

THE GREATEST BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK

A Devotional Meditation on Achrei Mot (After the Death) & Kedoshim (Holy Ones)

Leviticus 16:1-20:27; Amos 9:7-15;
Matthew 26:26-29; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 10:1-7

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It used to be that only the older people in my life monitored their blood pressure. Their doctors wanted to make sure their blood pressure readings stayed in a healthy range, neither too high nor too low. That meant little to me other than that it was an issue of concern for my elders. Then one day I realized I had become an elder when my doctor started to educate me about my own blood pressure. Now I'm checking it regularly, not just to please my doctor, but to partner with him in keeping me healthy.



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The spiritual lesson here is in the balanced perspective on blood: what it is, what it does, and whose responsibility it is to use it the right way. For most of my life, I knew blood was essential to life, but I didn't know exactly why. The general knowledge of blood carrying nutrients and oxygen throughout the body was enough. I didn't need to know what nutrients, or how much oxygen, or even what constitutes healthy blood. I still don't need to know much more than that, and most people don't, unless they are afflicted in some way that impairs the blood's ability to keep the body running. Disease will do that, but aging does it also. That's why it's wise to cease being an observer, and start being an active agent in keeping my blood flowing properly.

In other words, establishing and maintaining the status of the blood is something we do in partnership with God, just like everything else in life. We don't sit back and let him do it all, and we don't rush in and try to do it all on our own. We learn and we do as our Creator directs.

As Christians, we have learned to appreciate the blood of Messiah Yeshua. We know that his blood activates the New Covenant and opens the way to a relationship with our Creator. That's usually that's where our understanding ends. It hasn't really mattered that much up to now that we don't understand the finer points of why Messiah's blood is necessary, or how it works. Now, however, our Creator-King is bringing together Jews and Christians, the two halves of his covenant people, to carry forward the next stage of his Kingdom restoration. That's why it's important to start learning from each other about subjects like the spiritual function of blood.

Let's start with a familiar passage from Paul's letter to Yeshua's followers in Rome:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law [the Torah], although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's

righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:21-26 ESV

Paul uses a big word in this passage: *propitiation*. Some modern translations of his Greek substitute atonement for propitiation. That's easier to understand, but it's not quite what Paul meant. To get to his meaning, we should find out what Moses meant when he used the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term. We see an example in Leviticus:

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat."

Leviticus 16:1-2 ESV

The mercy seat, or *kaporet*, was the golden covering over the Ark of the Covenant. That is the place where the blood of the sin offerings is applied on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It's where God is appeased and his justice satisfied, which is the meaning of propitiation. Atonement is related to propitiation, but it refers to different function of the blood. Moses addresses that later in Leviticus:

If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.

Leviticus 17:10-12 ESV

Atonement is what a person brings as an offering to make amends for an issue that has caused separation from someone else. It's the price of reconciliation. That might mean covering the guilt of an offense or cleansing from ritual impurity. For the atonement to be effective, however, there must be a propitiation that satisfies the demands of justice, whether it's God's justice, or the satisfaction required by someone we have wronged. There can't be reconciliation if the offended party isn't ready to be reconciled.

This is the picture we receive from the Levitical system. As the writer of Hebrews says, this is a shadow, or form, of the reality that is brought to pass by Messiah. He is simultaneously the one who satisfies the demands of our Creator's justice, and the one who brings the offering of reconciliation on our behalf. The life really is in the blood – in his blood. Our part is to live the life he purchased for us in obedience to him.

And that is the greatest blood pressure check of all.