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## **Is Yom Kippur a Day of Fasting?**

It is often understood that Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement is considered a day of fasting. But is this simply tradition or a commandment.

In the Jerusalem Talmud, the Jewish oral law, Yom Kippur is referred to as Tzoma Rabbah, "the great fast" (j. Peah 7:4), and in another place as simply Tzoma, "fast" (j. Bava Batra 9:7).

The Hebrew word for fast is tsum (צום) (H6684). It means to refrain from eating for a period of time. This could include any drink as well.

However, the Torah does not specifically call us to fast for Yom Kippur, but to “*anah*” ourselves.

In Leviticus 16:29, 23:27 (and Numbers 29:7), the word anah (עָנָה) (H6907) is used, which refers to a “*humbling (or mortifying, afflicting) one’s soul.*”

This has been interpreted as including, in addition to fasting, refraining from bathing, anointing, wearing leather shoes, and sexual relations (*Yad, Shevitat Asor 1:5*). These are forbidden only by rabbinic legislation (*Tosafot, Yoma 7b*) and not by specific instructions found in the Torah.

We know what it means to “*fast*” (tsum), but what does it mean to “*afflict*” (anah) ourselves?

The Hebrew word “*anah*” appears about 79 times in the TANAKH (Old Testament).

We can find the first occurrence in Genesis 15:13:

### **Genesis 15:13**

Then the LORD (YHWH) said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted (*anah*) for four hundred years.

Here we see how being “*afflicted*” is synonymous with being a “*servant*” or placed under the “*authority*” of another.

In this light, it is not very positive, because it is unwillful bondage. It is not by their own desire that they become a servant, but circumstances outside of their control, not of their own free will.

The next instance of the word is similar:

**Genesis 16:6**

But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly (*anah*) with her, and she fled from her.

Again, under the authority of another...in this illustration, the master has the right to reward or punish the servant.

**Exodus 10:3**

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the LORD (YHWH), the Elohim of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble (*anah*) yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Again, another use meaning placing oneself under the authority of another...

It can also be used in context of a marriage, related to vows and binding. Keep this in mind for later in the teaching.

**Numbers 30:13**

Any vow and any binding oath to afflict (*anah*) herself, her husband may establish, or her husband may make void.

Our Creator uses the word with us...meaning to humble us, or to make us low.

**Deuteronomy 8:16**

...who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

This is a test as to whether we will follow His instructions or not, His Torah.

For example...

**Psalms 119:71**

It is good for me that I was afflicted (*anah*), that I might learn your statutes.

**Psalms 119:75**

I know, O LORD (YHWH), that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted (*anah*) me.

See how humbling ourselves is directly correlated with following His instructions.

In these instances, “*anah*” is positive, as it is us willfully placing ourselves under the authority of our Creator.

This is why the Torah does not focus, or really, even mention fasting as it relates to Yom Kippur. Yom

Kippur is designed to encourage us and call us to humble ourselves...to make ourselves low before Him, in obedience to Him.

Meaning this...though it is always important to follow Him and be obedient...it is most important to be sure that we are following His authority on Yom Kippur.

Because of this, many believe, that Yom Kippur will be the last day to repent and appeal at the time of the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

So, on Yom Kippur, it is of utmost importance to focus on Him and His ways...to humble ourselves, to prostrate ourselves, to make ourselves low...to only be following His instructions, and not our own ways.

Now, here is the question.

If we are to afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur, is there a particular type of obedience that our Creator brings to our attention on this day?

In other words, does YHWH define for us the manner of affliction that He expects from us.

We already mentioned that YHWH makes no mention of fasting as it relates to Yom Kippur...but He does mention another type of obedience related to the affliction several times.

Watch how many times He tells us that we should rest and that this particular appointed time (moedim) is a Sabbath.

### **Leviticus 23:26-32**

And the LORD (YHWH) spoke to Moses, saying, “Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict (*anah*) yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD (YHWH) .

Ok...so we should afflict ourselves...what does that mean?

**And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD (YHWH) your Elohim. For whoever is not afflicted (*anah*) on that very day shall be cut off from his people.**

Do you see how working or not working on Yom Kippur is related to being afflicted or not afflicted?

In case we miss it...YHWH continues and to say it again in verse 30.

**And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people.**

Again, being afflicted (*anah*) is being related to not working...a Sabbath.

But, in case we missed two times...YHWH says it again in verse 31.

**You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling**

places.

And in case we missed it three times, YHWH says it again for a fourth time in verse 32...afflicting yourself on Yom Kippur is related to resting on the Sabbath.

**It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.”**

So the affliction that YHWH desires from us on Yom Kippur is a day of rest, not necessarily fasting.

Make no mistake though, fasting is a type of affliction. Meaning, all fasting is affliction, but not all affliction is fasting.

### **Psalm 35:13**

But I, when they were sick—I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest.

So, it is not that one can not fast on Yom Kippur. We would simply urge those in the faith to realize that Yom Kippur is not so much about fasting, if it is about fasting at all, but about obeying our Creator, about humbling ourselves, making sure that we rest on that very important day.

Some like to point out Isaiah 58 to further illustrate this problem...

It makes no sense to fast on the Yom Kippur Sabbath, yet cause others to work. It is missing the whole point of this very important day.

### **Isaiah 58:3**

Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

YHWH states that they were seeking their own pleasure in making others work for them, despite their fasting...yet they were confused as to why YHWH did not recognize their fasting. They missed the point.

The point of it all is to humble yourself in obedience. They should not have been making others work on that particular day.

YHWH answers...

### **Isaiah 58:4-5**

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD (YHWH)?

### **Isaiah 58:13-14**

“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day (which was defined as others working for you earlier), and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of

the LORD (YHWH) honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD (YHWH), and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD (YHWH) has spoken.”

So, in conclusion, though we can fast on Yom Kippur, and though fasting is a form of affliction, it does not appear to be the form of affliction our Creator desires us to focus on...the important matters of Yom Kippur seem to focus on repenting and humbling, and leading to full obedience, centered around afflicting ourselves in a Sabbath rest.

There is one more interesting thing to consider.

The root meaning of the word “to afflict” or “anah” seems to also have a relationship or linguistic root with the Hebrew word for “marital rights” or “o’na” (H5722).

**Exodus 21:10**

If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights (o’na).

If our Lord returns on a future Day of Trumpets, it is possible that we might be taken into the bridal chambers (Isaiah 26:19-21) and the wedding may occur on Yom Kippur, just ten days later, as that day appears to be linguistically related to marital rights, and vows. Then perhaps, the wedding feast would occur during Sukkot, just five days later. It makes you wonder...

We hope that this teaching blessed, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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