



MBS181

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN LEVITICUS 16



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If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.
Leviticus 1:3-4

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Leviticus gives instructions on various types of offerings. This study will focus on the most important one, the offering of the Day of Atonement. While the Bible discusses the Day of Atonement in a number of areas, this study is concerned specifically with this particular holy day as it is written about in Leviticus 16.

This is a key chapter in the Book of Leviticus and a section all to itself. It will be studied in eight main divisions: the restrictions of the Holy of Holies, the preparations, the presentation of the sacrifices, the atonement for the priest, the atonement for the people, the cleansing of the participants, the restrictions and specifications, and the conclusion of the Day of Atonement.

There are some things to be considered regarding the Day of Atonement in order to see the larger picture. First, the Hebrew word for “atonement” comes from the Hebrew root *kafar*, a root that is found one hundred-ten times in the Old Testament, mostly within two books: Leviticus and Numbers. The basic idea of the word “atonement” is “to cover.” This is seen in Genesis 6:14, where it is used of covering Noah's ark with pitch to protect it from water seepage. The concept of the Old Testament usage of atonement is simply that of “covering”; their sins were covered by this particular offering.

Secondly, if broken down by its syllables, the word “atonement” is “at-one-ment.” The basic concept is that of bringing together two parties who have been at enmity or have animosity against each other. It is an Old Testament concept only, as the word is not found in the New

Testament. It is used in a theological sense for all that Yeshua (Jesus) did on the cross. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word “atonement” has a much more limited meaning: it means “covering” and it emphasizes the bringing together of two parties who have been at enmity with each other.

The third thing to note about this particular occasion is that it was a day of national atonement. There is a common misconception that on the Day of Atonement every individual Jewish person had to bring his own sin sacrifice for the year, but that was not the case. Rather, one goat, one blood offering, was offered up for the whole nation on this occasion. The purpose of this national Day of Atonement was to cover all sins that were not covered by the individual atonement. The sin offering was an individual atonement, as was the trespass offering. These were brought throughout the year as necessary to cover individual sins and trespasses. But the occasion of the Day of Atonement was to cover all sins that were not covered by the individual atonement. It also helped the very poor who could not afford a blood sacrifice and had to offer a meal offering; on this occasion, the blood offering would be a covering for the poor as well. So, with this one-day offering, one atonement was made for the whole nation. In this chapter, there is a special emphasis on individual appropriation. Although Yeshua died for all sins, of all time, for all men, everywhere, that by itself will not save anyone, because the benefits of Messiah's death are applied only to those individuals who believe. By the same token, an offering was provided for the whole nation on this Day of Atonement. But it was applicable only to those individuals who would afflict their souls; to those who would repent; to those who would believe. In the words of Leviticus 23, where the Day of Atonement is mentioned again, it states that it applied only “to the individual who afflicted his soul.” It did not cover deliberate sins of rebellion. It was for unacknowledged sins and defilement.

The fourth thing to consider about the Day of Atonement is that there are three basic purposes for the Day of Atonement. First, it was to provide a yearly opportunity to cleanse the people and the Tabernacle. A second purpose of the Day of Atonement was to remind Israel of her national standing before God. A third purpose of this occasion was to call for individual repentance. Again, a distinction must be made between national provision and individual appropriation. On this day, there was a national provision of atonement, but it was appropriated only by individuals who repented. Therefore, there is a call on this occasion for individual repentance.

And fifth, this was the most important religious day of the Jewish religious calendar. This was true under Moses and it was also true in rabbinic theology. In their writings, the rabbis refer to this day by the Aramaic word *yoma*, which literally means “the day,” with a definite article because of the special significance of this particular day.

I. THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES: LEVITICUS 16:1-2

The restrictions of the Holy of Holies will be discussed in two aspects: the timing of God's instructions and the limitation of entry into the Holy of Holies.

A. The Timing of God's Instructions: Leviticus 16:1

And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before Jehovah, and died.

The timing as to when God gave these special instructions specifies that it was *after the death of the two sons of Aaron*. The events of Leviticus 16 came after the event in chapter 10 that recorded the death of two of Aaron's sons. Their action was: *they drew near before Jehovah, and died* because they improperly performed the ceremony of the burning of incense.

