



Parasha Acharei Mot

May 4, 2019

Torah: Leviticus 16:1-18:30

Haftarah: Ezekiel 22:1-19

Sh'lichim: Hebrews 9:11-28

Shabbat shalom! Our *torah* portion today is entitled *Acharei Mot* meaning “after the death.” The death was the death of *Nadav* and *Avihu*, *Aharon*’s sons, which occurred three *parshiot* ago in *Parasha Tazria*. ADONAI killed them because they brought unauthorized fire before Him. The Hebrew says “*zarah* fire,” literally “another fire.” It wasn’t fire taken from the altar, but from their own fire source. It’s also possible that they entered and offered their incense in the Holy of Holies. The construction and consecration of the Tabernacle had just been completed and ADONAI had not yet given specific directions as to how and when the *Kodesh HaKodeshim*, the Holy of Holies, was to be entered. That was the intent of His words to Moses: *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they approached the presence of Adonai and died. 2 Adonai said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holiest Place behind the curtain —before the atonement cover which is on the Ark—so that he would not die. For I will be appearing in the cloud over the atonement cover”* (Leviticus 16:1-2 TLV). And, in this *parasha* ADONAI gave instructions for *Yom Kippur* specified that Aaron was not to enter the Holy of Holies, except according to these directions.

This is the gist of the instructions which were given to Aaron. He was not to enter the Holy of Holies except on one day each year, the 10th of *Tishrei*. It was to be *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement for the nation of Israel. The people were to afflict themselves on this day. The *rabbis* have interpreted that to mean that they are to fast on *Yom Kippur*. The main sacrifices to be offered included a bull which Aaron offered as a sin sacrifice for himself and for his family and a goat which was designated for ADONAI. Their blood was sprinkled on the atonement cover of the *aron kodesh*, the holy ark. A second goat specified for *Azazel* was not killed, but driven off into the wilderness. There has been a lot of speculation through the centuries as to what the word *azazel* represents. Some have said it was a fallen angel; some have said *HaSatan*. Others have called it the scapegoat, someone or something which is blamed for the faults of others. Young’s Literal Translation translates it as “goat of departure.” That is in line with Strong’s Concordance where the Hebrew word *azazel* means “entire removal.” It was the goat which was to be removed; sent away.

In the *Yom Kippur* service, it is easy for us to see the spiritual foreshadowing of Yeshua in the

goat for ADONAI, the sin offering. And, I also believe that *Azazel*, the goat for entire removal, represents Yeshua. The High Priest was to lay his hands on the head of this goat and confess on it all of the sins of Israel and then have the goat taken out into the wilderness and left there. There is nothing in Scripture which tells us that the goat dies there but there is also nothing which tells us that it did not.

Yom Kippur, as observed in Tabernacle and Temple times, remains in many ways a mystery. What did it actually do? Yes, it provided atonement, but atonement for what? To find the answer, we need to look more closely into the details of the service. Alfred Edersheim in his book, *The Temple*, gives a ringside view of everything which happened. His information comes from the *Mishnah*, from Maimonides writings and from other ancient sources. We don't look at this account as absolute truth, but it is probably close to the truth and can help us to understand ADONAI's purpose in commanding Israel to do these things. The High Priest was the main character and the success of *Yom Kippur* depended directly upon him and for this he had to be properly prepared. To be ready for this awesome task, he left his home a week early and lived in the side rooms of the Temple. During this time, he practiced everything which he would do on that day. He probably tutored by some of the older priests who had years of experience with *Yom Kippur* to make sure that he could carry out every step perfectly. And, he would be involved in every part of everything which took place on that day.

But, the sacrifices of *Yom Kippur* were not the only sacrifices offered that day. All of the regular sacrifices of the day had to be offered and this included the burnt offerings and drink offerings for both the morning and evening services. And, if *Yom Kippur* fell on a weekly *Shabbat*, those sacrifices would also be included. The *Yom Kippur* sacrifices took place in between the other services.

The High Priest was a busy man. He wore his golden garments for the morning and evening sacrifices, but changed into a plain white linen garment when carrying out his *Yom Kippur* responsibilities. In order to go from golden garments to white garments, he would bathe and change behind a screen which was in view of all of the worshippers. On this day, he washed his whole body a total of five times and his hands and feet ten times. In making the *Yom Kippur* sacrifices, he spoke ADONAI's name, represented by the Hebrew consonants YHVH with their correct vowel sounds, a total of ten times. Each time that The Name was pronounced, the people would prostrate themselves and say: "Blessed be the Name; the glory of His kingdom is forever and ever."

