

Jonathan's Atonement Yom Kippur 5780
Set down a few days later. Once I recovered from Fasting
A sharing of my evolutionary belief of Atonement

This is what I'm writing after fasting. First of all usually I don't fast 100%, like I may be sipping on grape juice during the day. This year, it was 100%. I don't know if that has any influence on what I'm writing, but it might.

In my earlier childhood years I was taught to atone on Yom Kippur for transgressions that occurred during the previous year. The day of atonement is our most holy of holy days. It comes 10 days after Rosh Hashanah, our New Year. I could never quite get it why we wouldn't end the year with atonement and then start the New Year fresh. Nope...we carry our transgression into the New Year.

I came up with some behaviors that I truly regretted. Like when I was a kid we lived near the railroad tracks and I was told to stay away. Well, what kid could? So I thought, yeah, I can atone for that. Then I thought about all the times I cried when I was beaten. Boys shouldn't cry and I felt that I could atone for that. Then as a teenager there was my getting into debates with my father, who had a photographic memory and could pull up arguments from news articles read in years past to make a point...which left me bewildered and feeling incompetent. I could atone for being so stupid for allowing myself to get tricked into a discussion with him that always ended in being put down. In my twenties I felt strongly that the war in Vietnam was not ok. I mean what threat did the Viet Cong present to us? Were they going to build canoes and paddle across the Pacific? Yet when I shared that feeling with certain people who were gung-ho on napalm and stuff, I was made to feel that I was somehow not only ignorant but Un-American. I felt that I could atone for wasting my time and energy bouncing this opinion off concrete mental walls. After all wasn't it about mind-expansion and not forcing someone to change their outlook on life. Or so I felt at the time. I was just getting into Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

In the many years that followed every year during the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur I would really try to get into it. However it still seemed that atoning on Yom Kippur was a bit mistimed. If anything, a light should go off the moment I "transgressed" so that I could immediately atone and not only atone, but correct myself. I mean if we didn't get it at the moment, then very likely we would keep on transgressing throughout the year. Why were we not corrected at the time? Where was that inner voice...directly from HaShem? (HaShem is a word for "The Name," which refers to G-d in Hebrew.) Did atoning at the end of the year with such a build-up of transgressions not kind of make a habit out of them? Atoning at the end of the year...wasn't it really too late?

I began to feel that this whole thing of atoning needed some work, even updating. Then also, why were we being expected to atone for situations and actions that in retrospect didn't seem to even originate with us. Maybe like prejudice or gender discrimination. Like they were really culturally downloaded into us. Yes we did the act, but what was the context? What else? Oh, like driving cars that pollute the environment. Got to have and drive a car. You know one of our cultural things, like on Passover we're supposed to invite a hungry person to join us. Never once. That's a transgression isn't it? Didn't atone.

OK. Atonement. There is something healthy in being able to atone, but maybe not the way it has been set up. This being a growing feeling in me I began to question this whole thing of atonement and where it all came from. For all the ills of society, and being far less than an orthodox capitalist, after spending years blaming the rich financiers and industrialists for all the

poverty and misery that existed side by side with wealth and ease, I came to the conclusion it's actually all part of life's design. Who designed it I wondered. The trail of evidence eventually emerged that it had to be HaShem. All of this is HaShem's creation. For all the time, since Adam and Eve, HaShem has been getting away with it and we have been carrying the burden. So, a year or so ago on Yom Kippur I decided to Atone for HaShem, and the damage that HaShem has done to humanity. For sure, I felt that HaShem isn't atoning because these things kept on happening or maybe atoning had no affect. You know, like if I atone...it's gone...no more of it. No, it doesn't work that way.

I know this all sounds a bit strange. How did this guilt thing get to be completely our fault? The hustle was in the theme of "Free Will and Choice." HaShem gave us decision making...huh? Yeah we can choose, but only about what we know and already by now we must know that we don't know anything! This not knowing includes me. Still I would ask you to read on. Then I began to wonder at what point had HaShem taken off, you know like split...slipped away...gone. It wasn't when HaShem tossed Adam and Eve out of Eden. Still around with the flood. Still around when the Tower of Babel collapsed and suddenly no one could communicate with each other...all speaking different languages. Hmmm...Did this have anything to do with how much conflict we experience with each other? Oh yeah, still around with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their inhabitants and finished it all off by turning a woman into Salt, just for looking back. OK, she was told not to, but into Salt? Come on. Then at some point HaShem hooked up with Abram and laid the burden of saving the world on his shoulders. As if this wasn't enough HaShem felt it the right thing to put the poor burdened man to the test. Hey this is a good one. "Pssst, Abram. If you really love me, here take this knife and off your son Isaac." Now we see Abram with a knife held in his hand over his lovely son Isaac...then a voice, "Just kidding." A bit traumatizing for both of them wouldn't you think? HaShem jumped back in with Daniel and his dreams that brought us into Egypt only to be enslaved for 400 years. Yeah, we didn't starve, but slavery? What kind of trade off is that? My genetic memory says it wasn't a lot of fun. Then again with Moses whom HaShem knocks off before allowing him to get into the Promised Land just because he hit the stone a while back with his staff to provide water to the people to ease their burning thirst. Then after that? 0...Nada, Nowhere...could this be termed abandonment?