That God spoke these things after the death of the two sons of Aaron emphasizes the sin of improper ritual and establishes a link between chapter 10 and chapter 16. The sin of Aaron's sons in chapter 10 created the need for a day such as the Day of Atonement. The reason this is brought up in verse 1 is because of the importance of doing the ritual of the Day of Atonement exactly as God commanded.

B. The Limitation of Entry into the Holy of Holies: Leviticus 16:2

and Jehovah said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron your 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.

God spells out the limitation: Aaron is not permitted to come *at all times into the holy place*, which was the second room of the Tabernacle. He is not to enter that room where the *mercy-seat* is upon the Ark because God was found in the visible form of the Shechinah Glory upon the Mercy Seat. The Hebrew word for *mercy-seat* here is *kaporet*, which means, "cover" or "lid." The concept of seat is also found in Psalm 99:1, where it is that of an atonement cover or an atonement lid. Essentially, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat. There were two cherubs on each end overshadowing the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, and the Shechinah Glory light was between the two cherubs over the Mercy Seat. When Aaron entered into the Holy of Holies, he saw a visible manifestation of the presence of God: the Shechinah Glory. Aaron was warned not to feel that he could enter that room freely; such thinking would lead to his death, just as his two sons had died. In other words, he was allowed to go into that room only on the Day of Atonement. Furthermore, as the high priest, he alone was allowed to enter into that particular room. During the entire duration of the Mosaic Law, there was only one man, of one family, of one clan, of one tribe, of one nation, of one race, of all humanity, who ever had access to God's presence, and even for him, it was only one day of the year.

God then states the reason why Aaron must take special precautions as to when and how he enters the room: *for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat*. Therein lies the reason for the danger of death: the presence of God in visible form, the Shechinah Glory. Therefore, he was the only one to enter and he was to enter only on this one day of the year. Furthermore, he was never to enter without blood; he did not dare go in unless he was given the protection of blood itself. Otherwise, God warns, He would become, not just a cloud, but a consuming fire, as was the case with the two sons of Aaron.

II. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT: LEVITICUS 16:3-5

Three things are involved in the preparations for the ritual: the offering for the high priest, the clothing of the high priest, and the offering for the people.

A. The Offering for the High Priest: Leviticus 16:3

Herewith shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering

The high priest himself must first deal with his own sins before he can deal with the sins of the people. Aaron had to provide for himself, and subsequent high priests had to provide for themselves, *a young bullock* or calf *for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering*.

The principle to be found here is that the sinful human priest had to make atonement for his own sins before he could make atonement for the people. The negative side of the Aaronic priesthood was that the high priest was a sinner who had to atone for his own sins before he could atone for the sins of the nation. This is one of the points picked up in the Book of Hebrews. The advantage for believers under the Melchizedekian priesthood is that Jesus did not need to deal with His own sin, but could deal directly with our sins.

B. The Clothing of the High Priest: 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 the linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: they are the holy garments; and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and put them on.

Four items of clothing that have to do with the high priest are mentioned in verse 4a. First: *the holy linen coat*; this is a shirt like garment that symbolized holiness and glory. It is also viewed as being the clothing worn by angelic beings (Ezek. 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6-7; Dan. 10:5; 12:6-7). Secondly: *the linen breeches*; this is a reference to shorts. Thirdly: *the linen girdle*; this is a sash that was wrapped around him. And fourthly: *the linen mitre*; this is the head covering, the *mitre*, or the turban.

Verse 4b states that *they are the holy garments*. These are not the regular

daily clothing items worn by the high priest. The breastplate and all the multicolored items and attire that the high priest wore on other occasions are described elsewhere. However, on this day his clothing would be far less elaborate, an outfit even more plain than the priestly clothing worn by the common priests. The point is that on this day he was stripped of all honor because of the nature of humility before the God of Israel. While the daily clothing of the high priest happened to be multicolored, on this particular occasion he was to wear clothing made of only one color: white, symbolizing purity.

