

Leviticus Chapter 16

Verses 1-34: This chapter comprises the ceremonial and theological pivot on which the entire Book of Leviticus turns. Even though today the temple and sacrificial systems have disappeared, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), remains the holiest day in the Jewish year. The introduction to the chapter is given (in verses 1 and 2), with an emphasis on safeguarding the sanctity of the Most Holy Place, as Aaron was forbidden “that he come not at all times into the Holy Place ... before the mercy seat”. The Hebrew phrase translated here “come not at all times” could imply a total prohibition against entry, but the context makes it clear that with proper precautions the high priest may enter the Holy Place once a year. The translation “not to come whenever he chooses” gives the meaning clearly. The reason Aaron could not enter the Holy Place is that it housed the ark on which the mercy seat was found. This was where God came to His people in the heart of the tabernacle, hidden in a cloud (Exodus 40:34-35).

The “mercy seat” likely means “lid” or “cover”. The notion of a seat was derived presumably from (Psalm 99:1), which speaks of God sitting between the cherubim as on a throne. The lid with its surmounting cherubim served as a cover for the ark (see discussion of the “mercy seat”; Exodus 25:17). If Aaron did not enter only when God prescribed, he would “die”. First, Aaron made “atonement for himself, and for his house”. The Hebrew word (*kiper*), has at least three possible meanings that are held among conservative scholars.

The first, coming from the Akkadian verb *kuppuru*, is “to cleanse” or “wipe”. This fits those contexts where the altar or the sanctuary is the direct object of the verb and the action involved smearing the altar with blood (verse 33).

The second meaning is “to make atonement” and would be derived from the Hebrew *koper* meaning “ransom price”. A *koper* is the money a man condemned to death could pay to escape the death penalty (Exodus 21:30; Prov. 6:35).

The third possibility is that it means “to cover”, so as to “appease” (compare Gen. 32:20). The verb appears 16 times in the 34 verses. Aaron is said to “make an atonement for himself, and for his house” (verse 6), and also “for the holy sanctuary ... the tabernacle of the congregation ... for the altar ... the priests ... and for all the people of the congregation.

The meaning and significance of the word “scapegoat” (used in verses 8, 10, 26), has caused much speculation. The Hebrew is *laazazel*, which is “to, for Azazel”. While some scholars have viewed Azazel as a desert demon, following nonbiblical Jewish literature, others have taken it to mean “Complete Destruction” or “Rocky Precipice”. However, its common meaning, “Goat of Departure”, best fits the context. Just as the two birds represent death and cleansing, so the two goats have the same symbolism here. One represents substitutionary death and the other (*azazel*), represents the carrying away of sins. Thus, man is justified and his sins are expiated. This principle of vicarious atonement and newness of life finds its fullest expression in Christ, the divine Lamb, who takes away human sin by His death (compare John 1:29). From Levitical usage, the term “scapegoat” is still employed to describe a person who takes the blame for some misdemeanor committed by another individual or group.

Leviticus 16:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died;"

That is, either immediately after their death, and so this chapter would have stood in its natural order next to the tenth. Or else after the above laws concerning uncleanness on various accounts were delivered out, designed to prevent the people entering into the tabernacle defiled. Whereby they would have incurred the penalty of death. Wherefore, as Aben Ezra observes, after the Lord had given cautions to the Israelites, that they might not die. He bid Moses to caution Aaron also, that he might not die as his sons died. These were Nadab and Abihu.

The death of the two sons of Aaron (compare Lev. 10:1-3).

We remember from a previous lesson that 2 sons of Aaron brought strange fire into the temple, and a fire came out from God and killed them. We must remember that they had been instructed on the holiness of God, and they disregarded that. We mentioned several things the strange fire could have been. One of the things most scholars believe it was, was that they were drinking alcoholic beverages. We also remember that Aaron was not allowed to grieve for them, or to bury them. He was separated for the things of God, and their cousins came and got them in their coats.

Leviticus 16:2 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy [place] within the veil before the mercy seat, which [is] upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat."

Common priests went every day to burn incense on the golden altar in the part of the tabernacle sanctuary outside the veil, where the lampstand, table and bread of the Presence were. None except the High-Priest was allowed to enter inside the veil (compare verse 12), into the Holy Place, actually called the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant rested. This arrangement was designed to inspire a reverence for God at a time when His presence was indicated by visible symbols.

“Appear in the cloud”: This cloud was likely the smoke of the incense which the High-Priest burned on his annual entrance into the Holy of Holies. It was this cloud that covered the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (see verse 13).

