

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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“Yah”: I have seen a few Messianics who insert “Yah” into places in Hebrew words where they linguistically cannot appear. Can you explain this for me, and why these people might be doing it?

Those who place a high emphasis on the Divine Name YHWH in the independent Messianic community, often among Sacred Name Only proponents, frequently believe that most Hebrew words beginning with a *yud* (י) or a “y” should have the syllable “Yah” in it. While there are Hebrew words where linguistically the syllable *Yah* (יָ) does appear, it certainly does not appear in all Hebrew words beginning with a *yud*. You have every right to challenge those who insert “Yah” into words where it does not appear, asking those who do so where they received their Hebrew training and what their justification is for doing so. If they say that they are not trained in Hebrew, then you probably have your answer.

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Yahshua: Why do you not use this form of the Messiah’s name?

The first problem with using “Yahshua” is that it is not a Hebrew word; it is not listed in any Hebrew dictionary or lexicon. There is no legitimate Hebrew spelling for the name “Yahshua,” which seems to be a fabrication by proponents of its use. It is not recognized as being a legitimate name by any Hebrew scholar or linguist. This is unlike the names *Yehoshua* (יהושפט) or *Yeshua* (ישוע), which clearly have Hebrew spellings.

The second problem is that “Yahshua” does not match the correct etymology of the Messiah’s name given for us in Matthew 1:21: “She shall bring forth a son. You shall call his name Yeshua, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins” (HNV). The name Yeshua means, “He is salvation,” as opposed to “Yahshua” which is supposed to mean “Yah [God] saves.” If salvation is to only come from God, and the Messiah is God, then the name Yeshua meaning “He is salvation” points to salvation coming from Yeshua and Yeshua being God. The name “Yahshua,” in contrast, would point to salvation coming from an outside source, and thus the Messiah would not be God in the flesh. Using the name “Yahshua,” we believe, subtracts from the Messiah’s Divinity.

One claim that proponents of “Yahshua” make, justifying that this is a legitimate name, comes from a statement that the Messiah makes in John 5:43: “I have come in My Father’s name.” It is said that in order for the Messiah to come in the “name” of the Father, that part of the tetragrammaton (יהוה) or Divine Name YHWH must appear in the name of the Son. This logic is highly questionable. To come in one’s “father’s name” in First Century Israel, one’s father’s name would appear *after* his own name, i.e., Yochanan ben/bar Zavdai (John son of Zebedee). If the application of coming in “His Father’s Name” is applied in this context, then the Messiah’s name should be “Yeshua ben YHWH” or “Yeshua bar YHWH,” meaning “Yeshua son of YHWH,” as opposed to the erroneous “Yahshua.”

Correctly understood, in John 5:43 we see that the Messiah is speaking of coming in His Father’s **authority** or “name” (Heb. *shem*, שם; Grk. *onoma*, ὄνομα), as there will be another, the antimessiah/antichrist, who will come in his own authority. It has nothing to do with whether or not part of the tetragrammaton or Divine Name YHWH must be part of His own personal name.

We do not believe that there is any scholastic basis for using the form “Yahshua,” and using it brings discredit to the Messianic movement in the eyes of many Jews who know Hebrew names from the Biblical period. The form Yeshua is almost universally recognized in the academic world as being the original Hebrew name for the Messiah, and that is the form that our ministry uses.

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Yahweh, Should We Use: Do you believe that we should use the name Yahweh? Do you believe that the Messiah spoke the name Yahweh?

Objectively examining the Apostolic Scriptures, there is not a single instance of the Messiah ever verbalizing the name YHWH, either directly, or with Him quoting from the Tanach. Consider Luke 4:17-19, which includes a direct quotation from Isaiah 61:1 and 58:6:

“And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ‘THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.’”

