

### LEVITICUS

#### Lesson 24 - Chapters 16 and 17

Last week we looked at Leviticus chapter 16 that covered the topic of the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. I'd like to flesh that out a little further this week (especially since we're only a few days from the beginning of the High Holy Days) and then we'll begin chapter 17.

The need for Yom Kippur can be summed up in these words: the Law made nothing perfect. The Law teaches us of God's laws and commands, what He has determined is evil and good, and the great need we have to make peace with Him. The Law pulls back the veil on our sin and the evil inclination that is within every man and makes it as exposed as Tzara'at on the skin of the afflicted. The Law gives us the path to righteous living and the blessings that flow from it, and it warns us of the alternative: disobedience, rebellion, and the consequence of the curses of the law. Choosing one direction brings life, the other death.

Yet the Law did not provide for justification. It did not provide a remedy for all sins, only those of certain kinds. It also did not perfect, which Yeshua said was necessary for all who would be saved: CJB Matthew 5:48 *Therefore, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Let me say that again: the Law was perfect, but its purpose was not to perfect; that was Yeshua's mission.

Therefore in the Covenant of the Law there was not a perfect Mediator in Moses; nor was there a perfect priesthood, nor a perfect atonement of sacrifice to cover sin. Instead the ritual sacrifices and the cleansings had to go on day after day, year after year. Even so, sin and uncleanness abounded; so much so that iniquity piled up in people and defilement soiled the very Tabernacle of God as well as all the holy ritual instruments, even the Brazen Altar. Once every year it fell to the High Priest to take an enormous risk by entering the most restricted area of the holy sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, and there he would set about cleansing the place and its furnishings. This yearly appointed time was called Yom Kippur, and so well understood among the people was its awesome importance that it gained the nickname of "the Great Day", or even simply "THE Day".

Yom Kippur takes place on the 10th day of the 7th month of the Biblical Hebrew religious cycle calendar. Even the number of the month and day is significant: the 7th month is the Sabbath month. The 7 Biblical Feasts take place over a period of 7 months. The 1st month brings us Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. The 7th month brings us Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), then 10 days later Yom Kippur, then 5 days later Sukkot the culmination of the Sabbath cycle of 7 religious festivals.

The number of the day of Yom Kippur is 10 (the 10th day of the month); 10 is the Biblical number of completion (completion in the sense of fullness, not of something ending).

This national cleansing (the cleansing of the whole congregation) and of the place where God dwelled on earth was critical because if the defilement became too great the Lord could no longer dwell among His people and His presence would have to leave in order that His ineffable holiness be protected. As I have taught you on numerous occasions, only the CLEAN can approach God; only the CLEAN are eligible for holiness. If Israel had any hope of standing before the Lord, the rituals of Yom Kippur had to be carried out.

Somehow, though, over the centuries the Rabbis began to twist the purpose of Yom Kippur; the biggest changes occurring after the Temple was destroyed for the last time in 70 A.D. It turned from being a national event to an individual one. It turned from being a day of cleansing to a day of judgment. The Rabbis now teach that on the Day of Atonement a worshipper's fate for the next year is sealed; he is either forgiven and his name is written in the book of life, or he is NOT forgiven and his name is omitted. Therefore during the 10 days leading up to Yom Kippur (beginning on Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year) the Rabbis also teach that the people of Israel are to be especially penitent; they are to sincerely repent of their sins. This is to be a time of great sobriety, even weddings cannot be held during this time period.

Originally, Scripturally, even though Yom Kippur was indeed a solemn time, it was marked with joy due to knowing that if the High Priest did his job then all of Israel's sins would be forgiven. A custom developed (even in Jesus' era) where the Jewish maidens (unmarried girls of a marrying age) would wear all-white garments and go to the vineyards where they would dance together. The single men would show up as well hoping to spot a future bride.

Leviticus 16 instructs that all worshippers are to "afflict" themselves at the time of Yom Kippur; this means to fast and to abstain from pleasurable things like having sex or drinking wine. The purpose was for people to be humble before God, recognizing their need for Him as life creator and sustainer.