The next procedure is described in verse 4c: *he shall bathe his flesh in water, and put them on*. The word *bathe* means “immersion.” The high priest would immerse himself in water for ritual cleansing and put on these Day of Atonement clothes.

C. The Offering for the People: Leviticus 16:5

And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering.

God clearly states that the object of the offering is *the congregation of the children of Israel*. The offering necessary for the congregation of Israel is twofold: *two he-goats for a sin-offering; and one ram for a burnt-offering*

III. THE PRESENTATION OF THE SACRIFICES: LEVITICUS 16:6-10

The official presentation of the sacrifices comes in two stages: first, the presentation for the high priest; and secondly, the presentation for the people.

A. The Presentation for the High Priest: Leviticus 16:6

And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself, and for his house.

The verse states: *Aaron shall present the bullock, or calf, for the sin-offering, which is for himself*. In Hebrew, this means literally, “which is his.” The bullock had to come from his own means. It must come not from the treasury, but out of his own herd, making sure it costs him something. This is to make atonement for himself personally *and for his house*, meaning “for his entire family.”

B. The Presentation for the People: Leviticus 16:7-10

In the presentation of the offering for the people, two goats are set before the Tent of Meeting in verse 7: *And he shall take the two goats, and set them before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting*.

Each goat then undergoes its own special ritual in verses 8-10, beginning with the casting of lots in verse 8: *And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for Jehovah, and the other lot for Azazel*.

The purpose of casting *lots* is to determine which goat will be chosen to die and which will be chosen to live. Each lot was inscribed with a

word: one lot read *for Jehovah*, and the other lot read *for Azazel*. According to rabbinic tradition, the high priest placed one goat at his right hand and the other goat at his left hand. He put both his hands into some kind of an urn, and one lot in each hand was taken and placed upon the corresponding goat. Regardless of how factual rabbinic tradition is, one thing is clear from the biblical text: it was by the means of casting lots that one goat was chosen to live and one goat was chosen to die. The goat chosen to die was *for Jehovah*; the goat chosen to live was *for Azazel*.

The word *Azazel* is found only in verses 8, 10, and 26 of this one chapter. It comes from a Hebrew root that allows for four possible translations. The first possible translation is of the goat itself. In that sense, it would mean the “escape goat” or the “goat of departure.” A second way to translate *Azazel* is to make it a proper name. In that case, it would be translated as “the power of evil” or “the desert demon,” a side reference to Satan. This would mean the sins of Israel were sent back to their ultimate evil source: Satan and his demons. A third way to translate the word *Azazel* is “rocky precipice.” By Jewish tradition, the goat chosen to live did not stay alive; rather, he was taken out into the wilderness and pushed backwards over a cliff or precipice and killed; in that way, he would not bring the sins he bore back into the camp of Israel. A fourth way to translate the term is to do so in the abstract, meaning “complete destruction” or “entire removal.”

It is difficult to determine the exact meaning, although the basic concept would be that of removal. The *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, used a Greek word for *Azazel* that literally means “the one to be dismissed.” The picture is that, through the shedding of blood of the first goat, the second goat removes the sins away from Israel.

In rabbinic theology, this was largely given a demonic significance. A rabbinic legend says that the angel *Samael* was given authority over all peoples except Israel, and so he complained to God. God promised *Samael* that he would gain control over Israel on the Day of Atonement, if the people sinned. The second goat, then, was intended to be an offering to *Samael*. Because the second goat was not taken into the sanctuary, it was released into the wilderness. Again, this is purely rabbinic tradition with no biblical validity.

The rabbinic legend called the “Legend of *Azazel*, the Scapegoat” is based on Isaiah 1:18, where Isaiah stated: *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*, it became a custom to tie a red ribbon on the horn of the scapegoat before it was sent out into the wilderness. Miraculously, year after year, the red ribbon always turned white, symbolizing that God had forgiven the sins of Israel for that year. This same legend points out that the red ribbon stopped turning white forty years before the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Subtracting 40

years brings one to A.D. 30, which was the year of the Crucifixion. Although the rabbis did not make the connection between the two, the connection is obvious. As of A.D. 30, the reason God was no longer forgiving the sins of Israel by means of these two goats was because of Hebrews 10:18, which states that there is no longer sacrifice for sin because He has sent His son. God is no longer forgiving sin through animal blood. Individuals must now come to the Messiah Jesus in order to receive forgiveness of sins.