In the Greek source text, Isaiah 61:1 is quoted directly from the Septuagint, the Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible from approximately three centuries before the time of Yeshua. The LXX rendered the name YHWH with the title *kurios* (κύριος) or “Lord,” the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי). In the synagogue at Capernaum, Yeshua would have read this text with *Adonai*.^a While the following verses in Luke 4:28-32 indicate that most in the synagogue thought He was blaspheming, they **do not** indicate that He was blaspheming because He verbalized the name YHWH. On the contrary, they were dismayed because of Yeshua’s words “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). “The prohibition against the pronunciation of the name of God applies only to the Tetragrammaton, which could be pronounced by the high priest only once a year on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies...and in the Temple by the priests when they recited the Priestly Blessing” (*EJ*).^b The Mishnah reflects these traditions that existed in the Judaism of Yeshua’s day:

“And the priests and people standing in the courtyard, when they would hear the Expressed Name [of the Lord] come out of the mouth of the high priest, would kneel and bow down and fall on their faces and say, ‘Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever’” (*m.Yoma* 6:2).^c

There was a protocol for using the proper name of God, which it is clear that Yeshua adhered to during His Earthly ministry. In the Gospels Yeshua actually spends more time calling His Father, “Father,” than referring to Him as God or Lord. If Yeshua considered not speaking the name YHWH aloud to be an error of the Second Temple Judaism that His ministry existed in, then there would be plenty of evidence in the Apostolic Scriptures supporting this, including charges of blasphemy against Him for verbalizing the name YHWH. **But these things do not appear.** As Messianic Believers who are trying to return to the theology of the First Century Believers, who operated within the context of Second Temple Judaism, we must recognize that while our Heavenly Father has a proper name, it was not used by Yeshua or the Apostles. We must have the same kind of respect for the holiness of the name YHWH that they had.

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^a “[A]nd he was given the scroll of the prophet Yeshu’ahu. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of *ADONAI* is upon me; therefore he has anointed me to announce Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned and renewed sight for the blind, to release those who have been crushed, to proclaim a year of the favor of *ADONAI*” (Luke 4:17-19).

^b Louis J. Rabinowitz, “God, Names of,” in *EJ*.

^c Neusner, *Mishnah*, 275.

Yahweh, used by the Patriarchs: Do you believe that the Sacred Name of Yahweh was used by the Patriarchs? Some say that it was, and others say it was not.

In the account of Moses at the burning bush, the Lord Himself makes it clear that the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know Him as YHWH: “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I did not make My name Yahweh known to them” (HCSB). The Lord states very clearly, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai” (NJPS). Prior to this time, the Divine Name of God was not revealed to His people.

Some in the Messianic community, particularly of the “Sacred Name” persuasion, claim otherwise. They claim that since the Divine Name YHWH is used in the Hebrew text of Scriptures, even in the Creation narrative, that the Patriarchs, Noah, and even Adam and Eve would have used the Divine Name. In direct contrast to this, those believing the JEDP documentary hypothesis for the Torah’s composition, not composition authorized by Moses, advocate that instances where the name YHWH is used in the text, it is information coming from the J source or the Yahwist. In contrast to this, wherever the title Elohim is used, the information and traditions are believed to come from the E source, the Elohist.

Sitting between the extremes of the Divine Name being known to the ancients before Moses, and those who say that Moses did not compile the Torah and thus the Divine Name used reflects the so-called J source, are various conservative standpoints, often based on literary techniques employed in the Pentateuch. While the Hebrew text of Genesis does have the Patriarchs speaking the name YHWH in dialogue, the account of God Himself in Exodus attests to them never knowing it. A fair assessment, as proposed by many Jewish Rabbis over the millennia, is that Moses is making a literary point when the name YHWH is used, as opposed to the title Elohim. The title Elohim is believed to emphasize the judgment and order of God, whereas the Divine Name YHWH is believed to emphasize the love and mercy of God. This would mean that the “love aspects” of God’s nature are emphasized when the name YHWH is used in Genesis.

We may assume that the name YHWH has been anachronistically used in Genesis to emphasize the fact that He is the *same* El Shaddai of the Patriarchs, and that they all worshipped the same God. The editor does not believe that the Patriarchs knew the Divine Name of God. But, they certainly knew the God who revealed Himself to Moses as YHWH at the burning bush.

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Yeshua/Y'shua: Why do you frequently use Jesus’ Hebrew name?

Whether some readers realize it or not, TNN Online is a Messianic website which is geared toward presenting Christians to the Hebraic Roots of our faith. In using the Messiah’s given Hebrew name of *Yeshua/Y'shua* (ישוע), as opposed to using Jesus, we reveal an element of our faith that has remained suppressed for almost two millennia. And just as Yeshua is our Savior, so does His name mean “He is salvation” (Matthew 1:21). Whenever you see the word “salvation” in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is probably the improper noun form *yeshuah* (ישועה), or a derivation of it.

