

Yom Kippur Fables: What would Yeshua answer?

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Shalom dear friends, tonight on the holiest night of the Jewish calendar. I pray your fast is easy and your day tomorrow, normally Shabbat anyway, would be especially significant. Thank you for listening to me for the next 25 minutes or so. Tonight I'm going to deliver a sermon in a different fashion. I hear so many silly things and some religious things and some cultural things that define or matter to us Jewish people, especially during this time of year. And if you will allow I want to address those phrases, those thoughts, those ideas, and see if they are consistent with messianic faith, and with you particularly in the 21st Century, here in Australia.

And those concepts or ideas or phrases are going to be up on the screen and contrasted in due course with the words of Yeshua, our Messiah and redeemer. Let's have a go at this.

Modern Idea #1) it's all about love: Forgiveness assumed

From this week's Jerusalem Post: "Yom Kippur is the day when the love of the Blessed be He "beats" all! This the day when G-d calls out to us: "Return to me and I will return to you"! The day when we stand before G-d as children before their father and hear the Divine call "I forgive"! If we succeed in connecting to the incredible beauty of this day, we will feel the purifying forgiveness, the endless love of the Blessed be He for us – His only children, and with G-d's help, that feeling will accompany us even after Yom Kippur ends and we will be blessed with a Shana tova!" (Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.)

Anything wrong with that?

For Rabbi Rabinowitz the essence of Yom Kippur is love and we hear "I forgive." Problem is we don't really hear that. Do an exit poll at Jewish synagogues tonight or tomorrow night especially and you will find most answering the question, "Do you feel forgiven?" by saying, "I hope so." They don't know, because they don't hear it.

The Bible does not guarantee that, not on the basis of Kol Nidre or of our good fasting.

Forgiveness assumed is not forgiveness granted. This assumption produced failure.

Y'shua would declare to us "this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26.28)

Modern Idea #2) May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good: Forgiveness temporal

Hebrew phrases can be so helpful here. G'mar chatima tovah.

Literally: A good final sealing

Idiomatically: May you be inscribed (in the Book of Life) for Good

This is a combination of three words, two of which are not in the Bible. "Gmar"

comes from the root word that means to finish. Although it's not a biblical word, it appears quite a bit in the Talmud (Avot 2:16 Yevamot 12:6). Chatimah is also Talmudic and can mean a signature or a sealing (Pessachim 104). The word "chotemet" or stamp (like a rubber stamp) is a derivative of "chatimah." The final word "tova" means good. The 10 days of repentance are divided into two parts according to the rabbis. The first the inscribing begins on Rosh Hashanah and finishes on Yom Kippur when the final "sealing" (chatima) of our fate takes place. Many sages give us a second chance - an extra 12 days until a really final sealing on Hoshana Raba (the 7th day of Sukkot). Bonus time.

That is why many people finish their correspondence during this time of year by writing or saying K'tivah V'chatima Tova-- "may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." When I was a kid, I learned that we should be inscribed in the Book of Life. The phrase then included the word, "tikateivu v'taihatemu." On or right before Yom Kippur, people modify that and wish "Gmar Chatima Tova." Technically you can say it means 'may your finished sealing be good.'

But where is this notion in the Scriptures? Where is inscribing? I can find no references to such inscription and only two references to the Book of Life in the Older Testament, which both seem to reference who is alive this year, or what then might be better, translated The Book of the Living. Moses mentions it in the Golden Calf episode and King David in the oft-quoted Psalm 69 about blotting out from the book of the living, meaning people will die.

So this idea of inscribing in the Book of Life is not there. Although to be fair it certainly abounds in the Newer Testament. There we see seven references, mostly in the book of Revelation to the Book of Life. And this book is the eternal book, the one that secures your eternity. If your name is written there, you have no need to fear, your forgiveness is assured, your life is eternal. But if your name is not written there, you have everything to worry about, eternity away from God, and major disappointment.

As for the idea of sealing in the Book, if inscription is not there in the Older Testament, then surely sealing is not there either. At least not sealed in the Book of Life.

However sealing is a Newer Testament word and very helpful in understanding something about the death of Messiah.

Let me describe the Greek word sphragizo. The Greek word means to cause to be sealed. It is used 15 times in the NT and six of those times in Revelation and four of those times in chapter seven alone. Like in the book of Esther when the king Ahashuerus sealed things with his ring, it meant it was official. We read in "Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked." He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and "sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud." (Esther 8.8, 10)

Rick Renner wrote in an article on his website, "So in the New Testament, when the Bible records that "When the chief priests and Pharisees asked that "...the sepulcher be made sure..." the Greek word sphragidzo is used. This word described a legal seal that was placed on documents, letters, possessions, or, in this case, a tomb. Its purpose was to authenticate that the sealed item had been

properly inspected before sealing and that all the contents were in order. As long as the seal remained unbroken, it guaranteed that the contents inside were safe and sound. In this case, the word sphragidzo is used to signify the sealing of the tomb. In all probability, it was a string that was stretched across the stone at the entrance of the tomb, which was then sealed on both sides by Pilate's legal authorities.

