

What Does It Mean To
"AFFLICT OUR SOULS?"

[Leviticus 23:27-32]

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In Leviticus 16:29-31, we are told about a day called the "Day of Atonement", and are commanded to "afflict our souls" on that day.

Leviticus 16:29, "And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourns among you."

Leviticus 16:30, "For on that day shall [the priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, [that] ye may be clean from all your sins before YAHWEH."

Leviticus 16:31, "It [shall be] a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever."

This refers to one of Yahweh's annual Set-apart Days, called the Day of Atonement. In the 23^d chapter of Leviticus, there is a list of ALL of Yahweh's Set-apart Days. He starts with the weekly Sabbath and then enumerates each of the annual festivals for the entire year. In verses 27 through 32, we find reference to this same "Day of Atonement" spoken of in Chapter 16, and again are admonished to "afflict our souls" on this day. We are also told WHEN to do this: "**...in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do not work at all...**" Verse 32 pinpoints the exact time: "**...in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.**"

The "seventh month" refers, of course, to the seventh month of the sacred calendar, which was revealed to Moses in Exodus 12:2, and which corresponds on the Gregorian calendar, that is in common use by the world today, to approximately mid-September to around mid-October. Its Hebrew name is "Tishri."

As we shall presently see, this annual Sabbath is just as binding upon True Believers today, as it was on the Israelites back then. It is the only one where we are commanded to "afflict ourselves" and is considered to be the most solemn occasion of the entire year. Yahweh issues a very stern warning in verse 29: "**For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.**"

It follows then that, if we expect to be one of Yahweh's people, we MUST

afflict our souls on this day, as He, in His infinite wisdom, has commanded us to do. But, since these two passages of scripture do not elaborate, we must look elsewhere in His Kodesh Word to find the meaning of this term. The Bible is not to be interpreted privately (II Peter 1:20). We must let the Bible interpret itself.

The English word "soul," used here, is translated from the Hebrew "nephesh" and simply means physical life, breath, or body. The same word is used elsewhere in reference to animals. It is not in any way referring to an "immortal soul" or a spirit within man, but rather to the physical body, the life.

The word translated "afflict" is #6031 in *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*, and is "ANAH," pronounced "aw-naw". It means to depress, to abase the self, to afflict, chasten self, deal hardly with, defile, humble, hurt, submit self, weaken.

Now let's look at a few scriptures to see how Yahweh's people afflicted and humbled themselves, keeping in mind II Timothy 3:16: **"ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF YAHWEH, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"**

In 11 Samuel 1:12, we see that David (whose salvation and resurrection is assured, Jeremiah 30:9), and all the men with him, **"mourned and wept and FASTED..."**, for Saul, Jonathan, and others who had been killed in battle.

In Psalm 35:13, David said, **"I humbled (ANAH) my soul with fasting."**

This same word is used in Daniel 10:12, but is translated "chasten." In verses 2 and 3 of this chapter, we see that Daniel fasted for three weeks, and Yahweh sent an angel to reveal to him what was to happen to His people (v. 14) then in verse 12, the angel tells Daniel that from the first day of his fasting and praying, he was heard.

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and TO CHASTEN THYSELF (ANAH) before thy Elohim, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."

When Ezra was preparing to lead a group of Jewish exiles from Babylon back to Jerusalem, he called a fast to seek Yahweh's protection during the trip, which would be through rugged, bandit-infested country.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might AFFLICT (ANAH) ourselves before our Elohim." (Ezra 8:21).

Psalm 69:10, "When I wept, and chastened (ANAH) my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach."

Isaiah 58:3, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted (ANAH) our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours."

Joel 2:12, "Therefore also now, saith Yahweh, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."

Psalm 109:24, "My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness."

I Kings 21:27-29, "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth (ANAH) himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Notice particularly here in I Kings, YAHWEH HIMSELF accepts fasting as an acceptable way to afflict, or humble oneself before Him.

Nehemiah 1:4, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the Elohim of heaven."

All these scriptures, as well as others, show plainly that these people FASTED to afflict, humble, and chastise themselves before Yahweh.

But just what IS a fast? Exactly what are we to do? Here again, as always, we should look to the Scriptures for the answer.