Please note that we are **not** of the position that the English name “Jesus” is pagan and a derivative of “Zeus” as some have advocated. Rather, Jesus is transliterated from the Greek transliteration of Yeshua, *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), which was used by the Jewish translators of the Septuagint to render *Yeshua* into Greek three centuries before Messiah, and is the title of the Book of Joshua (Yehoshua) in the Septuagint.

Now, even though we believe that Jesus is not “pagan,” this does not mean that as a Messianic website we necessarily encourage its usage. We believe in using Messiah’s given name of Yeshua.

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Yeshua, Divinity of: Does your ministry believe that Yeshua the Messiah is Divine, meaning God in the flesh?

Yes, we absolutely believe that Yeshua the Messiah is Divine, and are aware of the fact that this foundational truth is being denied by some in the Messianic community. We seldom employ the word “heresy” in regard to somebody’s beliefs or teachings, **but are of the firm position that those who deny the Messiah’s Divinity are such heretics.** There are those who believe that Yeshua was just a human man, and He had some kind of special relationship with God and was quite possibly even empowered by God, but never God in the flesh. There are those who are confused and do not know what to believe. While we cannot fully understand our Creator, nor can we fully understand His ways as mortal human beings, the Scriptures do tell us some important things about the Lord.

In Isaiah 43:3a, He tells us, “For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” He follows up this statement with, “I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isaiah 43:11). He challenges the “fugitives of the nations” (Isaiah 45:20), “I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, and they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 49:26). These verses from the Tanach (Old Testament) attest to the fact that the Lord, God Himself, is our only Savior and Redeemer. The process of being redeemed and being saved are unmistakably connected together, and they are directly related to our Creator Himself. The key in properly dealing with the Divinity of Messiah issue is directly related to how we become saved.

The Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) tell us some things about our salvation as well. The angels proclaimed at Yeshua’s birth, “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:20, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.” Paul also writes about “the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua” (Romans 3:24). We are told, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Yeshua the Messiah is the One “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Four times in the epistle of 2 Peter, Yeshua is called “our Lord and Savior” (1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). This seems to be a contradiction. If the LORD God is our only Savior and Redeemer, then why is Yeshua referred to as the One saving us and redeeming us? Is not this something that can be done by only God alone?

The truth of the matter is that one being saved, forgiven of his or her sins, and being spiritually regenerated, are all directly connected to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine. Consider the Scriptures from the Tanach that clearly tell us that God Himself is our only Savior and Redeemer. Consider the Scriptures which tell us that Yeshua is only the One in whom we have salvation and redemption. What is being communicated here? Is there a Divine connection between the Father and Son? Yes!

For a further discussion of these issues, consult the editor’s article “**Answering the ‘Frequently Avoided Questions’ About the Divinity of Yeshua.**”

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YHWH/YHVH: Are you against using the proper name of God? Are you for using it?

The strong aversion to using the name of God in Judasim today is that there is no complete way for us to know how to pronounce it. Scholars have debated for centuries over the exact pronunciation of God’s name, based on available linguistic evidence and testimonies from ancient history. But all that anyone can provide is a best guess.

“In the earliest Hebrew the sacred name appeared as a four-letter word or tetragrammaton: YHWH (יהוה), without any vowel signs. Since the vowels were added very late, at the time of the fixing of the MT text..., the OT itself gives no clue to its original pronunciation. Some help, however, is given by the early church fathers. Theodoret of Cyrus (fourth century A.D.) testifies that the Samaritans, who shared the Pentateuchal scripture with the Jews, pronounced the name $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$, and Clement of Alexandria (early third century A.D.) transliterated the ‘name of four letters’ as $\text{I}\alpha\omega\upsilon\epsilon$. Moreover, Egyptian Magic Papyri from the end of the third century A.D. attest to the patristic spelling, especially that of Theodoret. Following these hints, modern scholars believe the approximate pronunciation was ‘Yahweh’” (IDB).^d

“Yahweh” has become the most common pronunciation of the tetragrammaton in the scholastic community, but no complete certainty can be attached to this pronunciation. There are some variant pronunciations such as “Yahuweh” or “Yahoweh” which some prefer. A default position is to represent the name of God by the consonants YHWH or YHVH. We can, however, be confident that “Jehovah” (or “Yehovah”) is not the correct pronunciation of YHWH:

