

November 26 2023  
Afflict Your Souls Leviticus 16

### **Leviticus 16:29-34**

**29** “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you **shall afflict yourselves** and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. **30** For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins. **31** It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you **shall afflict yourselves**; it is a statute forever. **32** And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. **33** He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. **34** And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Once a year the Israelites would have a time of deep soul searching. It's called “**A Day of Atonement**” or “**Yom Kippur**.” Remember the word “Atonement” means to cover over sin.

A time in which the people would take a break from work and busy life, and on “**Yom Kippur**” they try to make things right before God. And one of the main ways in which they do that is called “**Afflict yourselves**” or “**Afflict your soul**.” (Read verse **29 - 31** again)

Hundreds of years ago, people thought the “**afflict your souls**” meant to beat your body or hurt your body” in some way. In some

parts of Europe the monks, they would take off their top off and grab a stick or a whip and hurt their body as a show of **deep repentance and remorse over their sin.**

But actually the word, “**Afflict yourselves**” or “**Afflict your soul**” means to fast and not eat any food or drink.

### **Afflict yourselves / Afflict your soul = Fasting**

On Yom Kippur, the idea was **to fast** (no food or drink) and **humble yourselves before God** and **take away the satisfaction of the body and pursue God’s Holiness**. And in that process, truly be remorse or **be sorrow over sin**. So that His mercy can be upon our souls and that God will forgive us for our sins. This was the whole point of “afflicting one’s souls.”

The primary point about “**afflicting our souls**” was **all about sin**. The entire book of Leviticus is about a Holy God who is pure and cannot **co-exist with sin**. And this is why we need Jesus who has no sin, died on the cross for our sin, so He can be the mediator between a sinful man and a Holy God.

**Meaning of Sin:** Sin is anything you say, do, or think that goes against God’s Words.

Here’s the thing, you and I break this law all the time. And because we break it all the time, we **can not fix sin by ourselves** with a Holy God. A lot of people try on their own, and this is why many Christians don’t have freedom from sin. Or, that many Christians take view sin lightly, or they have a low view of sin.

“**Sin is not so bad attitude**” and that is exactly what the devil want Christians to believe. “**Yeah. Don’t worry about it. You’ll be fine. Just move on. No need for repentance. Just try and do a lot of ‘good’ and forget about sin.**”

So to have freedom from sin, we need Jesus to help us move towards Him.

### **Romans 6:18** New Living Translation

Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

Remember, sin is what separates you from God, and sin gets us to move further away from God. So the goal of the people would be to break away from sin and move closer to God.

### **Hebrew Word for Sin = To Miss the Mark**

The reason this definition is so important is because it points to two things. **First**, there is a target we are aiming at, and **second it speaks to our intention**.

Once we know there is a target, then we can choose or intentionally hit it or to intentionally miss it. This is what “**miss the Mark**” means.

How do we intentionally miss the target? It's the Heart issue.

### **Proverbs 16:2**

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.

Or that God weigh's the motives of the heart.

Look, this is year 2023, heading into 2024, we **humans are supposed to be the most advanced civilization**, the most knowledgeable creatures (we have the internet), but yet we have **two wars** going on right now. Human trafficking is the fastest growing business, sexual diseases are rampant, and recently Pakistan just kicked out over a million Afghans (destroying their homes and property), and they are both muslim people. There is human injustice

everywhere and on and on it goes, and the list of sin does not end and in fact, it's getting worse.

Remember sin started just with a simple little lie. It **arrived ever since Adam and Eve believed in a lie** and sin will continue to thrive because the nature of man has never changed.

That's what the book of Leviticus is trying to address. God was embedding a moral code in the hearts of people to know what what is right and what is wrong. So we can choose to hit the target, intentionally or choose to miss the mark, intentionally.

Like Cain and Able. Able gave his best sacrifice and offering to God, but Cain didn't give His best to God and there was jealousy in Cain.

### **Genesis 4:1-7** New Living Translation

Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the Lord's help, I have produced a man!" **2** Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. **3** When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. **4** Abel also brought a gift—the **best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock**. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, **5** but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made **Cain very angry**, and he looked dejected. **6** "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? **7** You will be accepted if **you do what is right**. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! **Sin** is crouching at the door, **eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.**"

**That is what sin is:** No one has to teach you how to be jealous. God did not teach Cain to be jealous, right. This is the condition off man's heart since the creation of man. And we know later that **Cain was not able to control his sin** (He did not master over sin), so he ends up killing his brother Able.

This is the evidence of the moral code that God has put in every person's heart to know what is right and what is wrong. So in the book of Levities in chapter 16, God allowed a day in which it is called "A Day of Atonement" or "Yom Kippur" to **be remorseful, to be sorrow over our sin and to "afflict our souls."**

**Yum** = Day

**Kippur** = Covering (Covering over sin) / English "Atonement" or ***Day of Covering***

**Atonement:** "Covering" over sin

So on Yom Kippur or A Day of Atonement, the idea was that the High Priest would take all the sins of the people and do an animal sacrifice unto the Lord. And the High Priest would take the animal's blood and sprinkle the blood seven times on top of the mercy seat.

