Yom HaKippurim Study

By Yochanan Zaqantov

Yom Kippurim or Day of Atonement is the one commanded fast day and a day in which the sins of Israel were atoned for. Some refer to this period of 10 days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippurim as the Days of Awe. We will look at this also and whether it is truly commanded in the Tanakh. As Karaites we rely on the miqra (scriptures/readings) to guide us and we interpret them by using pshat or plain meaning. This does not mean we view the whole of the Tanakh as literalist but interpret it in the context of Language, History, and usage in the Tanakh. It has to be viewed as an ancient Israelite would have heard and understood it.

So let's look at the word for Atonement that is Kippurim. This word is the masculine plural form and is from the root (Kaf-pey-resh). It is found in the BDB under reference number 5722 and on page 498 and in the NEHC on page 615. It has the general meaning of Atonement.

Let's look at some scriptures that use this word.

Shemot (Exodus) 29:36

36 and each day you shall prepare a bull as a sin offering for expiation (al-hakippurim לעילת赎罪) you shall purge the altar by performing purification (to atone you – bakapper'kha בקפרך) upon it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it.

Here we see Kippurim used to refer to the Atonement of Aharon and his sons as Priests to be able offer up offerings for the sons of Yisrael

Shemot (Exodus) 30:10, 16

10 Once a year Aaron shall perform purification (And atone – vakippar לכפרר) upon its horns with blood of the sin offering of purification (hakippurim לחרטום); purification shall be performed upon it once a year throughout the ages. It is most holy to Yehovah.

16 You shall take the expiation (hakippurim לחרטום) money from the Israelites and assign it to the service of the Tent of Meeting; it shall serve the Israelites as a reminder before Yehovah, as expiation (to atone - Lekapper לכפרר) for your persons.
This was the census money collected. They were not to count Yisrael and so the offering was made to per person to be collected so they did not sin in counting them.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:27-28

27 Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement (yom hakippurim יומֵי חִקְפּוּרִים). It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to Yehovah; 28 you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement (yom kippurim יומֵי קִפּוּרִים), on which expiation (to atone – lekapper לֵכָּפֶר) is made on your behalf before Yehovah Eloheykhah.

Here we see that the Day of Atonement is the tenth day of the seventh month and we are to practice self-denial. This is the word primarily used to say humble oneself. What this means is to fast. We see this in Yeshiyahu (Isaiah) 58:3, Ester (Esther) 4:16, Ezra 8:21, Shemuel Bet/2 Samuel 12,

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 25:9

9 Then you shall sound the horn loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month—the Day of Atonement (bayom Hakippurim בֵּי-וֹם חִקְפּוּרִים)—you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land.

This sounding of the horn was to signal the start of the Jubilee.

Bamidbar (Numbers) 5:8

8 If the man has no kinsman to whom restitution can be made, the amount repaid shall go to Yehovah for the priest—in addition to the ram of expiation (hakippurim חִקְפּוּרִים) with which expiation is made (yekapper-bo לֵכָּפֶר-בּוֹ) on his behalf.

This refers to the sacrifice of Atonement to atone for guilt. Making restitution was part of the atonement that needed to be done.

Bamidbar (Numbers) 29:7-11

7 On the tenth day of the same seventh month you shall observe a sacred occasion when you shall practice self-denial. You shall do no work. 8 You shall present to Yehovah a burnt offering of pleasing odor: one bull of the herd, one ram, seven yearling lambs; see that they are without blemish. 9 The meal offering with them—of choice flour with oil mixed in—shall be: three-tenths of a measure for a bull, two-tenths for the one ram, 10
one-tenth for each of the seven lambs. 11 And there shall be one goat for a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of expiation (הָקִיפּוּר hakippurim) and the regular burnt offering with its meal offering, each with its libation.

Now would not Bamidbar 29 be a perfect place to tell us about the days of Awe (yamim noraim) Since this is instructions about keeping these days. The Yamin Noarim is thus a tradition and not a commandment in the Tanakh.

But where is the information about Yom Kippurim and how to do this.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 16: 1-34

1 Yehovah spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of Yehovah. 2 Yehovah said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover. 3 Thus only shall Aaron enter the Shrine: with a bull of the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.—4 He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic, with linen breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.—5 And from the Israelite community he shall take two he-goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 6 Aaron is to offer his own bull of sin offering, to make expiation (vkipper) for himself and for his household. 7 Aaron shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before Yehovah at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; 8 and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for Yehovah and the other marked for Azazel. 9 Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for Yehovah, which he is to offer as a sin offering; 10 while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before Yehovah, to make expiation (lekapper) with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.

