



The High Priest Who Changed *Everything*

Seeing Yeshua in the Holiest Day of the Jewish Year

God planned all along that each of the biblical “feasts” He commanded Israel to observe would bear a picture of Yeshua (Jesus) and His saving work. The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur in Hebrew, is no different.

Yom Kippur, which occurs in the fall, is not an occasion for saying “Happy Holiday” to a Jewish person. It’s a solemn day, the holiest on the Jewish calendar, and, according to Leviticus 23:27(NKJV), a day on which God commanded fasting and affliction of the soul over the seriousness of sin.

It may sound heavy and somber, but there’s hope in Yom Kippur because it’s about putting away sin for reconciliation with God. In ancient Israel, each year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies – the innermost area of the Temple housing the Ark of the Covenant and God’s very presence.

The high priest brought the blood of sacrifices into this Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the Ark’s Mercy Seat to atone for – or cover – first his own sins and then Israel’s. The sin was then symbolically placed on the head of a goat that was led outside the camp and abandoned to represent the sending away of Israel’s sins.

The hope of Yom Kippur is found in the covering of sin and how repentance and forgiveness usher in a renewed relationship with God.

Today, in the season preceding Yom Kippur, Jewish people pursue repentance and seek God's forgiveness and favor for the coming year, freely admitting they don't know for certain that they have it. However, as believers in Jesus, Scripture assures us that we have been "*set right by His grace*" (Titus 3:7 TLV) and encouraged to "*know that [we] may have eternal life*" (1 John 5:13 NIV) through Yeshua. (See also Hebrews 10:22 TLV.)

The book of Hebrews, in chapters 7 through 9, describes in detail how Yeshua completes the picture of this Day of Atonement. In the devotions ahead, we'll explore how He entered the heavenly Holy of Holies with His own blood to serve as both high priest and sacrifice, to fully atone for our sin.

FOR REFLECTION

Why would God place pictures of the coming Messiah in the biblical holy days He commanded Israel to observe throughout their generations? How does this inspire you about His Word?

Scriptures

Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.

— Leviticus 23:27 NKJV

So that being set right by His grace, we might become heirs with the confident hope of eternal life!

— Titus 3:7 TLV

So let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and body washed with pure water.

— Hebrews 10:22 TLV

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

— 1 John 5:13 NIV



Yeshua, Our High Priest

When God instituted the Jewish Feast of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), He knew that thousands of years later, His Messiah, Yeshua, would perform the duties of a high priest to eternal perfection.

The writer of Hebrews wanted his Jewish audience to know the detailed ways that Jesus fulfills the high priestly functions of the Day of Atonement for us. Chapters 7 through 9 compare and contrast Him to the high priests of the earthly Temples.

FROM THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

Priests came from the Tribe of Levi; however, there was one mysterious “priest of God Most High” mentioned in the book of Genesis who came from a different line.

Melchizedek seemed to have come from nowhere, even before the priestly line was established through Jacob’s son Levi. (Genesis 14:18–20 NIV)

Psalm 110:4 (NKJV) reveals the Messiah would be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, not from the Tribe of Levi. Hebrews compares Jesus to Melchizedek, who, because He was without genealogy or beginning or end of days, remains a priest forever. (See Hebrews 7:1–3 and 14–17 NIV.)

OUR MEDIATOR

The priest was a mediator, one who went before God representing the people, offering sacrifices, and praying for Israel. First Timothy 2:5 proclaims that Yeshua is our mediator with God the Father, and He sits in Heaven at the right hand of the Father's throne interceding for us. (See also Hebrews 7:25 TLV.)

ENTERING THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, the part of the Temple where God's glory dwelled. A mistake in the presence of the pure God could mean the high priest's death. Yeshua, being without sin, entered the Holy of Holies without concern.

Unlike the high priest, Jesus, being sinless, did not have to first offer the blood of a sacrifice for Himself before atoning for Israel's sin. His sacrifice also enables us to approach the throne of God with confidence. (See Leviticus 16:13 NIV, Hebrews 7:27 NIV, Hebrews 9:11–12 NKJV, and Hebrews 10:19, 22 TLV.)

FOR REFLECTION

Which aspect of Yeshua's high priesthood touches your heart the most? Why?

Scriptures

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

— Genesis 14:18–20 NIV

The Lord has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

— Psalm 110:4 NKJV

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

— Hebrews 7:1–3 NIV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

— Hebrews 7:14–17 NIV

For there is one God and there is one Mediator between God and men — a human, Messiah Yeshua.

— 1 Timothy 2:5 TLV

Therefore He is also able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, always living to make intercession for them.

— Hebrews 7:25 TLV

He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die.

— Leviticus 16:13 NIV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered Himself.

— Hebrews 7:27 NIV

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

— Hebrews 9:11–12 NKJV

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have boldness to enter into the Holies by the blood of Yeshua. ... So let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and body washed with pure water.

— Hebrews 10:19, 22 TLV



Yeshua, the Sacrifice

The high priest was required to offer sacrifices day after day on behalf of the people of Israel. The Day of Atonement came around every year, requiring additional specific sacrifices to cover Israel's sin for another year. Not only is Yeshua the high priest mediating between the Father and us, but He is also the sacrifice that ensures our sins are covered – not just annually, but eternally.

