

# Aspects of the Old Testament Foundation of the Feast of Yom Kippur

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**Abstract:** This study explores the biblical foundations and theological meanings of Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in the Jewish religious calendar. The research analyzes the Levitical texts that underlie this holiday, along with rabbinic interpretations that enrich our understanding of it. The main themes addressed include the role of complete fasting and sacred rest as a means of introspection and closeness to God, the significance of atoning for sins through repentance (teshuva), and the intrinsic spiritual energy of the day, which supports divine reconciliation and purification of the soul. The study also emphasizes the importance of rabbinic commentaries in defining the practices and deepening the spiritual meanings of Yom Kippur, highlighting the uniqueness of this day as a time of spiritual rebirth and joy. The main conclusion is that, from a Jewish perspective, Yom Kippur is not merely a religious ceremony but a sacred institution that facilitates the reconnection between humanity and divinity, providing an annual opportunity for purification and spiritual renewal.

**Keywords:** Yom Kippur, Fasting, Repentance, Shabbat, Day of Rest, Day of Atonement, Teshuva

## 1. Introduction

Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is one of the most sacred and significant days in the Jewish religious calendar, dedicated to the process of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with the Divine. The origin of this holiday is deeply rooted in biblical tradition, based on the commandments detailed in the book of Leviticus. It is a day of solemn introspection and purification, characterized by fasting, prayer, and observance of rigorous prohibitions designed to facilitate spiritual closeness to God. It is important to consider the biblical foundation of Yom Kippur and how it has been interpreted, expanded, and contextualized through rabbinic commentary. These rabbinic contributions not only enrich the theological understanding of the holiday but also emphasize the spiritual, social, and cosmic dimensions of the holiday.

We will focus on the foundational biblical texts that define fasting, rest, and atonement as essential elements of the feast and examine rabbinic contributions that offer insight into spiritual practices and meanings, emphasizing how the oral tradition complements the written text. Through this approach, we aim to provide a broad and deep understanding of Yom Kippur, both as a biblical institution and as an expression of a dynamic and living spirituality, providing an opportunity for reflection and renewal at both personal and communal levels.

## 2. The Fast of Yom Kippur: Scriptural Foundation (Leviticus 23: 27, 29, 32)

Leviticus 23: 27, 29, 32: "27. And on the tenth day of the seventh month, which is the day of cleansing, you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall fast, and burn burnt offerings to the Lord; 29. Every soul that does not fast on that day shall be cut off from his people; 32. This is a day of rest for you; you shall fast from the evening of the ninth day of the month; from that evening until the evening of the tenth day of the month you shall keep your Sabbath."

The fast of Yom Kippur is one of the holiest and most important days in the Jewish calendar. Known as the Day of Atonement, it is dedicated to repentance, prayer, and atonement for sins committed in the previous year. It is a complete fast with a series of strict rules, accompanied by a solemn and introspective atmosphere.

In Mishna Yoma 8:1, the five main prohibitions of Yom Kippur are listed, emphasizing the uniqueness and solemnity of this day. These restrictions are not intended to cause suffering but rather to allow man to focus on the spiritual and divine dimension, temporarily ignoring physical needs. The five prohibitions are as follows: 1) Eating and Drinking - It is forbidden to eat or drink; 2) Washing - It is forbidden to wash the body except in strictly necessary situations; 3) Anointing with Lotions - No oils, creams or other cosmetics; 4) Leather Footwear - It is forbidden to wear leather footwear; other materials may be used; 5) Marital Relations - Any intimate relations are forbidden (Mishna Yoma 8:1).

In other words, on Yom Kippur, basic physical needs are disregarded, but man focuses on his spiritual duties. By fasting and humbling himself, a person merits to distance himself from his animal nature - the physical world - and draw closer to God (Fridlander, 2004, 267).

