

Leviticus 16 (The Atonement)

The Day of Atonement

Lev 16:1 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD.

Lev 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

Lev 16:3 "This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

Lev 16:4 He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on.

Lev 16:5 From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

Lev 16:6 "Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household.

Lev 16:7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Lev 16:8 He is to cast lots for the two goats--one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat.

Lev 16:9 Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.

Lev 16:11 "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering.

Lev 16:12 He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain.

Lev 16:13 He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die.

Lev 16:14 He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

Lev 16:15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.

Lev 16:16 In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Lev 16:17 No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel.

Lev 16:18 "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar.

Lev 16:19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

Lev 16:20 "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.

Lev 16:21 He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task.

Lev 16:22 The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

Lev 16:23 "Then Aaron is to go into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there.

Lev 16:24 He shall bathe himself with water in the sanctuary area and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people.

Lev 16:25 He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

Lev 16:26 "The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

Lev 16:27 The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and intestines are to be burned up.

Lev 16:28 The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

Lev 16:29 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you--

Lev 16:30 because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.

Lev 16:31 It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance.

Lev 16:32 The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments

Lev 16:33 and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community.

Lev 16:34 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 16 is significant because it outlines the rituals for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the most solemn and important day of the ancient Israelite religious calendar.

The Core Rituals

- **The Holy of Holies:** It is the only day the High Priest could enter the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (the Holy of Holies) to stand before God's presence.
- **Atonement for Sin:** The High Priest sacrificed a bull for his own sins and the sins of his household.
- **The Two Goats:** He took two goats for the community. One goat was sacrificed as a sin offering to cleanse the tabernacle and the people.
- **The Scapegoat:** The High Priest laid his hands on the second goat (the "scapegoat"), confessed over it all the sins of Israel, and sent it away into the wilderness to symbolically carry the community's guilt away.

Spiritual and Theological Meaning

- **God's Holiness:** It taught the Israelites that God's presence is gracious but holy, and sin must be seriously addressed through God-appointed substitution and cleansing.

- **Christian Fulfillment:** In the New Testament (specifically in the book of Hebrews), these rituals point forward to Jesus Christ. Jesus serves as both the ultimate High Priest and the final sacrifice who entered heaven once for all time, permanently removing sin rather than needing to repeat sacrifices every year.

Leviticus 16 details the ancient Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), which the New Testament—especially the Book of Hebrews—presents as a shadow and blueprint pointing directly to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus as the Ultimate High Priest

- **The Earthly High Priest:** In Leviticus 16, only the high priest (Aaron) could enter the earthly Holy of Holies, and he had to do so with animal blood and strict mediation.
- **The Heavenly Fulfillment:** The New Testament explains in [Hebrews 9:11-12](#) that Jesus serves as our superior High Priest. Instead of entering a man-made tent, Jesus entered the ultimate heavenly sanctuary.

Heb 9:11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.

Heb 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

Heb 9:13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

Heb 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Jesus as the Sacrificial Offering

- **The First Goat:** Leviticus 16 requires a goat to be sacrificed as a sin offering to make atonement for the people's sins.
- **The Ultimate Sacrifice:** Jesus fulfilled this role by offering His own blood rather than the blood of animals. Hebrews notes that His single sacrifice achieved eternal redemption, ending the need for annual repetition.
- **Heb 9:27** Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

- **Heb 9:28** so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.
- **Mar 10:45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2Co 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus and the Scapegoat

- **The Second Goat (Azazel):** The high priest placed his hands on the live scapegoat, confessed the sins of Israel over it, and sent it away into the wilderness to carry their iniquities away.
- **The Removal of Sin:** Jesus embodies this picture by completely bearing and removing the sins of believers. Just as the scapegoat carried guilt into an uninhabited land, Christ removes human transgression far away from God's presence.

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Access to God's Presence

- **The Veiled Presence:** In the Old Testament tabernacle, the heavy veil kept regular worshippers out of God's immediate presence in the Holy of Holies.
- **The Torn Veil:** When Jesus died on the cross, the temple veil tore in two from top to bottom. The New Testament teaches that Jesus' blood now grants believers direct, confident access into the presence of God.

Mat 27:45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land.

Mat 27:46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Mat 27:47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

Mat 27:48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

Mat 27:49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

Mat 27:50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Mat 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split

Mat 27:52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

Mat 27:53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Mat 27:54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"