

# CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## DHW BIBLE CLASS LESSON 9 LEVITICUS CHAPTER 16

### INTRODUCTION

Israel's most celebrated holy day is known as *Yom Kippur* or the "Day of Atonement." It is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew religious calendar, which falls approximately around September-October.<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word "Yom" means "day" and the word "Kippur" (derivative: *kaphar*) means "to cover." The phrase simply means "the day of covering."

Leviticus 16 describes the institution of the "Day of Atonement" by the LORD who told Moses to instruct Aaron, his brother, the high priest. Since then, for 3,500 years, the Jews have observed the "Day of Atonement." It was the only day in the year that the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place or the "Holy of Holies" where God appeared in His glory upon the mercy seat.

The chapter teaches precious truths about God, about how to receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 23:27 - Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

### OUTLINE

- A. Atonement for Aaron Himself and the People. (16:1-10).
  - 1. The LORD spoke to Moses to warn Aaron not to enter the Most Holy Place lest he would die (vv.1, 2).
  - 2. Aaron could only enter the Most Holy Place by doing the following (vv.3, 4, 6):
    - a. He must offer a bullock for a sin offering.
    - b. He must offer a ram for a burnt offering.
    - c. He must put on his holy clothes.
    - d. He should offer the bullock for a sin offering for himself and his family.
  - 3. On behalf of the people, he must do the following (vv.5, 7-10):
    - a. He must take two young goats from the people and a ram for a burnt offering.
    - b. He must present the two goats at the entrance of the tabernacle for a sin offering.
    - c. He should cast lots on the goats to choose the LORD's lot for a sin offering.
    - d. He must present the other goat alive before the LORD as a scapegoat which was to be let off into the wilderness.
- B. The Sin Offering for Aaron and His Family (16:11-14).
  - 1. Aaron must kill the bullock for a sin offering (v.11).
  - 2. Aaron should fill the censer with burning coals from the brazen

altar and with his hands full of incense he would enter the Most Holy Place (v.12).

3. He should put the incense upon the fire so that the smoke covered the mercy seat and he might not die (v.13).
  4. He should sprinkle the blood of the bullock seven times with his finger on the mercy seat (v.14).
- C. The Sin Offering for the People (16:15-28).
1. The LORD'S lot.
    - a. Aaron must kill the goat for the sin offering and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat as he did with the blood of the bullock (v.15).
    - b. When Aaron performed these offerings, no one was allowed into the tabernacle, until he had finished the offerings (vv.16, 17).
    - c. Then Aaron would smear the blood of the bullock and the goat on the horns of the brazen altar after which he would sprinkle on the altar seven times to hallow it (vv.18, 19).
  2. The scapegoat
    - a. After making these offerings, Aaron would take the live goat (v.20).
    - b. Place his hands on the head of the goat (v.21).
    - c. Confess the sins of the people over it (v.21).
    - d. Send the goat away into the wilderness by a fit man (v.21).
    - e. The man set the goat free in the wilderness (v.22).
  3. The completion of the ritual
    - a. Aaron changed his clothes after taking a bath (v.23).
    - b. Aaron then offered his burnt offering and the people's burnt offering (v.24).
    - c. The fat of the sin offering would be burnt on the altar (v.25).
    - d. The man who led the scapegoat must wash his clothes and take a bath before he could re-enter the camp (v.26).
    - e. The remains of the sin offerings, the blood, the skins, the flesh and the dung would be burnt outside the camp (v.27).
    - f. The man who carried out this work must wash his clothes and take a bath before he could re-enter the camp (v.28).
- D. The Annual Day of Atonement (16:29-34).
1. This was to be a permanent statute to be observed on the tenth of the seventh month by Israel (v.29).
  2. On that day, the priest would make an atonement for the sins of the children of Israel before the LORD (v.30).
  3. It would be a sabbath rest for the children of Israel who should afflict their souls (v.31).
  4. The anointed priest would sanctify the Most Holy Place, the

tabernacle and the altar (vv.32, 33).

5. It was an everlasting statute to be kept once a year (v.34).

## COMMENTARY

### The Preparation

Once again we see that Moses held a special position before God. The LORD spoke to him directly and told him to instruct his elder brother, Aaron who was the high priest, concerning the things he had to do for the day of atonement. Moses held the special position of mediator between God and man.