The ceremonies began by the High Priest offering a sacrifice of purification for himself and then one for the people. This is significant because (as I said at the outset) the priesthood of the Law was not a perfect priesthood because it employed imperfect people. Even the High Priest needed atonement for sins and cleansing otherwise He would be too defiled to perform His duties. On this day, unlike all the other, he was dressed in special all-white garments. His "golden garments" (as they were known) that was his normal High Priestly attire when on duty were set aside on this one day per year. The white symbolized purity before the Lord.

There were many sacrifices offered on that day, but perhaps the most peculiar and spectacular was the Scapegoat ritual. Two goats were chosen, and then (by lot) one was designated to be slaughtered and sacrificed on the Brazen Altar and the other would be sent into the Judean Wilderness, alive, symbolically loaded up with all the sin and uncleanness of the nation of Israel from the previous year.

The sacrifice for the priesthood was a mature Bull, upon which the High Priest would lay his

hands (semichah) and transfer all the guilt and sin of the priesthood (including himself) onto this innocent substitute.

Later in the day the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies carrying a vessel filled with blood; this would happen three times. Some of the blood was from the Bull, some from the slaughtered Scapegoat. With great fear and trepidation the High Priest entered through the outer veil and into the Holy Place. The priests and worshippers watch anxiously as this was the last they would see of the High Priest until he either reemerged, meaning God had accepted sacrifices for the people. Or the High Priest never came out; meaning he had been struck dead, the sacrifices rejected by the Lord, and the people would now be forced to live in their sin until next year at this same time. The Parokhet, the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, was carefully folded back by the High Priest and there before Him stood the Ark of the Covenant with the folded wings of the Cherubim rising out of its lid, the Mercy Seat.

The High Priest then took blood from the golden vessel and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat and before the Ark, cleansing the place. Using his finger the High Priest would sprinkle the blood toward the Ark, upward once then downward. He performed this cycle of up and down precisely 7 times, even counting out loud as he did so to be sure; one time too many or once too few and the ritual was ruined.

Although I don't have time to go into great detail, during this time the Parokhet and the furnishing of the Holy Place (the outer room) were also cleansed with blood. Thus, at the end of the day, the Sanctuary of God (the Temple) was once again purged of uncleanness and suitable for God to inhabit.

Yet neither the lay worshippers nor the regular priests had the privilege of watching the High Priest perform his task within the dark confines of the sanctuary. Now, however, it was time for the 2nd half of the Scapegoat ritual, whereby the High Priest would tie a scarlet cloth between the horns of the goat, present the goat in public to the people, and then lay his hands on the head of the goat in the Temple courtyard as the current Mediator for Israel (thereby representing all the people of Israel). Laying both of his hands on the Scapegoat the High Priest would say: *"O Yehoveh, they have committed iniquity; they have transgressed; they have sinned... Thy people, the House of Israel. Oh, then, Yehoveh cover over, I entreat thee, upon their iniquities, their transgression, and their sins, which they have wickedly committed, transgressed, and sinned before thee..... Thy people, the House of Israel. As it is written in the Law of Moses, Thy servant, saying: 'For on that day shall it be covered over for you, to make you clean from all your sins before Yehoveh, you shall be cleansed'"*.

The innocent goat, now burdened with all the sins of Israel was then lead out through the Eastern Gate, over the arched bridge, across the Kidron Valley onto the Mt. of Olives. From there a designated person would lead the goat into the desert wilderness that lay to the south of Jerusalem. It is most interesting that (although Scriptures don't ordain it) Tradition developed that had a GENTILE (if you can imagine) as the one who led the goat into the wilderness, to a rocky precipice, and there would back the goat up to its edge and push it off to its death ensuring that the goat (with Israel's sin upon it) would never return to vex the people.