There is a fundamental distinction between fasting on Yom Kippur and fasting observed on other fast days. In the case of other fast days, abstention from food is intended to counteract bodily tendencies, thus expressing repentance. Fasting on Yom Kippur, on the other hand, is based on the concept that the soul, being in a higher spiritual state, does not require physical nourishment. This type of fast is also intended to remove any distractions, allowing us to focus on the deeper meaning of this holy day (Hutner, 2008).

One of the reasons for this Yom Kippur mitzvot is that, out of His bounty to His creations, God has given man an annual day dedicated to atoning for his transgressions through repentance. Thus, the faithful Jew is urged to fast on this day, because food, drink and other physical pleasures tend to awaken the material side of the human being, stimulating desires and faults and distracting him from the pursuit of truth, which is the service of God. Before the divine judgment, it is not fitting that man should be preoccupied with material matters, such as food and drink, at this solemn moment. Therefore, the Jewish believer is called to elevate himself spiritually, diminishing his attachment to the physical world, in order to become worthy and able to obtain divine forgiveness, uninfluenced by fleshly desires.

The root of this commandment in scripture can be explained as follows: because of God's infinite kindness to His creations, He has designated one day a year on which man can obtain atonement for his sins through repentance (teshuva). For this reason, the believing Jew is obligated to fast on this day, because the consumption of food, drink and other sensory pleasures activates the physical side of the being, encouraging bodily desires and the potential to sin. It is not fitting that man, on the day of his judgment, should present himself before his Creator with his soul darkened and troubled by the influences of food and drink. The judgment is based solely on the deeds committed by the individual at that time. Therefore, it is appropriate for the believing Jew to elevate his soul and overcome his physical nature on this day of great importance in order to become worthy and able to receive atonement, unhindered by the influence of bodily desires (Sefer HaChinukh, 2018, 313).

According to the Shulchan Aruch (2004), eating an amount of food equivalent to the volume of a kotevet (a large curmal) on Yom Kippur entails liability for karet. However, the consumption of any amount even below this measure is a violation of a biblical prohibition, in accordance with the well-known principle of chatzi shiur assur min hatorah, which stipulates that even part of a forbidden measure is also forbidden according to the Torah. The prohibition against eating on Yom Kippur according to the commandment in Leviticus 23:27, 29, 32 is generally extremely strict, with food permitted only in situations where there is a potential danger to life. While this principle seems straightforward, in practice, determining who is considered to be in danger when fasting is a complex issue that has generated significant debate among poskim (halakhic decisors). We will analyze three distinct categories of persons who might be included in this situation.

The Mishna Berura mentions, however, that there are differing opinions that hold that the three-day period can be calculated as an exact 72-hour duration. Accordingly, a yoledet could consume food until the precise fulfillment of those 72 hours, which would allow him to

eat on part of the day of Yom Kippur if the time limit ends in the middle of that day. The Mishna Berura also emphasizes that during the period of three days after childbirth, a yoledet should not fast, even if she wishes to do so. However, some commentators suggest that in such cases, she may consume food in smaller quantities than the shiur (the permissible halachic measure), "Even if she says that she does not need to eat, we still feed her and tell her to eat. However, in such cases, we should give her smaller amounts than the [prohibited] measure every time. But if she hasn't said she doesn't need it, we give her to eat as normal, without making the distinction or offering less than the measure. However, there are those who are stricter, and even in this case they demand that she be given less than the measure" (Mishnah Berurah, 2010, 617:10).

A person whose state of health is so serious that his or her life is endangered is undoubtedly permitted and obligated to consume food on Yom Kippur. The determination as to whether a person is in such a situation is based, according to Ghemara, on the assessment of experts, usually doctors. If a doctor is not available, a person's self-assessment is accepted, and the person is given the authority to communicate whether he or she feels he or she needs to eat. "As far as a sick person is concerned, we give them food based on expert opinion. If no experts are available, we feed him according to his own opinion until he says to stop" (Masechet Yoma, 1989, 82a).