"Before sealing the tomb, however, these authorities were first required to inspect the inside of the tomb to see that the body of Y'shua was in its place. After guaranteeing that the corpse was where it was supposed to be, they rolled the stone back in place and then sealed it with the official seal of the governor of Rome.

"After hearing the suspicions of the chief priests and Pharisees, "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can" (Matthew 27:65). The word "watch" is the Greek word *custodia*, from which we get the word *custodian*. This was a group of four Roman soldiers whose shift changed every three hours. The changing shifts assured that the tomb would be guarded 24 hours a day by soldiers who were awake, attentive, and fully alert. When Pilate said, "Ye have a watch..." a better rendering would be, "Here — I'm giving you a set of soldiers; take them and guard the tomb."

"Matthew 27:66 says, "So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." Wasting no time, the chief priests and elders hastened to the tomb with their government-issued soldiers and the special officers assigned to inspect the tomb before placing Pilate's seal upon it. After a full inspection had been made, the stone was put back in place, and the soldiers stood guard to protect the tomb from anyone who would attempt to touch it or remove its contents. Every three hours, new guards arrived to replace the old ones. These armed soldiers guarded the entrance to Y'shua's tomb so firmly that no one would have been able to come near it.

"The purpose of the seal was to authenticate that Y'shua was dead; therefore, we can know that His body was thoroughly inspected again for proof of death. There is no doubt that Y'shua was dead, for He was examined again and again, even as He lay in the tomb. Some critics have claimed that only Y'shua's own disciples inspected His body and that they could have lied about His being dead. However, an officer from Pilate's court also examined the body of Y'shua. We can also be fairly certain that the chief priests and elders who accompanied the soldiers to the burial site demanded the right to view His dead body as well so they could verify that He was truly dead." (Rick Renner, CBN, Teach all nations Publishers)

I say all this to say that sealed in the Book of Life, not an Older Testament concept, but a Newer Testament one, starts with the sealed tomb of Messiah Y'shua, and allows us who believe in Him to find eternal life and our own sealing to the day of judgment. Listen to Rav Shaul who writes:

- God also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1.22)
- In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1.13)

- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4.30)

We are sealed and safe. We belong to God. He is ours! Not on a wish list for another year, but dramatically and powerfully by the Ruach Hakodesh. We are His.

The writer of Hebrews would say, “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” and “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 9.12, 10.10)

Modern Idea #3) We are forgiven on the basis of what we do. Forgiveness earned

Repentance, prayer and charity. Those three things substitute for the sacrificial system since we have no Temple into which to bring the animals for sacrifice. This is standard understanding in the Jewish religion not only on Yom Kippur but also throughout our year. Without good works, all our ritual activity is useless. I get that. And I agree with this in measure.

Listen when the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE we lost our religion and we lost our way. For 1000 years we had that building, glorious and built by King Solomon, until Titus the Roman emperor destroyed it. Now what do we do? We had no place of offerings; no place of sacrifices; no place of atonement. Had God supplied another way before He took that away?

The rabbis say no. That would be the t’shuvah, t’filah and ts’daka as above.

The messianic answer is a resounding “YES!” The Talmud records this in Yoma 39b: “Our rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves” (cited: <http://www3.telus.net/public/kstam/en/temple/details/evidence.htm>). [The story is that there was a scarlet cord/ strap which hung outside the Temple in Jeruslaem and each year when the High Priest performed his service (Leviticus 16-17), the cord would turn white. The Yoma reference reminds us that the system was flawed after 30 CE, the time of the death of Y’shua]

The accomplishments of Y’shua on the cross 40 years before Jerusalem fell caused the scarlet or crimson strap to stay crimson. Never again would the sacrificial system ‘work’ or be efficacious. Y’shua had done the work on the cross, as he died for us. He saved us by his dying there. His blood is the atonement blood, which gives us everything we need to be forgiven of our sins. Only in Y’shua is there forgiveness.

Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3.5) and again, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.” (Hebrews 9.22)

By his death on the cross, Y’shua created forgiveness for us Jews and for all people, whoever would believe.

No amount of good efforts, no amount of good religion is enough to save anyone. That said, I still believe in repentance and in forgiveness. I still believe in charity and prayer. That's why we do this so often. But it's more of a thank you and a reminder to us that it's God's job to forgive us, and not our 100% that gets it done.

