

# Approaching God *from* Leviticus 16

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The book of Leviticus is the heart of the Pentateuch, the first five books in the Holy Word of God. The great Day of Atonement is the theological heart of Leviticus, the most significant act of worship of God's people, and the most sacred day on Israel's yearly calendar.

1. The Most Important Principle (Exod 40:34-35; Lev 1:1-4; 16:1-2)

2. The Most Important Preparation

a. Required Priestly Offering (Lev 16:3)

b. Required Priestly Dress and Cleansing (Lev 16:4)

c. Required Congregational Offerings (Lev 16:5)

3. The Most Important Purpose (Lev 16:13-16; Heb 9:22;  
Psa 103:10-13)

4. The Most Important Provision is the Most Important Person (Lev  
16:7-22; Phil 2:5-8; John 17:19)

# The Day of Atonement

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**The Most Significant Day:** This was one of the most important days of the year for Israel since it was the day that their sins were atoned for or covered (Leviticus 16:16, 21, 30, 33). This took place on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri – v. 29). It was the only day of the year that the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies.

**The Most Significant Reason:** It was the most significant act of worship and the most important of all the ordinances so that God could fellowship with them. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies three times:

- With the incense (16:12-14).
- With blood for his own sins.
- With blood for the sins of the entire congregation.

**Two Goats** (two ways God dealt with Israel's sin).

- **The slain goat:** Slain for the sin offering to cover the penalty for the sin of the nation for another year (16:125-19). Its blood was sprinkled on the altar.
- **The scapegoat:** This word may come from the Aramaic word which means *to remove*. The priest laid both hands on the head of the scapegoat, symbolically transferring the sins of the people to it. The setting free of the live goat pictured God's forgiveness of their sins (Psalm 103:10-13). It carried away Israel's sins but the act could never remove the guilt. Only Christ, coming as the perfect sacrifice and the perfect scapegoat could deal with our penalty and guilt (Isaiah 53:3-10).

**Blood:** Fresh blood was spilled on the altar to cover the sins of the nation for one year, to postpone yet again the final day of reckoning for those sins. Blood represented the biological life of man and of animals. By God's design, the forgiveness of sins is consistently linked with the shedding of blood.

~ The nation watched in front of the tabernacle. As the priest would carry the blood into the Holy of Holies, they were reminded that atonement was God's idea. It was His provision for forgiveness for sinful man.  
~ The day was called **Yom Kippur**. It was not a feast day, but a fast day. It was a solemn day of reflection and drawing near to God.

**The Most Significant Person:** Jesus Christ is illustrated in the High Priest. He did the work alone. He laid aside His garments of glory (Philippians 2:5-8). He sanctified Himself for us (John 17:19). The major difference is that He did not have to offer any sacrifice for Himself because He alone is sinless. But He Himself is the perfect and final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (Hebrews 7:23-28). God sent His Son as the **once-for-all** atonement for our sins (1 John 2:2; Hebrews 9:12).

**Repeated Yearly:** It was an annual reminder of their sins and the truth that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away their sins (Leviticus 16:24-34; Hebrews 10:3-4).

## Old System of Sacrifice

Temporary (Hebrews 7:21)  
Aaron first High Priest (Leviticus 16:32)  
From the tribe of Levi (Hebrews 7:16)  
Ministered on earth (Hebrews 8:5)  
Used blood of animals (Leviticus 16:15)  
Required many sacrifices (Leviticus 22:19)  
Needed perfect animals (Leviticus 22:19)  
Required careful approach to Tabernacle (Leviticus 16:3)  
Looked forward to a new system (Hebrews 10:1)

## New System of Sacrifice

Permanent (Hebrews 7:20)  
Jesus only High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).  
From the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14)  
Ministered in Heaven (Hebrews 8:12)  
Uses the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:5)  
Required one sacrifice (Hebrews 9:38)  
Needed a sinless (perfect) life (Hebrews 5:9)  
Encourages bold approach to Throne (Hebrews 4:16)  
Cancels the old system (Hebrews 10:9)

The Day of Atonement and the other atoning sacrifices had a deep personal meaning to the spiritually sensitive Israelite. Repetition of the sacrifices reminded the people of their continual need for cleansing. The sacrifice itself brought about a deep sense of cleansing and a fresh sense of God's acceptance.

## **Leviticus 16**

1. The correct approach to God (1-2).
2. Preparation made by the High Priest (3-10).
3. The necessity of the High Priest having a righteous, sinless standing before God (11:14).
4. The atoning Sacrifice – the covering and taking away of sin for the people (15-22).
5. Required: acknowledgement that cleansing and sacrifice are necessary for reconciliation with God (23-28).
6. The Day of Atonement was a permanent observance (29-34).