The goat *for Jehovah* is dealt with in verse 9: *And Aaron shall present the goat upon which the lot fell for Jehovah, and offer him for a sin-offering.*

The lot that was inscribed *for Jehovah* or “for the LORD” signified that the goat would die. This is the goat that would be the sin-offering, the goat that would provide the atonement through the shedding of blood.

The second goat, the goat for Azazel, is dealt with in verse 10: *But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement for him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.*

The means of atonement here is *to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness*. This is not totally unusual because, in the offering of two birds in Leviticus 14:53 for the cleansing of the leper, one bird was killed and the second bird was dipped in the blood of the first one and set free. This was part of the purification ritual of the cleansing of a healed leper. Likewise, the shedding of the blood of the first goat allows the second goat to carry their sins away. While the first goat makes the atonement, the second goat makes the purification. While the first goat was the goat for the shedding of blood, the second goat is the goat of removal in that he will symbolically carry away the sins of Israel.

IV. THE ATONEMENT FOR THE PRIEST: LEVITICUS 16:11-14

The first Day of Atonement ritual is divided into three segments: the presentation of the sin offering, the offering of incense, and the sprinkling of the blood.

A. The Presentation of the Sin-Offering: Leviticus 16:11

And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself.

Atonement must be made for the priest first because he must deal with his own sins before he can deal with the sins of the people. Atonement for the priest begins with the presentation of the *bullock of the sin - offering*, which is intended to provide for the atonement *for himself*, Aaron individually; and *for his house*, meaning his family. This would take care of the sins for his entire family. Then the killing is mentioned; he *shall kill the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself*; the point is that the shedding of blood is essential for atonement to be accomplished.

B. The Offering of Incense: Leviticus 16:12-13

The offering of incense is performed in two stages. The first stage, from the Altar of Sacrifice to the Holy Place, is described in verse 12: *And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil.*

Aaron must take *a censer full of coals* of fire from the Altar of Sacrifice, and fill his hands with *sweet incense beaten small*. This is in accordance with the previous command found in Exodus 30:36. The incense for the Altar of Incense is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). Next, he is to *bring it within the veil*, which is the doorway to the Holy Place.

The second stage focuses on the Altar of Incense in verse 13: *and he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not.*

The incense is now transferred to the Altar of Incense. Aaron is to *put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah*. The Altar of Incense stood in front of the *veil*, the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The reason he must do this is so *that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony*. It is a symbolic covering of the Shechinah Glory with prayer to God in order that He might not see the sin and cause His holy wrath to break forth upon the sinner, *that he die not*. In this way, the smoke of the incense will serve as a shield to protect the high priest from death because of his sins.

C. The Sprinkling of the Blood: Leviticus 16:14

and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat on the east; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

The high priest next moves into the inner chamber of the Holy of Holies; this marks his first entrance into this room on this day. Referring to the blood, the verse instructs him to *sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat on the east*. He does not sprinkle the blood on top of the Mercy Seat. The word *upon* means “against the front of it,” specifying toward the front of the lid. This sprinkling is done only once. According to rabbinic tradition the sprinkling is upward. At any rate, this provided the expiation for the sins of the priest.

Furthermore, it states: *and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times*. The word *before* means that the blood is sprinkled on the ground in front of Ark. In rabbinic tradition, the priest sprinkled this blood downward. Again, this provided the expiation, for the sins of the priest; he sprinkles once upward and he sprinkles seven times downward.

V. THE ATONEMENT FOR THE PEOPLE: LEVITICUS 16:15-22

The second main ritual of the Day of Atonement is the atonement for

the people, which comes in two stages, corresponding to the two goats.