Aruch states that, according to Ghemara, in most cases, it is based on the assessment of the doctors to decide whether the patient should eat. However, if the doctors feel that the patient does not need to eat, but the patient insists that he does, he will be allowed to eat, ignoring the doctors' recommendation in this case. "As for a sick person who needs to eat, if there is an expert physician present, even if he is non-Jewish, who says, 'If he does not eat, his illness is likely to worsen and he may be in danger,' we give him to eat based on his suggestion, and all the more so if he says that the patient may die. Even if the sick person says, 'I don't need it,' we listen to the doctor. If the sick person says he needs to eat, even if a hundred doctors say he doesn't need to, we listen to the sick person" (Aruch, 2004, 618:1).

As a parallel between the fast of Yom Kippur and the Orthodox Christian fast, we will evoke what Evagrius, one of the great Desert Fathers, mentions about fasting. He speaks of fasting as an essential means of purifying the soul and drawing closer to God. He emphasizes that fasting must be done with all strength and sincerity, considering it an act of self-giving before God. Fasting is seen as a method of inner purification, a means of leaving faults behind and renewing one's relationship with God, and it also has a spiritual warfare dimension, helping to overcome temptations and to drive away evil thoughts or influences. Through fasting, the mind and soul become clearer, more ordered, ready for prayer and contemplation. It is also an act of humility and obedience, which opens the soul to communion with the Creator (Evagrie Ponticus, 1946, 46).

John Cassian, an important theologian of monastic spirituality, places particular emphasis on the spiritual dimension of fasting, emphasizing that true fasting goes beyond mere physical abstinence and extends to the inner life. In his vision, fasting is not an end in itself, but a means to an authentic spiritual experience. Cassian emphasizes that it is not enough to focus only on bodily fasting (abstaining from food). True fasting must be accompanied by deep spiritual work, the cleansing of thoughts and meditation on the divine. Without this inner work it is impossible to reach the height of true righteousness and purity. Inspired by the Lord's words, Cassian reminds us that we must first cleanse the inner part of our life, symbolized by "the inner part of the cup and the bowl" (Matthew 23: 25), so that the outer part may be clean. This interior cleansing involves humility, repentance and prayer (Cassian 1946, 100).

Simeon Metaphrastus, a Byzantine writer deeply concerned with Christian spirituality, approaches fasting with a wisdom that balances the value of ascetic practices against the dangers of over-reliance on them. He offers a balanced perspective that warns of the spiritual

risks associated with a misunderstanding of fasting and other needs. Simeon recognizes the value of fasting, fasting, fasting, fasting and exemplary living. These are seen as good and helpful practices, but he considers them only a beginning of God-loving living, not an end in themselves. They must lead to genuine inner transformation. He warns that it is foolhardy to put all our trust in these outward practices alone. Fasting, though beneficial, is not a guarantee of spiritual purity or salvation. Wickedness can linger in the heart even in the midst of necessities, withdrawing temporarily only to deceive the soul. Simion speaks of a subtle spiritual trap: during the time of the needs, man may come to believe that he has cleansed his mind and reached perfection. This delusion is a major danger because it leads to pride, which makes him vulnerable to the attacks of evil. Wickedness, temporarily withdrawn, can come back thievishly and lower man to the lowest states of the soul. His teaching emphasizes that true Christian living consists not only in outward deeds, but in the inner work of the heart. Humility, temperance and discernment are needed to avoid deception. Only in this way can man progress on the path of God-loving life (Metaphrastus, 1976, 362).

Although Yom Kippur fasting and Orthodox Christian fasting have different contexts and rules, they share the same fundamental aspiration: the uplifting of the soul towards God through material renunciation and sincere repentance. While Yom Kippur is fixed in the Jewish calendar as a day of collective and individual atonement, Christian fasting is more diverse in form and purpose, including not only repentance but also the constant struggle against sins and the desire for spiritual fulfillment.

### **3. The Sacred Commandment to Rest on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 23:28, 30, 31)**

Leviticus 23: 28, 30, 31: "28. Do no work on that day, for it is the day of cleansing" that you may be clean before the face of the Lord your God. 30. And every soul that labors in that day will I cut off from among his people. 31. You shall not do any work: this is an everlasting habitation in your nation in all your cities."