11 Aaron shall then offer his bull of sin offering, to make expiation (vekippar) for himself and his household. He shall slaughter his bull of sin offering, 12 and he shall take a panful of glowing coals scooped from the altar before Yehovah, and two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense, and bring this behind the curtain. 13 He shall put the incense on the fire before Yehovah, so that the cloud from the incense screens the cover that is over [the Ark of] the Pact, lest he die. 14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger over the cover on the east side; and in front of the cover he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. 15 He shall then slaughter the people’s goat of sin offering, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover.
Thus he shall purge (vekipper) the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 When he goes in to make expiation (lekapper) in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out.

When he has made expiation (vekipper) for himself and his household, and for the whole congregation of Israel, 18 he shall go out to the altar that is before Yehovah and purge it (vekippur): he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and apply it to each of the horns of the altar; 19 and the rest of the blood he shall sprinkle on it with his finger seven times. Thus he shall cleanse it of the uncleanness of the Israelites and consecrate it.

When he has finished purging (mikapper) the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, the live goat shall be brought forward. 21 Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man. 22 Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

And Aaron shall go into the Tent of Meeting, take off the linen vestments that he put on when he entered the Shrine, and leave them there. 24 He shall bathe his body in water in the holy precinct and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making expiation (vekipper) for himself and for the people. 25 The fat of the sin offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar.

He who set the Azazel-goat free shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may re-enter the camp.

The bull of sin offering and the goat of sin offering whose blood was brought in to purge (lekapper) the Shrine shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung shall be consumed in fire. 28 He who burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may re-enter the camp.

And this shall be to you a law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial; and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. 30 For on this day atonement shall be made (bayom huzzeh yekapper) for you to cleanse you.
(letaher לָטָהֵר) of all your sins; you shall be clean before Yehovah. 31 It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; it is a law for all time. 32 The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest in place of his father shall make expiation. He shall put on the linen vestments, the sacral vestments. 33 He shall purge (vekipper וְקִפֵּר) the innermost Shrine; he shall purge (yekapper יֶקַּפֵּר) the Tent of Meeting and the altar; and he shall make expiation (yekapper יֶקַּפֵּר) for the priests and for all the people of the congregation.

34 This shall be to you a law for all time: to make atonement (lekaper לְקַפֵּר) for the Israelites for all their sins once a year. And Moses did as Yehovah had commanded him.

No indication of a preparation period to be kept for Atonement.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:22-32

22 And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I Yehovah Eloheym.

23 Yehovah spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts. 25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring an offering by fire to Yehovah.

26 Yehovah spoke to Moses, saying: 27 Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement (yom hakippurim יֹמֵּי קִיפּוּרִים). It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-purification, and you shall bring an offering by fire to Yehovah; 28 you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement (yom kippurim יֹמָּה קִיפּוּרִים), on which expiation (lekapper לְקַפֵּר) is made on your behalf before Yehovah Eloheym. 29 Indeed, any person who does not practice self-purification throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin; 30 and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people. 31 Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. 32 It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

Now if there was some sort of time to prepare oneself before Yom Kippurim then would it not indicate this.

Lets look at the verb that gives this word it’s meaning.
Kappar is the verb and it is reference number 3722 and is found in the BDB on pages 497-498 and in the NEHC on pages 614-615. It has the meaning of to atone.

Shemot (Exodus) 30:10

10 Once a year Aaron shall perform **purification** (And atone – vekipper כַּפֵּר) upon its horns with blood of the sin offering of **purification** (hakippurim הָכִיפּוּרִים); purification shall be performed upon it once a year throughout the ages. It is most holy to Yehovah.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 4:20, 26, 31, 35

20 He shall do with this bull just as is done with the [priest’s] bull of sin offering; he shall do the same with it. Thus the priest shall make **expiation** (vekipper כַּפֵּר) for them, and they shall be forgiven.

26 All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make **expiation** (vekipper כַּפֵּר) on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

31 He shall remove all its fat, just as the fat is removed from the sacrifice of well-being; and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, for a pleasing odor to Yehovah. Thus the priest shall make **expiation** (vakipper כַּפֵּר) for him, and he shall be forgiven.

35 And all its fat he shall remove just as the fat of the sheep of the sacrifice of well-being is removed; and this the priest shall turn into smoke on the altar, over Yehovah’s offering by fire. Thus the priest shall make **expiation** (vakipper כַּפֵּר) on his behalf for the sin of which he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 5:6,10,13,18,26

6 And he shall bring as his penalty to Yehovah, for the sin of which he is guilty, a female from the flock, sheep or goat, as a sin offering; and the priest shall make **expiation** (vekipper כַּפֵּר) on his behalf for his sin.