NOTES

A. The Ritual of the First Goat: Leviticus 16:15-19

1. The Sacrifice: Leviticus 16:15-16

The actual sacrifice is described in verse 15: *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat.*

The goat of the sin-offering is specifically *for the people*. The high priest will *bring his blood within the veil*, marking his second entrance into the Holy of Holies. Again, this is the only day the high priest was allowed to enter into this room, but he enters it on two occasions on this one day, for he must do with the blood of the goat *as he did with the blood of the bullock*. He is to *sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat*, that is over it, *and before the mercy-seat seven times*.

Verse 16 teaches that this provides the atonement: *and he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins: and so shall he do for the tent of meeting, that dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.*

In verse 16a, this is the atonement for the Holy of Holies. Three reasons are given for the cleansing of *the holy place*. First, the *uncleannesses of the children of Israel*, meaning because of their outward, ceremonial uncleanness. Secondly, *their transgressions*, meaning their violations of the Law of Moses. Thirdly, *even all their sins*, meaning their general sinfulness.

Verse 16b states: *so shall he do for the tent of meeting*. The high priest will also sprinkle blood upon the Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle because it dwells *with them in the midst of their uncleannesses*.

2. The Limitation of Access: Leviticus 16:17

And there shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

There is a clear prohibition against anyone entering this room besides this one man on this one occasion. Once the priest began to walk toward the Holy of Holies to make atonement, no one else was allowed to enter any part of the Tabernacle, including the first room. Once the high priest came out, this prohibition was ended. They were to wait until the atonement had been made. This shows the sanctity of it all, because on this day the high priest is making an *atonement for himself* and his family by means of the blood of the bullock, and for the whole *assembly of Israel* by means of the blood of the first goat.

3. The Application of the Blood: Leviticus 16:18-19

Moses deals with the application of the blood in verse 18: *And he shall go out unto the altar that is before Jehovah, and make atonement for it, and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.*

This was probably a reference to the Altar of Sacrifice, but it might refer to the Altar of Incense. The text is not entirely clear, but either way, the purpose is to *make atonement for it*. So he took the blood of the calf and also that of the slain goat, meaning this ceremony must be performed twice, first with the blood of the bull, and then with the blood of the goat, and first applied the blood of the calf *upon the horns of the altar round about* and then applied the blood of the goat *upon the horns of the altar round about*.

The first stage of the ceremony ends with the sprinkling of blood in verse 19: *And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the children of Israel.*

After applying the blood on the horns of the Altar, he must then sprinkle the blood seven times on top of it. The results will be twofold: first, he will *cleanse it* of ceremonial *uncleanness*; and secondly, he will *hallow it*, set it apart, from *the uncleannesses* of the people.

There are three distinctive elements of the ritual of the first goat. First, the blood is brought into the Holy of Holies twice on this occasion: the blood of the calf provided for the sins of the high priest and his family; and the blood of the goat is offered for the sins of the people. The second distinctive element is that the blood is sprinkled seven times on the holy places: the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Altar, either the Altar of Incense or the Altar of Sacrifice. The purpose was to cleanse them because they were located in the midst of the uncleanness of Israel. And thirdly, the application of the blood to the three divisions of the Tabernacle for the uncleanness of Israel: Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Altar.

B. The Ritual of the Second Goat: Leviticus 16:20-22

The ritual for the second goat comes in three stages: first, the timing of the presentation; secondly, the confession of sin; and thirdly, the release of the live goat.

The timing of the presentation is given in verse 20: *And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat.*

The first stage emphasizes the timing of the presentation is *when he had made an end of atoning* for three things: *the holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar*. By now, all of the blood rituals were accomplished, as the blood had to be shed first. He now presents the second goat, the goat chosen to live, the goat *for Azazel*.

The second stage of the ritual is the confession of sin described in verse 21: *and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness.*

There are four steps involved in the confession of sin. First, the laying on of hands. In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands was the means of identification. In this way, the goat was identified with the Jewish people. Secondly, the confession: with both his hands on the live goat, the high priest confesses Israel's sins. He must confess *all the iniquities of the children of Israel*, which involves internal sin; *all their transgressions*, which has to do with specific violations of the Mosaic Law; and *even all their sins*, which concerns general sinfulness. The third step is the substitution: *he shall put them*, meaning all these iniquities, transgressions, and sins *upon the head of the goat*. This is full-scale identification. The picture is that the sins of Israel are transferred to the live goat with the laying on of hands. And the fourth step is the removal: *and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness*. The Hebrew word means “appointed.” It was given to an individual who was officially appointed for this particular task.

