

National Atonement for an Individual Salvation

This week's reading for Yom Kippur (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16*), is taken from Parashat Acharei Mot. In this section of the Torah we learn about the Tabernacle ritual for making atonement on a national scale. The scriptures say Aaron is to take a bull for the Chatat Korban (Sin offering) and a ram for the Olah Korban (Whole burnt offering) and that He is to perform a mikvah (ritual bath) prior to putting on the holy garments (*16:3-4*). Two male goats are taken for a Sin offering and one ram for a whole burnt offering for the congregation of people (*16:5-6*). Both goats are presented at the entrance to the Ohel Moed (מֹועֵד, *Tent of Meeting*) one is used as a sacrifice and the other for the Azazel (לְעִזָּאוּל, *Scapegoat*). Lots are cast for the goats and the one that is chosen is to be the Sin Offering. Aaron makes the sacrifice of the bull for a Sin offering for himself and the coals from the fire upon the altar are placed in the fire-pan along with incense to make a cloud of smoke in the Kedosh Kedoshim (Holy of Holies) so that he does not die when he enters into the Holiest place (*16:11-12*). The blood of the bull is sprinkled seven times upon the mercy seat (*16:14*) and is also sprinkled in front of the mercy seat (*16:15*). It is in this way that Aaron is to sanctify the altars in the Tabernacle with the blood (*16:16-20*). Aaron lays both his hands upon the head of the Azazel (Scapegoat) and confesses the iniquities of the sons of Israel and sends the animal into the wilderness (*16:21*). In this way Aaron also acts as one man on behalf of all of Israel.

ספר ויקרא פרק טז *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:20-22*

כ וכלה מכפר את-הקדש ואת-אהל מועד ואת-המזבח והקריב את-השעיר הקחי: כא וסמך אהרן את-שתי ידיו [ידי] על-ראש השעיר החי והתודה עליו את-כל-עונות בני ישראל ואת-כל-פשעיהם לכל-חטאתם ונתן אתם על-ראש השעיר ושלח ביד-איש עמי המזכרה: כב ונשא השעיר עליו את-כל-עונותם אל-ארץ גזרה ושלח את-השעיר במדבר:

16:20 'When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 16:21 'Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 16:22 'The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (NASB)

The Scriptures state that Aaron needed to atone for his own sins, the holy place, and for the altar before making an atonement on behalf of the people. *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:20-22* states that Aaron acted on behalf of the people. Standing as an intermediary, Aaron confessed their sins over the sacrifice, offering the blood on behalf of all of Israel for all of their transgressions. The act of one man making atonement on behalf of many is a very important principal. The Torah introduces this principle in the beginning of the five books of Moshe with the Lord God Almighty making a promise to Abraham essentially saying it is by one man through whom all would be blessed. This principle of one man standing in place for many may be taken from *Bereshit / Genesis 12:3*, וְאַבְרָהָם, ג

12:3 *And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* (NASB) The Scriptures say “in you (בְּךָ) all the families (כָּל מְשֻׁפְּחוֹת) of the earth shall be blessed.” Here we read the Lord telling Abraham that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed. The idea is that through one man many would be blessed. It is from this Torah principle that we get the idea of one person standing as a representative for the many. With this principle of one man standing in for someone else, we get the illustration of suffering, death, blood, etc, these things which are necessary to make atonement. Based upon these things, the rabbis interpret the suffering of an individual to be atoning for another. King David spoke about suffering according to *Tehillim / Psalms 44*.

In *Tehillim / Psalms 44*, David wrote about being killed all the day long for the Lord’s sake (44:22). What is “*dying all day long for the sake of God*” all about? The word he used here is “*horegnu*” (הִרְגֵנוּ) meaning “*we are killed, murdered, destroyed*” all day long (כָּל-הַיּוֹם). Is suffering considered to be the same as being killed, murdered, and destroyed all the day long? The Apostolic Writings brings this into perspective when we read what Paul wrote saying, for Christ’s sake we face death daily (*Romans 8:36*). Paul says that we are to die daily (*1 Corinthians 15:31*), and that we should count it worthy to suffer for His name sake (*Acts 5:41, 9:16*). We are also told that we suffer with Him so that we may be glorified with Him (*Romans 8:17*). Paul also says that the power of the resurrection and having fellowship with his sufferings is how we know Him (Christ, see *Philippians 3:10*). The Apostle James’ example from *James 5:10* states, “*As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord*” indicating that suffering and patience was a common outcome of obeying God and/or speaking in His name. In the Torah we find man representing both man and the Lord God Almighty (i.e. the High Priest). The apostle Peter says that suffering is not something to be ashamed of but its purpose is to glorify God in the name of Yeshua (*1 Peter 4:16*). Yeshua also said in *Matthew 5:11* “*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.*” It is because of who we are and what we stand for that we are persecuted. Our faith in Yeshua and in our Father in heaven will lead to persecution because by our faith we can not remain indifferent to sin. David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 44:22*, כִּי-עָלִיךָ הִרְגֵנוּ, כָּל-הַיּוֹם נִחְשָׁבְנוּ כְּצֹאן טְבָחָה: *44:22 But for Your sake we are killed all day long; We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.* (NASB) The concept that is being brought out here in these various Scriptures is that we are to expect suffering to occur for righteousness sake because we are the children of God who live by faith, righteousness, and truth.