10 And the second he shall prepare as a burnt offering, according to regulation. Thus the priest shall make **expiation** (vekipper כַּפֵּר) on his behalf for the sin of which he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven.
13 Thus the priest shall make expiation (vekipper יַכְפֵּר) on his behalf for whichever of these sins he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven. It shall belong to the priest, like the meal offering.

18 He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt offering. The priest shall make expiation (vekipper יַכְפֵּר) on his behalf for the error that he committed unwittingly, and he shall be forgiven.

26 The priest shall make expiation (vekipper יַכְפֵּר) on his behalf before Yehovah, and he shall be forgiven for whatever he may have done to draw blame thereby.

We see from these verses that to atone is to make payment for the guilt. We see this idea in the related word kofer.

Kofer is reference number 3723 and is a masculine noun which is found on pages 497-499 in the BDB and on page 615 in the NEHC. It has the meaning of a ransom or to cover.

Bereshit (Genesis) 6:14

14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it (bakofer יָכְפֶּר) inside and out with pitch.

We see that Kofer’s basic meaning is to cover. Like pitch or tar covering something.

Shemot (Exodus) 21:30

30 If ransom (im-kofer יָמָכְפֶּר) is laid upon him, he must pay whatever is laid upon him to redeem his life.

Shemot (Exodus) 30:12

12 When you take a census of the Israelite people according to their enrollment, each shall pay Yehovah a ransom (kofer יָכְפֶּר) for himself on being enrolled, that no plague may come upon them through their being enrolled.

This is what we were referring to earlier about the payments for taking a census.
31 You may not accept a ransom (kofer לֵֽפֶר) for the life of a murderer who is guilty of a capital crime; he must be put to death. 32 Nor may you accept ransom (kofer לֵֽפֶר) in lieu of flight to a city of refuge, enabling one to return to live on his land before the death of the priest.

The crime of slaying nor escaping the requirement to stay in the city of refuse is not permitted.

Shemuel Aleph (I Samuel) 12:3

3 Here I am! Testify against me, in the presence of Yehovah and in the presence of His anointed one: Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded or whom have I robbed? From whom have I taken a bribe (kofer לֵֽפֶר) to look the other way? I will return it to you.

Iyov (Job) 33:24

24 Then He has mercy on him and decrees, “Redeem him from descending to the Pit, For I have obtained his ransom (kofer לֵֽפֶר);

Tehillim (Psalm) 49:8

7 men who trust in their riches, who glory in their great wealth? 8 Ah, it cannot redeem a man, or pay his ransom (kaf'ru קַפְרָע) to Elohim;

The Days of Awe (yamim noraim)

If you search through the Tanakh you will not find this concept tied to the Days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippurim. This concept is based upon rabbinic teachings from the Talmud. Here is the information I was able to find on Judaism 101.

The ten days starting with Rosh Hashanah and ending with Yom Kippur are commonly known as the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim) or the Days of Repentance. This is a time for serious introspection, a time to consider the sins of the previous year and repent before Yom Kippur.

One of the ongoing themes of the Days of Awe is the concept that G-d has "books" that he writes our names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the next year. These books are written in on Rosh Hashanah, but our actions during the Days of Awe can alter G-d's decree. The actions that change the decree are "teshuvah, tefilah and tzedakah," repentance, prayer, good deeds (usually, charity). These "books" are sealed on Yom Kippur. This concept of writing in books is the source of the
common greeting during this time is "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."

Among the customs of this time, it is common to seek reconciliation with people you may have wronged during the course of the year. The Talmud maintains that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and G-d. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible.

Another custom observed during this time is kapparot. This is rarely practiced today, and is observed in its true form only by Chasidic and occasionally Orthodox Jews. Basically, you purchase a live fowl, and on the morning before Yom Kippur you waive it over your head reciting a prayer asking that the fowl be considered atonement for sins. The fowl is then slaughtered and given to the poor (or its value is given). Some Jews today simply use a bag of money instead of a fowl. Most Reform and Conservative Jews have never even heard of this practice.

Work is permitted as usual during the intermediate Days of Awe, from Tishri 3 to Tishri 9, except of course for Shabbat during that week.

Two lesser special occasions occur during the course of the Days of Awe.

Tishri 3, the day after the second day of Rosh Hashanah, is the Fast of Gedaliah. This really has nothing to do with the Days of Awe, except that it occurs in the middle of them. For more information, see Minor Fasts.

