

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COVERING SIN AND CLEANSING OF SIN

Sometimes I sit around and think, and thinking leads to me asking questions. When we read our English Bibles, we take a lot for granted. We're looking at a book written in Middle Eastern culture that speaks to middle eastern culture but we try to understand it with a Greco/Roman understand, and worse yet, with an English flair. For instance, we read about Yeshua explaining to his disciples that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. When we read that verse, we surmise a very large camel trying to fit through a very small eye of a needle. It would seem impossible, given that interpretation, for a rich man to come to faith in Yeshua. If however we look at the history of Israel during the time of Yeshua, we find that there was a gate in Yerushalayim, called "the Eye of The Needle," aptly named because it was so small that when camels did try to enter through it, they had to fall to their knees and walk through the gate that way. The explanation of that parable being that it is possible for a rich man to come to a saving faith in Yeshua, but it would require the rich man to fall to his knees in humility, and to walk in humility during his life on order to ensure that he kept to the faith.

When one reads Hebrew, they have to take into account that Hebrew (especially ancient Hebrew) was written and spoken using different rules than modern Hebrew uses. Modern Hebrew uses sentence articles and a myriad of pronouns, adverbs and other grammatical inventions that it has borrowed from other languages. Many modern Hebrew prayers hold to the ancient methods. For instance, the second sentence of the Shema, "baruch shem kvod malchuto l'olam vaed" translated into English word for word is, "blessed name glorious kingdom forevermore." Note that there are no no articles or pronouns in the translation. Words were spelled differently in ancient Hebrew, many times with no hint of vowels. For instance, the word David in Hebrew is rendered דוד which are transliterated to English as DVD. If you say DVD (pronouncing it like a word, not in letters) it sounds akin to David. The word Abraham is spelled אברהם, which transliterated into English is ABRHM, which when pronounced like a word sounds much akin to Abraham.

With that having been said I have to approach a scripture that I feel has been mistranslated. The scripture that needs to be explored is Isaiah 1:18.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
Isaiah 1:18

According to the way that the scripture has been translated, the sins are scarlet, but will be made white as snow and the sins are also crimson but will be made to be like wool (white). That is all fine and well, but there is more to the story where this is concerned. The Hebrew word for “sin” in this verse is חטָא pronounced “Chet,” the “ch” making a guttural “kh” sound. Most Christian preachers define sin as a condition of “missing the mark,” and use archery metaphors to explain the condition. However, when “chet” is used the context is that it is guilt attributed to sin. The best way to explain it would be to use civil traffic law. If you blow through a stop sign you have transgressed, or sinned against the traffic code. Where “chet” is concerned in regard to the stop sign example, it is the guilt that is associated with you, the guilt that is upon you because you sinned by running the stop sign. Another way to look at it is thus. When you lie, that is the sin you committed, but because you were caught in a lie, people will always think of you as a liar. When we sin, we commit an act, but “chet” is considered the dirt that covers us because we have sinned. What makes matters even worse is the fact that we acquire natural sin at birth. Due to the fall of mankind we are born with the propensity to sin, or miss the mark. We’re born with a natural inability to hit the bullseye on the target and when we shoot for perfection, we can never accomplish it, and because of that we bear the guilt of being bad marksmen.

A study of the colors mentioned in the scripture is quite interesting. The red colors were derived from an insect that was dried and crushed, producing a indelible red dye when it was placed on just about anything. It was prized in that when something was dyed scarlet or crimson with this dye it would never wash out of the fabric. Now remember when I said that if you lie, people call you a liar. You gain a title that is hard to lose, right? In essence, the title of being a liar is something that a liar wears; it is like clothing. When a person is guilty, they bear guilt; it becomes part of their clothing, so to speak. Another way to look at it would be to say that crimson and scarlet are dyes that we are dipped into when we are living in sin; they are the colors of guilt. We have all heard the phrase, “the clothes make the man,” right? In the same way, crimson and scarlet denote the wearer as a sinner. The dye becomes one with the sinner and the sinner becomes one with the dye.