“The mercy seat” (see Exodus 25:17-22). It literally means “place of Atonement” and referred to the throne of God between the cherubim (compare Isa. Chapter 6). It is so named because it was where God manifested Himself for the purpose of atonement.

We remember that Moses and Aaron had the same mother and father; Amram and Jochebed. They were of the tribe of Levi. Aaron could not go into the holy of holies whenever he wanted to, even though he was the high priest. To go into the holiest place without God's permission would be certain death. The presence of God was in the holiest place in the cloud above the mercy seat. The veil separated the holy place and the Holy of Holies. We will find that this veil symbolizes the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, that everything in the Holy of Holies

must be pure gold or 24 karat pure gold overlay. Where God dwelled must be holy. Gold means the purity of God. This warning could have been given to Aaron just after the death of his sons.

Leviticus 16:3 "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy [place]: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering."

“Sin ... burnt offering”: For these offerings brought by Aaron the High-Priest (see notes on 4:1 – 5:13; 6:24-30 and 1:3-17, 6:8-13), respectively. The bull was sacrificed first as a sin offering (16:11-14), and later the ram as a burnt offering (16:24).

Aaron will not only represent himself before God, but will be the entire congregation's representative as well. Of course, this young bullock symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ who was our sin offering. Jesus took our sin upon His body that we might receive His righteousness. The ram for the burnt offering is also symbolic of the Lord as our burnt offering. We remember that Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac to the Lord, when God stopped him and gave him a ram substitute.

Genesis 22:13 "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind [him] a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

This ram will be totally burned up as a sweet savor to the Lord. Remember, this offering shows the total surrender to God by the person being offered for. In the sin offering Jesus is our Savior, in the burnt offering He is our Lord.

Leviticus 16:4 "He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these [are] holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and [so] put them on."

For a description of the priests' normal clothing (see Exodus 28:1-43 and Lev. 8:6-19). He wore them later for the burnt offering (compare verse 24). These humbler clothes were less ornate, required for the Day of Atonement to portray the High-Priest as God's humble servant, himself in need of atonement (verses 11-14).

When Aaron is representing God to the people in the sanctuary, he wears the fancy garment of the high priest. You remember that garment was the one with the breastplate with the 12 stones. It also had the ouches of gold on each shoulder with the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on the stones. The high priest carried the people he represented on his shoulders and on his heart at all times. When the high priest appears in the Holy of Holies before God for his sins and the sins of the people, he wears a very different garment. The garment the high priest wears when he presents the people and himself before God, is very plain. The linen in the garment in the breeches, and in the mitre shows righteousness. This washing of his body, before he puts on the garment, symbolizes water baptism. When we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are baptized in water and we put on the robe of righteousness that Jesus provided for us. We read in Revelation that this robe is so white, because it has been washed in the blood of the Lamb. This

garment the high priest wears, shows that we stand before God with nothing cleansing us, but the blood of Jesus. We stand in the robe of all believers that Jesus has provided. No flesh must be showing. Flesh has been left behind. We are a Spirit man.

Verses 5-10: The Day of Atonement rituals featured two goats: a “sin offering” and a “scapegoat”. The first was sacrificed to cleanse the Holy Place from the sins of Israel that had tainted it (16:15-19). The high priest would take blood from this goat and sprinkle it on the “mercy seat” (Heb. 9:13-14). Then he would place his hands on the second goat, confess Israel’s sins, and send it into the wilderness as a sign of the removal of sin. Both animals symbolized Christ (Heb. 7:27-28; 9:7). The Hebrew verb *kipper* (“to cover”), refers to the mercy seat and is the root of (*Yom*) *Kippur* (23:26-32). Jesus “covered” (made atonement), and “took away” people’s sins.

Leviticus 16:5 "And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering."

“Two ... goats” (see 16:7-10, 20-22). One animal would be slain to picture substitutionary death and the other sent to the wilderness to represent removal of sin.

“One ram”: Along with the High-Priest’s ram (verse 3), these were to be offered as burnt offerings (verse 24).

He not only takes a sacrifice of the goats and a ram for us, but takes one for himself as well. Notice that the offering for the high priest is the same as the offering for the whole congregation. We must also see that the daily sacrifices were not enough. The fact that this offering was made just one day a year foreshadows the fact that Jesus would make one perfect offering for all time for everyone.

