

Yom-Kippur

To some of you, this title may look as bewildering as it did to me at first. A change in the second letter from (o) to (u) could possibly look like a heading with a more probable slot in our English vocabulary, possibly a name in a recipe file. Sorry to say, the title of this article does not reflect anything yummy; in fact, it reflects on something distasteful to the 20th-century mind. The title takes us back to gore, blood, washings, killings, ceremonies, ritual, and affliction. In Leviticus 23:26-32, Moses was introduced to the events of this Hebrew day better known as *the Day of Atonement*.

Yom-Kippur reflects the most awesome day on the Jewish calendar for more than 3,000 years. Tishri 10, usually falling somewhere between late September and early October, has been a day of wide-eyed observation for many a little Jewish boy and girl, father and mother.

On this day the priest took off the glamour of the breastplate and after careful washing at the laver, donned a simple linen garment. In this simple attire, he proceeded to sacrifice a bull at the altar of burnt offering for himself and the priests. He then took the blood of the bull and gathered some smoldering coals and incense for the entrance into the holy of holies. When the incense contacted the hot coals, there was the sizzle of liquid and heat in contact and the eruption of a foggy steam that hid the high priest from the view of the mercy seat. The high priest then carefully sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat (Lev 16:12-14).

Then there was the ordination or commissioning service with two creatures in the lot. However, it was entirely different from the calling in the book of Acts. This lot did not involve the call of people to a special work, but the call of a goat. Two of these four-legged creatures were called to fill a vital role in the events that followed that day. One was to be killed and laid on the altar. The other was to have the sins of the people laid on its head and then be sent by a strong man into the wilderness to remove the sins of the people in the camp.

After the casting of the lot to find the will of God in the commissioning of the goat, the less fortunate animal found himself used as a sacrifice. After the bloodshed, the entering into the holy of holies was repeated. Again, the sizzling vapor clouded the mercy seat, and again the blood was applied by sprinkling over the mercy seat, only this time for the sins of the people (Lev 16:5,9,15-16). The high priest would then exit to

the altar of burnt offering and sprinkle it with the blood of the bull for himself and the priests and the blood of the goat for the people.

Next, the second goat would find out his role, as the high priest walked up to him and carefully laid both hands on him and charged an able man to escort him to the wilderness of non-habitation except for wild animals. The charge included giving him the sins of the people to carry, symbolizing the transfer of Israel's sins to the realms of no human habitation (Lev 16:20-22).

Following all this, the high priest would resume his ornate garb, after a thorough washing. Once more he looked like the familiar person they were accustomed to seeing. However, the events of the day still were not completed. The next step was to offer a ram for himself and another for his people (Lev 16:24). The conclusion of the day was the removal of the sacrificial waste to a place outside the camp where it was burned.

We may ask why all this additional ritual? Were not all the daily sacrifices of Leviticus 1:7 sufficient? The answer lies in understanding the difference between intentional sins (those done with a high hand) which were not covered by the daily sacrifices, and unintentional sins. But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproached the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him (Num 15:30,31). Thus, provision was made in the complete sacrificial system for sins contemplated and sins committed ignorantly. Yom-Kippur sacrifices covered the intentional sins.

The ritual described in Leviticus 16 was for the portable sanctuary, the tabernacle. With the construction of the temple, the ceremony was adapted to the permanent surroundings. We are not informed how this service was conducted in the temple. However, the writings of Josephus sadly inform us that Roman procurators often appointed high priests, thus causing corruption and bribery. Therefore, many were not spiritually minded and ignorant of the Leviticus 16 procedure. There is supposedly rabbinic reference made to the custom of tying a red ribbon to the ram's horn. If the ribbon turned white, it was a sign of approval from God of the sacrifice having been accepted. We have no way of knowing whether this ever happened; however, God's procedure was never meant to be altered. When people open themselves up for signs outside God's predetermined method, they open themselves up to satanic miracles as well.

Also, the goat was supposedly later called in the Hebrew (azel) instead of scapegoat. The goat was pushed off a cliff a few miles south of Jerusalem, instead of releasing it in

the wilderness. This was done to avoid the perplexing problem of the animal coming back into the city.

After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., it became almost impossible to carry out the Yom-Kippur observance. Thus, the rabbis instituted radical changes. A first-century Jewish leader, Yohanan Ben Zakkai, declared that God no longer desired blood sacrifice, but in their place accepts repentance, charity, prayer, and fasting. ON this basis Yom-Kippur is now a "transformed" day of introspection, prayer, and fasting. They feel the afflicting of Leviticus 16:29 implies fasting. They make an exception for mothers to be, children, and the infirm.

We are told a present-day Yom-Kippur service begins at sundown with a (all vows) prayer called Kol Nidrei. It continues with liturgy and prayers of forgiveness, with readings from the book of Jonah because Nineveh repented. Even the most secular Jewish person will usually participate in this solemn day by not working. Ultra-Orthodox Jews are not quite so comfortable with this bloodless approach. On the afternoon before this day, some Jews may be seen waving a chicken over their heads and praying to God to accept their sacrifice. While the rabbis do not approve of this activity, it does give us an insight into the burden of the Jewish heart. The truth of Leviticus 17:11 is still ringing in their hearts, It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. They do not recognize the blood of Jesus, but they use animals as the Old Testament required.

Many Jewish people will admit that they lack a sense for peace at the end of their modern-day Yom-Kippur. Year after year these people are invited to take part in a service that brings no satisfaction, no peace; only a feeble hope that God recognized their attempt.

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 10:1-3 eloquently puts the problem in perspective, For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. The Yom-Kippur observers are like some American tax-payers. On Dec. 31, they frantically search for ways to roll over tax payment till the following year, only to face the same dilemma 12 months later. They may do it all their lives only to someday face the reality that money earned constitutes paying tax, not matter how many times it was managed to be rolled ahead. All this sacrificial ritual never removed the problem; it only covered it for one more year.

It is so sad that in the heart of New York City, there is a live animal market for Jewish people. Money that could be used for the furtherance of the kingdom of God is being wasted on commerce, the buying, and selling of blood that need not be shed any longer. The people for whom "the sacrifice" was really meant, completely missed it.

The Bible says in Zechariah 12:10-13 and confirms it in Romans 11:26-27 that there will be a day of salvation for those people who recognize their ultimate sacrifice. May we, as a people who have laid hold on Jesus' sacrifice and have been grafted in where natural branches should be, with all diligence, present our bodies a living sacrifice, lest God remove us just like He did the natural branches. It is no longer a ritual that brings salvation; it is now simply bringing forth fruit meet for repentance and being attached to the life-giving trunk of Jesus. We no longer have to go through services and leave feeling as guilty as when we came. Our high-priest, Jesus Christ, laid aside His heavenly garments, descended to the depths of this sin-cursed world, not to perform a sacrificial ritual with the blood of animals, but to sacrifice Himself. He left the sword pierce His flesh! He left His blood flow once and for all, for us! What a high priest! Thank you, Jesus!

~Howard Horst