Inside the tabernacle is a place called the Holy of Holies in which the High Priest takes all the sins of the people once a year on Yom Kippur and put the blood on God's mercy seat or judgement seat. When they put the blood on the top of the Ark of the Covenant with all our confessions of sin, then God gives us His mercy and His judgement will not be upon us.

**[Show the image of the Ark of the Covenant]**

Remember the Mercy Seat is God's judgment seat. And God is not just a loving God (that's why **He is called merciful God:** "Mercy Seat"), but He is also **a righteous God**. If you are Hitler and you murder people, then God is righteous and He will judge sin. When we

sin, there are consequences to our sin. That's **intentionally missing the mark**.

But, because we confess our sins before God and make our hearts right before Him, then that is where God's mercy comes in. So the shedding of blood on the mercy seat, is where God will forgive us for our sins and His mercy comes in. That's why it's called a Mercy Seat.

And, because God is very serious about sin because God is a Holy God. He is not asking us to be perfect, but He is commanding us to seek Him, confess before Him and make things right before Him.

That is why, I love Jesus. We don't have to wait on Yom Kippur, once a year to go to God and confess before Him. **We can go to Jesus anytime and any day**. Happy days and rainy days, because God is a merciful God.

### **Yom Kippur the Two Goats:**

So on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur they took two goats. Remember one goat was **for the Lord** (sin offering) and the other goat was **for Azazel** (Scapegoat).

The priest would cast lots to see which goat would go to the "Sin Offering" (Alter: BBQ Grill). and the other to be sent away Free, far away from the camp.

The other **for Azazel** was that the innocent goat would receive all the sins of Israel and taken out of the camp and never to return. This would signify that our sins are covered for whole year. We **just need to repeat it every year** on Yom Kippur.

So the **Day of Atonement**, or the **Day of Covering over our sins**, would happen once a year, but it never would permanently remove the sins, it just covered over it.

### **Leviticus 16:33-34**

**33** He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. **34** And **this shall be a statute forever for you**, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel **once in the year** because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.

So Yom Kippur is associated with the temple, because that is where you have to sacrifice animals and in the Holy of Holies you have the ark of the covenant. **So what would happen if you don't have the ark of the covenant or even the temple?** Where then can you do the Yom Kippur?

Something happened to the Temple and Yom Kippur.

### **Back drop of Temple Destruction:**

During Jesus time Rome had taken over Israel and people are paying crazy taxes to Rome. We have someone like Matthew in the gospels who is a Jew collecting money for Rome, and the Jews hated people like Matthew because the money was helping Rome and not Israel.

### **[Show image of Gessius Florus]**

Well there was a guy named **Gessius Florus** who was Roman and was in charge of finance in Judea. Which means he was in control of money and you know what that means (**Some for Rome and some for me**). This guy really loved money but hated the Jews. So when the tax revenue was low, he decided to go the Holy Temple and take money out from there. That was God's money and he decided to take money from God. The temple money was very precious to the people.

The Jews got very upset and started a revolt in Jerusalem and Florus decided send Roman soldiers to squash the revolt which ended up killing more than 3,500 hundred Jews. That didn't calm the Jewish people down.

In fact the people got even more angry and started a bigger uprising against the Romans. So the Romans got even more upset and sent in an entire Roman army to destroy Jerusalem and destroy the Holy Temple. You destroy the Temple, then you also destroy the identity of the people. You also destroy the entire culture and Yom Kippur.

**That was in A.D. 70**, the final destruction of the Holy Temple.

And to this very day, you and I can go to Israel and actually see the stones the Romans had destroyed.

### **[Show image of the Western / Wailing wall in Jerusalem]**

Note: This is the Western Wall but it's also called the Wailing Wall. Now this is just a “**retaining wall**” or the “outer shell” that supports inside of another building (The temple). Think of this as a fortress wall that supports another building inside, which is the temple.

Now it's called a “**wailing**” wall because when the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D., all the people were “wailing” or “crying” over the destruction of the Temple because their whole entire identity was with the Temple. You destroy the temple, then you destroy the way of life, and their identities.

All the sacrifices and all the offerings (**burnt, meal / grain, peace, sin and trespass offerings**) and finally Yom Kippur was all part of the Temple. No Temple then no offering. ***How is God going to forgive us for our sins?***

What do you do? With the destruction of the temple, what do you about the “**Day of Atonement**” or “**Yom Kippur?**” On Yom Kippur we



sent out a goat with all our sins. So who will cover for our sin because there is no more mercy seat? Who will forgive us for our sins?