Daily in the morning and evening, the priests had to carry out the burnt offerings and all the other offerings brought by the people. Aaron was warned not to enter the Most Holy Place lest he be struck dead, just like his two sons who disobeyed God and offered "strange fires". God said that He would appear in the Most Holy Place, above the mercy seat which is upon the ark of covenant -- (v.2).

The only way for Aaron to enter into the Most Holy Place was for him to sacrifice a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram (a male sheep) for a burnt offering. Aaron had to offer sacrifices as an atonement for his sins before he could enter into the presence of God (v.6). God reveals to us that He is absolutely and intensely holy. A sinner might not come before His presence in his own way or he would be struck dead. The sinner, no matter who he was, could only approach God in the manner prescribed.

Aaron's attire was different from the usual garments which he wore at other

times (Exodus 28). On this day of atonement, Aaron wore a plain white linen attire and linen headwear. He had to wash himself before putting on the holy garments. We see the big contrast between this simple linen garment and his usual multi-coloured garment with the precious stones on the breast plate, which he wore as the high priest of the people. This simple white linen holy garment made him look more like a slave/servant. The spiritual lesson is that man cannot offer anything to God. All our good works and our righteousness are but filthy rags.<sup>2</sup> The fact, that Aaron had to wash himself, teaches us that not only must the heart and mind be prepared but also the physical body before we approach God. We must prepare ourselves body, soul and spirit on Saturday for worship on Sunday.

Aaron must receive two young goats from the people for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering in their behalf (v.5). He had to present the two goats at the entrance of the tabernacle before the people and cast lots on the two goats. One lot was for the LORD and the other for the "scapegoat." (v.8). The lot for the LORD would be sacrificed as a sin offering while the other would be presented alive before the LORD as an atonement and let off into the wilderness (v.10).

### The Ceremony

Aaron would bring the bullock for the sin offering as an atonement for himself and his family. He must kill the bullock himself, take a censer containing burning coals of fire from the brazen

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

altar, bring sweet incense and enter into the Most Holy Place. He had to put the incense in the censer in order that the cloud of the incense would cover the mercy seat so that he would not die (v.13). This is because a person cannot see God and live. He had to take the blood of the bullock and sprinkle with his finger on the eastward side of the mercy seat seven times. The eastward side of the mercy seat was the side that faced the entrance of the tabernacle. Observe the number “seven.” This number is a Hebrew sacred number that symbolizes perfection, fullness, rest and completeness.<sup>3</sup>

After performing the sin offering for himself, he had to kill the goat as the sin offering for the people, take the blood to the Most Holy Place and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat just as for the bullock. This ritual was to make an atonement at the holy place and the tabernacle because of the sins of the children of Israel. No one was allowed to enter into the tabernacle until the high priest had come out and made an atonement for himself and his family and for all the children of Israel. This explained that the tabernacle was contaminated because of the sins of the people who had come into contact with it. This teaches us the solemn truth of the pervasiveness of sin. When a person sins, others are either directly or indirectly affected by it. God could not dwell in the tabernacle that had been sin-stained. In application to us in the New Testament, God dwells in the midst of His Church and in the body of each individual blood-bought Christian. We are taught here that sin separates us from God. There is a constant need for

the church and the body of believers to function in a manner pleasing to God. The individual Christian must remember to keep and use his body for things holy unto God.

After sacrificing the goat for the sin offering, Aaron had to take the live goat, lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the sins of the children of Israel and get a man to lead the goat into the wilderness where it would be let off (v.21). This was the scapegoat. The person who led the scapegoat into the wilderness must wash his clothes and bathe himself before he could re-enter into the camp.

After this, Aaron had to take off his white linen clothes, wash himself with water in the holy place and put on his usual holy garments. He had to offer his burnt offering and also the burnt offering of the people to make an atonement for himself and the congregation (v.24). The fat of the sin offering would be burned in the brazen altar. The rest of the bullock and the goat (the skins, the flesh and the dung) of the sin offering would be taken and burned outside the camp.