“An artificial form, often attributed to Petrus Galatinus in *ca.* A.D. 1520, which results from the combination of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton...with the substitute vowel reading which was introduced in the sixth-seventh centuries A.D...One of the various substitutes that were employed, the chief was ‘Adonai’ (‘Lord’), the vowels of which the Masorettes as a rule added to the consonants ‘YHWH’ to indicate that ‘Adonai’ should be read. The combination of the two—the Tetragrammaton and the vowels of ‘Adonai’—yields the artificial name” (IDB).^e

Because the Hebrew language has no vowels, the Masorettes, whose job it was to copy the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, added special markings underneath letters to indicate vowel sounds. For the name YHWH (יהוה), the vowel markings for *Adonai* or “Lord” were applied, so the cantor would read *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי). Some early Christian Bible translators applied the vowel markings for *Adonai* and came up with the name “Jehovah.” There are still a fair number of Christians who use the form Jehovah, albeit in error. The scholastic community today is more likely to use the more correct form “Yahweh,” or simply YHWH.

There are some in the Messianic community who believe that they know what the correct way to say the name of God is. The problem with this is that the pronunciation of His name has been debated for centuries, and one of the reasons why Jews today do not use it is because His name was only spoken aloud by the high priest in the Temple on *Yom Kippur*. Perhaps today we might not view it in such a sense, seeing the name YHWH or forms such as “Yahweh” used in academic journals and publications. But considering the debate over how God’s name is pronounced, it would be best to respect historical precedents, knowing that our Father has a name, but treating it with the respect and holiness that it deserves.

As a ministry, we do not use the proper name of God, YHWH, in consideration for the long-standing Jewish custom of not pronouncing it. This was followed by Yeshua and the Apostles, who we never once see in the Apostolic Scriptures speaking the name YHWH. If you use the name YHWH frequently, and later travel to Israel, you may discover yourself a very unwelcome person.

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^d B.W. Anderson, “God, names of,” in *IDB*, 2:409.

^e B.W. Anderson, “Jehovah,” in *Ibid*, 2:817.

YHWH, Above the Cross: I heard a Messianic teacher say that the Divine Name YHWH was spelled out on the writing above Yeshua's cross? Is this true?

The Scriptures that are often made light of concerning this belief include Matthew 27:37, "And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, 'THIS IS YESHUA THE KING OF THE JEWS,'" and John 19:19, "Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, 'YESHUA THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS'" (cf. Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38). What we know for certain from the Gospels is that Hebrew was not the only language in which this superscription was written. John 19:20 makes the important remark, "many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Yeshua was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek." At the very least, this indicates that there were more than just Hebrew-speaking Jews present in Jerusalem at the time of Yeshua's crucifixion, but also probably indicates that the Greeks and Romans present at this event needed to know that Yeshua was indeed King of the Jews.

Some have made light of the record in John 19:21-22, where "the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews"; but that He said, "I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.'" This claim is made to support the belief that the Divine Name YHWH was somehow spelled out in the Hebrew superscription above our Lord as He was dying. Some conclude that the Sadducees wanted the name YHWH pulled down and the words be re-written. But notice that this is not what the text tells us. They wanted it torn down because they wanted Pilate to write the mocking statement "I am King of the Jews." History reveals that Pontius Pilate was no friend of the Jewish people in Israel, and that he was censured by the authorities in Rome for how he treated them. Varied traditions indicate that he was either executed, committed suicide, or was exiled because of his poor administration.^f If indeed antagonistic toward the Jews, Pilate would have wanted Yeshua's cross to say something to the effect that the king of the Jews was a "dead man," and that Rome had prevailed over them.

While our ministry *fully affirms* the Divinity of Messiah Yeshua, we can find no evidence to support the conclusion that the name YHWH was spelled above the cross in the words "Yeshua the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." Many who make this assumption claim that the Hebrew would have read *Yeshua haNatzri v'melech haYehudim*, beginning with the first four letters of God's Divine Name: YHVH or YHWH. The problem with this is that the statement actually translates as "Yeshua the Nazarene **and** king of the Jews," notably including the Hebrew conjunction *vav* (ו), generally meaning "and." If this were an accurate rendering it would be reflected in John's Greek transcription with the conjunction *kai* (καί), also generally meaning "and." But all John 19:19 reads with is *Iēsous ho Nazōraios ho basileus tōn Ioudaiōn* (Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων), with no *kai* present in the text.

