

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 239

AFFLICT YOUR SOULS

A Covenant Deep Dive into Yom HaKippurim (יום הכיפורים), the Day of Atonement

What Does “Afflict Your Souls” Mean in the Tanakh — and How Is the Day Kept to Yahweh? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Yom HaKippurim is the tenth day of the seventh month, a Shabbat Shabbaton on which the covenant people ‘afflict the soul’ (Leviticus 23:27). The rabbinic tradition lists five afflictions (Mishnah Yoma 8:1) and teaches that the Day atones for sins against Yahweh but not against a neighbor until the neighbor is appeased (Mishnah Yoma 8:9) — a principle the Written Tanakh itself already sets down in Leviticus 6:1-7 .	Christianity has mostly not kept the Day, reading Leviticus 16 as fulfilled in the Messiah (Hebrews 9–10; Romans 3:25). Yet the New Testament itself calls the season ‘the Fast’ (Acts 27:9) — a witness that the Day was still kept, and known by its affliction, in the first century. The Written Tanakh calls it a statute forever for the native and the stranger alike (Leviticus 16:29).	Islam knows no sacrificial atonement and no priest between the servant and Allah; return — tawbah (تَوْبَة, repentance) — is direct (Q. 2:37; 39:53). The tenth-day fast of Ashura is tied in Sahih al-Bukhari (2004) to a fast the Jews of Madinah kept for Musa, and fasting is a commanded discipline (Q. 2:183). Tanakh and Q. both know a fast meant to humble the self before the Creator.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the ***Tanakh*** — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy (Devarim) 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms (Tehillim) 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy (Devarim) 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written ***Tanakh*** to a single question in two parts: what the written covenant commands for the Day of Atonement, and what it means to afflict the soul. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. English book names are given first, with the Hebrew in parentheses. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets on first citation. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, and the Qur'an are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis (Bereishit), Exodus (Shemot), Leviticus (Vayikra), Numbers (Bemidbar), Deuteronomy (Devarim)	Foundation text — the appointed statute, the order of the day, and the Torah’s own usage of the word ‘afflict’
Nevi’im (Prophets)	Isaiah (Yeshayahu), Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu), Ezekiel (Yechezkel), Hosea (Hoshea), Joel (Yoel), Amos, Jonah (Yonah), Micah (Mikhah), Zechariah (Zekharyah), Malachi, Samuel (Shemuel), Kings (Melakhim)	Prophetic commentary on what the Day is for — and what it is not
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms (Tehillim), Proverbs (Mishlei), Ecclesiastes (Kohélet), Esther (Ester), Daniel , Ezra, Nehemiah (Nechemyah), Chronicles (Divrei HaYamim)	Witness to the practice of affliction — fasting, confession, and return

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Acts 27:9; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9–10	To show how the Day is named and read inside Christianity: “the Fast” of the first century, and the reading of it as fulfilled
Qur’an	Q. 2:37; 2:183; 24:22; 39:53	Repentance, fasting, and forgiveness in the Islamic witness
Hadith	Sahih al-Bukhari 2004	The tenth-day fast of Ashura and its stated origin
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Yoma 6; 8:1; 8:9; Talmud Megillah 31a; later customs (Kol Nidre, Kapparot, the Ten Days of Awe)	The rabbinic account of the five afflictions and of the Day’s order; later customs named only to be tested against the written text

I. THE APPOINTED TIME — WHAT THE WRITTEN COVENANT COMMANDS

I-A. Method and Numbering

Scripture in this document is rendered in working translation from the Masoretic Hebrew text and set in bold. Chapter and verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets at first use. Lexical data draw on BDB, HALOT, Gesenius and TWOT; Strong's numbers appear in plain text. Every claim about the Day is tested against the **Deuteronomy (Devarim) 19:15** standard, and where fewer than two or three texts stand behind a claim, this document says so plainly.

I-B. The Three Questions

Once a year, on a single day, the written covenant suspends the ordinary rhythm of life: no work, no food, a gathered assembly, a priest in linen entering the innermost room of the sanctuary, and a goat sent alive into the wilderness. No other day in the covenant calendar asks so much, and none promises so much. It commands the covenant people to 'afflict' their souls, and it promises, **"from all your sins before Yahweh you shall be clean"** (Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:30).

Three questions govern this study. **First:** what does the written covenant command for this day? **Second:** what does it mean to 'afflict the soul' — what did **Yahweh's** own text mean by that word, judged by the way that same text uses it elsewhere? **Third:** where no altar stands and no priest in linen enters the sanctuary, how is the Day kept to **Yahweh**, faithfully to what is written and without adding to it? This document does not answer from tradition. It answers from the text.

I-C. Five Witnesses to the Statute

The two-or-three-witness rule asks for at least two or three texts before a matter stands. The Day of Atonement stands on five, across three books of the Torah.

Witness One — Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:29-31: the statute itself. **"And this shall be for you a statute forever (*chukkat olam*): in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls and do no work at all, the native and the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before Yahweh you shall be clean. It is a Sabbath of complete rest (*shabbat shabbaton*) for you, and you shall afflict your souls — a statute forever."**

Witness Two — Leviticus (Vayikra) 23:26-32: the appointed time. **"Only on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement (*Yom HaKippurim*); it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall afflict your souls... For any person who is not afflicted on**

this very day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on this very day, I will destroy that person from among his people... It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath.” Here the Day is named among the *mo’adim* (מוֹעֲדִים, appointed times) H4150 of Yahweh (Leviticus 23:2) — His calendar, not a human institution’s — and here the day is counted from evening to evening.

Witness Three — Numbers (Bemidbar) 29:7-11: the offerings of the day. “On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall afflict your souls; you shall do no work... one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old... and one male goat as a sin offering, besides the sin offering of atonement (*chatat hakippurim*) and the continual burnt offering.” The Day carries its own sin offering, distinct from the ordinary daily and festival offerings.

Witness Four — Leviticus (Vayikra) 25:9-10: the shofar of release. “Then you shall sound the shofar-blast in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement (*beyom hakippurim*) you shall sound the shofar throughout your land. And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty (*deror*) throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a Jubilee (*yovel*) for you.” The Day of Atonement is the day that opens the Jubilee (treated in Section VII).