To put this together a little better, we have to say that the definition of “guilt” is a much better definition as the generic English word “sin.” Now, since the scarlet and crimson are dyes that color the person that bears guilt, a better understanding for Isaiah 1:18 would be rendered:

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith Yahweh: though you are a sinner, and your guilt be as scarlet, you shall be as white as snow; and though you be red like crimson, you shall be as white as wool.”

Guilt and sin are cleansed away. To say that sin proper can be cleansed is a foreign idea in scripture. Sin is imperfection and imperfection cannot be made perfect, how imperfection can be removed and replaced with perfection:

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 1 Corinthians 13:10

There are a multitude of scriptures, both in the Tanakh and the Brit Hadasha which mention sin being cleansed from the sinner. The scriptures in the Tanakh all point to a future date (from that time).

Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. Isaiah 36:33

The scriptures in the Brit Hadasha point out that the provision for the cleansing of the individual from sin already exists (from that time forward) and is available to whosoever will come to repent and accept the forgiveness through the Blood of Yeshua.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed (Cleansed) us from our sins in his own blood Revelation 1:5

It is easy to ascertain that Melech David was privy, not only to spiritual conditions current to his time, but what would happen many years down the road from the time that he was alive. A look at Psalm 51 shows quite clearly the knowledge that Melech David possessed:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Psalm 51:1-9

The word for “blot out” in Hebrew “Machah” actually means to obliterate or exterminate. These are interesting terms because they denote that David is asking that his iniquities be

destroyed and killed. In our current day the word “blot” has taken on a different meaning. It literally means to take ink and place it over a name so that the name is no longer readable; but in Biblical times it meant that whatever was blotted out was obliterated, like it never existed. The word for “purify,” is “Chata,” and it means exactly that, to purify. When water is purified it can be done one of three ways. It can be done by distilling, which involves heat and condensation; or it can be run through filters that will remove all impurities, and it can be done by adding something to the water to take away bitterness and/or kill all bacteria or toxins. Moses did this when Yahweh told him to throw a piece of wood into the pool of Marah; the wood took away the bitterness and made the water potable. I can only surmise that David’s asking that Yahweh purge him with hyssop was related to the blood of the Pesach Lamb applied to the doorposts and lintel of the Hebrew homes in Goshen. In effect, we have Melech David asking Yahweh to obliterate his sin, that Yahweh dip hyssop into something to purge (cleanse) him. We have to surmise that Melech David saw himself as something other than white as snow, because he deliberately asks Yahweh to wash him to make him appear like snow. This could only be David reflecting that it would take blood to cleanse him from his sin guilt and it was only blood that could wash sin away. There is no mention of cleaning the sin, such as cleaning the sin so that the sin is clean, but there is mention to cleansing one of sin; that is, washing it away once and for ever.

There are scriptures in the Tanakh that talk about something other than washing away sins and iniquities. The Tanakh mentions “covering,” sin. When it comes to sin, and the idea of covering it, the first thought that I get is sweeping a pile of dust under a carpet; it is still there but you can’t see it. Yahweh forgave a lot of people of a lot of things before Yeshua came and died on Earth. He would cover things and it seemed that people would sin a little here and a little there, finally moving the carpet away so that the dirt pile could be seen again. If they listened to Yahweh afterward, he would correct them, there would be a repentance and the sin would be covered again. The blood of bulls and goats were also a covering. You could say that those sacrifices were buying time until the ultimate sacrifice could occur thus removing the covering and providing a washing away of the sin.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Psalm 32:1

The word for “covered” in the scripture above is *kacah* and it actually means to cover or conceal. Yahweh provided a way for sins to be covered so that He didn’t have to see the sin, allowing him to commune with those under Torah. The animal sacrifice that occurred would pull the rug over the dirt pile (so to speak) so that Yahweh saw a clean slate. Everyone has something that they can tolerate as long as they can’t see it. It might be okay to hear that your coworker

vomited in the restroom, but if you had been there when it was happening you might have been repulsed. In same fashion Yahweh knew that the dirt was under the carpet, but as long as He didn't have to see it, he was okay. This is a very loose analogy, but one that helps us to understand.

Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. Proverbs 10:12

In the preceding scripture the word for covereth is also *kachah*. The best rendered meaning for *kachah* in this instance is to “cover by clothing.” In other words, being covered or clothed in love causes any sin unviewable because of the love clothing. Last week I attended the graduation of my pharmacy students. As with any graduation ceremony, the soon to be graduates had to wear a cap and gown. The current tradition says that it doesn't matter what is under the gown, just as long as you look presentable with the gown. So, a person could have worked out in the yard all day, had grass and dirt stains on their clothes, yet their outward appearance was that of being professional and honoring tradition. Love is the same way. You can be a very messed up person on the inside, but if you exude love everywhere you go you help to diffuse strife.

Diffusing strife is the foundation truth of love. In some translations of Scripture, love is called “charity,” both terms being synonyms of each other. There is an interesting scripture in this regard, found in 1 Timothy:

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

The Greek word for “covers,” found in the scripture above is “*kalyptō*.” This word really has only one meaning, that being:

To hide, veil; to hinder the knowledge of a thing (Strongs G2572)

If we're believers in Yeshua our sins are washed away and Yahweh sees them no more. There is one problem however; we are still in our mortal bodies and we are capable of sinning. We're no longer sinners (adjective) but we can still sin (verb). When I think of the word “*kalypto*” it reminds me of a product called Scotch Guard. This product was invented by someone and the rights were bought by Scotch Company (the makers of Scotch Tape). The beautiful thing about Scotch Guard was that when you bought new upholstered furniture and you sprayed it with Scotch Guard it would repel water and just about every fluid, and it even repelled

dirt and grime. After a few months or years of use the Scotch Guard would wear off, causing the furniture to take unto itself the things from which it once was guarded. Wise consumers would have the fabric treated again to fully protect it. The scripture above told about love, and how it would cover a multitude of sins. But what does that really mean. One could say that Love is our Scotch Guard. When we love we're putting on righteousness because we're being obedient to Yahweh and He rewards those who keep his commandments. Each act of love is like one spray of Scotch Guard; it protects us from taking on the attributes of the world and acts as a covering. The more love that we live, the thicker our covering becomes and the more the world sees us like we really are; one with Yeshua and cleansed by His blood. It is a twofold process. When we have a loving attitude, it hinders the dirt and grime from covering us, and, it causes us to seek more where the righteousness and holiness of Yahweh is concerned. We like the cleanliness that we feel and we want it to remain, so we spray more Scotch Guard on and the knowledge of sin grows more and more distant. We used to sing an old hymn which had the following refrain in its lyrics:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Yeshua is the author of love. When we love we are looking at him for He is love:

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16

So that our study can be complete we have to look at the word, "atonement," in both the Tanakh and the Brit Hadasha. In the Tanakh, the Hebrew word for atonement is, *kaphar* "כָּפַר" which has the following meanings:

to cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch

- (Qal) to coat or cover with pitch
- (Piel)
 1. to cover over, pacify, propitiate
 2. to cover over, atone for sin, make atonement for
 3. to cover over, atone for sin and persons by legal rites

- (Pual)
 1. to be covered over
 2. to make atonement for
 3. (Hithpael) to be covered

When we were children many of us used a variety of objects to write on the wall. IF we used something that would not wash off, our parents would paint over our artwork. The writing still existed, but it was covered so that nobody could see it. We can see that this word's definition is very similar to *kacah* which we looked at earlier. Both mean to cover over with something. With *kacah* we saw that it was like covering a pile of dirt with a carpet. With our current word, *kaphar*, that word is used as painting over with tar. So, in many cases, in the vernacular of the Tanakh, an atonement was a covering over, not necessarily a washing away.

I would be remiss if I failed to mentioned a more popular meaning of atonement, the meaning that you and I are more familiar with. The word that we will look at now is *Kippur* (כִּפּוּר). In this case, the word *Kippur* כִּפּוּרִים (kippurim) which is plural means the “expiation” (or washing away) of the offense or sin. If it is in a singular context it simply means “atonement,” or covering over.

