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**The Kairos of Fasting –
The Rule of Fasting on the Day of Atonement
(Leviticus 16:29–31),
the criticism of Fasting in
Isaiah 58:1–14 and Matthew 6:16–18
(Summary)**

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SUMMARY

The Kairos of Fasting –

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Key words: Fasting, Kairos, Piety, Penitence, Obedience, social justice

Fasting besides almsgiving and prayer is essential part of Jewish and Christian piety (Tobit 12:8–10; Mt 6:1–18). There are two reasons for I decided to explore the question of fasting in biblical perspective. The first was that in Protestant church there is not prescribed the act of fasting. There are no exact rules in Protestant tradition as like in Catholic or Orthodox Church. Although this fact in biblical tradition there are several motivations of fasting. According to S. Lowy the main motivation of fasting can be: mourning, penitence, prayer, reconciliation with God. The second reason was that there has not appeared in Hungarian a biblical monography on the topic of fasting. My PhD thesis is focused on the practice and rule of fasting on the Day of Atonement (=Yom Kippur) – 10th Tishri (Lev 16:29–31) and the criticism of formal fasting (Isaiah 58; Mt 6:16–18).

The central hypothesis of this doctoral thesis is the following: fasting is kairos. Fasting by definition is ritual abstinence with religious purpose. Fasting is kairos because it has been practiced with well defined motivation and temporal circumstances (from one day up to fourty days or regular fasting days). This hypothesis has been proven by linguistic and tradition critical research method.

The basic form of fasting was not to eat and not to drink. The common verb for fasting in the Hebrew Bible is צוּם. The Greek root νηστεύω (the Septuagint and New Testament form of צוּם) derives from the Indo-European term of 'ne-edtis' which has the meaning of: to be without nourishment, to be hungry.

This doctoral thesis contains seven chapters followed by summary (in Hungarian, Romanian and English) and bibliography.

In the first chapter there are mentioned the most important scholars who did research on the issue of fasting like S. Lowy, David Lambert, Kent Berghuis and Paul Heger. The second chapter was dedicated to the specific biblical Hebrew and Greek terms for fasting.

Whithin second chapter we have seen that fasting is not described by only one term like the Hebrew root צוּם or νηστεύω (in Greek), but as well by synonym parallels. Besides the

definition of the meaning of the structures (קָרָא צוֹם; שָׁק; קָדַשׁ צוֹם) we pointed out the idea that fasting was practiced during mourning (סָפַד) prayer (פָּלַל). In Acts 27:9 the noun ἡ Νηστεία denotes the Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur. By the analysis of the Psalm 6 we noticed that weeping, tears are motives belonging to mourning rite. Mourning rites are in close relationship with the phenomenon of fasting.

The aim of the third chapter is to give a short outline of the history of fasting from ancient time up to the present.

The purpose of the fourth chapter is to define the terminus technicus of this thesis (καίρος). Here we mention two important monographies, namely: Oscar Cullmann: *Christus und die Zeit* (1948) and James Barr: *Biblical Words for Time* (1962).

The main part of our doctoral work are the fifth, sixth and seventh chapter.

In the the fifth chapter we pointed out the fasting paradigm of the passage Leviticus 16:29–31 (Lev 23:29–32; Num 29:7–11). Here keeping fast on the Day of Atonement is compulsory for it has been prescribed by the eternal law of YHWH. Moreover we stated that the verbal structure עָנָה נֶפֶשׁ in Leviticus 16:29 according to the rabbinical tradition has the sense of ‘to keep fast’ (Mishnah Yoma 8:1). According to the rabbinical literature the structure עָנָה נֶפֶשׁ is synonym with הַצּוֹם („the fast”) (Misne Tora 4:1). The Day of Atonement as שַׁבַּת שְׁבֻתוֹן was considered a day of complete rest. On this very day any kind of work was prohibited. In contrast on Yom Kippur there was prescribed keeping sacred assembly.

The sixth chapter concerning the passage Isaiah 58:1–14 is focused on criticism of communal fasting. In this chapter we explored the criteria of keeping the fasting day that is pleasing to YHWH (in Hebrew: יוֹם צוֹם רְצוּן). Fasting does not have any sense without practice of social justice. In other words the community which practices fasting has to help poor people (Lev 25; Isaiah 61:1–3).

The seventh chapter deals with the passage Matthew 6:16–18. Here the main theme is the criticism of personal fasting which has to be practiced in secret. Personal fasting has to be about the communion between the Heavenly Father and who is fasting.

Finally, fasting besides prayer and almsgiving is part of jewish and Christian piety although that fasting is adiaphoron. Fasting is not compulsory, it is not a diet, but a way of expression of our communion with the Heavenly Father.

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