Witness Five — Exodus (Shemot) 30:10: the annual anchor. “Aharon shall make atonement upon its horns once a year; with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year he shall make atonement upon it throughout your generations; it is most holy to Yahweh.” Long before Leviticus 16 is spoken, the annual atonement is already fixed in the instructions for the altar of incense.

Date, affliction, rest, assembly, blood, Jubilee: five texts in three books converge on one day. The standard is met and exceeded. What remains is to hear what the Day means.

I-D. The Name and the Root: Kaphar (כָּפַר)

The written text names the Day *Yom HaKippurim* (יוֹם הַכִּיּוּרִים, Day of Coverings / Atonements) — in the plural (Leviticus 23:27; 25:9). The familiar singular ‘Yom Kippur’ is later Hebrew. The plural is worth noticing: it speaks not of one covering but of the many, the whole range of what must be covered — sanctuary, priests, and people (Leviticus 16:33).

The root is *kaphar* (כָּפַר, to cover / atone) H3722. Its family includes *kofer* (כֹּפֶר, ransom / covering price) H3724 (Exodus 30:12, the *kofer nefesh* (כֹּפֶר נֶפֶשׁ, ransom for a soul) studied in Doc 161), *kippurim* (כִּיּוּרִים, atonements) H3725, and *kapporet* (כַּפֹּרֶת, the covering-lid of the

ark) H3727. The lexicons (BDB, HALOT, TWOT) all record a real debate: whether the root began as ‘to cover’ (compare Arabic *kafara*) or as ‘to wipe away’ (compare Akkadian *kuppuru*). The Tanakh’s own usage shows the range. In **Genesis (Bereishit) 6:14** Noach is told to ‘cover’ the ark with *kopher* (כֹּפֶר, **pitch**) H3724 — a physical covering. In **Genesis 32:20** [Hebrew 32:21] **Yaakov** hopes to ‘appease’ Esav with a gift. In **Numbers (Bemidbar) 35:33** the land ‘*cannot be atoned for*’ except by the blood of the one who shed blood. In **Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 6:7** a coal touches the prophet’s lips and his sin is ‘atoned’.

What all these share is the placing of something between an offense and its consequence. And the Torah is explicit about who provides it:

“For the life (*nefesh*) of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement (*lekhapper*) for your souls” (Leviticus (Vayikra) 17:11).

The means of covering is **Yahweh**’s gift, not humanity’s invention. This is the ground on which the entire Day stands, and it connects directly to the covenant blood studied in Doc 192.

II. WHAT AFFLICTION MEANS — “AFFLICT YOUR SOULS”

II-A. The Command in Its Own Words

The written text never uses the later Hebrew phrase for ‘*affliction of the soul*’. It says, five times, the same simple thing.

“You shall afflict your souls” — *te’anu et nafshoteichem* (תַּעֲנוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם, you shall afflict your souls) (Leviticus 16:29); *ve’initem et nafshoteichem* (וַעֲנִיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם, and you shall afflict your souls) (Leviticus 16:31; 23:27, 32; Numbers 29:7).

A further text, **Numbers 30:13**, speaks of vows *le’anut nafesh* (לְעַנּוֹת נַפֶּשׁ, to afflict the soul) — there, a wife’s self-denial vows, which her husband may confirm or annul — showing that self-affliction was a recognized act in the covenant community apart from this one day.

Notice the sanction. **Leviticus 23:29** says that any person who is not afflicted (*te’uneh* (תַּעֲנֶה, is afflicted)) on that day “shall be cut off” (*nikhreta* (וְנִכְרְתָהּ, and shall be cut off) H3772) from his people. Of every command on the Day, this is the one **Yahweh** attaches the gravest consequence to. To understand the Day, one must understand this word.

II-B. The Root *Anah* (עָנָה): What the Torah Itself Means by It

The verb is *anah* (עָנָה, to afflict / to humble / to be bowed down) H6031, here in its intensive and reflexive forms. It is a different root from *anah* (עָנָה, to answer) H6030, which is unrelated. Its family

includes *oni* (עָנִי, affliction) H6040, *ani* (עָנִי, afflicted one / poor) H6041, and *anav* (עָנָו, humble / meek) H6035 — the very word used of Mosheh in Numbers 12:3. The word is best understood by watching the Torah use it.

Affliction imposed by force. When Sarai deals harshly with Hagar, the verb is *va-te'anneha* (וַתַּעַנֶּהָ, and she afflicted her) (Genesis 16:6), and Yahweh answers,

“Yahweh has heard your affliction (*onyekb*)” (16:11).

When Egypt oppresses Yisra'el, the verb is the same: “the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied” (Exodus 1:12), and Yahweh says “I have seen the affliction (*oni*) of My people” (Exodus 3:7; see also Deuteronomy 26:6-7). In Genesis 34:2 the same verb marks the violation of Dinah. In this usage, affliction is what the powerful do to the powerless, and Yahweh hears it and acts.

Affliction by Yahweh, for a purpose. This is the decisive usage.

“And you shall remember the entire way that Yahweh your Elohim led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to afflict you (*le'anotekha*), to test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He afflicted you (*va-ye'annekha*), and let you hunger, and fed you the manna... in order to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that comes out of the mouth of Yahweh does man live.” (Deuteronomy (Devarim) 8:2-3).

The Torah **defines its own verb by narrative:** to be afflicted is to be brought to hunger and dependence so that the heart is humbled, tested, and taught. Verse 16 gives the end: “to humble you and to test you, to do you good in your latter end”. The affliction has a purpose, and the purpose is good.

Place this beside the Day of Atonement and the design comes into view. On the tenth of the seventh month, Yahweh's people are invited to re-enter, by their own act, the dependence of the wilderness: no work (no self-provision), no bread (no self-sustenance), and the heart turned toward the One who provides. The rest and the fast are not two commands but one lesson.

II-C. Nefesh (נֶפֶשׁ): Who Is Being Afflicted?

The object of the verb is *nefesh* (נֶפֶשׁ, soul / life / self / throat / appetite) H5315. The word first appears in Genesis (Bereishit) 2:7: the man becomes a *nefesh chayah* (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, living soul). It is the whole living person, and its Hebrew sense includes the throat and the appetite:

“the sated soul (*nefesh save'ah*) tramples honey, but to the hungry soul (*nefesh re'evah*) every bitter thing is sweet” (Proverbs (Mishlei) 27:7);

“He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good” (Psalm (Tehillim) 107:9).

