the public. The tradition is that especially during this time G-d is available and desiring people to seek His grace and find forgiveness.

Of course forgiveness is only found through faith in Messiah Yeshua. One may seek His forgiveness anytime; however, one may find that teaching about sin and bringing people under conviction during the fall festivals can often produce greater results. These are HaShem’s appointed days and when we share the message of these days, I believe there will be a special anointing upon this message.

It is wise to study the Word of G-d and learn about these festivals and share their significance with others as you apply the Biblical truth contained in them.

Chag S’meach חג שמחה