And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement (kippur = washing): and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement (kaphar = covering) for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. Exodus 29:36

It is interesting that the scripture above talks not only about washing the sin away, but also covering the sin, or shall we say the sinner. Notice also that the act in this scripture is for the washing and cleansing of the “priests” specifically Aaron and his sons. There had to be an extra washing of those would be ministering unto Yahweh. So, they were covered like the rest of the people through sacrifice, but also washed of their sins through expiation.

The word “expiation” is very interesting too. The 1823 version of Webster's Dictionary define expiation as:

EXPIA'TION, noun [Latin expiatio.] The act of atoning for a crime; the act of making satisfaction for an offense, by which the guilt is done away, and the obligation of the offended person to punish the crime is canceled; atonement; satisfaction. Among pagans

and Jews, expiation was made chiefly by sacrifices, or washings and purification. Among Christians, expiation for the sins of men is usually considered as made only by the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

The word “atonement” is used only one time in the Brit Hadasha. In Romans 5:11 we read:

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Romans 5:11

The Greek word for atonement in the scripture above is “*katallagē*” (καταλλαγή). The definition for that word is:

- *exchange*
 1. *of the business of money changers, exchanging equivalent values*
 2. *adjustment of a difference, reconciliation, restoration to favour*

in the NT of the restoration of the favour of God to sinners that repent and put their trust in the expiatory death of Christ

A similar word “*katallassō*” (καταλλάσσω) is used elsewhere in the Brit Hadasha and is defined as:

- *to change, exchange, as coins for others of equivalent value*
 1. *to reconcile (those who are at variance)*
 2. *return to favour with, be reconciled to one*
 3. *to receive one into favour*

When we read the definitions for those two Greek words we are reminded of the first scripture that we looked at in this article:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18

The scripture in Isaiah clearly talks about a reconciliation that takes place between Yahweh and Israel. It can be compared to a husband and wife who want to work things out in their relationship; they approach each other and talk. There always seems to be one party that

wants to approach first in such situations, and in the case of scripture it is Yahweh. Think about all that Israel did to alienate themselves from Yahweh. And even with the hurt that they did to Yahweh, He still wanted to approach to make things better. What a love story.

I know that it took a while to get to this point. What again is the focus of this article? In the past I have sat in churches and heard that our sins are covered. In addition, there are worship songs out in the Christian realm that talk about our sins being “covered.” Many Christians are quick to point out that we are not under the Law anymore, yet they use Tanakh terminology. I have presented scriptures from the Tanakh and the Brit Hadasha that prove that before the Brit Hadasha was written and before the time of Yeshua’s incarnation on Earth, that sins were covered. Yes, there was talk about the sins of the everyday man being washed away, but aside from the Kohanim of Yahweh, that was not possible. The Fathers looked toward a day when their sins were washed away. One might ask when the sins of the Fathers that predated the advent of Yeshua had their sins washed away. We know that Yeshua Ha Mashiach, after he died on the tree visited Sheol and preached to the captives there:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 1 Peter 3:18-20

You see, there is no way for any man to enter Heaven but through the blood of Yeshua. The Lamb of Yahweh had to preach to those who did not have opportunity to hear him prior to his incarnation so that they could either accept Him or reject Him. We know that there were those who accepted him because:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) Ephesians 4:8-10

We know that there were those whom He led captive the righteous ancients with Him to heaven. We know this through one scripture that very few pay much attention to:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Matthew 27:51-53

I can only imagine what it would have been like for those who were still unbelievers at that time. Imagine being someone that heard Yeshua speak yet you still didn't receive the message. You're sitting there and Yirmayahu, or Yeshayahu or Eliyahu walk up to you and tell you that Yeshua is the Son of Yahweh and that He's Mashiach. That would probably be a long-lasting memory that you would never forget.

When Yeshua cried out from the tree, stating "It is finished," it meant so much more than His ministry up to that point was finished. It meant that everyone prior to His coming, who would accept His gift of salvation, and those present at that time, and those who would believe on His Name from that day forth would not just have their sins covered; they would have them washed away forever and ever.

If your sins are therefore washed away, they are far more than covered; they are gone like they never existed. In the Tanakh the phrase "blotted out," didn't mean that something was covered with a large ink blotch. No, the word literally means "exterminated." It means that the sins were killed and obliterated; annihilated. Now if you are in a Church and the teacher talks about your sins being covered, you know that they are ignorant of scripture. If you sing a song that speaks about sins being covered, that song is defunct and not worthy of issuing forth from a believer's mouth; or they are not saved and are waiting for salvation? In either case we have to be careful of what we say and what we mean.

