

# The LIVE GOAT

in Leviticus 16:1-34 **WAS** / is ...

"Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for **the scapegoat**. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But **the goat** on which the lot fell to be **the scapegoat** shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as **the scapegoat** into the wilderness." (16:8-10)

"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring **the live goat**. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of **the goat**, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. **The goat** shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release **the goat** in the wilderness." (16:20-22)

\* \* \*

a key aspect  
of the Day of Atonement  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

about the  
removal of sin & guilt  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

an annual  
object lesson on forgiveness  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \*

closely linked to  
the first goat  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

foreshadowing  
Christ's work (John 1:29)  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

important but  
neglected by theologians  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

in line with  
Psalm 103:12 & Heb. 10:17  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

Descriptive



Meditation

traditionally called

**the scapegoat**

\* \*

like and unlike  
the second bird in 14:1-7  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \*

not  
driven off a cliff & killed  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \*

not to be  
worshiped (Lev. 17:7)  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

often wrongly  
linked to a demon, Azazel  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

perhaps not just  
a judicial illustration  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

serious and  
somewhat sad at that time  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

to be applied  
to the conscience (Heb. 10:22)  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

to help us  
think about sin & salvation  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

\* \* \*

unnecessary  
today (Hebrews 10:1-18)  
(Agree? yes, no, partly)

**Directions:** after reading through **Leviticus chapter 16** and **Hebrews chapters nine and ten** in a good study Bible, think about and discuss the many ways the scapegoat is described. **Do you agree with the various phrases above? Would you change the way some of the blank lines are filled?** — **At the end of the study, discuss the most important descriptive phrases and make applications.** In doing so, think about how our position in Christ enables us to have a clear conscience and greater joy than was possible in Old Testament times. Also, it may be helpful to think about the victory over sin that is yet to come (1 Cor. 15:53-57). — © 2022 by Jon F. Mahar, Hakusan City, Japan and Alexander, Maine, U.S.A.

### **What was the scapegoat?**

Each year on the Day of Atonement, two male goats were selected for a sin offering (16:5), but only one of them was actually killed. The second, living goat — which is traditionally called the scapegoat — was taken to an uninhabited wilderness and released after the sins of the people had been confessed over it by the high priest (16:10, 20-22). This represented forgiveness and the removal of sin through the shedding of blood associated with the first goat. Of course, only the sacrifice of Christ actually took away sin; bulls and goats did not. (See Hebrews chapter ten.)

### **Are there any parallel passages?**

The closest parallel to the two goats on the Day of Atonement is the use of two birds in 14:1-7 when someone was cured of leprosy. The first bird was killed, and the second one was set free. There is an important difference in these cases, however. Birds often return, but the second goat was taken to a place from which it could not return. Moreover, the former leper was allowed to return home like the second bird, but the scapegoat which represented sin that had been forgiven was permanently removed.

### **What do theologians say?**

Understandably, the sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy seat (16:11-16) is stressed because it represented the death of Christ. However, the follow-up role of the second goat is usually neglected even though the second goat pointed to the taking away of the sin of the world (John 1:29). Again uninspiringly, theologians devote many pages to the debate about the meaning or extent of “world” in John 1:29 but have precious little or even nothing to say about the fact of the taking away of sin in Christ is complete. The scapegoat did not come back, and in Christ our sins are remembered no more (Heb. 8:12, 10:17).

### **What do others say?**

Sadly, there is much careless speculation about the second goat. Some say that it was taken to a cliff to be killed in a place called Azazel. Others claim that it was presented to a wilderness demon named Azazel. These strange theories arise from the fact that the Hebrew term, *azazel*, traditionally translated in English as scapegoat, is not found elsewhere in the Bible. It is a difficult term, but a parallel one in Arabic means to completely remove, and this meaning fits the context well. Turning the term into the name of a place or a demon does not.

### **Why were goats used instead of sheep?**

Young sheep or goats were both acceptable for Jewish offerings, but for some reason two kids (young goats) was required on the Day of Atonement rather than lambs. Perhaps this was because a young goat would have been more likely to readily leave the person taking it into the wilderness. Secondly, the abandoned goat would have had a better chance of surviving in the wild than a lamb would have had.

### **What is the application?**

Of course, we should take sin seriously, just as was done on the Day of Atonement. However, for those of us who have been forgiven through the Messiah, it is now possible for us to draw near to God the Father with more boldness than during the old dispensation. (See Hebrews 10:22.) The blood of bulls and goats could not take away our sins (Heb. 10:4), but they pointed to the One who did (Heb. 10:5-10). Knowing Him, we should approach God boldly.