How to rationalize that we have been abandoned? Time passed...you know cycles of conqueror and conquered until the ultimate take down by the Romans who later took over Christianity, which immediately became empowered to take us down even further. Diaspora. Persecution to no end! No priests any longer for the Romans smashed The Temple to smithereens. In retribution for the rebellion, not only was our Temple destroyed we as a nation were ripped from our homeland and in the Diaspora cast into the winds. While stumbling around with no priests, some of us morphed into the role of the rabbi. During the Diaspora one such rabbi fearing that the oral teachings would be lost decided on his own to violate their sacred means of orally passing it onward through the generations and wrote them down as he remembered them to be. With that first time that they were written down, HaShem's explanation to Moses of the Torah was lost to future generations. Now just endless rabbinical debates over interpretations of interpretations of interpretations and endless commentaries on interpretations. In following centuries the Christians and the Muslims who honor the Torah have lost even more for never having heard the living explanation of HaShem to Moses. Looking back who could blame the rabbi who had good intentions? Yet we wouldn't argue that reading isn't sufficient

alone as we lost the multiple sounds of the Voice that provides us meaning that comes to us through hearing the spoken word.

Of course what I am sharing is unusual and challenging. Yet, the issue that is presented to us, as we are solely responsible for our human condition is to me without merit unless we include everyone involved, including HaShem.

The teachers of Judaism and subsequently the teachers of Christianity and Islam have excluded HaShem from this investigation of responsibility. They did this by claiming that we aren't living according to The Law. This transference of responsibility from The Creator to an imperfect humanity, which by definition means we cannot live perfectly, is misguided. It is the ultimate denial of what we are experiencing and the source of it. Worse we are raised to believe erroneously in our Free Will and Choice, the crown jewel of the transference of fault. We were acculturated as children with this belief, which we carried into adulthood and have been living under this unfair judgment incorporated in all of this. I say the Christians were also shortchanged by being brought up to believe the undermining concept of Original Sin. In both cases the blame is on humanity. Proof: We were born to choose to mess-up. Nah! I wonder about this some times, while we all have been waiting thousands of years for their Lord's reappearance as the Messiah...blaming the people for the HaShem's absence. To me, it signifies the consummate denial and the accompanying unreasonable expectation that undermines humanity's well-being.

Anyway, all of this led to my belief that HaShem has abandoned humanity and in doing so having somehow placed the blame on people who are choosing to not live peacefully with each other. I mean. Come on. We are hardly choosing any of this. Doing it rather under some kind of compulsion. Still, at time a little guilt would be helpful if it extends to people actually feeling bad for our behavior that is currently causing global warming. Oh, and the extinction of species. Oh, how about flooding the ocean with plastic?

Still HaShem at least left us with a scroll that incorporated The Teachings we call The Torah. It not being good enough the Christians were given The Last Testament, the Muslims the Quran, the Hindus the Sanatana Dharma, the Buddhists The Four Noble Truths, and the Indigenous people The Stories that are the only teachings still passed down orally.

Sadly without HaShem, it really became hopeless because only HaShem and HaShem alone could have connected the Teachings with Humanity in a Sacred Way as was done during the wandering through the desert for 40 years. Of course having HaShem in our presence for perpetuity would have caused a crisis of unemployment in later intermediaries called prophet, rabbi, priest, monk, sheik, or shaman. Yes, a physically continuous presence living in person and being accountable 100% for the manner in which creation, HaShem's children, us people live together instead of dropping off the responsibility upon humanity who struggles to just figure out which side is up and which side is down. Woe are us such that we cyclically sacrifice our children to HaShem, not on an alter, but sacrifice them through our self-consuming righteous warfare...by the hundreds, the thousands, the many millions. Yet, we are taught to look down and condemn past people who felt it was sacred to sacrifice their young on the alter to their supposedly pagan G-d.