Deuteronomy 9:9 and 18 show the example Moses left. He says that during his fasts, **"I neither did eat bread nor drink water."**

Queen Esther asked all the Jews in Shushan to join her in a three day fast, **"...neither EAT NOR DRINK three days, night or day." (Esther 4:16)**

Ezra "...did eat no bread, nor drink water." (10:6)

We find that the Apostle Paul, in the book of Acts, fasted for three days, neither eating nor drinking. Acts 9:9, "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

So the plain, revealed truth, directly from the Bible, is that we "afflict our souls" by fasting, and that fasting is the total abstinence from both food and drink. Therefore, on the Day of Atonement, we afflict our souls by abstaining from food and drink for the 24-hour period from sundown, ending the ninth day, until after sundown of the tenth day, of the seventh Scriptural month (Tishri 10, on the Hebrew calendar).

But Leviticus 23 refers to these days as Feasts of Yahweh. Should we FAST on a FEAST day? The Hebrew word translated Feasts in Leviticus 23, is MOWED, OR MOWADAH (*Strongs* #4150), meaning a fixed season, an appointment, appointed time, or festival. So Yahweh is telling us that these are His fixed, annual observances, to be observed according to His instructions, including a "kodesh convocation" on each of the seven High Sabbaths. This means a commanded assembly for the purpose of worship. (Leviticus 23:4)

Does this Festival have any meaning for us today? Hasn't it already been fulfilled? The answer is YES, it does have meaning for us today, and NO, it has not been fulfilled.

Yahweh's Kodesh Days, based on the agricultural seasons in Israel, reveal His plan of salvation for all mankind, from the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior, through and beyond the resurrection of the last human being who will ever be born on the face of this earth.

Each Festival has its own meaning, its own part to play. Like chapters in a book, or pieces in a puzzle, if one is missing, you would not get the complete story.

There is ample evidence in the New Testament that Yahshua and His disciples kept these annual Kodesh Days, and also that, much later, the Apostles and other true believers were still keeping them, and teaching others to do so.

In Acts 27, we find Luke accompanying Paul on his journey to Rome. He

writes (verse 9), "**Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them...**"

Those who oppose the observance of Yahweh's Kodesh Days say that Luke was merely using that "old Jewish festival" as a reference point to show that it was now late autumn, the stormy season, and not that they were observing the day.

But Luke was a Gentile, and he was writing to a Gentile, Theophilus (Acts 1:1). If it had been cast aside, and was no longer to be kept, then Luke would have had no reason to mark time with use of that expression, and his Greek friend, Theophilus, surely would not have understood what he meant. This happened more than thirty years **after** the Messiah had been impaled. Everything "done away with" should have long since ceased.

Yet here is Luke, a Gentile convert, referring to the Day of Atonement. The implication is clear. These annual Kodesh Days were still being observed by the Apostle Paul, and other New Testament converts.

Some might suggest that perhaps Luke's statement in Acts 27:9 took place **AFTER** the incidents recorded in verses 21-33, when Paul encouraged the sailors to take some food. However, a careful reading of the entire chapter will show that the events recorded in verse 33 happened at least 14 days **AFTER** the conversation recorded in verse 9. In fact, Paul refers back to this conversation in verse 21, saying, "**Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me.**" There can be no doubt that the chapter is written in chronological order.

They were in port at Fair Havens when the verse 9 incident took place. Paul was advising them that they should, in his opinion, stay there for the winter, and not try to make it to Phenice. He was overruled and they set sail (v.13). Almost immediately, they ran into a storm, which buffeted them about for fourteen days before they came near land (verses 14-38). They were working sailors, and the reason they had not eaten was simply because they were too busy trying to save the ship. And besides, they were terrified; in great fear for their lives.

Study this entire chapter, as well as the ones before and after. You will find that there is absolutely **NO** connection between the Fast mentioned in verse 9, and the one referred to in verses 21 and 33. Even the Greek words used in the two instances are different, and have totally different meanings. The word "Fast" in v.9 is from the Greek NESTEIA, *Strong's* #3521, and means "abstinence (from lack of food, or voluntary and religious); specifically **the fast of the Day of Atonement.**"

The other words, "abstinence" in verse 21, and "fasting" in verse 33, are from, respectively, Strongs #776 and #777, and mean the same thing. Number 776 says "ASITIA, from #777, fasting (the state) abstinence." Number 777 says "ASITOS: without taking food--fasting." These words do NOT denote fasting for a religious purpose, as does NESTEIA, but simply mean abstaining from food.