According to these verses, work is forbidden on Yom Kippur to prevent distractions. "The mit *mitzvah* to refrain from work on Yom Kippur has as its main reason that we should not be distracted by anything, so that we may focus our thoughts and intentions on obtaining forgiveness and absolution from the Master of the Universe on this day, proclaimed as the day of forgiveness since the creation of the world" (Sefefr Ha'Hinuk, 2024, 317). It can be said that there is a positive commandment to refrain from performing melakha (forbidden activities) on Yom Kippur, according to the verse, "This is a day of rest for you" (Leviticus 23: 32). A person who works on Yom Kippur not only fails to fulfill this positive commandment to refrain from melakha, but also violates a negative commandment, "You shall not do any work on that day" (Leviticus 23: 28). Since Yom Kippur is called "Shabbat," the thirty-nine categories of activities forbidden on Shabbat are also forbidden on Yom Kippur. The difference lies in the punishment: whoever willfully works on Shabbat (in the presence of witnesses and after warning) is liable to stoning to death by stoning, while for Yom Kippur he is liable to karet (spiritual exclusion). If one performs melakha unknowingly on either of these days, one must offer a sin offering. This is made clear in the verse, "And every soul that shall work on that day, I will cut him off from among his people." (Leviticus 23: 30).

As on Shabbat, the commandment to rest on Yom Kippur includes the obligation not to treat the day as an ordinary day. In addition to refraining from forbidden activities, it is not permitted to engage in strenuous activities or preparations for weekdays. For example, it is not permissible to open a store or move heavy items in preparation for activities after Yom Kippur. Even if these activities do not fall into the thirty-nine categories of forbidden activities, they contravene the commandment concerning rest (Leviticus 23: 32). This

commandment emphasizes the preservation of the sacredness and uniqueness of the day. A person's behavior must be different from that of an ordinary day (Melamed, 2016, 22:1).

In general, all Shabbat laws also apply on Yom Kippur, with an additional mitzva to fast, which requires an even deeper separation from worldly concerns.

In terms of Christian teaching, Gregory Palamas offers a profound and integrative perspective on the concept of "rest in God", emphasizing that this rest is not inactivity, but implies an active and continuous spiritual work in communion with God. Authentic rest in God is not a state of passivity, but a work of the good and virtues, realized through divine grace received in union with him. Gregory Palamas emphasizes that rest and work in God are inseparable: to rest in God is to work in God. This work involves turning away from sin and active involvement in good works, prayer and living the virtues. Gregory Palamas shows that resting in God is profoundly dynamic and working. It is not mere withdrawal from the world or static contemplation, but a living participation in the uncreated divine energies. True rest involves the working of good and collaboration with God's grace, which leads to spiritual growth and communion with him. For Gregory Palamas, "rest in God" is not a state of passive repose, but an active working in divine grace, a living of the good and virtues in communion with God. This vision contrasts with the abstract and passive conception criticized in Varlaam, which separated rest from any spiritual work. Thus, rest in God becomes synonymous with the fulfillment of the divine commandments and participation in his life, offering a dynamic and profound understanding of the Christian life (St. Gregory Palamas 1977, 254).

Yom Kippur is a day of sacred rest through complete abstention from work, creating an exclusive space for repentance, prayer and reconciliation with God. It is a physical and spiritual rest imposed to ensure total concentration on the divine purpose of the day. Christian rest, according to Gregory Palamas, is a dynamic state of spiritual activity in divine grace, manifested in the fulfillment of the good and continuous communion with God. It does not imply inactivity, but a living experience of the divine commandments. Both forms of rest emphasize the importance of separation from worldliness in order to achieve a state of holiness and closeness to God, but they differ in their emphasis on the passive or active nature of this rest.