I need to bring this to a close shortly, so allow me to sum it up. While I'm not necessarily arguing with the Traditions that developed about Yom Kippur, we can see both good symbolism and bad in them. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that the Scapegoat that was set loose in the Wilderness to be pushed over a cliff or killed. Nowhere does it say that ANYONE, let alone a gentile, was to lead that goat. Nowhere does Scripture say that the purpose of Yom Kippur is see if a person's name can be written, year to year, into the divine Book of Life (or not). And certainly nowhere can it be that Yom Kippur or any of the Biblical Feasts are properly and fully conducted without the existence of the Holy Temple AND the priesthood. So for anyone, today, to judge another on how it is that they go about celebrating the Biblical Feasts, and accusing others of not being properly Torah observant on the matter, is disingenuous. That does not mean that we should not do what we can, outside of what a Temple and priesthood of the Temple were uniquely ordained to do, to observe God's appointed times. More than ever before in my life I see that Christianity has abandoned God's appointed times and we need to be those who do what we can to reinstitute the observances.

It is very troubling to know that for about the last 500 years in the existence of the Temple that even then the Yom Kippur ritual was not conducted properly. How can I know this for certain? Because the Ark of the Covenant had gone missing since the Babylonian Exile. The High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, was actually going into a Holy of Holies that was empty; no Ark, no Mercy Seat, no presence of God. It is well recorded that the High Priest, during those final 5 centuries the Temple stood, was actually sprinkling blood on the floor at the empty spot where the Ark used to sit. I can draw no other conclusion than that the people of Israel did not have their iniquities covered over, as a congregation, for 5 centuries. They had the opportunity when Yeshua came, but all but a handful rejected it.

But here is some good news: the imperfect High Priest, priesthood, manmade sanctuary, and sacrifices have been transformed and fulfilled by one who IS perfect. The perfect Law has finally been perfectly followed. The Messiah Yeshua is the perfect Mediator; He is the sinless High Priest who NEVER had to have His sins atoned for; He is the ideal innocent sacrifice that can atone for every and all sin; His sacrifice is so perfect and complete that it only had to occur once, not over and over again.

Yet just as in the Scapegoat ritual required two goats, and one was slaughtered and the other released, so Yeshua has accomplished some of Yom Kippur's purpose at His advent and will accomplish the remainder at His second and future coming. He became the sacrificial goat that atoned once for ALL of His worshippers 2000 years ago. But all Israel has NOT yet been saved and as we have been told directly by Jesus, and as it was expounded upon by Paul in Romans 11, Yeshua's priority was Israel. In His soon return He will save Israel from its earthly and spiritual enemies and bring them to peace with God.

I have no doubt that the 7 Biblical Feasts point entirely to the redemptive work of Messiah. I further have no doubt that they will occur in the season that they were ordained to occur. The Spring and Summer Festivals (the first 4) have already been fulfilled. We await the fulfillment of the 3 Fall Festivals: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

Let's move on to Leviticus chapter 17.

### LEVITICUS 17

Leviticus 17 is going to answer many questions, and set the stage for much of what is going to happen in the entire rest of the Bible. We're going to have several foundational concepts introduced in chapter 17 and I hope you will give me all your attention because what you get from this will aid you greatly in your general Bible study.

This chapter plus the next 9 chapters form what scholars now call "The Holiness Code". And the general idea is that the entire nation of Israel bears the responsibility to respond to God having separated and blessed them above all other people on Earth; the expected response was that they conduct their lives in a holy manner. In Chapter 19 verse 2 we find this admonition to the nation of Israel: ***"You shall be holy, for I, Yehoveh your God, am holy"***.

While we could say that most of Leviticus up to this point has been directed primarily to the newly established priesthood, these chapters are addressed to every level of lay-Israeli society even down to foreigners, the non-Israelis, who live among them. This is something that we as Christians should make note of because just as we saw in the previous chapter concerning Yom Kippur, it was not only the physical genealogical descendants of Jacob that found themselves under the requirements, blessings AND curses of the Laws of Moses, but even those who sojourned among Israel. Let's be clear about whom we're talking about here.