And the life of the nefesh is in the blood (**Leviticus 17:11**; see Doc 230 on the nefesh in the blood).

So **‘afflict your souls’** commands more than a stomach’s discipline. It commands the whole self — appetite, comfort, pride, and self-reliance — to be brought low before **Yahweh**. But the appetite is where the command touches the ground, because the nefesh is where a human being feels need.

II-D. Three Readings Tested by the Witnesses

Three answers have been given to the question ‘what does afflict mean?’ Each is tested here by the two-or-three-witness standard.

Reading One: affliction means fasting. This stands on four witnesses.

(1) **“I afflicted my soul with fasting” — *inneti va-tzom nafshi* (עֲנִיתִי בַצֹּם נַפְשִׁי, I afflicted my soul with fasting) H6685 (Psalm 35:13),** where fasting (***tzom* (צִום, fast)**) is the instrument by which the soul is afflicted.

(2) **“Why have we fasted and You do not see; why have we afflicted our soul and You take no notice?” (Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 58:3),** where fasting and afflicting the soul stand as a parallel pair, and **58:5** calls it **“a day for a man to afflict his soul”**.

(3) **“And I proclaimed a fast there... that we might humble ourselves (*lehit’anut*) before our Elohim” (Ezra 8:21),** using the reflexive form of the same verb.

(4) The wilderness hunger of **Deuteronomy 8:3. Verdict: corroborated.** The affliction of the Day includes fasting, and the Tanakh itself says so.

Reading Two: affliction means humbled, contrite heart. This stands on several witnesses.

“Then their uncircumcised heart shall be humbled” (Leviticus 26:41);

“The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Elohim, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17 [Hebrew 51:19]);

“I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him who is contrite and lowly of spirit” (Isaiah 57:15);

and **Yahweh’s** word to **Eliyahu** about Ahab,

“Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me?” (1 Kings (Melakhim Alef) 21:29),

after Ahab tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted (21:27). **Verdict: corroborated — and this is the inward reality that the fast serves.** The prophets never let the outward act stand without it (see II-E).

Reading Three: affliction means a fixed list of five deprivations. The Mishnah (Yoma 8:1) lists five: eating and drinking, washing, anointing, wearing sandals, and marital relations. The **written text gives no list.** But the Tanakh's own vocabulary of the mourning-fast shows that each of these five has a precedent in the covenant community's practice of humbling:

food and drink (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21;

and in extremity Esther (Ester) 4:16; Ezra 10:6);

washing and anointing (2 Samuel (Shemuel Bet) 12:20; 14:2; Daniel 10:3);

going without sandals (2 Samuel 15:30; Isaiah 20:2);

and the setting aside of marital joy in a time of assembly and fast (Joel 2:16; compare Exodus 19:15).

Verdict: the five are well-grounded practices of humbling, but they are not commanded as a list in the written text. A keeper who observes them stands on solid Tanakh precedent; the covenant text itself commands the affliction and leaves the boundary of it to the humbled heart.

II-E. What Affliction Is Not — Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 58 as Yahweh's Own Commentary

The Day's commentary in the prophets is severe. In **Isaiah 58** the people fast, and **Yahweh** rejects it:

“Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, and all your laborers you oppress... Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a man to afflict his soul? To bow down his head like a bulrush and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to Yahweh?” (58:3, 5).

The affliction was performed perfectly and refused completely, because it was disconnected from justice.

Then comes the definition:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the afflicted poor (*aniyim merudim*) into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” (58:6-7).

And the reward:

“Then you shall call, and Yahweh will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, Here I am” (58:9).

Read closely, the word for the ‘*afflicted poor*’ in verse 7 is *aniyim* (עֲנִיִּים, **the afflicted ones**) H6041 — the same root as the verb in the command to afflict your soul. The prophet’s design is unmistakable: **the one who has afflicted his own soul for a day is placed for that day where the hungry and the oppressed live, and is then obligated to them.** The fast is not a private spiritual exercise. It is meant to end in the release of the afflicted. This is the prophetic reading of the Day, and it is the reason the Day and the Jubilee share a shofar (**Leviticus 25:9-10**).

Two further witnesses confirm that this is the covenant’s consistent teaching and not a single prophet’s complaint.

Zechariah (Zekharyah) 7:5-10: “When you fasted... was it for Me, for Me, that you fasted?” followed by **“Execute true justice, show steadfast love and mercy each to his brother; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the stranger, or the poor”.**

And **Amos 5:21-24: “I hate, I despise your feasts... but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”.**

Verdict: three prophets, one message. Affliction without justice is refused. The Day is not kept until its keepers are just.

III. THE ORDER OF THE DAY — VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS) 16

III-A. Why the Chapter Begins Where It Does

The instructions open with a death:

“And Yahweh spoke to Mosheh after the death of the two sons of Aharon, when they drew near before Yahweh and died” (Leviticus 16:1;

the event is recorded in **Leviticus 10:1-2**). The Day is born inside a warning about access.

“Tell Aharon your brother that he must not come at all times into the holy place, inside the veil, before the covering (*kapporet*) that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud upon the covering” (16:2).

The innermost room of the sanctuary is not a place a human being may enter on his own initiative. The Day of Atonement is the one prescribed way in.

III-B. The Preparation (16:3-10)

The high priest does not wear the golden vestments on this day. He bathes and puts on holy linen garments (16:4) — the plain dress of a servant, not the splendor of an office. He brings a young bull as a sin offering for himself and his household, and a ram for a burnt offering (16:3, 6). From the congregation he receives two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering (16:5). The two goats are set before **Yahweh** at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he casts *goralot* (גורלות, lots) H1486 over them: **“one lot for Yahweh and one lot for Azazel”** (16:8). The goat on which **Yahweh**’s lot falls is offered as the sin offering; the goat for Azazel is

“set alive before Yahweh, to make atonement over it, to send it away to Azazel into the wilderness” (16:10).

The order is deliberate: the priest is atoned for **first** (16:6, 11), and only then the people. No one stands between the people and **Yahweh** in a state of unatoned guilt, and the text does not exempt the one whose office is to atone for others.

III-C. The Innermost Room (16:11-19)

The priest takes a censer of burning coals from the altar and two handfuls of fine incense, and enters within the veil,

“and he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of incense may cover the covering (*kapporet*) that is upon the testimony, lest he die” (16:12-13).