#### **4. Yom Kippur as the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23: 27)**

According to the *Sefer HaChinukh*, from the moment of Creation, God designated Yom Kippur as a day of atonement for sins, a day whose essential nature allows for spiritual purification and reconciliation with God. From the very beginning, this day was set apart and sanctified by God for this specific purpose. By consecrating this day for the process of atonement, Yom Kippur has acquired a special sacredness and has been invested by the Divinity with the capacity to support this process. This is emphasized by the rabbis, who repeatedly state that Yom Kippur 'repairs' - an expression that underlines the intrinsic power of this day. In addition, it emphasizes that Yom Kippur is indispensable for maintaining the cosmic balance of the world. The fundamental rationale for this commandment derives from the divine kindness shown to the Jewish people: God established an annual day dedicated to the atonement of sins through the process of *teshuva* (repentance). Without this annual opportunity for purification, the accumulation of wrongs over the years would lead to moral saturation and threaten the existential equilibrium of the world, necessitating its destruction. Consequently, to ensure the perpetuation of the universal order, God, in His infinite wisdom, established Yom Kippur as a Day of Reconciliation and spiritual restoration (Sefer HaChinukh, 2024, 185).

Rabbinic tradition provides examples of figures such as Adam, Cain, Reuben and Judah, who realized the process of *Teshuva* (repentance) long before Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the second set of Tablets of the Law and the official integration of Yom

Kippur into the Jewish calendar. The question therefore arises: what fundamental change did Yom Kippur bring in this context? To answer this, it is important to examine the circumstances in which this day was established (Rotaru, 2015, 318-322).

The divine revelation on Mount Sinai, when God gave the Ten Commandments to all the Jewish people, took place on the 6th of Sivan, known as the feast of Shavuot. After this event, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for a period of forty days, during which time he received the Torah, and then descended with the first set of Tablets of the Law. During his absence, the Jewish people, believing that Moses would not return, built the Golden Calf, a serious act of idolatry. When Moses returned and saw this act, he destroyed the Tablets in outrage. He then climbed Mount Sinai again for another forty days, praying for forgiveness for the Jewish people. Finally, he was called for a third ascent of the mountain, where he received the second set of Tablets of the Law. He descended with them on the day that would become known as Yom Kippur. This moment marked the reconciliation between God and the Jewish people, establishing Yom Kippur as a day of atonement and forgiveness for all future generations. Thus, Yom Kippur not only symbolizes the possibility of repentance, but institutionalizes a specific day in the calendar for the process of spiritual reconciliation, with deep theological meanings related to the relationship between Divinity and humanity (Rotaru, 2019, 94-105).

According to Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Yom Kippur is a day imbued with an intrinsic spiritual energy of atonement and forgiveness. This concept is based on the idea that the holidays are not celebrated merely as symbols or commemorations of past events, but allow us to reconnect with the temporal source of their original holiness. The holiness manifested in the original moment of these days continues to directly influence the present, being the same as it was when they were established. Rabbi Tsvi Hirsch Broyde of Kélèm, Rav Dessler's teacher, emphasized that time does not pass over man passively, but that man travels a journey through time. For example, the first Shabbat represents a "temporal station" called Shabbat, and every week, man reaches this station again, accessing the same holiness and spiritual influence as during the first Shabbat. The same principle applies to all holidays: they are not mere commemorations, but recurring points in time that allow direct access to the original spiritual energies that define them. Before the institution of Yom Kippur, the process of teshuva was sufficient to remove the wrongs committed by a person. However, with the establishment of this holy day, the Jewish people were given a unique opportunity: to completely erase the wrongs and start anew with a "clean slate". This process not only remedies spiritual damage, but allows for the full restoration of the lost spiritual level (Luzzatto, 2022, 4:8:5).