As the timeframe of Leviticus is but around a year after having left Egypt, how is it that they have foreigners living with them already? I mean, did the attraction of living out in the desert in tents, eating manna 3 meals a day, having no idea exactly how this was all going to turn out, simply overwhelm those who heard about it all and so they came in droves to take advantage? Hardly. If you'll recall in Exodus 12:38, we're told that a "mixed multitude" of people marched along with Israel out of Egypt. Now I have no idea how many is in a "multitude", but the word itself implies it was a significant number. And, as a result, we find that many of God's laws and commands specifically address these foreigners from Egypt who, at some level or another, have joined Israel.

Not all of these foreigners became official Israelites. Some had other reasons for throwing in with Moses' mob than merely to become Israelites. I suspect that a significant portion of them represented intermarriages between Egyptian families and Hebrew families. After all we are told in the Bible that while the bulk of Israel lived in the Land of Goshen in Egypt, a great many Hebrews had moved to other regions of Egypt. Since their stay in Egypt was so long (4 centuries) it's rather easy to imagine the assimilation of a significant number of Jacob's descendants into traditional Egyptian society.

Other people and tribes including Egyptians and very likely several Semitic (meaning those who came from Noah's son Shem) but non-Hebrews people and tribes, who had personally witnessed and survived the awesome wrath and power of the God of Israel decided that they wanted to enjoy the benefits of being part of a group whose God possessed such mastery over the weather, the animal kingdom, the Nile River, even death. So when we picture just what this enormous group of refugees in the wilderness consisted of we need to include a substantial amount of non-Hebrews (foreigners) in that make-up.

This fact has a direct translation to our day. I have demonstrated this principle over and over again and shall never cease to do so until all the Church understands: what has enabled those of us who are physical gentiles to BE saved is that we benefit we receive from God's covenants with Israel. And how do we do appropriate that benefit that by birth is not ours? By being grafted into Israel. Is this a separate action from accepting Yeshua, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior? No. It happens (though we are unaware of it) when we become redeemed. When gentiles are redeemed we are joined to Israel (or more accurately, to Israel's covenants). We do not physically transform into racial Jews; rather we are joined to Israel **on a spiritual level** in the same way we are brought joined into union with Jesus. We are NOT joined to Messiah physically, are we? Rather it is in spirit, or better by **means of** the spirit, that we are joined to Him. Just as those foreigners (that mixed multitude of non-Hebrews, non-Jews) who threw in with Israel when they left Egypt benefited and were blessed right alongside their Hebrew friends by the God of Israel, so it is with gentiles Believers today. You're going to find in the Torah that it's NOT that those foreigners were required to join Israel by giving up all their traditions and customs and adopting Hebrew culture; it was that they had to submit to the Hebrew God and to Israelite authority. They didn't have to say: well, we were Edomites, but today we fully renounce our heritage and become Hebrews.

This is SUCH an important principle to drink in, because if this is NOT the case....if gentile Believers are not grafted in to Israel and their covenants with God..... then indeed the Torah and the Old Testament **IS** unimportant and irrelevant for born-again Believers. But I would also go so far as to say that the New Testament becomes irrelevant as well because the entire subject matter of the New Testament is but the fulfillment of the Older Testament's prophecies concerning a coming Messiah.

Open your Bibles to Romans 11:13. St. Paul is speaking to gentiles. How do I know he's speaking to gentiles? Because he says so.

### **READ ROMANS 11:13 – 31**

Paul says we are grafted into Israel and Israel's covenants. Being part of Israel is by definition being part of their covenants. You can't be part of Israel apart from the covenants because what makes Israel Israel ARE the covenants with Yehoveh. So what we are reading in the Torah has much significance for any and all who profess to be disciples of Messiah Yeshua.

