

Bible Study: Lev 16

Author: Moses

Audience: Israel

Date: approximately 1445 B.C.

Location: Mount Sinai

Theme: maintaining holiness before the Lord

Genre: exposition/prose

Outline

Introduction to the Day of Atonement (16:1-2)

Preparation for the ceremonies (16:3-5)

A summary of the ceremonies (16:6-10)

A description of the ceremonies (16:11-28)

The rules for the Day of Atonement (16:29-34)

Observation

16:1 God spoke to Moses after He killed Aaron's two sons (10:1-2)

16:2 God tells Aaron when and how he can approach the ark (16:29)

16:3 Aaron must offer a bull (sin) and a ram (burnt); both males

16:4 He must wash his body and wear holy linen garments (Ex 39:27-29)

16:5 Israel must offer 2 male goats (sin) and a ram (burnt); all males

16:6 Aaron (the High Priest) offers the bull as his sin offering

16:7 Aaron presents the 2 goats at the doorway of the Tabernacle

16:8 Aaron casts one lot for Yahweh, the other for the scapegoat (Azazel)

16:9 Aaron offers the goat for Yahweh as a sin offering

16:10 Aaron sends the Azazel into the wilderness

16:11 Aaron offers the bull as his sin offering (cf. 4:3-12)

16:13 Aaron covers the mercy seat with a cloud of incense (Ex. 30:34-36)

16:14 Aaron sprinkles the blood of the bull on the mercy seat 7 times

16:15 Aaron sprinkles the blood of the goat on the mercy seat 7 times

16:16 Aaron makes atonement for the holy place (due to Israel's sins)

16:18 He puts the blood of the bull & goat on the horns of the altar to cleanse it

16:19 He sprinkles some of the blood on the altar seven times (Heb 9:22)

16:20 When he finishes atoning for the holy place, he offers the live goat

16:21 Aaron lays the sins of Israel on the head of Azazel, led away by a man

16:22 Azazel carries their sins into the wilderness and is released

16:24 Aaron bathes, puts on his cloths, and offers the burnt offerings

16:25 He offers up the fat of the burnt offering in smoke on the alter

16:26 The man who released the Azazel washes his clothes and bathes

16:27 The bull and the goat are burned outside the camp

16:28 The one who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe with water

16:29 Israelites, aliens must afflict themselves, rest on Tishri 10 (Zech 12:9-14)

16:31 A Sabbath of rest, afflict your souls; a permanent statute

16:32 The High Priest shall make atonement generation after generation

16:33 He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary and the people

16:34 A permanent statute, to make atonement for their sins once a year

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Interpretation

What is the meaning of the term “scapegoat” (Heb. *Azazel*)?

The identification of the live goat as a ‘scapegoat’ (vv. 8, 10, 26) needs clarification since the Hebrew ‘āzā’zēl (found only in these verses) has been translated in at least four ways: (a) as a reference to the goat itself—a “goat of departure”; (b) as a proper name, Azazel, referring to the powers of evil, a desert demon, or even to Satan, so that the sins of Israel were sent back to their ultimate evil source; (c) as a term meaning “rocky precipice” from which the goat was pushed to kill it; and (d) as an abstract term meaning “complete destruction, entire removal,” or the like... A survey of scholarly opinion merely reinforces the uncertainty of the exact etymology and usage of this term. However, the significance of the goat’s function in bearing away the people’s sin into the wilderness is clearly set forth (Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 1:198).

What does the symbolism of the Day of Atonement mean?

The Bible provides some direct answers but other issues are less clear.

The General Symbolism of the Fall Holy Days

Old Testament Type	New Testament Antitype
Feast of Trumpets	Seven Trumpet Plagues; Christ Returns
Day of Atonement	Satan Bound; General Repentance
Feast of Tabernacles	Millennial Kingdom; General Salvation
The Eighth Day	White Throne Judgment; General Resurrection

The Specific Symbolism of the Day of Atonement

	Old Testament Type		New Testament Antitype
16:2	Aaron, High Priest of Israel	Heb 4:14	Jesus, our great High Priest
16:3	Male sacrificial offerings	John 1:29	Son of God, Lamb of God
16:4	High Priest washes with water	Mt 3:16	Washing pictures baptism
16:4	High Priest wears linen garments	Rev 19:8	Linen pictures righteousness
16:7	Two male goats facing sacrifice	Mt 27:17	Two men facing execution
16:8	One goat for Yahweh	Mt 3:17	Jesus, Son of God the Father
16:8	One goat for Azazel	Mk 15:7	Barabbas, son of the father (Satan)
16:9	Yahweh goat led to slaughter	Mt 27:26	Jesus led to slaughter
16:10	Azazel goat released	Mt 27:26	Barabbas released
16:13	Incense covers the mercy seat	Rev 8:4	Prayers of the saints before God
16:19	Sprinkles the blood 7 times	Heb 10:14	Picture complete atonement
16:21	Azazel banished by an assistant	Rev 20:1ff	Satan banished by an angel
16:27	Bodies burned outside the camp	Heb 13:11ff	Jesus suffered outside the gate
16:29	Israelites, aliens afflict themselves	Jer 16:19ff	Whole world will mourn, repent
16:29	Atonement once per year	Heb 10:12	Atonement once in history

Application

A sin to avoid: Aaron’s sons died for approaching God on their terms, not His (16:1-2)

A command to obey: The Day of Atonement is a perpetual statute for everyone (16:29)

An example to follow: Fasting is associated with repentance, humility (16:29)

A condition to meet: No forgiveness without bloodshed (Heb 9:22)