The *Yom Kippur* service began with the High Priest laying his hands on the head of the bull and confessing his sins and the sins of his household. While making that confession, he spoke the name of ADONAI three times. Next, the two goats were chosen. It was very important that they were the same size, shape and color to carry out the idea that together they formed parts of the same sacrifice. With the two goats facing the High Priest and their backs to the worshippers, he put both

his hands into a large vase containing two lots. One had written on it *la'YHVH* and the other *la'Azazel*; for ADONAI and for *Azazel*. Before withdrawing the lots from the urn, he prayed and spoke the name of ADONAI. And, again the people worshipped. With the lots in his hands, he placed the one in his right hand on the goat in front of his right hand and the one in his left hand on the other goat. It was considered good fortune if the lot for ADONAI was in the right hand. That was the goat which would be sacrificed and its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. Leaving the two goats standing there beside each other, the goat for *azazel* was turned around and made to stand facing the worshippers. The High Priest then tied a tongue shaped piece of scarlet cloth to its horn.

The High Priest then returned to the bull which was standing near the outside of the Holy Place. He again placed his hands on its head, confessing again his sins and the sins of his household, but this time, also the sins of the priesthood; the sins of all of the priests. In this confession, ADONAI's name was spoken three more times and the people worshipped. Then the High Priest killed the bull, collected its blood and gave the container to a priest to stir to keep it from coagulating.

He then filled his censer with coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering. Notice its difference from the fire offered by *Nadav* and *Avihu*. This was holy fire, fire set apart for that purpose, whereas they took their fire, as the *rabbis* say, "from the kitchen." With a bowl of frankincense in his left hand and the censer of coals in his right, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and offered incense. After smoke filled the room, he backed out and outside the curtain, prayed a prayer for a year of blessing.

Going out of the Holy Place, he took the bowl of blood from the priest who was stirring it and again entered the Holy of Holies. Inside, he sprinkled the blood of the bullock on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant eight times; upward once and downward seven times. Again going outside, the High Priest killed the goat for ADONAI. Taking its blood, he entered the Holy of Holies a third time and sprinkled it eight times on the Ark; upward once and downward seven times. That was a total of sixteen sprinklings on the Ark of the Covenant, eight from the bull and eight from the goat. Other sprinklings were done outside the Holy of Holies in the Holy Place before the curtain and on the Altar of Golden Incense. This brought the sprinklings of blood to a total of forty-three times, sixteen in the Holy of Holies and twenty-seven in the Holy Place. And, don't forget that between each of these events, the High Priest went behind the curtain, washed himself and changed into fresh linen garments. He did all these things: He entered the Holy of Holies three times, spoke ADONAI's name ten times, sprinkled blood forty-three times and made fifteen washings! What does it all mean? I don't know. I am sure some have speculated, but I haven't tried to find out. Whew! I'm already tired! But, we're not finished.

Attention was now turned to the goat for *Azazel* which had been quietly standing facing the worshippers all this time. Laying both his hands on the goat's head, the High Priest made this

confession: “Ah, ADONAI; they have committed iniquity; they have transgressed; they have sinned- Your people, the house of Israel. Oh, then, ADONAI, cover over I entreat You, upon their iniquities, their transgressions, and their sins, which they have wickedly committed, transgressed, and sinned before You- Your people, the house of Israel. As it is written in the Law of Moses, Your servant, saying: ‘For on that day shall it be covered over for you, to make you clean from all your sins before ADONAI, you shall be cleansed.’” These were the final three times that the Name was spoken. The worshippers prostrated themselves in worship during this confession. As the High Priest spoke the last four words, “you shall be cleansed,” he raised his head and looked toward heaven.