The conjunction *vav* (ו) or "and" is also not present in modern Hebrew translations of the Greek Apostolic Scriptures in John 19:19. The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation reads with *Yeshua haNatzri melech haYehudim* (ישוע הנצרי מלך היהודים), meaning "Yeshua the Nazarene, king of the Jews." The 1991 UBSHNT reads with *Yeshua m'Natzrat melech haYehudim* (ישוע מנצרת מלך היהודים), "Yeshua from Nazareth, king of the Jews." While it may sound interesting, and tickle some ears, the Hebrew that would have appeared above Yeshua's cross did not spell out the Divine Name YHWH. Author Douglas Hamp confirms these conclusions:

"In none of the texts above do we see the word *kai*, which, if the acrostic *YHWH* had been written in Hebrew, would have appeared in the Greek. If it appeared in at least one of the texts, then we might conclude that it was really there. However, since we don't see it in any of the texts, which are our *only* records of what was (or was not) on that sign, we must conclude that the acrostic *YHWH* was not on the cross. It is best to be silent where the Bible is silent. Regardless, however, of what it spelled out, the reason that the Jewish leaders were angry was not

^f Cf. Lorman M. Petersen, "Pilate," in *NIDB*, pp 789-790.

because the writing somehow spelled out *YHWH*, but because it said He was the king of Jews, an obvious declaration of messiahship, which they plainly rejected.”^g

If Bible readers really want to see Yeshua the Messiah portrayed as *YHWH*, then it would be much more beneficial for them to investigate the many intertextual references from the Tanach, quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures—where passages directly applying to the LORD are applied to Yeshua, with Him integrated into the Divine Identity.^h

updated 24 February, 2010

^g Douglas Hamp, *Discovering the Language of Jesus* (Santa Ana, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing, 2005), 77.

^h For further consideration, consult Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), and Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

Yom Kippur, Fasting: Where is the command in Torah to fast on *Yom Kippur*? I thought it only said that we are to afflict our souls.

The command to commemorate *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement appears several times in the Torah (Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:30; 23:27-28; Numbers 29:7-11), with each section of commandments giving specific details. One of those specific details—and arguably the most important—is listed in Leviticus 23:27: “it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls.” What does the clause *v'innitem et-nafshotekhem* (וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם) mean, exactly? The verb *anah* (אָנָּה), appearing the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), is defined as “**humble oneself, mortify oneself.** (by fasting)” (*CHALOT*).^a So from a lexical standpoint, “afflict your souls” (KJV) or “self-denial” (NJPS) can definitely mean that one is to fast on *Yom Kippur*.

Surveying Jewish history, it is very easy to see that fasting—abstaining from food—was most definitely the traditional interpretation and application of what it means for one to afflict himself or herself on *Yom Kippur* by the time of Yeshua. A direct reference to *Yom Kippur* appears in Acts 27:9, which says that on Paul’s way to Rome “considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even **the fast** was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them.” Here “the fast” (Grk. *tēn nēsteian*, τὴν νηστείαν) is undoubtedly *Yom Kippur*. Commentators are almost unanimously agreed that this is *Yom Kippur*. F.F. Bruce explains, “By the ‘Fast’ [Luke] means, of course, the Great Day of Atonement, which falls on Tishri 10.”^b

In the Jewish tradition, there are exemptions from fasting on *Yom Kippur*. Under the Rabbinic principle of *Piku’ach Nefesh* or Regard for Human Life, infants and the infirm and/or the elderly are permitted to eat on the Day of Atonement, but preferably with basic staples and water. However, if one can adequately fulfill the requirement to fast, one is expected to do so. The fast of *Yom Kippur* is to focus oneself entirely on God and in confessing any sin—individual or corporate—and to intercede for His mercy upon Israel and the world.

While many Messianics find it difficult to fast on this one day throughout the year, it is notable that many of the greats who have served the Lord over the centuries made it a regular practice. John Wesley often fasted between Thursday afternoon and the late afternoon or evening meal on Friday, every week. Many people who feel the need to focus themselves on the Lord in intense periods of prayer fast for weeks or a month at a time, although they will normally drink water. Messiah Yeshua Himself fasted for forty days in the wilderness after being immersed by John the Baptist (Matthew 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2). So certainly, fasting for a single day on *Yom Kippur* should not be construed as any kind of burden, but a healthy faith practice that we probably do not do enough.

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^a *CHALOT*, 278.

^b F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 506.