The Shabbat that occurs in this period is known as Shabbat Shuvah (the Sabbath of Return). This is considered a rather important Shabbat.

http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday3.htm

As you can see from this the source for this is not the Tanakh. There is written references to a book in Moshe asked to be blotted out of.

Shemot (Exodus) 32:30-34

30 The next day Moses said to the people, “You have been guilty of a great sin. Yet I will now go up to Yehovah; perhaps I may win forgiveness for your sin.” 31 Moses went back to Yehovah and said, “Alas, this people is guilty of a great sin in making for themselves a elohim of gold. 32 Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record (book) which You have written!” 33 But Yehovah said to Moses, “He who has sinned against Me, him only will I erase from My record (book). 34 Go now, lead the people where I told you. See, My messenger shall go before you. But when I make an accounting, I will bring them to account for their sins.”
What about afflict your soul?

There are 4 verses this is used:

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 16:29, 31

29 And this shall be to you a law (statue) for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial (te’anu et naf’shoteykhem – they shall afflict your their body); and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen (ha’ez’rah) nor the alien (va hager) who resides among you. 30 For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before Yehovah. 31 It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial (ve’iniytem et naf’shoteykhem); it is a law for all time.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:32

27 Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: [and] you shall practice self-denial (ve’iniytem et naf’shoteykhem), and you shall bring an offering by fire to Yehovah; 28 you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before Yehovah Eloheykha. 29 Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial (lo te’uneh – not you will afflict) throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin; 30 and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person (et hanefesh) to perish (destroyed) from among his people. 31 Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. 32 It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial (ve’iniytem et naf’shoteykhem), on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

Bamidbar (Numbers) 29:7

7 On the tenth day of the same seventh month you shall observe a sacred occasion when [and] you shall practice self-denial (ve‘iniytem et naf’shoteykhem). You shall do no work.

The Hebrew is ‘anah (from which iniytem conjugated) (a verb) 6031 and nefesh (noun) 5315.
Why do I refer to nefesh as a body?

Bamidbar (Numbers) 9:6,7,10

6 But there were some men who were unclean by reason of a corpse (lenefesh adam– by a body of man) and could not offer the passover sacrifice on that day.

Appearing that same day before Moses and Aaron, 7 those men said to them, “Unclean though we are by reason a corpse (lenefesh adam– by a body of man), why must we be debarred from presenting Yehovah’s offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?”

10 Speak to the Israelite people, saying: When any of you or of your posterity who are defiled by a corpse (kiy-yihyeh tame’ lanefesh) or are on a long journey would offer a passover sacrifice to Yehovah,

Here you see that the nefesh is not living therefore if it were a soul in the since of a spirit it would not be referred to in this way. Therefore we are to afflict our bodies. In what way does one afflict their bodies. Also, spirit is another Hebrew word, which is Ruach.

Yeshiyahu (Isaiah) 58:10

10 And you offer your compassion to the hungry [and if you let out to the hungry you body] And satisfy the famished creature (vanefesh na’anah – and body afflicted )— Then shall your light shine in darkness, And your gloom shall be like noonday.

We know this is referring to one hungry because of verse 7. It is showing compassion for those nefesh which are afflicted or hungry and feeding them.

7 It is to share your bread with the hungry, And to take the wretched poor into your home; When you see the naked, to clothe him, And not to ignore your own kin.

Ezra 8:21

21 I proclaimed a fast (tzom) there by the Ahava River to afflict ourselves (lehit’anot) before Eloheynu to beseech Him for a smooth journey for us and for our children and for all our possessions;

Here we see that they fasted to afflict themselves.

As we have seen the Day of Atonement is for the redeeming of Israel for its sins and that was to be done once a year for all. There were periods during the year when atonement
was made through the sin offering and guilt offerings. But first the person was to pay back what was the cause of the guilt. Then a penalty or restitution was a part to it. We don’t see this attached to Yom Kippurim. It was done person by person. Remember the sin of the person is not transferred to another. Each is held accountable for their sin. So what do we do today since there is no offering that can be made.

1. We Fast – No food or water from sunset to sunset from the evening of the 9th day til the evening of the teth day of the seventh month.
2. We Pray – We offer up our prayers in place of offerings. Hosea 14:2-3

2 Return, O Israel, to Yehovah Eloheykha, for you have fallen because of your sin. 3 Take words with you and return to Yehovah. Say to Him: “Forgive all guilt and accept what is good; Instead of bulls we will pay [The offering of] our lips.

Let all return to Yehovah Eloheynu and keep his ways and may he be merciful this day to forgive us our iniquity and sins and let all who serve him gather together to praise his name even while we afflict our bodies this day.

Baruch atah Yehovah, Melekh haOlam,