An attendant then took the goat into the wilderness. He exited the Temple by way of the Eastern Gate and crossed over a bridge to the Mount of Olives. But, the wilderness wasn’t just over the hill. Measured by our measure, it was something over seven miles away. And that brought about a problem with a Sabbath day’s journey for this was a Sabbath. The distance which could be walked on a Sabbath was about 2/3 of a mile. To deal with this, ten equally-spaced stations had previously been set up between the Temple and the wilderness with several men stationed at each with food and water. As the attendant with the goat reached each station, he was offered food and water and was then accompanied by the men to the next station where he was again offered refreshment. Each of the men accompanying him would walk one-half a Sabbath’s day journey, about 1/3 mile, and then return one-half a Sabbath’s Day journey to their original station where they would spend the night. And, they would return to Jerusalem after the Sabbath was over. The attendant and the goat walked the last one-third mile alone with his last companions watching from a distance. When he came to the cliff at the edge of the wilderness, he tore off one-half of the scarlet tongue of cloth and placed it on a nearby rock. Then he pushed the goat off the cliff. There were other men stationed along the way down from the high cliff watching the goat as it fell to its death. The *Talmud* relates that the crimson cloth on the rock would turn white when the goat died, signifying that Israel’s sins had been forgiven. This message was then relayed back to the High Priest at the Temple by the men waving flags. He was waiting for G-d’s answer before proceeding with the service.

What you have just heard is an account of a *Yom Kippur* service which took place several hundred years before Yeshua came to earth, but was written some years after His time. There is another account of some of these events in the *Talmud* which was written after Yeshua’s death. That account tells that a part of the crimson cloth was nailed to the Temple door while the people waited in the Temple hoping for it to turn white. Whether or not the scarlet cloth was on a rock in the wilderness or on the Temple door, we don’t know. But, it is possible that by Yeshua’s day that change had been made.

What do we make of all of this? There are many possible parallels, but I’ll just name two. We can see the Levitical High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies in the earthly Temple to sprinkle blood

as a foreshadower of Yeshua, the High Priest after the order of *Malkitzedek* who entered the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Tabernacle and sprinkled His won blood. Do you remember the goat for *Azazel* standing facing the worshippers while the other sacrifices were being offered? Consider these verses: *1 Then Pilate took Yeshua and had Him scourged. 2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and dressed Him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and slapping Him over and over. 4 Pilate came out again. He said to them, "Look, I'm bringing Him out to you, to let you know that I find no case against Him." 5 So Yeshua came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. "Behold, the Man!" Pilate said to them.* (John 19:1-5 TLV). Just as the goat had stood before the sinners in the Temple on that *Yom Kippur*, Yeshua stood before them whom he would soon redeem. The goat for *Azazel* had the sins of the people confessed over it and Yeshua would soon take the sins of every person upon himself. Can you picture that? The people looked upon a sinless goat and upon a sinless man, both of which were used by ADONAI to take away sin. Pilate said: "Behold the man!" "Look at the man!" He tried to release Yeshua, but the crowd kept shouting for His death: *15 They shouted back, "Take Him away! Take Him away! Execute Him!" Pilate said to them, "Should I execute your king?" The ruling kohanim answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" 16 Finally, Pilate handed Yeshua over to be crucified* (John 19:15-16 TLV). By saying "we have no king but Caesar," the chief Priests, including Caiphas the High Priest, metaphorically placed their hands on Yeshua's head, thereby placing their own sins upon Him and sending Him out to His death.

What did *Yom Kippur* in the days before Yeshua accomplish? It's hard to know. Everything about it was mysterious. There are more questions than answers. The mysterious *Azazel* goat which carried the sins of the people was not sacrificed and it did not have its blood sprinkled in the Temple. The mystery includes the fact that *Azazel* was only one part a sacrifice, with the two goats making up the whole. One was killed and one let go. But, neither did the bull and goat which were sacrificed provide atonement. Their purpose was to cleanse the Temple, the priesthood and the people so that ADONAI's system could continue for another year. More mystery: the atonement for the sins confessed upon the goat did not do away with them, but took them to another place: *10 "But the goat upon which the lot for the scapegoat fell is to be presented alive before Adonai, to make atonement upon it, by sending it away as the scapegoat into the wilderness"* (Leviticus 16:10 TLV). The Priests were not told to kill *Azazel*, but to send it into the wilderness. What this seems to show us is that confessed guilt, including the guilt of the High Priest, was removed from the people to the head of the goat, their symbolical substitute. But, the goat was not killed and only sent far away into the wilderness, a land not inhabited. This means that under the Covenant made at Sinai, sin was not blotted out but only put away, far away. It was covered up, but not removed. *3 "But in these sacrifices is a reminder of sins year after year— 4 for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"* (Hebrews

10:3-4 TLV). This in itself was a promise of what was to come through Yeshua; permanently blotted out sin.