He sprinkles the blood of the bull with his finger on the front of the covering and seven times before it (16:14), then slaughters the goat for the people and does the same with its blood (16:15).

Then comes the statement that reveals what the Day is really for:

“Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Yisra’el and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses” (16:16).

The altar too is cleansed and consecrated from the uncleannesses of the children of Yisra’el (16:18-19).

This changes how the Day must be understood. The Torah teaches that sin is not only private guilt; it defiles the very place where **Yahweh** dwells.

“You shall separate the children of Yisra’el from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling My dwelling that is in their midst” (Leviticus 15:31).

The Day of Atonement is the annual cleansing that allows a holy **Yahweh** to keep dwelling among an unholy people. The phrase **“which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses”** is one

of the most tender lines in the Torah: Yahweh remains with them in the midst of their impurity, and provides the means to keep doing so.

III-D. The Living Goat and the Confession (16:20-22)

When the sanctuary has been cleansed, the priest brings near the living goat.

“And Aharon shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat and confess (*vehitvaddab*) over it all the iniquities (*avonot*) of the children of Yisra’el, and all their transgressions (*pish’eihem*), all their sins (*chatotam*); and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away by the hand of a man appointed (*ish itti*) into the wilderness. The goat shall bear (*nasa*) all their iniquities upon itself to a land cut off (*eretz gezerah*); and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness” (16:21-22).

Three words for wrongdoing are gathered here on purpose, and together they leave nothing out: *avon* (עֲוֹן, perversity / guilt) H5771, *pesha* (פָּשַׁע, rebellion / transgression) H6588, and *chattat* (חַטָּאת, a missing of the mark / sin) H2403. The verb for confession is *hitvaddab* (וְהִתְוַדָּב, and he confessed) H3034, and it is a spoken act: the wrongs are named aloud. The goat *nasa* (נָשָׂא, bears / carries away) H5375 them to *eretz gezerah* (אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה, a land cut off) H1509 — a place from which they do not return. The picture is of guilt removed and sent beyond reach (compare Micah (Mikhah) 7:19: “You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea”).

III-E. Azazel (עֲזָאזֵל) — What the Text Says and Where Scholars Divide

The single most debated word in the chapter is *Azazel* (עֲזָאזֵל, *Azazel*) H5799, which occurs only in **Leviticus 16:8, 10, 26.**

The evidence is honestly divided among three readings.

(1) **A description of the goat:** *ez ozel* (עֵז אֲזֵל, a goat that goes away), the reading behind the Greek Septuagint’s ‘the one sent away’, the Latin ‘caper emissarius’, and William Tyndale’s English ‘scapegoat’.

(2) **A place:** a rugged, cut-off region; the Mishnah (Yoma 6) describes the goat’s destination as a cliff, though the written text says only that the goat is sent to a ‘land cut off’ and let go.

(3) **A personal name of a wilderness power:** the reading of some modern scholars (notably Jacob Milgrom in his Anchor Bible commentary), who see a wilderness demon to whom the burden of sin is returned, and the later use of the name for a fallen figure in 1 Enoch, a work outside the Tanakh.

The two-or-three-witness standard does not require the dispute to be resolved before the rite can be understood, because the **text itself** settles what the goat is *not*.

First, the goat for Azazel is **never slaughtered, never offered, and never receives blood or altar**; it is sent away alive (16:10, 20-22), whereas the goat that atones is the goat for **Yahweh** (16:9, 15).

Second, the Torah immediately forbids sacrifice to wilderness powers: “**And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat-demons (*se’irim*), after whom they go whoring**” (Leviticus 17:7) — the very next chapter.

Third, the covenant’s consistent claim is that no rival power operates outside **Yahweh**’s authority (Isaiah 45:7, treated in Doc 148).

Verdict: whatever *Azazel* (אַזָּזֵל, *Azazel*) denotes, the rite is not worship of it. The atoning act belongs to **Yahweh** alone; the second goat is the visible sending-away of what has been atoned.

III-F. The Close of the Service and the Statute (16:23-34)

The priest returns to the tent of meeting, removes the linen garments, bathes in a holy place, and puts on his regular vestments, then offers the burnt offerings for himself and for the people (16:23-24). The fat of the sin offering is burned on the altar, and the carcasses of the bull and goat are carried outside the camp and burned (16:25, 27). The man who sent the goat away, and the man who burned the carcasses, wash their clothes and bathe before returning to the camp (16:26, 28). Then the statute is stated for the whole people (16:29-34), and its aim is given:

“For on this day he shall make atonement for you to cleanse you (*letaber etkhem*); from all your sins before Yahweh you shall be clean (*titharu*)” (16:30).

The goal is not merely pardon but cleanness — *taber* (טָהַר, *to be clean / to purify*) H2891. Atonement here restores fitness to stand before **Yahweh**. And the final line seals the rhythm:

“This shall be a statute forever for you, to make atonement for the children of Yisra’el for all their sins once a year” (16:34).

The Day comes back again, because human beings come back again; each year the covering must be renewed.

IV. THE DAY AS COVENANT LAW — REST, ASSEMBLY, THE STRANGER, AND THE LIFE-PRINCIPLE

IV-A. Shabbat Shabbaton: The Sabbath of Sabbaths

Twice the Day is called *shabbat shabbaton* (שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן, *a Sabbath of complete rest*) H7676, H7677 (Leviticus 16:31; 23:32). The doubled form is rare: it is used of the weekly Sabbath (Exodus 31:15; Leviticus 23:3), of the sabbatical year (Leviticus 25:4), and of this Day. Moreover, on the

other festivals the covenant forbids only *melekbet avodah* (מְלַאכֶּת עֲבֹדָה, laborious work) (Leviticus 23:7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36), but on the Day of Atonement, as on the weekly Sabbath, it forbids *kol melakhah* (כָּל-מְלָאכָה, any work at all) H4399 (Leviticus 23:28, 30, 31; compare Exodus 20:10). The Day therefore carries the strictest rest in the calendar, and Yahweh's own sanction for violating it is that He will Himself destroy the person (*ve-ha'avadti* וְהָאֲבַדְתִּי, and I will destroy), 23:30).

