



CHOSEN PEOPLE
MINISTRIES

THE MEANING OF YOM KIPPUR



DAY 10



Years ago, a Chasidic rabbi taught me the real meaning of Yom Kippur. I was

handing out pamphlets about Yeshua the Messiah at a New Jersey college when, all of a sudden, a determined, black-coated, bearded, hat-wearing campus Chasidic rabbi ran towards me and began handing out his own literature. Not only that, he stopped some of the students who had received a copy of my pamphlet, asked them if they were Jewish, and then told them they should not read what was obviously (in his opinion) spiritual contraband. He virtually took it out of their hands and gave them a copy of his leaflet, telling them about the importance of living a more fulfilled Jewish life: keeping Torah, kosher, going to synagogue, and loving God in a more traditional Jewish way.

He represented a group called Chabad, which now has close to 6,000 “missionaries” traversing the globe, calling Jewish people—especially on college campuses—to return to their spiritual roots and embrace a more faithful Judaism.

At first, I was a bit concerned, and felt he was unfair in doing what he did. I almost said to him, “Go get your own crowd!” But, in the distance I noticed that students were watching, and seemed to be wondering why the rabbi was helping the man (me) wearing a sweatshirt that read something like *Yeshua is the Messiah* hand out his literature. I laughed and continued this unexpected few moments of “dueling pamphlets.”

It was less than a week after the Day of Atonement, and I thought I would take the opportunity to engage my self-proclaimed antagonist in meaningful conversation. I asked the rabbi, whose name I knew, “Baruch, did you have a good high holiday season?” He looked at me and said, “Of course.” I then asked if I could ask him a bit of a personal question, and he responded with a quick “sure.” I asked Baruch, whose name means “blessing,” “Do you know if you were blessed with the forgiveness of your sins on Yom Kippur?” He smiled at me, like a father whose young and precocious son had asked a naïve but potentially reasonable question.

He answered, “You believers in Jesus think it is so easy to be forgiven. You just say a little prayer and bingo, you are forgiven!” I returned the good-natured smile and said, “Baruch, I really want to know. You spent all day fasting after ten days of intensely repenting, and now the Books of Life and Death are closed (according to Jewish tradition), and I am wondering. Did you make it into the Book of Life?” Then in typical Brooklyn, New York fashion (since I knew he lived in Brooklyn), I

said, “Answer the question, yes or no.”

His tone of voice warmed, and he became almost pastoral and said, “How can someone ever know they were forgiven? You think you get a certificate or something like that? It is a matter of faith, and believing you did the right thing.”

I pressed him one more time and said, “So, you do not know for sure that your sins are forgiven?” This time he became a bit exasperated with me (I don’t blame him) and, using my Hebrew name, said, “Menachem, even if I were forgiven, I would walk out of the synagogue and sin again and have to repeat the whole process the following year.” He continued, “The point is this: a faithful Jew must keep repenting all the time in order to be forgiven of sin. It is a constant process.”

I smiled and said, “Thank you.” He asked, “Why the thank you?” I told him that his answer reminded me of why I am so grateful for what Yeshua the Messiah did for him and for me. He died once for all, for all sins, for all time, and for all people. Though I need to repent and live for Him, my eternal future rested in His mighty hands and not my own.

He smiled at me, and we wished one another a *Chag Sameach* (Happy Festival), as we still had one additional Levitical festival (and the one which was the most fun!) coming up—the Feast of Tabernacles—Sukkot. The rabbi helped me appreciate the words of our Messiah Jesus who said, “*It is finished!*” It is a source of great personal joy to know that His work of redemption is completed.

The author of the book of Hebrews helps me appreciate more of the details regarding the finality of the work of Yeshua in dying for my sins. He was a perfect Levitical High Priest, who now intercedes on the basis of His once-for-all, perfect sacrifice for you and me so that we can fellowship with God today, right now, and forever more.

The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated

from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. (Hebrews 7:23–28)

And again, one of my favorite short verses in the Bible that is all the more meaningful as you consider what was written, “*For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified*” (Hebrews 10:14).

Scripture Meditation:

The above passages and a careful reading of Hebrews 10:1–16 will enable you to glean deeper insight into what He did for us through His sacrificial death and powerful resurrection. I am thankful for the forgiveness of sin and gift of eternal life given to all who believe in Yeshua the Messiah.

However, the encounter with the Chabad rabbi also taught me another valuable lesson. One’s love for God should never lead to silence! In fact, it should produce the opposite—a joy that compels us to speak to total strangers, to risk our personal dignity and safety, and even to respectfully resist those whose goal it is to turn people towards a spiritual path other than the *one way* we know to be true.

I have found a *new* New Year’s resolution, thanks to some continued reflection on this encounter that happened so many years ago. I pray that the new Jewish year will grant you many opportunities to tell others about your love for God and His Son, and that He will give you the

strength to show His forgiveness and love to others.

Be sure to wish your Jewish friends and family a Happy New Year, or as the standard Hebrew greeting for this time of year invokes, “May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life” – *L’shanah tovah tikatevu!*

Today’s prayer:

Thank You, *Abba*, for Yeshua! Please open the eyes of our Jewish friends and neighbors to see that He has indeed perfected for all time those who are sanctified through His offering. Forgive us for the times we have allowed fear, apathy, or other distractions to thwart us from sharing the gospel with the lost. May we have the courage and conviction to take every opportunity You give us in the coming year to share our love for Jesus with others. *Abba*, as we come to the end of the Ten Days of Awe, may many more Jewish people’s names be added to the Book of Life!