HIS OWN BLOOD

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest took the blood of bulls and goats into the Temple, sprinkling it on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies, to cover Israel's sin. As the perfect and spotless sacrifice, the sinless Jesus supplied His own blood and presented it to God in the heavenly Holy of Holies to atone for our sin (Hebrews 9:12 NIV).

INNOCENT PAYING FOR THE GUILTY

Yom Kippur observance also required the sacrifice of a second unblemished goat upon which the high priest laid his hands and symbolically placed Israel's sins. Isaiah prophesied about the suffering Messiah on whom all our sins would be placed. The New Testament tells us that Jesus took our sins upon Him to the extent that He became sin for our forgiveness. (See Leviticus 16:10, 21 NKJV, Isaiah 53:6 TLV, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV.)

PUTTING AWAY OUR SIN

The Yom Kippur “scapegoat” was then led out to the wilderness and abandoned, representing the taking away of Israel’s sins. Yeshua put sin away from us for good. The blood of His sacrifice removes our sin, even making us holy. (See Leviticus 16:22 TLV, Hebrews 9:26 NKJV, and Hebrews 10:14 TLV.)

ONCE, FOR ALL, AND COMPLETELY

The Day of Atonement sacrifices had to occur every year to cover Israel’s sins. Indeed, the priests made sacrifices daily, first for their own sins and then for Israel’s. Jesus shed and offered His blood once, for all. In doing so, “He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him....” (See Hebrews 7:25–28 NIV and Hebrews 10:11–12 NIV.)

FOR REFLECTION

Take some time to reflect on Yeshua’s holiness, His sacrifice for you, and the redemption He bought for you with His own blood. Thank and worship Him for all He has done for you.

Scriptures

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

— Hebrews 9:12 NIV

“But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat. ... He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites — all their sins — and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task.”

— Leviticus 16:10, 21 NIV

We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us turned to his own way. So Adonai has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

— Isaiah 53:6 TLV

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

— Leviticus 16:22 NIV

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

— Hebrews 9:26 NKJV

For by one offering He has perfected forever those being made holy.

— Hebrews 10:14 TLV

Such a high priest truly meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself.

— Hebrews 7:26–27 NIV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.

— Hebrews 10:11–12 NIV

Therefore He is also able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, always living to make intercession for them.

— Hebrews 7:25 TLV



For the Joy Set Before Him

As high priest, Jesus boldly entered the heavenly Holy of Holies after His death to mediate for us. Before His death, as the sacrifice that atones for (covers) our sin, He endured tremendous suffering. It's worth looking at what He went through because it highlights His love for us.

YESHUA HUMBLLED HIMSELF

First, He humbled Himself to become human. Born into a world He Himself created, Jesus laid aside His rights as part of the triune God. The Creator became a creature. The Master became a child. The Lord of all became a servant. For our sakes.

His humble submission to the Father led Yeshua to the purpose of His coming – to die in place of each of us (Philippians 2:6–8 NIV).

YESHUA SUFFERED FEAR, ANGUISH, AND PAIN

As a man, Jesus felt things the same way we do. If He stubbed His toe, it hurt. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He knew the pain and cruel death that lay ahead of Him. Isaiah 52:14 (NIV) prophesied that He would be beaten so badly that He'd be almost unrecognizable as a man. Yeshua anguished at what He was about to suffer. (See Luke 22:41–44, Luke 22:63–65, Isaiah 53:3 TLV.)

YESHUA WAS BLAMELESS YET DIED AS ONE GUILTY

Jesus was utterly innocent but freely died as if guilty, without offering a single protest. Instead, through every moment of the abuse He endured, He chose to entrust Himself to the Father (1 Peter 2:22–24 TLV).

HOW AND WHY DID HE ENDURE ALL THIS?

One of the most overwhelming things about Yeshua's suffering is that He did it "for the joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2 NKJV). What's the joy that He counted worthy of such agony? Us. Knowing it would restore His relationship with you enabled Him to press on through it to the end.

Covering our sin as our high priest and sacrifice, enabling us to live close to Him – that's the joy that kept Yeshua enduring each moment of the torturous hours before He declared the words, "It is finished!" (John 19:30 TLV). He loves us that much. He loves you that much.

FOR REFLECTION

Take some time to read the entire chapter of Isaiah 53. Reflect on what Jesus endured for the joy of paying for your sin to bring you close to Him for eternity.

Scriptures

Who, though existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be grasped. But He emptied Himself — taking on the form of a slave, becoming the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled Himself — becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

— Philippians 2:6–8 TLV

Just as there were many who were appalled at Him — His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and His form marred beyond human likeness.

— Isaiah 52:14 NIV

And He pulled back about a stone's throw from them, got on His knees, and began to pray, saying, “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And in His anguish, He was praying fervently; and His sweat was like drops of blood falling down on the ground.

— Luke 22:41–44 TLV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating Him. They blindfolded Him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” And they said many other insulting things to Him.

— Luke 22:63–65 NIV

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, one from whom people hide their faces. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

— Isaiah 53:3 TLV

“He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” When He was abused, He did not return the abuse. While suffering, He made no threats. Instead, He kept entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we, removed from sins, might live for righteousness. “By His wounds you were healed.”

— 1 Peter 2:22–24 TLV

Scriptures (*cont.*)

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

— Hebrews 12:2 NKJV

When Yeshua tasted the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

— John 19:30 TLV