Verses 6-28: The following sequence describes the activities of the High-Priest and those who assisted him on the Day of Atonement:

1. The High-Priest washed at the basin in the courtyard and dressed in the tabernacle (verse 4).
2. The High-Priest offered the bull as a sin offering for himself and his family (verses 3, 6, 11).
3. The High-Priest entered the Holy of Holes with the bull’s blood, incense and burning coasts from the altar of burnt offering (verses 12-13).
4. The High-Priest sprinkled the bull’s blood on the mercy seat 7 times (verse 14).
5. The High-Priest went back to the courtyard and cast lots for the two goats (verses 7-8).

6. The High-Priest sacrificed one goat as a sin offering for the people (verses 5, 9, 15).
7. The High-Priest reentered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and also the Holy Place (compare Exodus 30:10, verses 15-17).
8. The High-Priest returned to the altar of burnt offering and cleansed it with the blood of the bull and goat (verses 11, 15, 18-19).
9. The scapegoat was dispatched to the wilderness (verses 20-22).
10. Afterward, the goat keeper cleansed himself (verse 26).
11. The High-Priest removed his special Day of Atonement clothing, rewashed, and put on the regular High-Priest clothing verses 23-24).
12. The High-Priest offered two rams as burnt offerings for himself and the people (verse 3, 5, 24).
13. The fat of the sin offering was burned (verse 25).
14. The bull and goat sin offerings were carried outside the camp to be burned (verse 27).
15. The one who burned the sin offering cleansed himself (verse 28).

Leviticus 16:6 "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house."

Though theologians tend to use the term *atonement* to summarize Christ's work on the Cross, it occurs only in the Old Testament (Rom. 5:11 is better translated "reconciliation"). And only relates to one part of what was accomplished for us, that is, the cover of our sins. This word probably means "cover", and is first used where Noah is commanded to cover the ark with pitch (Gen. 6:14). Just as the ark was a "type" of Christ in saving His people from judgment (Heb. 11:7), the "cover" within and without emphasized the means whereby our salvation is secure. That is, our sins are covered by the blood of Christ. This covering of sin is an expression of God's love for mankind (Prov. 10:12). When a Christian hears about another's failing, he should both forgive and forget the event. All believers should follow Christ's example and seek to build up the fallen one, rather than follow the natural inclination to engage in gossip (Prov. 17:9; see (Gen. 6:14; Lev. Chapter 16; Lev. 16:30).

We must see in this, that his offering for himself and his household must be made first, before he would be worthy to make offering for the congregation.

Leviticus 16:7 "And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

The sin offering for the people, a proper emblem of Christ. This creature being clean and fit for food, denoting the purity of Christ, and his being suitable and wholesome food, as his flesh is to the faith of his people.

"And present them before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": At the east of the court, and the north of the altar, as the Misnah. So that their faces were towards the west, where the Holy of Holies, the seat of the divine Majesty was.

Leviticus 16:8 "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat."

"The scapegoat" (compare verses 10, 26). This goat (literally *Azazel* or "escape goat"), pictured the substitutionary bearing and total removal of sin which would later be fully accomplished by Jesus Christ (compare Matt. 20:28; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:1-10; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; and see notes on verses 20-22).

In the Old Testament, guidance was obtained by the casting of "lots". This practice also appears in the New Testament (Acts 1:26), but Jesus told the disciples that when the Holy Spirit came, He would lead them in truth instead (John 14:16-17).

We remember in the 2 goats, that one represents death and the other represents life. We are dead in sins and trespasses, until we accept Jesus as our perfect sacrifice. The animal that is killed represents the fact that we were dead in sin. The scapegoat represents life. We have been set free to live for Jesus. These goats are offered before the brazen altar at the door of the tabernacle.

Leviticus 16:9 "And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him [for] a sin offering."

Alluding to the manner of taking out the lot by the high priest, who, when he took it out, lifted it up with his hand. And then let it down, and put it on the head of the goat; after which he brought it to the altar to be sacrificed.

"And offer him for a sin offering": An offering for the sins of the people, as a type of Christ, who made his soul an offering for sin for his people. But this was not done by Aaron until he had brought and killed the sin offering for himself. After which we read of killing this sin offering for the people (Lev. 16:11). Wherefore some take this offering here to be no other than a setting apart or devoting the goat for this service.

Jesus was our substitute, just as this goat was their substitute. Just as Jesus shed His precious blood for payment of our sin, this goat would shed his blood to pay for their sin.

Leviticus 16:10 "But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, [and] to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness."

"Make an atonement": The day of Atonement necessitated two goats, one allowed to live and go free, signifying that Christ took away our sins. The other was slain on the altar, the blood being taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant. This signified that Christ shed His blood, then presented Himself in heaven to appear in the presence of God for us.