Yom Kippur is a special day set aside by God on which the genuine repentance of the Jewish people is accepted without hindrance and their wrongs are easily erased. This day has the power to repair all the spiritual damage caused by sins, enabling those who repent to return to the original state of purity, holiness and closeness to God from which they had strayed. An interesting aspect of Yom Kippur is the opportunity to make up for seemingly lost spiritual years. Through deep and sincere repentance, individuals can transform past mistakes into merits, even reaching higher levels of spiritual elevation. Moreover, on this day, God works together with the repentant, facilitating the process of spiritual restoration and return to holiness. Thus, Yom Kippur is not just a day of atonement, but a miraculous moment of deep reconnection with Divinity and spiritual renewal.

Rabbi Fridlander highlights that Yom Kippur is a day on which man receives special divine support to repent. This day is characterized by an intense manifestation of divine mercy, whereby man is encouraged and supported to turn to God through teshuva (repentance). This help from heaven is not conditional on the merits of the individual; even those who, according to strict law, would not be eligible for such assistance, receive this support. This is the unique power of Yom Kippur - a divine opportunity offered to all for spiritual reconnection (Fridlander, 2004, 264). Similarly, Rabbi Noah Weinberg emphasizes

that Yom Kippur is a privileged day on which man can appeal directly to God, without obstacles or delays. This concept is reflected in the prophetic verse "Call to Him while He is near," which traditionally refers to Yom Kippur. On this day, God is more accessible than ever (Weinberg, 2024). To illustrate this, Weinberg compares the relationship with God on Yom Kippur to having direct access to a high-ranking official, such as a mayor, during an election campaign, when he is present among the people. Throughout the year, the process of teshuva is more complex and requires considerable effort, similar to getting an official audience. However, during Yom Kippur, the process is much easier and repentance is accepted immediately.

According to Rabbi Chalom Brezovsky, the essence of Yom Kippur is its atoning power. This holy day is defined by its unique ability to lift the Jewish soul above the material world, characterized by imperfections and mistakes, thus enabling it to reconnect to a higher spiritual level. This process of elevation causes all mistakes to be atoned for. Moreover, if a person directs his intentions towards God on this day, the Divine responds with a reciprocal closeness, thus strengthening the bond between man and Creator (Brezovsky, 2010, 167).

In the *Babylonian Talmud*, Rabbi Akiva offers a powerful analogy to describe the purifying effect of Yom Kippur: "God acts as a mikveh (ritual pool) for Israel." Just as a mikve cleanses physical impurities, God cleanses the spiritual impurities of the soul. Rabbi Akiva proclaims, "Blessed be Israel! Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven!" This divine purification is metaphorically described by the verse, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be cleansed," reaffirming God's role as the ultimate source of spiritual purification (Masechet Yoma, 1989, 85b).

Contrary to the perception that Yom Kippur is a day of sadness, rabbis consider this holiday to be one of the most joyous days in the Jewish calendar. This joy is rooted in the purification the day brings, giving those who repent a chance to begin a new spiritual chapter. Rabbi Akiva emphasizes this joy by saying: "Blessed be Israel!" The connection between purity and joy is also evident in the nuptial tradition, where one of the seven blessings invokes the joy of the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden before sin: "Give lasting joy to the companions who love one another, as you did for your creations in the Garden of Eden." (Masechet Yoma, 1989, 85b). Thus, Yom Kippur is not only a day of atonement for the Jewish people, but also a day of spiritual transformation and profound joy, which springs from freedom from the burden of wrongdoing and a return to a state of original purity.

A parallel can be drawn between the state of repentance as seen by Orthodox teaching and the repentance done by the Jewish Christian on the feast of Yom Kippur. Mark the Ascetic, one of the most profound theologians of Christian asceticism, places a fundamental emphasis on repentance as an ongoing work, necessary for all people, regardless of their spiritual state. In his teachings, repentance is not just a one-time moment of remorse, but an ongoing practice that transforms the whole life of the believer. Mark emphasizes that repentance must be pursued by all people - sinners and righteous alike. There is no point in one's life when one can consider that one has reached perfection and no longer needs to repent. Even the spiritually saved need repentance in order to maintain and increase their connection with God. Even those who are "as godly as possible" need repentance, because neglecting small faults gradually leads to greater falls ("He who despises small things will fall by little and little" - Sirach 19:1). In essence, Mark Asceticus teaches that repentance is a living work, essential in maintaining man's relationship with God and in his progress on the path to perfection (Mark Asceticus, 1946, 222).