Bullingers Companion Bible, note on Acts 27:9 states: "Fast: i.e. the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement, about October 1."

The Good News Bible renders this passage, "We spent a long time there (Safe Harbors), until it became dangerous to continue the voyage, for by now the Day of Atonement was already past." A footnote explains: "Day of Atonement. This was celebrated toward the end of September or beginning of October, at which time bad weather made sailing dangerous."

Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, under Fast says, "In Acts 27:9, 'the Fast' refers to the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16:29; that time of the year would be one of dangerous sailing."

Ungers Bible Handbook, page 599, comments on verses 7-12: "Adverse winds made the 130 mile trip to Cnidus (a fine harbor) difficult and lengthy. The time of the Fast (October 5, v. 9), signaled that dangerous weather had set in, which could be expected after September 14."

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible says on verse 9: "**When much time was spent** (since leaving Caesarea. But for unforeseen delays they might have reached the Italian coast before the stormy season) **and when sailing** (the navigation of the open sea) **was now dangerous, because the Fast was now past** (that of the Day of Atonement, answering to the end of September and the beginning of October, about which time navigation is pronounced unsafe by writers of authority. Since all hope of completing the voyage during that season was abandoned, the question next was, whether they should winter at Fair Havens, or move to Port Phenice, a harbor about 40 miles to the westward. Paul assisted at the consultation and strongly urged them to winter where they were)."

If you have access to the *Jerusalem Bible*, read Acts 27:1-14, and footnotes 27a, and 27c, at the bottom of the page. In note c, he identifies the "last" of verse 9 as the Day of Atonement, "the only fast-day prescribed by the Law."

In summary, we have seen that Yahweh intends for those of us who claim to be His people to "afflict ourselves" at least once a year, on His Day of Atonement and that, in every Biblical example, this has been done by fasting. He says emphatically that those who choose to disobey this command will be cut off--will no longer be part of His people.

Leviticus 23:29: "For whatsoever soul [it be] that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

We have also seen that fasting consists of abstaining from both food and drink. Moreover, we have seen that this annual High Day was still being kept in the New Testament era and is, therefore, obligatory upon us today.

In Colossians 2, a chapter of Apostle Paul's writings that has been grossly misunderstood by virtually all of Christendom, we are told to beware of man's worldly traditions (v 8), man's commandments and doctrines (v. 22). All these things are sin, and are against us. But Yahshua took these things (our sin) out of the way, nailing it to the stake, v. 14.

Therefore, Paul tells us, v. 16, **"Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of (observance of) an kodesh day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."**

V. 17, "Which are a SHADOW (FORESHADOW) OF THINGS TO COME, BUT THE BODY OF MESSIAH."

Notice "is" is in italics, meaning it was not in the original. The correct meaning of this statement is, "Don't let some man or group of men judge you in your observances of these things, but **LET THE BODY OF MESSIAH DO THE JUDGING**"

These people were gentile converts who had NO prior knowledge of the Hebrew laws and customs. Therefore, Paul would have had NO reason to be instructing them **NOT TO OBSERVE THESE THINGS**. What they knew, they had learned from New Testament converts such as Paul.

When properly understood, these verses form one of the strongest supports in the entire Bible **FOR** Sabbath and Kodesh Day observance. Verse 17 tells us plainly that they foreshadow events that are still to come in the future. Yahweh's plan of salvation is being worked out and pictured year by year as we observe these days.

They keep us mindful of that plan and purpose, and of the part that we can have in it, if we are obedient to His will.

Hebrews 5:8-9, "Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation **unto all them that obey Him;**" (see also Acts 5:32, Romans 8:9).

What will you do? Will you be one who says, "Well, I know the scripture says that, but here's the way I see it." Or will you humbly submit to your Savior's will, and keep this solemn day in the way that HE intended?

Your comments, questions, or requests for further information on this or any Biblical subject is welcome.