My deceased wife used to have an idea that she conveyed to many. When they would tell her about "their cancer," or "their arthritis," she would gently rebuke them, telling them that when they made it there, it became theirs. If they had cancer it was something that had afflicted them, it was not theirs. In the same way sin is not "our sin." We man sin from time to time out of ignorance, but those sins are forgiven once we confess them to each other. It's that simple, it's that easy.

As believers in Yeshua we need to be careful of what we say and/or what we claim. We need to be careful because:

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he... Proverbs 23:7

I am of the thought that there are many things that we must unlearn. Through good intentions, but out of ignorance many have taught us wrongly. That is why Yahweh tells us to search the Scripture. We're exhorted to be like the Berean's who compared everything to

scripture so that they would not be hoodwinked or mistaught. It is important that we are sensitive to the voice of Yahweh's Spirit when he leads us into correction. As I mentioned earlier, we have been led through "tradition" to believe a variety of things, some of which might not be wholesome and/or nurturing for your walk with Yahweh Yeshua.

Without getting into specifics, when Martin Luther left Catholicism, he didn't abandon it altogether. There were certain "traditions" that he brought with him, especially in the way of holidays and observations. It seems that this happens whenever new movements come to the Church of Yeshua. For instance, when I was a kid my mother attended an Episcopal church and she took my sister and I there on Sundays. If you were to look at the differences between Episcopal and Roman Catholic (or any Orthodox Christian sect) there aren't very many deviations. In fact, when I received my confirmation in the Episcopal Church the document said that I was confirmed in The Holy Catholic Church. Later I found out that Catholic means "universal," so that elated my anxiety. In fact, the Episcopal Church is so much like the Roman Catholic Church that when I dated a RC girl back in the early 90's I was able to take Communion. That was back before I knew any better. Like I said at the beginning of this paragraph, I'm not going to get into more specifics because I don't want to offend anyone, but I do pray that maybe the Ruach Ha Kodesh will spur some of you on to research more.

So I think that my request of anyone reading this journal is that you humbly ask Yahweh Yeshua to show you anything that you are doing that is not pleasing to Him, or is leading you down a path that will have you doing things that aren't prescribed as being scripturally prudent. There is a misconception that once we're Born Again that we are perfect. Well, we might look perfect in Yahweh's eyes because of what Yeshua accomplished for us, but we are still a work in progress:

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6

Since we're a work in progress we have to accept the fact that we are constantly being purged of bad things in our lives and we're given good things to replace them. Yahweh has a plan for each one of our lives and He knows when He is going to do works in us and through us. The things that Yahweh has shown me over the past ten years I would not have been able to understand prior to that. It is sort of like school. In primary school we learn the basics, which are gradually increased until the time comes to leave primary school to attend High School. Had we

not gone through primary schooling we could never be ready for higher achievements. In like manner High School prepares us for life and also for trade school or college.

Rabbi Paul, in his letter to the Hebrew believers illustrates that there are certain foods for certain ages of maturity in faith in Yeshua:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:12-14

It is only when one is able to accept the deeper things of Yahweh that those things will be imparted. Last August our new grandson was born. We've been excited as we watch him mature. This past month he's been watching the older kids and the adults as we eat solid food. He has been seeing our food and he's been identifying the smell of the food as something that is tasty, and he's been reaching out for our food. I pray that those who read this text and who are still on milk will desire to want the solid food that Yahweh offers. I pray that you crave the deeper things of Yahweh and that you call out to him for those things. The sad thing about those who are still on milk is that they have a hard time (as the scripture points out) discerning between good and evil. This is why people can be believers for years or even decades but fail to see evil and deception; thus, falling into those things. Yeshua extolled us to ask, seek and knock, and then you will receive. Please, ask for Yeshua to tell you the truth, and seek it with all of your heart, and knock on Yahweh's door until he opens it to sit you at the table filled with the finer foods of His Kingdom.