Put this beside the affliction and the design repeats: the manna taught Yisra'el on the sixth day to gather double and on the seventh to rest, trusting that **Yahweh** would sustain them (**Exodus 16:22-30**). On the Day of Atonement the people rest from work and from bread. Both are one act of surrender: **I am not the source of my own life.**

IV-B. The Called Assembly

The Day is *mikra kodesh* (מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ, a called holy assembly) H4744, H6944 (Leviticus 23:27; Numbers 29:7). It is not a solitary retreat. The covenant pattern for such assemblies is visible in the Tanakh: the people gather, the Torah is read aloud, confession is made, and worship follows. In **Nehemiah (Nechemyah) 9:1-3**, the people assemble with fasting, sackcloth, and earth upon their heads, stand and confess their sins, and spend a fourth of the day reading the book of the Torah and a fourth in confession and worship.

In **Joel 2:15-16** the call is to;

“sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people... gather the children and those who nurse at the breast”.

The assembly is for the whole household, and the Torah is read where the people can hear it (**Deuteronomy 31:10-13**).

IV-C. The Stranger

The statute is addressed to **“the native and the stranger who sojourns among you”** — *ba-ezrach ve-ha-ger* (בְּעֶזְרָח וְהַגֵּר, the native and the stranger) H1616 (Leviticus 16:29). The Day is not an ethnic possession. The stranger who lives inside the covenant community shares the rest and shares the affliction, and, by the same logic, shares the covering. This is the Torah's own anticipation of;

Isaiah 56:6-7: “the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh... all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it... I will bring to My holy mountain... for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples”.

It is why this document speaks to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike: **Yahweh's Day has a door for every nation that will come through it!**

IV-D. The Sanction and Its Boundary: What “Cut Off” Means

The penalty for refusing the affliction is *karet* (נִכְרְתָהּ, cut off) H3772 (**Leviticus 23:29**). The Tanakh does not define this in a single formula: it has been understood as premature death, the ending of a line, or exclusion from the people, and its execution belongs to **Yahweh**, not to a human court (**23:30: “I will destroy”**). What the text does establish is the difference between weakness and defiance. **Numbers 15:27-31** distinguishes sin committed in error (*bishgagah* בִּשְׁגָגָה, in error) H7684, for which an offering is provided, from sin committed *beyad ramah* (בְּיָד רָמָה, with a high hand) H3027, H7311, where the person “reproaches Yahweh” and is cut off.

Yet the Day reaches farther than one might expect. The confession in **Leviticus 16:21** includes the *pesha'im* (פְּשָׁעִים, rebellions) — not only errors but rebellions — and **Leviticus 6:1-7** [Hebrew 5:20-26] provides a path for the deliberate wrongs of fraud, robbery, and false oath: restitution in full, a fifth added, and a guilt offering. **David**’s deliberate sin with Bat-Sheva met no sacrificial provision, only confession and **Yahweh**’s response:

“I have sinned against Yahweh.” And Natan said to David, “Yahweh has also put away your sin; you shall not die” (2 Samuel 12:13),

and the psalm he wrote,

“You do not desire sacrifice, or I would give it” (Psalm 51:16 [Hebrew 51:18]).

The line the covenant draws is between the one who returns and the one who will not. For the fuller treatment of whether covenant standing can be forfeited, see Doc 238.

IV-E. The Life-Principle and the Limits of the Fast

The written text commands the affliction of the soul and does not name exceptions. But the same covenant sets a governing principle over all its statutes:

“You shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man shall live (*vachai bahem*): I am Yahweh” (Leviticus 18:5; see also Ezekiel 20:11).

The commands are given for life, not for the loss of it. Two further witnesses show how the Tanakh treats the person who cannot meet a command’s full measure. In **2 Chronicles (Divrei HaYamim Bet) 30:18-20**, many who ate the Passover in an unprepared state were prayed for by **Hizkiyahu**:

“May Yahweh the good pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek Elohim, though not according to the purification of the sanctuary”; and Yahweh “heard Hizkiyahu and healed the people”.

And **Exodus 21:19** permits a physician’s care:

“and he shall surely heal him”.

The text does not address by name children, the ill, the elderly, the pregnant, or nursing mothers. **This document does not treat their situation as a reason for the Day to be set aside, but it does hold that nothing in the written covenant authorizes any keeper to endanger life in order to keep the affliction.** A keeper who is ill, on medication, pregnant or nursing, elderly, or caring for children should keep the Day in the measure their health allows, seek the counsel of a physician beforehand, and offer to **Yahweh** what can be safely offered — a humbled heart, the rest from work, the assembly, the confession. This is a matter of covenant wisdom, not medical advice.

V. FIVE COVENANT WITNESSES TO RETURN — AND WHERE NO ALTAR STANDS

The question of how the Day is kept today is not answered by tradition but by the Tanakh’s own witness to how a covenant people returns to **Yahweh**. Five witnesses, drawn from Torah, prophets, and writings, form a consistent pattern.

Witness One — Leviticus (Vayikra) 26:40-45: The Torah’s Own Pattern of Return

Yahweh describes what will happen when the people fall away and are scattered, and what will bring them back:

“If they confess (*bitvaddu*) their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers... then their uncircumcised heart shall be humbled (*yikkana*) and they shall accept the punishment of their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Yaakov... I will not reject them nor abhor them to destroy them, to break My covenant with them, for I am Yahweh their Elohim” (26:40-44).

Here, in the Torah itself and outside the sanctuary, is the pattern of the Day: **confession, a humbled heart, and Yahweh’s remembrance of the covenant.** The verb *bitvaddu* (וָתִּוָּדוּ), and they confessed) H3034 is the same verb used for the high priest’s confession over the goat (16:21).

Witness Two — Deuteronomy (Devarim) 30:1-10: The Word Is Near

“And you shall return (*shavta*) to Yahweh your Elohim and obey His voice... with all your heart and with all your soul... and Yahweh your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, to love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (30:2, 6).

The verb *shuv* (שׁוּב, to return / turn back) H7725 carries the whole covenant of repentance. And the text adds that this return is not remote:

“For this commandment which I command you today is not too hard for you, nor is it far off... But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (30:11, 14).

Witness Three — Psalm (Tehillim) 32 and 51: The Confession of a Man Who Had No Offering to Bring

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh — and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Elohim, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:2, 17 [Hebrew 51:4, 19]).

The heart that is broken (*lev nishbar* (לֵב נִשְׁבָּר, a broken heart)) is described as the offering Yahweh does not despise. The psalmist does not abolish the altar (51:18-19 [Hebrew 51:20-21] looks forward to its restoration); he shows what stands beside it.