That being the case I also think that we can, in some ways, make the Torah come alive in our lives a little more...make it far more personal and real..... if we can insert ourselves into the role of those foreigners who left Egypt and were now living in their tents alongside Israel. Even more so, as a result of our position in Christ, we are those foreigners who are full-fledged citizens of Israel. We're not required to give up our gentile-ness. We're not required to become racial or physical or national or religious Jews. But we are required to live within the terms of their covenants. For **ONLY** within **their** covenants exists the basis for the atonement that Christ offers to all who will trust Him.

### **READ LEVITICUS CHAPTER 17 all**

As we see in verse 2 what is about to follow is addressed to all Israel.....every level of Israeli society. And in verse 3 we get this foundational instruction.....permit me to paraphrase: No domesticated living creatures (animals) are to be ritually slaughtered outside of the Tabernacle Courtyard. In other words this rule is about domesticated.....NOT WILD.....animals. And if you'll notice the animals mentioned are the CLEAN animals....the ones that may be used both for sacrifice AND for food. When it comes to the subject of meat, offerings to God and meat used for food carry the same restrictions. Don't trivialize what we just read here because not only is it an instruction concerning holiness, it has tremendous societal impact; because essentially all domestic animals that will be used as a meat source must FIRST be offered as a sacrifice (this will change upon entering the Promised Land). They must be ritualistically slaughtered and offered to God in the precise manner accorded to each of the carefully constructed Levitical sacrifices. This means that for the average Israelite or foreigner living among them meat was a rare treat. And they only got to keep a portion of each animal killed; the remainder was burned up on the Altar and in some cases that which wasn't burned up was given to the priests as their portion. Not only did this make eating meat expensive, it made it a royal pain. Because each time a family wanted meat they had to take the animal to the Tabernacle, and wait their turn in what must have been a very lengthy line, to have a priest officiate the rites and the slaughter of the animal. Further the animal had to be an unblemished animal, one of the best, to even qualify.

Now as short as Leviticus 17 is it is just chocked full of things that we really need to pay careful attention to, because its going to explain much of what Israeli society was like back then; and it will also explain many issues that are dealt with in the NT. And besides the fact that domestic animals had to be slaughtered under ANY circumstances at the Tabernacle and first offered for sacrifice, we also see what happens as a penalty for those Israelites who disobey this commandment of God; that man shall be cut-off from among God's people.

Notice in verse 3 that it states that one cannot get around this slaughtering provision simply by removing the animal to OUTSIDE THE CAMP to kill it. This is not something this is only about maintaining a state of purity within the precinct of Israel. But even more, the level of seriousness of this disobedience in God's eyes is detailed in verse 4. There it states that "blood" (or "blood –guilt") shall be imputed to the man who does such a thing as to slaughter an animal only for food. So what does that mean? Blood or bloodguilt? This means that the offense is the equivalent of murder. Yikes! We'll come back to that in a minute. But for now let's look at the term "cut-off" and see what it meant in Biblical times.

Cut-off means that it is understood that one has rebelled against God, and as a result God's judgment is going to be visited on that person. We'll find "cut-off", though, used in many different contexts and situation in the Scriptures and each has a little different nuance. For one thing being "cut-off" for trespassing one of God's commands doesn't necessarily occur immediately. It simply means that SOMETHING is going to happen to you, in time, as part of God's justice for your act of rebellion. So you run around with this sentence hanging over your head, often for years and years. You know its coming.....something bad.....but you don't know what, and you don't know when, and you don't know how. It'll be in God's timing and in God's way.

The punishment doesn't necessarily involve the physical death of the perpetrator.....or at least his immediate death. Most often "cut-off" in the OT meant that a person would NOT live out his normal life span. And since there was no concept of dying and going to heaven in those days (in fact the Psalms and most OT discussions on the matter simply talk of going down in to Sheol, the grave, as but man's natural end to existence) what the Israelites looked forward to was dying of a ripe old age. Being "cut-off" generally meant your life would be cut short. This particular aspect of being cut-off was regularly prescribed for the wicked.

Being "cut-off" could at times take the form of being expelled from the community of Israel.....in modern religious terms, excommunication. And at times it also seems to carry the sense of being permanently separated from your ancestors. Now what that meant to them when an afterlife was a very hazy and undefined thing to begin with, is hard to put our finger on. But whatever it means it was not a good thing, that's for sure.