The rabbis have a different approach to suffering by taking this concept one step further saying man is responsible for the conduct of others (see the *Rachmal, Rabbi Moses Chaim Luzzatto, Derech Hashem and Ma’amar halkkarim, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, New York, 1998, pg 312-315*). How is this so? According to the rabbis a person is liable to punishment, if he is indifferent to the wrong that is being perpetrated around him (see *Ezekiel 3:18*). The greater such a man is, the greater is his responsibility. The rabbis say that he may suffer for the sins of his family which is first reached by his influ-

ence; he may also suffer for the sins of the whole community if he could hope to find a “willing ear” among them, and he may even suffer for the sins of the whole world if his influence extend so far, and he forbear from exerting it for good (*Talmud Bavli Sabbath 54a*). According to the Rabbis, the Torah principle of one man standing on behalf of another offers the possibility that a righteous man may suffer for justice sake, though he himself has never committed any transgression. This is an interesting perspective since the rabbis appear to be speaking of taking the message of God (repentance) to his family, the community, or even the world, in the hopes of finding a “willing ear” to listen. The willing ear is the one who listens and repents of his sin before God and is saved. The idea is when one sees another person sinning, he should go to him and talk to him about the Lord and about repentance (see *Ezekiel 3:18*). The suffering referred to here by the rabbis may be the result of persecution that comes by the one who stands for truth, justice, and righteousness and seeks to lead others in God’s ways.

Under another opinion, the rabbis consider suffering of the righteous as an atonement for the sins of their contemporaries like what is said according to *Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 35*, “When there will be neither Tabernacle nor the Holy Temple,” Moses is said to have asked God, “what will become of Israel?” Whereupon God answers, “I will take from among them the righteous man whom I shall consider as pledged for them, and will forgive all their sins;” the death of the perfect man, or even his suffering being looked upon as an expiation for the shortcoming of his generation. Notice how contained within the rabbinic commentary (Midrash Rabbah) is the idea that one man stands as a substitute on behalf of another, and in the midrash on behalf of the nation of Israel. This is derived from the Torah principle of the sacrifices, where the innocent creature must suffer for the sins of another creature, and the role of the priest as we see here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:20-22*, and Aaron making atonement for the nation of Israel. We can clearly see the parallels in the themes of the suffering Messiah (our Savior) being drawn out from these Scriptures and from the rabbinic thought. With this rabbinic idea of suffering, Rabbi Ishmael said, “I am the atonement for the Jews,” which means that he took upon him all their sins to suffer for them. (see *Mishnah Negaim, 2:1*, http://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Negaim.2.1, *Shulchan Aruch 4*) The point is that suffering for righteousness sake is a common biblical theme and is consistent with the teaching of the rabbis and interestingly with the teachings of the apostles.

When Paul and Peter speak of suffering for the Messiah (Christ) and for His name sake, we are not suffering to atone for sin but rather for living righteous lives, for being a testimony of truth and righteousness before others. This is very similar to what is written in the *Talmud Bavli Sabbath 54a*, suffering for family, community, or the world, and the peoples sin of not listening or hearing the word of the Lord turns into persecution and reviling. We suffer and are persecuted, reviled, put to death, destroyed all the day long, just like David is saying in his Psalm for the sake of the Lord God Almighty, His truth, and the Messiah Yeshua, His Savior. Based upon the study thus far, realize that we cannot make atonement for someone else, only one who is perfect may do so. This is illustrated in Aaron’s need to make atonement for himself first before bringing atonement on behalf of the people. According to the Gospel account, Yeshua the Messiah lived a perfect life and did not need to make atonement for himself prior to making atonement

for the sins of the world. Yeshua, the righteous man who never sinned, his influence was so great that he is capable of suffering for the entire world as the Lamb of God. Can you see how this principle is consistent with the Torah and the teachings of the rabbis (*Talmud Bavli Sabbath 54a*)?

The blood sacrifice is very significant and cannot be overstated in the Scriptures because there is something here that is fundamentally important. The principle that is found within this central text of the Torah is that of the need for one man to stand in place for another and for an innocent life to give up his life on behalf of another. Based upon this Torah principle, Yeshua offered His own body up to be the perfect Sacrifice for sins. By His shed blood He made atonement on our behalf. We have blood atonement before the Lord Today in the work of Yeshua the Messiah. Yom Kippur, "*the Day of Atonement*," is the holiest day of the Jewish year and rightly so because this day represents the restoration of national Israel, the final judgment of the world, and reveals the High Priestly work of Yeshua our Kohen HaGadol (High Priest). This day should be remembered because the Torah expresses our responsibility in light of the covenantal acts of God. The Lord, our Father in heaven, brought His Messiah (His Son), made a covenant in His blood, and wrote His truth upon our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. In Yeshua "*the Christ*," our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Halleluia!