

Yom Kippur

Leviticus 16:1–34; Numbers 29:7–11; Isaiah 57:14–58:14; Hebrews 9:1–15

notes by Tim Hegg

Yeshua—Our Heavenly High Priest

The Torah *parashah* chosen for reading on Yom Kippur contains the instructions for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and particularly the manner in which the Cohen Gadol (High Priest) was to perform the sacred ceremonies of the day. We should first note the strategic placement of this chapter as indicated by the opening verse: *Now Adonai spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died.* The story of Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, and the errant manner in which they performed their duties, is given prior to our *parashah* in order to emphasize that God’s way of forgiving sins is entirely in harmony with His utter holiness. For God to forgive sin requires that His holiness and justice be satisfied and this is demonstrated in the sacrificial system where the life of an innocent animal is taken in exchange for the life of the sinner. The actions of Nadav and Avihu disregarded God’s clear instructions, and by so doing, openly denied that the God they served is sovereign and infinitely holy.

Having reminded us of the death of Aaron’s sons, Moses emphasizes that the duties of the Cohen Gadol must be carried out according to God’s instructions. Moses does this by the repeated phrase “that he may not die” (וְלֹא יָמוּת), emphasizing that God’s way of atonement is the only way. And this is because the duties prescribed for the High Priest on Yom Kippur as well as the whole of the sacrificial system, were a direct prophetic revelation of the work of Messiah Yeshua, Who is the eternal, heavenly High Priest at the right hand of the Father.

The first use of the phrase “that he may not die” is in v. 2:

Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

The first law given is that Aaron is to enter the Most Holy place only at the appointed time. If he were to enter any other time, he would die. And the reason is that God appears in the cloud over the mercy seat. In other words, the very holiness of God demands that Aaron come only at the appointed time. Any other time would be an affront to God’s holiness. Here we learn that God has appointed a time for atonement. The festival cycle

is the revelation of God's plan of salvation in its entirety, completed in one year. That the Cohen Gadol enters only once into the Most Holy place during this cycle foreshadowed the coming of Yeshua at the appointed time to enter, once for all time, into the work of obtaining eternal redemption for all who would obtain eternal life (cf. Heb 9:12; 10:10).

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Torah, so that He might redeem those who were under the Torah, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

The phrase "that he may not die" is found a second time in our *parashah* in v. 13:

He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die."

Not only must the appointed Cohen Gadol come into the Most Holy place at the appointed time, and only at the appointed time, but he must also come with more than just the blood of the sacrifice. He must also put incense upon the coals of a firepan which he brings into the Most Holy place in order to produce a cloud that would envelope the mercy seat. Thus, on Yom Kippur, both the blood and incense were necessary elements in order to effect atonement in the Most Holy place. This too is a clear foreshadowing of the work of Messiah. The blood of the sacrifice sufficed to pay the penalty for sin, but the incense, symbolic of prayer or intercession (cf. Ps 141:2; Rev 8:3-4), was necessary for applying the payment of sacrifice to those who would be saved. Thus, in the laws of Yom Kippur, the sacrifice of Yeshua as well as His heavenly intercession is foreshadowed. The payment for sin, made through the giving of His life as a substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross, is presented to the Father on behalf of His people through His intercession on their behalf.

In John 17 we are given a pattern of Yeshua's heavenly intercession for His people. (Note John 17:4, 11, 13; cf. also Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24)

Request 1 - "glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You." (17:1)

Here we have Yeshua requesting that the glory which He had with the Father before the world began be restored to Him as the conquering victor of sin and death. We see from the very beginning of this prayer that the glory of the Father is the ultimate goal of the Son. But the Father is best glorified by the salvation of sinners, which is the result or outcome of the Son's work. To be glorified, then, means to be shown victorious in His saving acts. The final and eternal salvation of those He has chosen is

therefore co-terminus with His glory. Their salvation is just as secure as is the very glory of God.