Witness Four — Exodus (Shemot) 34:6-7, Micah (Mikhah) 7:18-20, and Jonah (Yonah) 4:2: The Character That Makes Return Possible

Why does the Day work at all? Because of who Yahweh has said He is:

“Yahweh, Yahweh, El compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in steadfast love (*chesed*) and faithfulness (*emet*), keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7).

The prophets rest their hope on this self-description.

Micah 7:18-19: “Who is an El like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression... He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot; You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea”.

And even a pagan city that fasted and turned received the same mercy:

“When Elohim saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, Elohim relented” (Jonah 3:10),

while **Jonah 4:2** explicitly cites the attributes of **Exodus 34** as the reason. Affliction and turning do not earn Yahweh’s mercy; they meet a mercy already declared.

Witness Five — Nehemiah (Nechemyah) 9 and Daniel 9: Confession in the Absence of the Temple

Nehemiah 9 records a national confession made in fasting and sackcloth, tracing the whole history of covenant faithfulness and covenant failure:

“You are righteous in all that has come upon us, for You have dealt faithfully, and we have acted wickedly” (9:33). Daniel 9:3-19

is a confession made in exile, without a temple, an altar, or a priest: **Daniel** sets his face to **Elohim** **“to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes”** and confesses on behalf of his people. And at the very time of the evening offering, the answer comes (**9:20-21**). The heavens did not wait for an altar.

V-F. Where No Altar Stands — What the Tanakh Gives an Exiled People

The written covenant commands a priestly rite performed at a sanctuary (**Leviticus 16**). Where there is no functioning altar, the text is not silent about what the covenant people may bring.

First, Hosea (Hoshea) 14:1-2 [Hebrew 14:2-3]: **“Take words with you and return to Yahweh; say to Him, Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will render the offering of our lips (*ufarim sefateinu*) instead of bulls”.**

Second, 1 Kings (Melakhim Alef) 8:46-50: Shelomoh’s prayer at the dedication anticipates a people carried captive who

“turn back with all their heart and with all their soul... and pray to You toward their land”, and asks that Yahweh **“hear in heaven... and forgive Your people who have sinned against You”.**

Third, Psalm 141:2: **“Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering”.**

Fourth, Ezekiel (Yechezkel) 11:16: to the exiles Yahweh says **“Though I have removed them far off among the nations... yet I have been to them a little sanctuary (*mikdash me’at*) in the countries where they have gone”.**

The Hebrew *mikdash me’at* (מִקְדָּשׁ מְעַט, a little sanctuary) H4720, H4592 is a remarkable phrase: **in exile, Yahweh Himself is the sanctuary!**

What this document concludes. The written Tanakh does not say the Day lapses when the altar is absent. It commands the Day as a statute forever, and it shows that the covenant people in exile kept faith by bringing what they could bring: rest, affliction, assembly, confession, words, and a returned heart. This document does not say the priestly acts have been replaced, and does not reproduce them.

No goat is chosen by lot, no blood is sprinkled, no incense is offered before a covering. And it does not claim for any elder, teacher, or institution the office of **Aharon** on this day. The role of the elder is to gather, to read the Torah, to teach, and to pray with the people; the atoning provision is **Yahweh's** (**Leviticus 17:11**), and the return is the people's.

VI. HOW TO KEEP THE DAY TO YAHWEH

The following table separates three things that are often blended: what the written Tanakh **commands**, what the Tanakh **witnesses** as the covenant people's practice, and what is **later tradition**. Only the first category is command. The second is strong precedent. The third is not binding under the standing rule of this institution.

VI-A. The Keeping of the Day, Item by Item

PRACTICE	WHAT THE WRITTEN TANAKH SAYS	STATUS
Know the day	The tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:27; Numbers 29:7), counted from the evening that closes the ninth day to the following evening (Leviticus 23:32). The seventh month opens with Yom Teruah (Leviticus 23:24; Doc 234), so the Day falls nine days after it, by whatever calendar your community follows.	Commanded
Cease all work	Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:28, 30-31 . A Sabbath of complete rest — not merely laborious work.	Commanded
Afflict your souls	Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:27, 32; Numbers 29:7 . The Tanakh's own usage of the verb: fasting (Psalms 35:13; Isaiah 58:3, 5; Ezra 8:21), the hunger and dependence of the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2-3), and a humbled heart (Leviticus 26:41; Psalm 51:17).	Commanded
Set aside ornament and comfort	Not listed in the text of the Day, but the covenant community's humbling regularly included sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5-8; Daniel 9:3; Nehemiah 9:1), putting off ornaments (Exodus 33:4-6), and abstaining from anointing, sandals, and marital joy (2 Samuel 12:20; 14:2; 15:30; Daniel 10:3; Joel 2:16).	Witnessed
Gather	The Day is a called holy assembly (Leviticus 23:27). Pattern: Nehemiah 9:1-3; Joel 2:15-16 .	Commanded

PRACTICE	WHAT THE WRITTEN TANAKH SAYS	STATUS
Read the Torah aloud	Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; 9:3. The Day's own texts are Leviticus 16, Leviticus 23:26-32, and Numbers 29:7-11; Isaiah 57:14-58:14 is its prophetic commentary (the assignment of that passage to the Day is later synagogue practice: Talmud Megillah 31a).	Witnessed
Set right what you owe	Leviticus 6:1-7 [Hebrew 5:20-26]: restitution in full, a fifth added, and a guilt offering; Leviticus 19:17-18: do not hate your brother in your heart, rebuke your neighbor, do not take vengeance or bear a grudge, love your neighbor as yourself; Proverbs 16:6: “By steadfast love (<i>chesed</i>) and truth iniquity is atoned (<i>yekhuppār</i>)”. The rabbinic principle of Mishnah Yoma 8:9 is a restatement of what the Written text already teaches.	Commanded (covenant law)
Confess	Leviticus 16:21; 26:40; Numbers 5:6-7; Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy”; and the national confessions of Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9.	Commanded pattern
Pray with words in place of bulls	Hosea 14:1-2; Psalm 51; 141:2; 1 Kings 8:46-50.	Witnessed
Loosen bonds, feed the hungry, release the oppressed	Isaiah 58:6-7; Leviticus 25:9-10; Zechariah 7:9-10; Deuteronomy 15:1-2. The fast Yahweh chooses.	Commanded (prophetic definition)
Guard life	Leviticus 18:5; 2 Chronicles 30:18-20; Exodus 21:19.	Commanded principle
Close in trust	Zechariah 8:19: the fasts become “joy and gladness and cheerful feasts”; and Nehemiah 8:9-12, where weeping under the Torah is turned to rejoicing (a pattern seen on the first of the seventh month; see Doc 234).	Witnessed