[Show image of **Yohanan ben Zakkai**]

There is a famous Rabbi named **Yohanan ben Zakkai**, who lived in the 1st century and was there after the destruction of the Holy Temple in A.D. 70.

This is the same man who was the primary contributor to the core text of **Rabbinic Judaism** (Think of him as a major Bible commentary), the **Mishnah** (first major written collection of the Jewish oral traditions that are known as the Oral Torah. This is a commentary of the book of Torah, the first five books of Moses).

So this was a question posed to Mr. Zakkai, “*what do we do about Yom Kippur?*”

This is his response, “*We are going to just reflect before the Lord and do more ‘good’ things for people. We’re still going to ‘afflict our souls by fasting,’ reflect about our sin, but we’re also going to see how much good we can do. Doing good for others will just be as effective as sacrificing animals to God.*” So no more animal sacrifice, instead do good for people. No blood on the mercy seat or shedding of blood so doing “good” for people is like animal sacrifice.

O.K., so if **Yohanan ben Zakkai**, says it’s good then, it must be good.

So along with fasting (no food and drink), and reflecting on our sin, we will do “good” things for people, which then **set the precedent for the Jews to this very day**. This is how the Jews celebrate Yom Kippur today.

**How will you know if your “good” will influence God’s plan? Or how will you know if your “good” will outweigh all the bad you have done?**

Because that is what we all try to do, right. We're trying to do "good" so we can win favor from God or that God will see the work of my hands, that I have done good for people. In other words, "***I am working hard through my own efforts to get to heaven!***"

### **[Show Rosh Hashanah and word 10 Days and Yom Kippur]**

So in the Jewish calendar you have in between **Rosh Hashanah** is the birthday of the universe, or **Jewish new year celebration** for Israel and **Yom kippur** is ten days. So between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, you have ten days, to think about the sins, but also now all the "good" things they have done in the year and you fast just one day on Yom Kippur. Also, during the 10-day period, a person is thought to be able to influence God's plans for the coming year.

Do you remember the **Mishnah**, the ***legal text that dictates Jewish daily life***, God is portrayed as inscribing people's names in one of three books on Rosh Hashanah: a book that records the names of **good people**, a book of **evil people**, and a **book of people who are neither totally wicked nor righteous**.

Have you ever heard of Santa's Naught or Nice phrase? This is where they get that from. If you have been good, then Santa gives you presents, but if you have been bad, then no presents.

- **Book of Life:** Names of Good People
- **Book of Death:** Names of Evil People
- **No Place:** Names of people who are neither wicked or righteous until Yom Kippur before sealing their fate.

Ten Days of Awe or Ten Days of Repentance will determine your fate.

- If you turn to God and reconcile with the person you have hurt, then God will extend to you another year of "good" or forgiveness.

- However, if you don't repent (change your ways) then there is a good chance that you will die the next year.
- So basically these ten days is called an "open" book, meaning that it is open for you to be in the book of life or the book of dead or evil.

**The 10 days:** Jews believe that they can perform acts of **prayer, repentance, and charity** during the Days of Awe to **influence God**, changing how they are categorised before the books are sealed on Yom Kippur.

But the problem is, what happens if I was to sin again after the book is closed? What if I was in the "evil category" and I die, then do I go automatically to hell without ever having the chance to do good?

So the primary mind set goes, "*does my 'good' out weigh the 'sin' in my life.*" Now Muslims, Hindus and many other religious groups believe that good must outweigh the bad to get to heaven. "*If I just do good in life,*" then I will get to heaven attitude. This is where you get, "I'm a good person. I haven't killed anyone."

So let's say, I do one bad thing, like "killing someone," then how many good do I need to do for the "atonement" to get to the book of life? And this is what a lot of people try to do. **They try to do more good, so the bad will go away.**

The primary issue with the Ten Days of Awe is that you cannot predict your future. **Can you predict for your future?** How many good you will do or how many bad that I might accidentally do? How will you know that you will never sin again in the future?

***Under this law, there is no assurance of salvation.***

So what happened with Yom Kippur was that the Israelites went from truly confessing their sins and repenting before God so that God's mercy can be upon us to now, "*I hope that all my good will*

*outweigh the bad and God will see the goodness in me greater than the bad.”*

That’s why when Jesus came on the scene and He was talking to those who were very religious people. I mean the whole nation and it’s people was all about God and Jesus was telling directly to these people to repent:

### **Matthew 4:17**

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”

Repent means to change direction or change of mind. So Jesus wasn’t talking to people who didn’t know God, He was talking to people who already knew God.

Jesus was talking to people who did “all the right things on the outside,” and yet these people were missing the most important thing, which was to go back to the heart of worship.

That is what Leviticus is all about. Getting access to God with the right heart of worship. Getting into the presence of God with the right heart of worship.

That’s why Jesus said, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.” A Holy God wants to dwell with His people and the people must intentionally hit the mark. You must choose to aim your life at the target, then everything else will all work out.