All of these things about *Yom Kippur* under the First Covenant are interesting. Through *Yom Kippur* we see parallels with Yeshua who was to come. But, out of all of this information, what is our ultimate question? I think it is this: “how did Yeshua’s death pay the sin price for us?” We know Yeshua as the Lamb of G-d Who takes away the sins of the world. And, He is. But, that is only one part of the picture. We also see Him as an *asham*, the guilt offering described in Isaiah 53: 10 “*Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise Him. He caused Him to suffer. If He makes His soul a guilt offering,*”.. (Isaiah 53:10a TLV). As an *asham* for us, Yeshua represented the guilt offering of the goat whose blood was sprinkled on the atonement cover of the Ark. And, He was also the sin offering which was pictured in the living goat even though it was not sacrificed nor had its blood been sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. All of these events together give us somewhat of a picture of how Yeshua paid the sin price for us. It is not a perfect picture because of our limited understanding. But, it is a beautiful picture, a picture of One with a love so great that He would give up His life for us. G-d’s love for us and Yeshua’s love for us is much more than we can comprehend. And, there is much else which we do not understand, but the day is coming when we will understand. Today we know in part as *Sha’ul* said: 12 “*Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known*” (1 Corinthians 13:12b TLV).

This brings us to the question of the future meaning of *Yom Kippur*. We have seen the fulfillment of the Spring Festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and *Shavuot*, Pentecost; all in Yeshua in some way. We also expect and await the fulfillment of the Fall Festivals. *Yom Kippur* is one which is hard to pin down. Is it a judgment of those people remaining at that time who have not accepted Yeshua? Maybe. But, after any sort of judgment which may occur, there is something else; a day of joy. At that time, Yeshua will have returned triumphantly to earth and for us, it will be a time of rejoicing: 9 “*Then on the tenth day of the seventh month, on Yom Kippur, you are to sound a shofar blast—you are to sound the shofar all throughout your land. 10 You are to make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants*” (Leviticus 25:9-10 TLV). The *shofar* will proclaim the final Jubilee and we will spend eternity with Yeshua and the Father.

That will be much different than where we are today. To even speak about where we are today, I have to bring up *HaSatan*, the Adversary. He is the tempter who tempted *Adam* and *Chavah* in the Garden and Yeshua in the wilderness. And, he is now tempting the people of the nations. Temptation is not his only weapon as he also sends his other fallen angels out to inhabit those humans who open their spiritual doors to them. Collectively, human beings provide a home for millions and millions of unclean spirits, spirits who influence some people and who possess some people. We see much

evidence of this in our daily news reports; terrorism, rapes, murders and many perversions. Among all the evil spirits unleashed there seems to be one primary spirit, a very widely spread spirit of anger. And, we are experiencing this, big time, among the people in our nation today. *HaSatan* knows that his time is short and he has redoubled his efforts to try to deceive and to cause to fall as many as possible.

But, we as followers of Yeshua, are not like those who have fallen under *HaSatan's* spell. ADONAI has given us His *Ruach*, His Spirit, to help us to walk in the ways which Yeshua taught us. We are not to be controlled by anger and we are to be quick to forgive. We do not always agree in our understanding of the Scriptures, but we must always love each other. And, with G-d's help we will.

Yom Kippur is ADONAI's promise of a future with Him. As Yeshua's followers, we are called to love ADONAI with all our heart, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves! Even as bleak as things look today, there is a day of overcoming, a day when all Israel will be saved and many, many of the people of the nations will be saved. Psalm 67 has special meaning for us today. It begins with the words from the *Birkat HaKohenim*, the High Priestly prayer, but moves into a prayer for salvation and for ADONAI's rule over the nations. We close with it today: *1 G-d be merciful to us and bless us and cause Your face to shine on us. 2 That your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all the nations. 3 Let the people praise You, O G-d. Let all the people praise You. 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on earth. 5 Let the people praise You, O G-d; let all the people praise You. 6 Then the earth will yield her increase and G-d, even our own G-d, will bless us. 7 G-d will bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.* Amen; so let it be Father!

Shabbat shalom!