VI-B. On Food, Water, and the Boundary of the Fast

The written text of the Day says **afflict** and does not say **abstain from water**. The Tanakh shows fasts that included no water — **Esther 4:16** (“**neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day**”) and **Ezra 10:6** (“**he ate no bread and drank no water, for he was mourning**”) — but both are

exceptional, and neither is tied to this Day. The rabbinic tradition (Mishnah Yoma 8:1) includes drink among the five afflictions. **The keeper should hold two things together:** the seriousness of the command (**Leviticus 23:29**), and the life-principle that governs every statute (**Leviticus 18:5**). Where a keeper's health, medication, pregnancy, nursing, or age makes a complete abstention unsafe, the covenant path is to consult a physician beforehand and to offer what can be safely offered, keeping the rest, the assembly, the confession, and the justice of **Isaiah 58** in full.

VI-C. A Framework for the Day (an Arrangement, Not a Command)

What follows is a suggested order for a household or a gathered community. Only the items marked **Commanded** in the table above are commands of the written text; the arrangement itself is offered as practical wisdom.

Before the Day (the ninth). Ask the question **Leviticus 6:1-7** and **Leviticus 19:17-18** force: whom have I wronged, and what do I owe? Make the restitution you can; speak the reconciliation you can. Forgive the debts and grievances you hold. Prepare the household so that no work must be done on the Day (compare **Exodus 16:22-23**, where Yisra'el prepares before the rest).

At sundown. The Day begins (**Leviticus 23:32**). Gather. Read **Leviticus 16** and **Leviticus 23:26-32** aloud. Open in confession by name: the wrongs, the rebellions, the sins (*avonot*, *pesha'im*, *chattot* in **Leviticus 16:21**).

Through the night and the day. Rest. Pray. Read the Torah and the witnesses of Section V together — **Psalms 32, 51, and 130:3-4, Daniel 9, Nehemiah 9, Hosea 14, and Jonah** — and take **Isaiah 57:14-58:14** to heart. Keep the children in the assembly (**Joel 2:16**). Where the fast is complete, let it teach what **Deuteronomy 8:3** says it teaches: that man does not live by bread alone.

Toward evening. Turn to the justice the fast exists for. Decide what you will release, whom you will feed, whom you will pay, and whom you will forgive (**Isaiah 58:6-7**). The fast is not finished until it has done something for the afflicted.

At nightfall. The Day closes “**from evening to evening**” (**Leviticus 23:32**). Close in thanksgiving, not despair (**Zechariah 8:19**). Break the fast gently, and share your bread with the hungry.

VII. THE SHOFAR OF RELEASE — ATONEMENT AND THE JUBILEE

The Day of Atonement is the day the Jubilee opens:

“on the Day of Atonement you shall sound the shofar throughout all your land... and proclaim liberty (deror) throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a Jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his possession and each of you shall return to his family” (Leviticus 25:9-10).

The Torah places the two together because they express one movement. On the Day of Atonement, Yahweh covers the debt of human sin. At the Jubilee, human beings cover one another’s debts: land returns, servants go free, the poor are restored (compare the servitude law studied in Doc 194).

Forgiveness received is meant to become forgiveness given.

The prophets return to this theme with sharp warning. In **Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu) 34:8-17** the leaders of Yehudah proclaim **deror** (דֶּרֶר, liberty) H1865 to their Hebrew servants and then take them back. **Yahweh’s** answer is a mirror of their act:

“You have not obeyed Me by proclaiming liberty, each to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty — to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine” (34:17).

And **Isaiah 61:1-2** takes the Jubilee’s liberty as the sign of **Yahweh’s** favor for the afflicted. The Day of Atonement without release is a fast that **Yahweh** does not choose (**Isaiah 58:6**).

VIII. WHAT THE WRITTEN TEXT DOES NOT SAY — GUARDING THE STATUTE FROM ADDITION

The covenant’s own rule is stated early: **“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).**

The Day of Atonement has accumulated a great deal of later observance, some of it beautiful and some of it questionable. The purpose of this section is not to condemn it but to say plainly which of it stands on the written text.

ITEM	WHAT THE WRITTEN TANAKH SAYS	STATUS
The “Ten Days of Awe” and the idea that the year’s verdict is ‘inscribed’ on Yom Teruah and ‘sealed’ on the Day of Atonement (Rosh Hashanah 16a-b)	The Tanakh gives two days: the first (Leviticus 23:24 ; Doc 234) and the tenth (Leviticus 23:27). It names no ten-day season between them. The Tanakh does know a heavenly book: Exodus 32:32-33 ; Psalm 69:28 ; Malachi 3:16 ; Daniel 12:1 (see Doc 238). What it does not give is the inscribing-and-sealing schedule.	Book: Tanakh. Schedule: later tradition.

ITEM	WHAT THE WRITTEN TANAKH SAYS	STATUS
Kol Nidre , the formula for the annulment of vows	Attested from the Geonic period; several Geonim opposed it, and its defenders limit it to vows between a person and Yahweh , not vows to others. The Tanakh's standard is that a vow is kept: Numbers 30:2 [Hebrew 30:3]; Deuteronomy 23:21-23 [Hebrew 23:22-24]; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 [Hebrew 5:3-5]; Proverbs 20:25 . The written remedy for a rash vow is confession, not a liturgy of cancellation. See Doc 236 on the binding word.	Later tradition
Kapparot , the swinging of a fowl over the head on the eve of the Day	No such rite appears anywhere in the Tanakh. The atoning blood is Yahweh's gift on the altar (Leviticus 17:11), and a private rite of substitution performed elsewhere does not stand on that text. The custom has been both defended and criticized by rabbinic authorities themselves.	Later tradition
"Yom Kippur" (singular)	The Tanakh names the Day in the plural, Yom HaKippurim (יום הכּפּוּרִים, Day of Atonements) (Leviticus 23:27; 25:9).	Vocabulary