In Rabbinical literature the Hebrew word for "cut-off" is **karet**. And **karet** carries with it the concept of "death at the hands of heaven". So first and foremost this was seen as divine punishment and the punishment didn't necessarily end with the death of the violator, nor even affect him directly; instead it could be carried over into one's descendants (such as by one of his children dying). So the idea that we've all heard about in the Bible whereby the sins of the father are visited upon the 3rd and even 4th generation is but an extension and example of **karet** in action. **Karet** (being cut-off) could even mean that one's family line might come to a complete end.....perhaps a punishment worse than death....since there was this notion that in a very real way your essence (your spirit) continued to live on IN your descendants. So if you had no descendants you had no hope of having an afterlife.

Let's digress for a minute and talk about the crime of "blood" or "blood-guilt". In Hebrew the phrase is **shafakh dam**.....**shafakh**, to shed.....**dam**, blood. So more literally the crime of "blood" means to shed blood. Here in Leviticus it revolves around improper and non-sanctioned killing of domesticated animals. More usually it is a synonym of murder, the unjustifiable killing of a human being.

Back in Genesis 9 we find that Noach (Noah) is given the OK to kill living creatures for food (a Biblical first). Let's take a peek at that verse because it answers specifically some questions that are too often just assumed NOT to be answered, but are perhaps only hinted at in Scripture.

**NAS Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 "And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. 4 "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 "And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.**

So, why are the animals of earth going to fear men? Because, they NEEDED to have the instinctual fear of men put into them for preservation of their species. Apparently before the Flood animals had little, if any, fear of man. As a footnote this explains why Noah didn't have to be a Pied Piper to get all those animals into his Ark.....few, if any, had any fear of men. God didn't put that instinctive fear into them when He created them. After all for the first time in the history of the world, after the Flood, Yehoveh had given man permission to eat other living creatures.....which means, of course, man now had license to KILL other living creatures.....whereas he didn't before. Up to now, as Gen. 9:3 explains, it was green plants that had been man's official food source. As much as it depresses me to think about it, man was apparently created to be a vegetarian.

Now, one other thing. Genesis 9, verse 5 says that "from every beast I will require it".....that is, that God will require that beast's life for killing other life that has blood in it. We also see that apparently the ANIMALS were also vegetarians up to the Great Flood, right along with humans. So God didn't put a spell on the animals that were locked up in the Ark all those months (such that they didn't want to kill and eat Noah or his family, or even each other); they had no instinct to do so and apparently no taste for flesh.

Let me be very clear here; the timeline of what foods could be eaten looks something like this: Beginning with Adam and Eve, and up to Noah and the Great Flood, animals were not to be killed for food. But animals (presumably CLEAN domestic animals) were killed for sacrificing and it would seem reasonable that the skins from those animals were for some time used as clothing and perhaps for tents and to hold liquids. Up to the Flood men were supposed to be vegetarians. Did some men.....perhaps many.....disobey that instruction? Very likely.

After the Flood God gave Noah and his family (the only people left on earth) the instruction that they COULD kill animals and eat meat. Why? I don't know and the Bible doesn't say. Interestingly the range of animals they could eat seems to be without restriction. In other words there was no mention of clean or unclean as far as the selection of animals for food. Yet it may have been that it was understood that man was to eat only those things that were suitable for sacrificing and God certainly had already classified animals for sacrifice into the clean and unclean. But I just don't find an indication that man had any restrictions placed on meat as food.

So it appears that man could eat ANY living creature, starting immediately after the Great Flood, and that was in effect UNTIL God gave Moses the Torah on Mt. Sinai.....around 1200 years or more after the Great Flood. Then on Mt. Sinai God gave explicit instructions concerning the eating of living creatures and divided them into clean (acceptable) and unclean (not-acceptable) foods for men.

Let's stop here and we'll take up the matter of blood again next time.