### **The Scapegoat**

The Hebrew name of the scapegoat is *azazel*. The word appears only four times in the Old Testament and all of them in this chapter in Leviticus (vv.8, 10, 26). This word has various meanings: (1) it is considered to be a derivation from two Hebrew words: *ez* “goat” and *azal* “to turn off.” By linking it with the Arabic word *azala* “banish,” “remove,” it means “for the entire removal” (2). The rabbinic interpretation is a place designated for the goat. It could be a desert, a solitary place or a high place such as a cliff from where the goat would be thrown down. (3) Another interpretation is Azazel, an evil spirit or a

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<sup>3</sup> Use the concordance to search for the use of the number seven in the Bible.

demon, in contrast to the LORD. But there is no justification for this comparison. The comments of Carl Schultz are appropriate<sup>4</sup>:

*The actual use and meaning of this word in Leviticus 16 is at best uncertain. However, regardless of its precise meaning, the significant dimension is the removal of the sins of the nation by the imposition of them on the goat. In this passage, sin seems to be hypostatized and therefore readily transferable to the goat. Indeed verses 21 and 25 state that this goat is to bear away the sin of the people. Such a ritual would illustrate vividly the physical removal of defilement from the camp to a solitary place where it would no longer infest the nation."*

This illustrates the exclamation of the Psalmist (Psalm 103:12):

*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

Jeremiah, the prophet of God, also declared (Jer 31:31-14):

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days,*

*saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

### **Its Observance**

The children of Israel were to keep this law in the seventh month, Tishri, on the tenth day (which was the first month of their civil calendar). They were to "afflict" their souls -- the phrase was commonly understood to mean that they were to pray and fast. It taught the need for every Jew to examine himself and repent of his sins. The other purpose of the law was to prevent Aaron who was the high priest and "in theory the holiest man in Israel" from sudden death if he were to enter the Most Holy Place without doing what had been prescribed. This law showed that no man, however holy, could approach God except in the manner as required of God.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

How can we, as Christians in the New Testament, benefit from this study? We know that God is holy and that no man can approach Him unless he does so according to the way prescribed by God -- the only way is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has said that He is THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life; no man comes to God the Father except through Him. The sin offering and the burnt offering remind us of the Lord's Supper that we are commanded to observe. As often as we

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<sup>4</sup>*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT):* Vol. II:1593. For more discussion of the word see Wenham's commentary, pages 233-235.

eat of the bread and drink of the cup, we do show the Lord's death till He comes. Christ is our sin offering. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for us once and for all and not just for us but for the whole world. And if anyone believes in Christ's redemptive work, confess his sins and receive Him, his sins will be cleansed by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The innocent *azazel*, the scapegoat, that was let off in the wilderness depicts Christ Jesus who was made sin for us. Once forgiven, God does not remember our sins any more. That, however, does not mean that sin is of little consequence. NO. Sin is terrible and awful. It separates us from God. So whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, we should examine ourselves and see if there are any wicked ways and thoughts in us. We should confess and ask God to cleanse and forgive us of our sins.

Leviticus 16 is the climactic chapter of the book.

**THE JEWISH CALENDAR**

MONTH		DATE	HOLIDAY
1. Nisan	Mar/Apr	Nisan 14 Nisan 15-21  Nisan 16	Passover Unleavened Bread Firstfruits
2. Iyar	Apr/May		
3. Sivan	May/Jun	Sivan 6	Shavout (Weeks)
4.	Jun/Jul		

Tammuz			
5. Av	Jul/Aug	Av 9	Tisha B'Av
6. Elul	Aug/Sep		
7. Tishri	Sep/Oct	Tishri 1  Tishri 10 Tishri 15-21	Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur Sukkot (Tabernacles)
8. Heshvan	Oct/Nov		
9. Kislev	Nov/Dec	Kislev 25-- Tevet 2/3	Hanukkah
10. Tevet	Dec/Jan		
11. Shevat	Jan/Feb		
12. Adar	Feb/Mar	Adar 14	Purim

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** Leviticus 16:1-10; Hebrews 9:1-12

**Tuesday:** Leviticus 16:11-14; Hebrews 9:13-22.

**Wednesday:** Leviticus 16:15-19; Hebrews 9: 23-28.

**Thursday:** Leviticus 16:20-28; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

**Friday:** Leviticus 16:29-34; Hebrews 10:1-21.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why could not Aaron enter into the Most Holy Place "at all times"?

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2. What would happen to Aaron if he had entered the Most Holy Place?

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3. What does this reveal about God?

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4. What must Aaron do in order to approach God?

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5. What does the bullock of the sin offering prefigure?

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6. For whom was the goat of the sin offering sacrificed?

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7. What must Aaron do for himself first before he could offer the goat of the sin offering? What does this teach us about the principle of service to the Lord?

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10. The Day of Atonement was a day of repentance and cleansing for the children of Israel. What is the equivalent occasion for us in the New Testament?

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8. In what way is the scapegoat a picture of Christ?

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9. What important truth is illustrated by the scapegoat?

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