I remember as an Orthodox Jew, in my youth, failing on so many occasions.

When I was 14, and now a full-fledged member of the synagogue, after the morning prayers ended about 2 pm, and before the services reconvened at 4 pm for Neilah, I was famished. How could we be expected to 'last' 24 hours of not-eating. I snuck around the corner to the Smak's Drive-in and got a 19 cent hamburger. I stuffed it in my face very fast, lest someone see me. Then I returned to synagogue, sat next to my parents, and my mother asked me about the tomato sauce (ketchup) stain on my white shirt sleeve. Caught! And it was my first sin of the year, or at least the day, as I lied. You would think the pickle smell on my breath would have been part of my disclosure as well.

I wondered if I had to wait until Yom Kippur to get God's attention, or how we would ever fix it.

Each year on Yom Kippur, we would chant the short form of the confession. We would add to it the Al Khet. Listen to the first few words of the short confession: ASHAMNU: We have become desolate. We commit ourselves to recognizing that our failures are self-destructive.

BAGADNU: We have betrayed our potential, our families, God Himself. We can question who we have been in our multifaceted role as a human being and as a Jew? Whom have we betrayed? Is it not ultimately we as well as others?

GAZALNU: We have stolen. This includes not only financial theft, but theft of time, and misleading others into thinking that we are more accomplished than we actually are. This sin is especially damaging in that it reflects the fact that we have rejected the role in life that God has given us.

DEBARNU DOFI: We have spoken with "two mouths" – we have been hypocritical. We can confront our fear of rejection, and the dishonesty that we use to "cover ourselves." Of whom are we afraid? Why? Should we not be more willing to tackle the reality that confronts us?

More from Aish.com on all the rest of the short confession:

HEYVINU: We have made things crooked. This includes all forms of dishonest rationalizations. Our hunger for decency sometimes is satiable through false justifications. We must remember that even a murderer invariably justifies himself at the time he commits the crime. We must rise above the false self-pity that at times lets us slip into situational ethics.

VI'HIRSHANU: And we have made others wicked. We have forced others into destructive responses. An example of this is a parent who slaps the face of an older child, almost forcing him into loss of verbal (and possibly even physical) self-control.

ZADNU: We have sinned intentionally. The classical example is lying, in which case there is always full awareness of the factuality of the sin. How could we learn to bring God back into our consciousness when we are blinded by stress and fear?

CHAMASNU: We have been violent. This includes all forms of taking the law in

one's own hands. Almost everyone has fallen into the trap of letting the ends justify the means.

TAFALNU SHEKER: We have become desensitized to dishonesty. Dishonesty feels "normal" to us. When we live in a time and place where lying is "normal," we can endeavor to envision our spiritual heroes in our shoes.

YATZNU RA: We have given bad advice. This often is the result of being ashamed to admit ignorance. One of the most beautiful aspects of taking counsel from the Torah sages is their refreshing ability to use the words "I don't know." Committing ourselves to re-introduce this phrase can be life-changing.

KIZAVNU: We have disappointed God, ourselves and others by not living up to our promises. We tell people that we can be counted upon, when we really mean that we can be counted upon if things work out. When they don't, it is important to ask one's self: Why is it that in situations where integrity and convenience can't coexist, it is always integrity that must be sacrificed?

LATZNU: We have been contemptuous. We have diminished the importance of people and values that deserve respect. We all know at least one person who makes himself/herself "big" by devaluing others. If that person is ourselves, then we must question the direction that our need for self-esteem takes us.

MARADNU: We have rebelled. We, in our bottomless insecurity, have found ourselves negatively proving ourselves endlessly both to God and to our fellow man. How many times this year could our lives been spiritually improved, if we didn't have to "teach" anyone a lesson?

NI'ATZNU: We have enraged people. We have purposely pushed other people's buttons. We have caused God's anger to be awakened by our self-destructive behavior. We've let our desire for human connection lead us to destructive interactions.

SARARNU: We have turned aside. We have confronted truth and looked the other way. We have chosen ease over morality.

AVINU: We fallen victim to our impulses. Would our lives be improved if we learned to not only ask ourselves the question "what" but the question "when"? The desire for instant gratification has financial, physical and emotional implications.

PASHANU: We have broken standards of behavior that we know to be right and then justified this because of our egotism. Have we not found ourselves justifying bad decisions with lie after lie? Have we not moved forward because to do so would mean tacitly admitting that our present level is not "perfect" enough to gratify our bottomless egos?

TZARARNU: We afflicted others. Even in situations where harsh words are demanded, whenever we go beyond what is called for, we are accountable for the pain suffered by every unnecessary word. While we may be just letting off steam, our victims may believe every word that we say. The result can be a tragic diminishment of their self-esteem.