Elijah Ecdicul approaches repentance in a way that emphasizes the connection between the awareness of its necessity and human behavior in relation to sin. Elijah emphasizes that those who do not turn their thoughts to repentance live in a state of spiritual carelessness, which causes them to sin constantly. This reflects a rift between man and God, for the lack of repentance is a sign of a soul that does not seek correction. Elijah observes that repentance is

often prompted by an awareness of sin. Those who sin inadvertently are more likely to repent, but their occasions of repentance are not as frequent as those who sin willfully and constantly. In essence, Elijah Ecdicul sees repentance as a vital process, linked to awareness and responsibility, which protects the soul from a continual fall into sin (Ilie Ecdicul, 1948, 283).

Simeon the New Theologian offers a profound and distinctive perspective on repentance, placing it in significant contrast to theology. He approaches repentance as an essential stage, but distinct from the theological or contemplative state, highlighting the differences between the two. Repentance is seen as a necessary condition for drawing near to God, but it is a preliminary stage. The one who repents recognizes his unworthiness and sins, crying out to God for forgiveness and restoration. Simeon associates it with a state of heartbreak, necessary for the cleansing of the soul. Repentance is absolutely necessary to reach theology. Without it, there is no purification, humility or preparation for communion with God. It is an obligatory path that every soul, regardless of its spiritual calling or destination, must travel. Simeon the New Theologian describes repentance as an essential and valuable work, but he considers it a preliminary step on the way to union with God. If repentance is the state of one who recognizes his helplessness and sins, theology is the state of one who has entered into full communion with God and lives in light and glory. The two are not opposites, but complementary, each having its role in man's spiritual ascent (Simeon the New Theologian 1977, 51).

Repentance on Yom Kippur is an annual moment of collective and individual reconciliation, in which man reconnects with God and cleanses his soul for a new beginning. In contrast, Christian repentance is an ongoing work that transforms the believer's life and helps him or her to progress on the path to perfection. Both forms of repentance emphasize the need for humility, awareness of sins and cooperation with God for spiritual restoration.

## 5. Conclusions

Yom Kippur, known as the Day of Atonement, is one of the most important days in the Jewish religious calendar, with deep roots in the Old Testament. This day is dedicated to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with God, underlining its central role in maintaining the relationship between man and divinity. Complete fasting is a central element of the feast, with clear prohibitions on the consumption of food, drink and other physical activities. These rules are intended to facilitate introspection and spiritual closeness to God, offering believers an opportunity to transcend physical needs. The prohibition to work on Yom Kippur is biblically based (Leviticus 23: 28, 30, 31). It is seen as a way of avoiding distractions and allowing exclusive focus on repentance and prayer. Yom Kippur is described as a 'Shabbat of the Shabbats', symbolizing a high degree of sacredness.

The day is invested with a unique capacity to support atonement and spiritual reconciliation, being set up as a special time when wrongs can be completely wiped away, giving believers the opportunity to start afresh with a 'clean slate'. Yom Kippur is seen not just as a day of commemoration, but as a time of intrinsic spiritual energy that facilitates spiritual purification and renewal. This is a day when the Divine is more accessible, supporting the process of repentance. Rabbinic commentaries add a profound dimension to this holiday, emphasizing that it is not just a formal ritual but an active process of spiritual transformation. The rabbis emphasize the power of this day to change the lives of believers, to give them the opportunity to recover their lost spiritual level. Contrary to the perception that Yom Kippur is a sad day, the rabbis see it as a holiday of joy, derived from spiritual purification and freedom from the burden of wrongdoing. In conclusion, Yom Kippur is more than a religious tradition; it is a manifestation of the dynamic relationship between God and man, offering believers a framework for reflection, repentance and spiritual rebirth.



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