The third stage of the ritual is release of the live goat in verse 22: *and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness*.

This is the goat *for Azazel* that does the actual bearing of sin. The text states that the goat is carried *unto a solitary land*. The Hebrew word literally means, “a land cut off,” “a land severed from others.” It is a land that is not connected by roads, highways, or paths. The act is: *he shall let go the goat in the wilderness*. According to the text, the goat was alive when he was released. The rabbis say that the goat was pushed off a cliff and killed. While that did become the practice later in the Second Temple period, it was not the practice in the Tabernacle period; the goat was simply let go alive into the wilderness.

The picture here is that, through the shedding of the blood of the first goat, the second goat can bear away the sins of Israel, which is similar to the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14:53.

VI. THE CLEANSING OF THE PARTICIPANTS: LEVITICUS 16:23-28

A. The Cleansing of the First Participant: Leviticus 16:23-25

The first participant who needed the cleansing was, of course, the high priest and his cleansing comes in four stages: the removal of the special white garments, ritual immersion, the burnt offerings, and the disposal of the fat of the offerings.

First, he must remove the white garments that he wore only for the Day of Atonement in verse 23: *And Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there*.

The high priest now goes *into the tent of meeting*, for the purpose of removing the *linen garments*. This will be in exchange for his regular multicolored priestly garments. It is pointed out that the linen

garments are the ones he put on *when he went onto the holy place* just for this occasion, at the beginning of the Day of Atonement service. The verse further states: *and shall leave them there*. In other words, these clothes were kept in the first room, the Holy Place, and they will not be used again until the next Day of Atonement. By rabbinic tradition, they were never used again, not even at the next Day of Atonement. The next Day of Atonement, a brand new set was made for him. There is no concrete evidence that this is true, but at any rate, what is known is that the garments were worn only once a year. The high priest probably wore the same clothing the following year. Of course, with a change in the high priesthood, there may have been a change of clothing because of different sizes and natural wear and tear.

The typology of this ritual refers to the Messiah's resurrection. It typifies man's subjective response in receiving redemption; the laying aside the likeness of sinful flesh.

The second stage of the high priest's cleansing is the washing in verse 24a: *and he shall bathe his flesh in water in a holy place, and put on his garments*. Again, the word *bathe* means "immersion." He underwent ritual immersion when he took off his daily clothing and before he put on his Day of Atonement clothing; now the ritual is repeated. But this time he takes off his Day of Atonement clothing, undergoes ritual immersion, and then goes back to wearing his regular daily clothing.

The third stage of the cleansing process for the high priest is the offering up of the burnt offerings in verses 24b: *and come forth, and offer his burnt-offering and the burnt-offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people*.

The high priest comes out from the Holy Place again and offers the burnt offering for himself, which was the ram of verse 3; he also offers up the burnt offering for the people, which is the ram of verse 5. This finalizes the ritual in that he will *make atonement for himself and for the people*.

And the fourth stage concerns the fat of the offerings in verse 25: *And the fat of the sin-offering shall he burn upon the altar*.

The fat parts of the bull and the goats are to be burned on the Altar.

B. The Cleansing of the Second Participant: Leviticus 16:26

And he that lets go the goat for Azazel shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

Moses deals with the cleansing of the second participant, the "appointed one" of verse 21; the one who *lets go the goat for Azazel* must *wash his clothes*; he must also *bathe his flesh in water*. In other words, he too must undergo ritual immersion. Only then will he be permitted to return to the camp.

C. The Destruction of the Remains: Leviticus 16:27

And the bullock of the sin-offering, and the goat of the sin-offering, whose blood

was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be carried forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. It was the *blood of the bullock of the sin-offering, and the goat of the sin-offering* that was brought into the Holy of Holies to make atonement, therefore, the rest of their remains were to be taken forth outside the camp and were totally destroyed by fire; this included *their skins, and their flesh, and their dung*. The principle was that the remains of any animal whose blood came in contact with the Holy of Holies, whether it was sprinkled toward the veil or within the Holy of Holies, must be destroyed by fire outside the camp.