Request 2 - “keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.” (17:11)

The second request is that those who belong to Yeshua (whom He purchased with His own blood) should be “kept,” that is “guarded” from anything that might separate them from the salvation which is theirs. The context makes it clear that this “keeping” or “guarding” is seen in the sphere of unity—oneness. He is asking that they be kept as safe and secure in their relationship with the Father as the Son and Spirit are secure in their oneness with Him. Thus, this “keeping” has as its primary focus the issue of covenant, for the request is “keep them in Your name,” i.e., in the Name which is attached most closely to the giving and keeping of the covenant (cf. Ex 3:14ff). It therefore has a corporate dimension as its primary focus. This prayer of Yeshua secures the inevitable presence of the people of God (קְהִלָּה, *k'hilah*, “congregation”; ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*, “assembly”) upon the earth until the “end of the age” (cf. Mt 28:18ff).

Request 3 - “keep them from the evil one” (17:15)

The third request is specific in regard to the warfare in which the follower of Yeshua is engaged, a warfare not “against flesh and blood” but against wicked spirits and demonic forces (Eph 6:12). Such a request signals to us the harsh reality that, apart from the sustaining power of Yeshua’s intercession, the battle with Satan would be lost. That is to say, the spiritual battle we fight against Satan is one which, left to our own strength, even the strength of the renewed man, would be lost apart from the ongoing application of Yeshua’s sacrifice to our lives. It is important to see that our warfare against evil is not only based upon the historical, past event of the cross, but equally to the present reality of Yeshua’s intercession for us. Through His intercession, He constantly secures in the life of each believer what He purchased by His death. This includes the ability to successfully wage war against the enemy of the soul.

Request 4 - “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (17:17)

This fourth request of Yeshua on behalf of His own secures the application of the word of God to the heart and soul of the believer. “Sanctify” means to “set apart,” “to make holy.” Thus, the inevitable outcome of Yeshua’s intercession—His prayer on our behalf, is that we will be set apart from the world of unrighteousness through the application of the truth of His word. It is the truth that becomes the agent of sanctification, a truth

that comes to the heart and soul of the believer as the direct result of Yeshua's intercession. Thus, the work of the Spirit in illumining the truths of Scripture, and making application to the heart of the redeemed is the direct result of Yeshua's intercession.

Request 5 - "I...ask...that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You...that the world may believe." (17:20-21)

This fifth request has a slightly different point of view than the earlier request to "keep them in Your name" (Request 2). There, the issue was the mere existence of the *kehilah* or community of believers. Here, the focus is on their ability to be in unity as an expression of their love for each other, and thus as a witness of God's love in which they live. For the outcome of their unity is that "the world may believe." This recalls the words of the former context of John (13:35) where it is written, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." If the prayer of Yeshua is being worked out in any true community of faith, then love for each other will be an evident reality.

Request 6 - "Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am...." (17:24)

The sixth request secures the resurrection and life in the world to come for all those who are His, a world in which Yeshua will be seen as the glorious Messiah He truly is. This particular prayer of Yeshua makes our being with Him throughout eternity a reality. Even as He ascended to the very presence of the Father, so we too will be with Him in the glory of His presence, forever welcomed in as the redeemed family of God.

Request 7 - "...that the love wherewith You did love Me may be in them and I in them." (17:26)

This seventh and final request secures that those who have been justified will be conformed to the image of Yeshua. The "love" of God is unparalleled and unmatched, and it is demonstrated in the mystery of the godhead. The eternal relationship between the Father, His Messiah, and the Spirit is marked by absolute unity, while at the same time an interdependence and mutuality that is the essence of love. It is eternal, omnipotent, unchanging, and pure. It is this love which forms the model for loving each other within the multifaceted relationships of mankind. What is more, it is a love well displayed in the actions and life of Yeshua, for this "love" which is requested to be "in them" is followed by the words "and I in them." That is to say, this kind of love manifests the very life of Yeshua lived out in the lives of His disciples (cf. Gal 2:20).