

MORDEKHAI'S DRASH — *ACHAREI MOT / K' DOSHIM*



Torah: *Acharei Mot* (After the death), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 16.1-18.30
along with: *K'doshim* (Holy people), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 19.1-20.27
Haftorah: *Amos* 9.7-15; *Yechezk'el* (Ezekiel) 20.2-20
Suggested Messianic Writings: *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 5.43-48

Shalom,

The original “Temple” *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) service is described in *Vayikra* 16. The English word “atonement” can be found at least 15 times in *Vayikra* 16 alone. The Hebrew root is כָּפַר *ka-phar*, and the basic meaning is, “to cover, to hide.” *Atonement*, according to Zhodiates, simply means, “to be ‘at one’”. Atonement is “the condition which results when one makes amends.”

So the question is: what is it that needs to be covered, or hidden; what condition is it that needs to be amended? Very obviously, the answer is “sin!” Well, what exactly is “sin?” The Hebrew word for “sin” is חַטָּאת *kha-taht*. The definition is, “to miss the mark, to make a false step, to err from the path of duty and right; an offense”. *Yeshua* is called a “rock of offense” (*Romans* 9:33 and *1 Kefa* 2:8, both quoting *Isaiah* 28:16), because those who do not develop a rock solid faith foundation in Him are easily offended, having a faith[less] foundation made of shifting sand. The first appearance of the word *kha-taht* (sin) is in *B'resheet* (*Genesis*) 4:7. *Hevel* (Abel) had just given from the first of his flock to *HaShem*, while his brother *Kayin* (Cain) simply “brought an offering.” *HaShem* did not accept *Kayin*'s offering, and we're not given the full story here, but *Kayin* became angry, and “his countenance fell”. *HaShem* came to *Kayin* and asked, “Why are you angry? Why so downcast? If you are doing what is good, shouldn't you hold your head high? And if you don't do what is good, sin is crouching at the door – it wants you, but you can rule over it.” Sadly, we know that sometime after that, *Kayin* killed his brother *Hevel*. *Kayin* did not rule over sin, so sin ruled over *Kayin*. *Sha'ul* expands on this concept to a great degree in *Romans* 6: “You are slaves to the one whom you obey (vs 16)... Do not let sin rule in your mortal bodies, so that it makes you obey its desires (vs 12).”

Point being that *Kayin* understood the word *kha-taht*, for he did not question the meaning of *HaShem*'s statement. As we see, from the beginning man has understood the meaning of the word “sin.” In our own day and age, unsaved mankind also understands the meaning of the word “sin,” on one hand mocking the term, proclaiming that sin is enjoyable and okay, declaring wrong to be right; on the other hand, many people feel that they are morally good and therefore are not sinners in need of a Redeemer.

Because of our fallen state, in the presence of the Holiness of the Creator G-d the holiest man on earth is “sin.” Whenever a man in Scripture came in contact with the radiant glory of G-d, he instantly fell to his face, knowing how unworthy He was. When the new nation of Israel was founded, *HaShem* instituted for them an annual day in which sin could be atoned for. As followers of *Yeshua*, we know that He who is the sinless One – fully G-d, yet fully a Jewish man – became sin on our behalf, or as the CJB words it, *Yeshua* “became a sin-offering on our behalf” (*2 Corinthians* 5:21). *Sha'ul* did not write with chapter breaks, and he went on (6:1) to say, “We urge you not to receive his grace and do nothing with it.”

Messianic believers are sometimes questioned by non-Messianic believers for observing *Yom Kippur* – since *Yeshua* died once for all time for sin and through that we have forgiveness, why do we need an annual set-apart day to seek atonement and forgiveness? For a couple of reasons, at least; one, to simply say “Thank You;” to *Yeshua* for being the *kap-pa-rah* (covering) for our sin (*1 Yochanan* / *1 John* 2:2) and for reconciling us to our Creator; and two, it seems that our flesh-man constantly struggles with our sin nature, so we do need to seek forgiveness often, and *Yom Kippur* is a good time to consider our standing with our Creator. I believe it is in error to declare that once a person has received *yeshu-ah* (salvation), that is all one ever has to do. If that were the case, there would not be a need for any commandments regarding righteous and holy living and working out our salvation with fear and trembling – and many of those commandments came directly from *Yeshua* Himself through the Gospels, as well as from *Sha'ul* and

the rest of the *Messianic Writings* writers, not to mention the commandments of Torah and the rest of the Tanakh. Once again we are reminded of the theme of the book of Vayikra, “Be holy, for I Am Holy.”

Here is a mystery: Only the *Kohen HaGadol* (the High Priest) could ever enter the Holy of Holies, and that was once a year on Yom Kippur. Following the sacrificial death and resurrection of Yeshua, and the giving of the *Ruakh HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit), we are told in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 that we believers are now the temple of the living G-d. The Greek word for temple is *ναός*, *naos*, which literally means “the central sanctuary of the Temple itself – the Holy of Holies.” In other words, as believers, our bodies are now a “Holy of Holies, an abode of G-d!” We are to be holy, as He is holy. To *know* the Messiah is the key to worship, as opposed to *knowing about* the Messiah. As Sha’ul wrote in Philippians 3:8, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of *knowing* Messiah Yeshua my L-rd, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Messiah.”

In Vayikra 17, HaShem commands that all animal sacrifices are to be made at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting only, i.e., no sacrifice was to be done anywhere else in the Land of Israel. This was such a great penalty that such a person would be cut off – כרת *kah-raht*, which could mean “to be killed,” or at the very least, “to be excommunicated” – from the people of Israel. Most certainly sacrifices *to* animals, or animal images, was disobedience. For example, in 17:7, sacrifices to “goat-demons” were to be discontinued. The Hebrew of “goat-demon” is שַׂעִיר *sah-eer*, meaning “a hairy goat demon,” and the term *satyr* (“*sā’tar*, a woodland creature depicted as having the pointed ears, legs, and short horns of a goat and a fondness for unrestrained revelry”) comes from this word. This is probably where the image of the devil as a pitch-fork carrying horned being comes from. A *sah-eer* was one of the gods of Egypt, and apparently some of the Israelites brought this worship with them. The demonic realm has great power, and is not to be trifled with, worshipped, or trivialized.

The bulk of the rest of the first Parashah, and the second Parashah, concern proper sexual conduct as well as proper conduct for living life in general. I believe that a commandment against the modern day murderous crime of abortion can be found in 18:21 and 20:1-5, which declares that no children are to be sacrificed to the false god Molekh. Then follow commandments regarding such things as: honesty in business dealings; treating the handicapped and poor with kindness; proper speech; not being involved in witchcraft or fortune-telling; and the rules regarding fruit trees. Twice in the chapter we are told to keep Shabbat; revere our parents; show respect for the aged; treat the foreigner properly; and distinguish between the clean and the unclean, so that the Land itself will not vomit you out.

The Haftorah reading from Amos predicts the restoration of the fallen סֹכָה *sukkah* of David, which is when Israel will be restored to her former glory, and will rule what is left of the nations, and this is more than likely during the millennial kingdom under the authority of Messiah Yeshua.

Kefa (Peter) echoes the theme of Vayikra in his first letter (1:13-16), written to Messianic Jews in the diaspora, “...do not let yourselves be shaped by the evil desires you used to have when you were ignorant [without knowledge of the Holy]... become holy yourselves in your entire way of life... ‘You are to be holy because I Am Holy.’”

יְרוּשָׁלַם – *Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah
(Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1.11 CJB)