This goat being set free and driven into the wilderness with the sins on him, show the life we receive in Jesus. The high priest laid his hands upon the goat confessing the sins of the people and then released the goat, and drove him into the wilderness. Both of the goats made up the sin offering.

Leviticus 16:11 "And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which [is] for himself:"

In the same manner, and is to be understood in the same sense as in (Lev. 16:6).

"And shall make atonement for himself and for his house": By a confession of words, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, and which Jarchi calls the second confession. For the same was made, and in the same words as before (see notes on Lev. 16:6).

"And shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself": Which was a type of Christ. The creature itself was, being strong for labor, and patient in bearing the yoke. Christ had a laborious service to perform, the work of man's redemption. And he was strong for it, able to go through it. And did not only readily take upon him the yoke of the law, and became obedient to every command of his divine Father, but even to death itself, the death of the cross. The kind of sacrifice was a sin offering, and such Christ in soul and body was made for his people. In order to which, as this sacrifice, he was put to death.

The priest could not go into the holy of holies without blood for his sins and the sins of the people. This bullock is killed at the brazen altar, the blood from the animal will be brought into the holy of holies. We have mentioned this over and over, but it is very important to remember that the blood of animals can only cover sin. The blood of Jesus Christ does away with sin.

Leviticus 16:12 "And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring [it] within the veil:"

"Within the veil" (see note on verse 2). The veil separated all from the holy and consuming presence of God. It was this veil in Herod's temple that was torn open from top to bottom at the death of Christ, signifying access into God's presence through Jesus Christ (see Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

The smoke from the incense burning will separate Aaron from the full view of God. The presence of God is in the holy of holies. When he put the sweet incense on the coals, the smoke made a veil where he could not see the face of God.

Leviticus 16:13 "And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that [is] upon the testimony, that he die not:"

"Cloud" (see note on verse 2).

“Upon the testimony” The Testimony included the tablets of stone, upon which were written the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:16; 31:18), located in the ark under the mercy seat.

If he entered without blood, or in any way did not fulfill all the requirements of God, he would die. The mercy seat covered the ark of the covenant and the Spirit of God hovered in the smoke above the mercy seat. The Holy of Holies was closed off to everyone except the high priest, and was even closed to him except for one time a year. Thank goodness, Jesus opened the way into the very presence of God for all believers when he was crucified.

Matthew 27:51 "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;"

This veil had kept all out, except the high priest. The veil symbolized the flesh of Jesus. We can go boldly before the Father now in the name of Jesus.

Leviticus 16:14 "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle [it] with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times."

“Seven times”: This number symbolically indicated completion or perfection (compare verse 19).

This sprinkling 7 times on the mercy seat symbolizes the complete work of mercy that Jesus gave all who will believe. This blood sprinkled completed the sacrifice for sin for that year for the priest and the congregation. The blood of the perfect Lamb (Jesus Christ), completed the sacrifice for all time for all who believe

Leviticus Chapter 16 Questions

1. What had happened to 2 of Aaron's sons, when they offered before the Lord?
2. Why had the LORD killed them?
3. Who came, and got, them and buried them?
4. Who did the LORD call Aaron in verse 2?
5. Where did God say He would appear?
6. What did He warn Aaron not to do?
7. Who were Moses' parents?
8. What separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies?

9. What did this veil symbolize?
10. What shall Aaron come into the holy place with?
11. Who will Aaron represent before God?
12. Jesus took our ____ upon His body that we might receive His _____.
13. What was the substitute God had provided for Abraham instead of his son Isaac as a sacrifice?
14. This offering shows the complete _____ to God by the person being offered for.
15. In the sin offering, Jesus is our _____.
16. In the burnt offering, He is our _____.
17. What shall Aaron wear in the holiest place?
18. What does the white linen symbolize?
19. Before he puts on the garment, what shall he do?
20. In the holiest place, Aaron is representing _____ _____ to _____.
21. When Aaron was representing God to the people, what did he wear?
22. After we Christians are baptized, what do we put on?
23. What is offered for a sin offering for the congregation?
24. What does the fact that this offering inside the veil is made just one time a year foreshadow?
25. Whose offering must be made first?
26. What is the fate of the two goats?
27. How does Aaron determine which goat shall die?
28. What does the scapegoat symbolize?
29. Who was the substitute for the Christian?
30. What symbolism can we see in the goat being set free in the wilderness?
31. Why did Aaron carry the censer full of coals and the incense into the holiest place?
32. What happened to the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, when Jesus was crucified?

33. How many times was Aaron to sprinkle the blood before the mercy seat?