OK, Enough! Anyway with this year's fasting I no longer feel this way...at least not so much. I no longer really blame HaShem for our mess. As uncomfortable as it may be...maybe what has happened is a sort of personal belief evolution. What kind of evolution? As blasphemous as what I have already shared, now I am not so sure that HaShem could actually be available, not because of a choice of abandonment, rather as a cause of an inability. Believing in an intentional abandonment really highlights my lack of empathy. I can accept this and so I atone

for failing to recognize the overwhelming and exhausting consequence of being HaShem. It's just way too much! Not abandonment...rather a crisis of identity and succumbing to our imperfect humanity's unreasonable expectations of perfection and well maybe a deep state of loneliness...a good bit of shame...all too overwhelming. I'm trying to be reasonable. I mean, it was a good, no a great job right up to the Creation of humans. It had all seemed to be working out fairly well. Yes! A great and mighty job! There was this amazing Eden...what a creation. Life in all its multitudes...Everything living in peace...harmony. Then...one creation too many. Adam. Oh, so alone. Why not Eve? Well with only the two of them...look at the result. Kaboom to peace and harmony. People. Not knowing anything and then with knowledge not knowing anything anyway. But let's be less judgmental. What kind of lives could they live being traumatized by being thrown out of Eden for what...a bite in ignorance? Traumatized and in having children their parenting must have been a bit weak...no role models and such so that one boy killed the other. And so forth and so on...right up to today.

How was HaShem to know the consequence of just one creation too many? Isn't HaShem supposed to be all knowing? Well if we are created in the image of HaShem...well then no. Not all knowing. Has to learn by experience too. Anyway who said that HaShem was all knowing? What was the point of the creation of the poor snake and the Tree of Knowledge? For humanity this was no gift. Is this where HaShem stuck the all knowing self? In a Tree and a snake. Well, with one small itty bitsy ever so tiny bite, all of that Knowledge instantly slamming into the human brain...flames coming out of their ears. Eyes crossed. Neurons incinerated. Whew...what a rush...perhaps borderline overdose. What was left and not obliterated? Who could Know?

So, my atonement. I'm so sorry HaShem for not grasping the situation and I atone for somehow being raised and accepting the belief in the interpretation into which I was innocently misled. Innocently, because the teachers were only human who believed in what they were taught, but sadly didn't know that they didn't know. How could they when everything they learned was learned from interpretations and then interpretations of the interpretations...oh and endless commentary through the generations? Definitely not what was literally taught to Moses by HaShem orally, and passed down orally word-for-word with HaShem's explanation as to what it all meant. It all stopped being sacred at the moment the Oral Teachings of Torah were written down. Of course with interpretations there had to be confusion as to what it was all about and then the endless arguing of who knew and who didn't know. Really. If anyone knew, how could we be in this mess?

With all this buzzing around in my head I could only wonder aren't we all in this together; meaning HaShem and us? Poor HaShem, probably just hiding in shame for what happened and the chaos that occurred. Of course we are all in this together. How are we going to work our way out of this mess? How are we going to get HaShem to drop back in and lend a hand? Hmmm. What about let's start by taking the pressure off HaShem and let's make it simple. If we are destroying the world because we are stuck on how to live in it nicely, let's just stop what we are doing. Let's all just slow down enough to meditate upon sustainability. You know...sustainable living so we don't further ruin it.

Instead of continuing to blindly go forward under the compulsion of what we interpret progress to be, let's take a breather on this plateau where we live. Do we really need any more newer and faster things at such a pace that we can't even catch our mistakes before they run amuck? Yeah. Instead of taking the next step with Artificial Intelligence taking over our management, which is the step over and off the edge, let's choose to be still long enough to be able to take a deep look into the future that we are "creating" for our children, and our

grandchildren and in that state of consciousness let's now focus on how they will remember us...if they are still here that is, for we certainly won't be.

Should we slow down enough, maybe HaShem will feel like safe enough to hang out with us so that the veil of supremacy can drop off. Sure HaShem created all of this and has super powers, but that obviously didn't mean it was always properly used. Can we be mature enough to accept this and quit defending and justifying the errors because of how we all feel so alone and frightened? Yes, we do need to believe, but it's not enough. We have to do the work. Work out how? Don't know? Maybe we need to look a little bit deeper. What we do know and need to employ is that it's all a learning experience and if we can just back off on the prayers and the expectations that we lay on HaShem and get to the point where we can extend a welcoming hand so that maybe all together we can work this out and HaShem can do better by having the help of all of us, you know, a Team.

For sure it can't be about who's right and whose wrong. It can't be the push to be the most powerful. That's what got us into this situation. Would it be so strange that The Truth may be that we really are all One Family and only by sticking together without laying blame on ourselves and each other that we can really dig our way out of this mess.

Here's the bottom line: In a healthy family we make sure all are welcome and have the ability to contribute to the continuing welfare of our living together.

Shared with love,

Dad to my Family. Jonathan to my friends.

Jonathan@outfar10.com to those whom I have yet to meet