In dealing with the sin offerings in the first seven chapters of the Book of Leviticus, the high priest could normally partake of a portion of the sin offerings. This is true only of the individual sin offerings throughout the year. However, concerning this sin offering on the Day of Atonement, he could not partake of it under any circumstances. Whatever was not burned on the Altar had to be taken outside the camp and totally destroyed there.

D. The Cleansing of the Third Participant: Leviticus 16:28

And he that burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

The one responsible for burning the remains must undergo his own ritual cleansing in two stages. First, he must *wash his clothes*; and secondly, he must *bathe his flesh in water*, this again refers to ritual immersion. Only then could he freely return to the camp.

VII. THE RESTRICTIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS: LEVITICUS 16:29-33

A. The Declaration of a Statute: Leviticus 16:29-31

The timing of the declaration is given in verse 29: *And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourns among you.*

The Day of Atonement is declared to be *a statute for ever*. Furthermore, *the seventh month*, the month of *Tishrei*; *on the tenth day of the month*, Moses declared: *ye shall afflict your souls*. This is important because it deals with internal affliction and internal repentance. The emphasis is on the individual Jewish member of the commonwealth who afflicted his own soul. While atonement was provided on this day for the whole nation, it was not immediately and automatically applied to every individual. It was applied only to those individuals who actually believed. The rabbis concluded that this word meant, “fasting” based on Numbers 29:7 and Isaiah 58:3-5. In this context, however, fasting is not mandated on this day. Although fasting became a modern Jewish observance, it was not a Mosaic observance as such. Rather, they were to afflict their souls on this day.

Furthermore, they were to *do no manner of work*. It was to be a day of rest and was to be treated like a Sabbath. In fact, the only time the word “Sabbath” is used for a day of the week other than the seventh day happens to be on the Day of Atonement. This prohibition includes both *the home-born*, as well as *the stranger*, a Gentile who sojourns among them.

The purpose is spelled out in verse 30: *for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah.*

On this day, atonement is provided to cleanse them *from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah*. The typological meaning is, of course, that Yeshua is our Redeemer, and blood is the means of atonement. Obviously, these are valid typologies from the Book of Hebrews.

Moses points out that this is the Sabbath of Sabbaths in verse 31: *It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls; it is a statute for ever.*

This is a sabbath of solemn rest, literally *Shabbat Shabaton*, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, the holiest of all rest days. Again, they are exhorted to *afflict* their *souls*; otherwise, it will not be applied to them. Furthermore, it is to be *a statute for ever*. This would appear to contradict the New Testament teaching that, with the death of the Messiah, sacrifices were no longer necessary. But the Hebrew word for *for ever* does not actually mean “eternity” as we use it in English today. Literally, the Hebrew word simply means “up to the end of a period of time.” What that period of time is must be determined by the context. Some times it is used to indicate “up to the end of a person's life.” At other times, it is used as “up to the end of human history.” But it is also used to mean “up to the end of an age or dispensation,” as is the case here. It is to be *a statute* as long as the Law of Moses was in effect. This was to be followed strictly, as Leviticus 16 says, until the end of the Dispensation of the Law, when the Messiah became the final sacrifice for sin.

B. The Role of the High Priest: Leviticus 16:32-33

These verses distinguish between the position of the high priest and his function. His position is described in verse 32: *And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments.*

The high priest is *anointed* to this office. The phrase *who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead* means that his office was hereditary; he became a high priest because his father was a high priest. Thus all high priests would be direct descendants of Aaron. His purpose is to *make the atonement*; he was the mediator between Israel and God. As to his uniform, he shall *put on the linen garments*, meaning those to be used only for the Day of Atonement. They were *holy garments* because they were set aside for this unique purpose. The position of the high priest is that he is the one who makes atonement

and he is the one who wears the special priestly garments.