KISHINU OREF: We have been stiff-necked. We have been stubborn and unwilling to redefine ourselves. No matter how wrong we are, we insist that we are right.

RISHANU: We have been wicked. This includes all forms of physical aggression or financial injustice (such as refusal to repay a loan). When Moses saw his fellow Jew striking another Jew, he called him "rasha." He never used this phrase in any other context.

SHICHATNU: We have been immoral. This includes all forms of dehumanizing "hunting" members of the opposite sex, or the equally dehumanizing choice of becoming "prey." Do we question why we select a specific image to be the one that we use to let the world know who we are?

TA'INU: We have erred. This, of course, is not a reference to sins that we have done because we weren't aware of better options. This refers to the choice to remain ignorant out of fear or laziness that inevitably leads to making further mistakes. This is a good time to make a solid, defined resolution to learn more. Let it replace the vague realization that time is slipping by.

Confession is good. And required. But not a substitute for Y'shua's death on the cross. He alone can take away sin. Not the blood of bulls or goats. Not my white robe or fasting all of 25 hours until tomorrow night. Not clenching my fists, not keeping kosher. One thing will forgive us. God's love in Y'shua.

"For Messiah also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3.18)

He declared from the cross, "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23.34)

Idea #4) We did nothing wrong. Forgiveness extended

Then there are others who say, "We don't need forgiveness; God needs forgiveness. He has failed the Jewish people. He has failed the world. He is either helpless or frail or unable, or uncaring if He is powerful enough to assist." I'm pretty sure you don't feel like this, but it's reasonable to consider this topic. The world is a mess. And God's lack of changing it might be proof of his inability and/or his lack of love. We need to forgive God, they say, most critically about letting six million of our people die in the Holocaust. God needs our forgiveness.

Does this statement shock you? It's abundant in the modern literature. So says Ian M. Cron, "Miss Anne, is it wrong for me to believe it was Jesus who asked my forgiveness?".... She put her hand on her hip, "So why wouldn't Jesus humble himself and tell a boy he was sorry for letting him down if he knew it would heal his heart?"

from Jesus, my Father, The CIA and Me by Ian Morgan Cron

For those online, read Sam Storms here

<http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2012/07/forgiving-god-sam-storms> and also this blog and comments:

<http://anjsdevotionals.blogspot.com.au/2008/02/forgiving-god.html> Forgiving God.

Does God need to be forgiven? Not in the least. Who needs forgiveness? Those who fail to live up to what they have said about themselves, or the contracts they make with others. God however is perfect, his ways are perfect, and all his ways are justice. We don't get it; we don't understand; we don't like it. But forgiving is about cancelling a debt, and God owes us nothing. He is not indebted to us. Yet we often find God guilty of "lapsing" when we face tragedies. We blame Him for bad golf shots or rainy days after we got our hair straightened. We blame him for

wayward children or failing parents who forget us suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia. We blame God for war in the Middle East, for millions dead in the Holocaust, for Tony Abbott's victory or surprises with our football team. When we think this way we endorse the human need for pleasure and we think we are better than God. Our principles, our ethics, our considerations are more carefully chosen than His. We know better. We have to teach him and forgive him for his failures.

That's even hard for me to read. Much more to speak out loud and would be even harder yet to espouse. God help those who think like that.

I understand disappointment and hope you do also, but to blame God for your dissatisfaction and your expectations unmet is to think of yourself more highly than you ought. It's to make you God and him your servant. And that won't work. Been there. Done that.

Y'shua would offer himself to us as a living sacrifice to bring us to the Father.

**Idea Eternal idea #5: God forgives on the basis of His own sacrifice:
Forgiveness in Y'shua**

Although I've mentioned it in passing, now I get to the final idea, the original idea, the heavenly one, and the one that works. It's not based on us or on me or on a religion or philosophy. It's based on the person and work of Messiah Y'shua. He came to live and die, to be a korban, an offering who would bring us near to the Almighty, who would bridge the gap between eternity and the temporal, between the Ever-good and the failed, between Righteousness and human failings. He died to forgive us our sins, and to usher us into God's presence.

Take an exit poll at messianic congregations worldwide tonight and tomorrow night and you will find the assurance of salvation, the comfort of knowing our salvation is God's work. You will find believers shouting 'Hallelujah!' because of a cross in Jerusalem and the empty tomb nearby.

Y'shua declared forgiveness there, to all who would receive Him.

Most of us in this room tonight have done just that.

Have you? Will you now? Receive His love and grace and be born again. Then your name will be written in the Lamb's book of life, never to be erased. You will be His. He loves you. He longs to be in relationship with you.

Receive Him now.