

# **The Day of Atonement**

Leviticus 16

by Don Falkos

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The Ark of the Covenant was located inside the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, behind the inner curtain, in the Most Holy Place. The cover of the ark was called the atonement cover and later was known as the mercy seat.

The Lord said to Moses, "Only the high priest, your brother, Aaron, is allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, and only after he has prepared himself through ritual bathing, by dressing in special priestly garments, and by offering certain sacrifices. If he does not follow my instructions, he will die."

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron was to sacrifice a bull as a sin offering for himself and a goat as a sin offering for the people of Israel. He would carry some of the blood into the Most Holy Place; he would burn incense; and he would sprinkle some of the blood on the atonement cover of the Ark. When he came out of the Tabernacle, he would sprinkle some of the blood over the sacrificial altar to purify it.

Then Aaron would take a second goat, lay his hands on its head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sin of the people of Israel, transferring the sins of the people to the head of the goat. Then the goat would be driven out into the wilderness, carrying with it all the sins of the people, serving as a scapegoat for the people of Israel.

The final act of the Day of Atonement was the removal of the sin offerings to a place outside the camp, where they would be burned.

In this way, once each year, the people of Israel were purified from their sins, making them right with the Lord.