The function of the high priest is described in verse 33: *and he shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.*

The key function of the high priest on this day was to serve as a mediator. The emphasis is that he was to *make atonement* for three things: first, *the holy sanctuary*, the Holy of Holies; secondly, *the tent of meeting*, the Holy Place; thirdly, *the altar*, the Altar of Sacrifice. He was also to make atonement for individuals: *the priests*, meaning the common priests, and *for all the people of the assembly*, meaning all Israel. The function of the high priest, then, is that of making atonement, both for inanimate objects such as the Tabernacle, as well as for individuals: himself, his family, the common priests, and the whole nation of Israel.

VIII. THE CONCLUSION OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT: LEVITICUS 16:34

And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make atonement for the children of Israel because of all their sins once in the year. And he did as Jehovah commanded Moses.

This verse is a summary of the *statute* or law and ends this section of the Book of Leviticus dealing with the Day of Atonement. Moses points out that this is to be *an everlasting statute*. Again, the word *everlasting* must be taken in its Hebraic meaning, not the English meaning of “eternity,” but “to the end of a period of time,” in this case, until the Messiah comes. Until the Messiah comes, they must perform this ritual once a year because of Israel's sins.

In rabbinic theology, it is said: Even without the Temple and its services, the Day of Atonement can be the occasion of purification from sin by means of repentance.

However, this is not biblically correct. *For without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.* This was a doctrine found in Old Testament (Lev. 17:11), as it is in the New Testament (Heb. 9:22); therefore, there is the need for blood atonement. The reason there is no animal blood atonement is because the final atonement has been made with the blood of the Messiah.

The chapter ends by stating: *And he did as Jehovah commanded Moses*; that is, Aaron did exactly as God had commanded Moses. In this way, Aaron avoided suffering death like his two sons, as he was warned in verses 1-2.

A further summary of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 concludes with fifteen specific points concerning the entire Day of Atonement.

First, the penalty for entering the Holy of Holies at the wrong time and in the wrong way was death (v. 2).

Secondly, the sin offering and the burnt offering had to be sacrificed on this day (v. 3).

Thirdly, Aaron had to lay aside his beautiful garments and put on his plain, white linen garments (v. 4).

Fourthly, two goats for the sin offering, and one ram for the burnt offering were chosen (vv. 5-10, 21-22).

Fifth, the golden censer full of burning coals was brought to the Altar of Incense and the smoke of the incense went up before the Lord and covered the Mercy Seat (vv. 12-13).

Sixth, the blood of the bull and the slain goat was taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon and before the Mercy Seat (vv. 11, 14-15).

Seventh, the high priest was alone in the Tabernacle when he worked on this day. No one else could enter (v. 17).

Eighth, upon coming out of the Tabernacle, he sprinkled the blood upon the horns of the Altar (vv. 18-19).

Ninth, the scapegoat was sent away into the wilderness, symbolically bearing away the sins of Israel (vv. 21-22).

Tenth, the high priest took off his white linen garments and left them in the Holy Place; he then washed, and put on his beautiful garments (vv. 23-24).

Eleventh, the high priest then sacrificed the ram of the burnt offering (v. 24).

Twelfth, the fat of the sin offering was burned on the Altar and the remainder was carried outside the camp and burned (vv. 25, 27).

Thirteenth, this was to be a day of mourning for sin (v. 29).

Fourteenth, it was to be a day of rest (v. 29).

And fifteenth, it was to be observed once a year (v. 34).

There are three lessons to be learned from the Day of Atonement. First, this chapter emphasizes the absolute holiness of God.

Secondly, it also teaches that we can never obtain this holiness on our

own merit; therefore, no one can atone for his own sins. There was always the need for a mediator. The high priest served as the mediator between God and Israel.

The third lesson is that blood had to be shed. In the New Testament, the Day of Atonement sacrifice is dealt with in two main sections in the Book of Hebrews. First, in Hebrews 9:11-10:18, the author states that the Messiah's blood is better blood than the blood of bulls and goats. Secondly, in Hebrews 13:10-12, the author makes a comparison with what occurs outside the camp. Just as the offerings of the Day of Atonement could not be eaten by the priest but had to be taken outside the camp and burned, in the same way, the Messiah suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem. Those within the gates had no right to partake.✠

NOTES

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