IX. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE DAY

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Primary Question	How does the covenant people, without a functioning altar, keep the Day of Atonement — and what does the Day do for sins against Yahweh and against a neighbor?	Is the Day of Atonement still to be kept, or was it fulfilled and ended in the Messiah (Hebrews 9–10; Romans 3:25)?	Is there a need for an appointed day, a priest, or a blood atonement at all, when return (tawbah) is direct to Allah?
Covenant Strength	Has kept the Day continuously through some two thousand years without an altar. Preserved the fast, the confession, the reading of Leviticus 16, and the principle (Mishnah	Preserved Leviticus 16 in its canon, holds a serious view of sin and of Yahweh's provision for atonement, and itself calls the season 'the Fast' (Acts 27:9), witnessing that the	Preserves fasting as a commanded discipline of the soul (Q. 2:183), insists on direct return (Q. 2:37; 39:53), and stresses forgiveness given to others as the condition of

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
	Yoma 8:9) that wrongs against a neighbor must be put right first — exactly what Leviticus 6:1-7 teaches.	Day was still kept, and known by its affliction, in the first century.	forgiveness sought (Q. 24:22), a principle that echoes Isaiah 58 and Leviticus 19:17-18.
Covenant Departure	The Ten Days scheme, Kol Nidre, and kapparot are post-biblical additions (Section VIII). The tradition also treats the rabbinic list of five afflictions as the definition of the command, though the written text gives no list.	Ends the Day on the strength of a later reading, while the Written text calls it a statute forever (<i>chukkat olam</i>) and nowhere announces its end. The Tanakh itself already teaches that sacrifice without a humbled heart was never enough (Psalm 51; Hosea 6:6), which is the sound part of Hebrews' argument; but Leviticus 16:30 says the Day atones and cleanses, and Jeremiah 33:18 promises that priests will not lack. The affliction and the justice of Isaiah 58 fall away in practice.	Sets aside the priestly order and the altar of Leviticus 16 and 17:11, which the Written covenant says Yahweh Himself gave. Ashura's stated origin is Musa's rescue from Pharaoh (Sahih al-Bukhari 2004), not the affliction command of Leviticus 23:27; and the month-long Ramadan fast is a different institution from a one-day evening-to-evening Sabbath of affliction that carries the Day's own commands of rest and assembly.
Covenant Witness	Return to the Written text: the Day is Yahweh 's appointed time; the affliction is defined by the Tanakh's own usage (fasting and humbling); the neighbor is reconciled first; and where no altar stands, Hosea 14:1-2 and 1 Kings 8:46-50 show what the people may bring.	Read Leviticus 16:30 and Leviticus 23 as the Tanakh gives them and ask what text ends them. Then recover Isaiah 58 and Zechariah 7-8 as the Day's prophetic meaning: an affliction that ends in the release of the afflicted.	The Qur'anic instincts — fasting, direct return, forgiveness given — are met and completed in the Written Day: one day, the whole household and the stranger, the affliction, the confession, and the mercy Yahweh has declared of Himself (Exodus 34:6-7).

X. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	Yom HaKippurim is Yahweh's own appointed time — the tenth day of the seventh month, a statute forever for the native and the stranger alike.	Leviticus (Vayikra) 23:27; 16:29-31
II	The Day atones and cleanses. The means of atonement is Yahweh's gift, not humanity's invention, and its goal is that the people be clean before Him.	Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:30; 17:11
III	To "afflict the soul" is a command upon the whole self. The Tanakh itself explains the affliction: fasting, humbling, and the wilderness dependence Yahweh taught through hunger.	Deuteronomy (Devarim) 8:2-3; Psalm (Tehillim) 35:13; Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 58:3, 5; Ezra 8:21
IV	The Day is a Sabbath of complete rest. Rest from work and rest from bread are one act of trust: I am not the source of my own life.	Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:31; 23:28-32; Deuteronomy (Devarim) 8:3
V	Affliction without justice is refused. The fast Yahweh chooses looses the bonds of wickedness, feeds the hungry, and lets the oppressed go free.	Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 58:6-7; Zechariah (Zekharyah) 7:5-10; Amos 5:21-24
VI	Confession, restitution, and reconciliation belong to the Day. What is owed to a neighbor is not covered by fasting; it must be set right.	Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:21; 5:20-26; 19:17-18; Proverbs (Mishlei) 28:13
VII	Where no altar stands, the covenant text shows what Yahweh's people can bring: a humbled heart, confession, words in place of bulls, and a life returned to Him. No teacher takes the place of Aharon.	Hosea (Hoshea) 14:1-2; Psalm (Tehillim) 51:16-17; 1 Kings (Melakhim Alef) 8:46-50; Leviticus (Vayikra) 26:40-45; Ezekiel (Yechezkel) 11:16

XI. IN CONCLUSION — THE ANSWER OF THE WRITTEN COVENANT

What does the written covenant command? The tenth day of the seventh month, from evening to evening: no work at all, the affliction of the soul, and a called assembly, for the native and the stranger, as a statute forever. Five texts in three books say so (Section I).

What does affliction mean? The Torah defines its own verb. To afflict is to be brought low — by force, when the powerful do it to the powerless, and by **Yahweh**'s design, when He brought Yisra'el to hunger in the wilderness to humble and teach them. On the Day, the covenant people take that lowering upon themselves by fasting, resting, and humbling the heart before **Yahweh** (Section II). But the prophets refuse the act without its fruit: the one who has afflicted his own soul must loosen the bonds of the afflicted (**Isaiah 58**). The same root holds both.

How is the Day kept to Yahweh? As the Tanakh's own witnesses keep it: the rest is kept, the soul is afflicted within the measure of life, the assembly gathers, the Torah is read, the wrongs are named aloud and set right, words are offered in place of bulls, and the justice of the fast is done for the afflicted (Sections V–VII). No teacher takes the place of **Aharon**; no additions are counted as commands (Section VIII). The covering itself is **Yahweh**'s, and He has said what He is:

“compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in steadfast love and faithfulness” (**Exodus 34:6**).

The Day of Atonement is not a day to earn mercy. It is a day to stand still, hungry and unoccupied, and receive what has already been declared. **“For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before Yahweh you shall be clean”.**

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from all your sins before Yahweh you shall be clean.”*

Leviticus (Vayikra) 16:30 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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