Refreshed IN THE WORD
For thy word hath quickened me
PSALM 119:50

Torah Studies

Connecting the Torah and Jesus

STUDY 17

Jesus, Our Great High Priest

Day 17 · Leviticus 16

Read the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 and discover how Hebrews points us to Jesus' complete offering.

For personal reading and study with friends

King James Version · Complete Scripture passages

Read and share online

Read one section at a time. Take turns reading the verses aloud, discuss the questions, and choose one practical response. Every passage referenced in the teaching is included in full.

Let’s begin together

Father, open our understanding as we read Your Word. Help us hear Your instructions in their setting, see Jesus clearly, and respond with faith and love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Leviticus 16 describes the Day of Atonement, when Israel’s high priest carried out a special yearly cleansing. This chapter addresses the sanctuary, the priests, and the people. Hebrews helps us see how Jesus’ priesthood and offering bring this story to its fulfillment.

Main truth: Jesus is our great High Priest. His once-for-all offering gives us a secure foundation for drawing near to God.

1. Approach God in the way He provides

Leviticus 16:1-5

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

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 vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

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

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.

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.

The chapter recalls the death of Aaron's sons. Aaron could not enter behind the veil whenever he wished. He needed the appointed offerings, washing, and linen garments. The mercy seat was the cover of the covenant ark. God's presence was holy, and access was a gift governed by His instruction.

Leviticus 16:6-10

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.

7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

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

9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

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.

Aaron first needed atonement for himself and his household. The two goats had different roles: one was offered as a sin offering, and the other was kept alive to be sent away. Keep both parts together as we continue reading. Leadership did not place Aaron beyond the need for mercy.

2. Cleansing reached the sanctuary

Leviticus 16:11-14

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:

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 vail:

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:

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.

Aaron brought the bull's blood for his own offering. Incense formed a cloud over the mercy seat, and the blood was sprinkled as God commanded. Every action emphasized that Aaron entered as a dependent servant, not as the owner of God's presence.

Leviticus 16:15-19

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an 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.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

The goat's blood was brought for the people. The holy place, tent, and altar needed cleansing because of Israel's uncleanness and sins. Sin affected the community's life before God. Atonement dealt with more than private feelings of guilt; it concerned the holy dwelling in the midst of the people.

3. Confessed sins were carried away

Leviticus 16:20-22

20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

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 in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Aaron confessed Israel's sins over the living goat, and it was sent into the wilderness. The picture is clear: the sins were carried away from the community. The English word "scapegoat" names this goat sent away. We should follow the actions described rather than build a teaching on guesses about details the passage does not explain.

Leviticus 16:23-28

23 And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:

24 And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

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

27 And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

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

Aaron changed garments, washed, and offered the burnt offerings. Those who handled the goat and the remains also washed before returning. The ceremony involved the whole community's life, with careful responsibilities for each person.

4. Humble yourselves and rest

Leviticus 16:29-34

29 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

31 It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

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

The people were to humble themselves and stop their work on the appointed day. “Afflict your souls” expresses this humbling before God. The high priest made atonement once each year. The people received God’s provision with seriousness; they could not perform the high priest’s work for themselves.

5. Hebrews explains the earlier pattern

Hebrews 9:6-10

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Hebrews describes the regular service and the high priest’s yearly entrance with blood. Those offerings addressed the worshiper’s ceremonial condition but could not bring the final cleansing of conscience. The earlier arrangement pointed beyond itself to the work God would accomplish through Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-14

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Jesus came as High Priest and entered through His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption. He offered Himself without blemish. His work cleanses the conscience so that we can serve the living God. The fulfillment is greater than repeating the old ceremony with a different priest.

6. One offering, a lasting foundation

Hebrews 10:10-14

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews contrasts priests who stand offering repeated sacrifices with Jesus, who offered one sacrifice for sins and sat down at God’s right hand. His offering is complete. Being perfected here concerns the lasting effectiveness of His sacrifice for those being sanctified; it does not mean believers never need correction or growth.

We do not improve Jesus’ sacrifice by punishing ourselves or trying to purchase God’s welcome. We respond with faith, honest repentance, gratitude, and obedience. The finished offering is the foundation for a changed life, not an excuse to continue hurting others.

Talk it over with friends

1. Why did Aaron need an offering for himself before serving the people?

2. What do the sacrificed goat and the goat sent away show within the ceremony?

3. What does Hebrews say Jesus accomplished once for all?

Put it into practice

Confess a real wrong plainly to God. Where appropriate, ask the person you hurt for forgiveness and take a practical step to repair the harm.

Rest your confidence in Jesus' offering. When guilt drives you to try to earn your place with God, return to what Hebrews says He has accomplished.

A verse to carry with you

Hebrews 10:14

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Read this verse slowly. Tell a friend what it teaches you about Jesus and how you will respond.

Let’s pray together

Father, thank You for Jesus, our great High Priest. Thank You that His offering is sufficient. Teach us to approach You with reverence and confidence, confess our sins honestly, and serve others with a clean conscience. Let Your mercy produce a faithful life in us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

I love you, my friends.

Scripture and sources

Scripture text was checked against the King James Version published by eBible.org. The complete verses are reproduced with their historical wording. Verse numbers and layout are adapted for reading; editorial footnotes are omitted. Tap any Scripture reference to view its source.

Bible edition and text