This Bible study is a companion to the book *The Bloodstained Path to God*,
by Daniel and Sarah Habben, in the Bible Discovery series published by
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Leader’s Notes

This Bible study complements the book *The Bloodstained Path to God*, in the Bible Discovery series. This series deals with basic background knowledge that’s helpful for reading the Bible in the way the Lord intended it to be read.

The seven lessons cover the same material as the book but they do not correspond to the chapters. The book may still be a helpful resource to the teacher and participants. An order form for the book is included on the CD.

Lesson Three is rather long and could be divided into two parts. The second part could begin at The Tent of Meeting.

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Lesson 1

The Day of Atonement

Worship

Read responsively Isaiah 57:14-19.

(According to Jewish tradition, this is a portion of the “appointed” Scripture reading for the Day of Atonement.)

Leader: It will be said: “Build up, build up, prepare the road!
Group: Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.”

L: For this is what the high and lofty One says—
G: he who lives forever, whose name is holy:

L: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
G: to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

L: I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry,
G: for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me—the breath of man that I have created.

L: I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger,
G: yet he kept on in his willful ways.

L: I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
G: I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel.

L: Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD.
G: “And I will heal them.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, open our hearts to your Word that we may see clearly our sin and our Savior. As we begin our study of the Old Testament laws, help us see our Savior there also. Amen.

Introduction

How many books of the Bible did Moses write?

Most people think that Moses wrote five books of the Bible (Genesis-Deuteronomy). We even call the books the Pentateuch (Greek for “five volumes”). In reality, Moses wrote one book entitled the Torah (“law,” singular) of Moses.
The reason the Torah was divided into five sections was simply for practical reasons. The Torah forms more than a fourth of all the books of the Old Testament and contains about 300,000 letters of the 1.1 million in the Old Testament. A work of such magnitude far exceeded the normal size of an individual scroll among the Jews. Only so much could fit on one scroll before it became too heavy to lift. Since no scroll was more than 25 feet long, the writings of Moses were divided into the five books we have today.

The CD includes a PDF file of the Torah chart that appears at the beginning of the book. You can print copies to hand out to participants. Or if they have purchased the book, have them turn to the inside cover.

Spend some time discussing the symmetrical arrangement of the single book, the Law of Moses, as shown on the chart. What was the center of that book?

If we keep in mind that the Torah is really one book, it will help us see the beautiful symmetry found in it. In Hebrew poetry, the most important part often comes in the middle. So it is with the Torah. The most important chapter, the highlight of the Torah, is Leviticus 16—the Great Day of Atonement.

In this Bible study on Leviticus (and parts of Exodus), we will be looking at how the heart of the Torah points to the heart of God’s plan of salvation through Christ. In this first lesson, we look at the center and most important chapter of the Torah, Leviticus 16. This chapter teaches us about the Day of Atonement.

**Studying God’s Word**

**A Warning**

Read Leviticus 16:1,2.

1. Moses records the deaths of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu. How did they die? (See Leviticus 10:1-3.)

   Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire when they offered “unauthorized fire” before the Lord. We don’t know exactly what Nadab and Abihu did wrong. Many scholars think they offered incense while they were drunk (see Leviticus 10:9).

2. What reality about our relationship with God do the deaths of Aaron’s sons illustrate?

   We dare not approach God on our own terms because he is holy and we are not.

So how was a sinner able to approach God? Let’s find out.

**The Great Day of Atonement**

Read Leviticus 16:3-19.

The Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement is *Yom Kippur*. The root meaning of this term could be translated as “day of covering,” “day of removing,” or “day of ransom.” Although these translations seem unrelated, they all draw an accurate picture of the rituals of Yom Kippur. On this day, the Israelites’ sinful fingerprints that smeared God’s sanctuary were covered by the blood of substitute animals. Their sinful deeds were removed on the head of a scapegoat. And all this was possible because of the future ransom Jesus would pay with his blood.
3. Summarize what was to happen during the first part of the Day of Atonement.

   This is a good summary of the events of this day from *The Bloodstained Path to God*, page 23:

   Wearing a simple, white garment, the high priest cleanses the sanctuary from the inside out, moving from the Most Holy Place, out to the Holy Place, and then into the courtyard where the altar of burnt offering is located. Later, he incinerates the fat of the bull and goat for the sin offering on the altar. All remains—innards, hide, flesh—are carried outside the temple precinct to be burned.

   The sins of the Israelites are transferred to a goat, which is led away into the desert and, according to Jewish tradition, thrown backward off a cliff so that there is no danger of their sins somehow returning to the camp.

   At this point the high priest changed back into his garments for the second series of events, which we will look at in the next section.

   If you have time, read all of chapter 2 of *The Bloodstained Path to God*. You may wish to consult The People’s Bible commentary on these verses from Leviticus. The Web site www.templeinstitute.org will give you insights from a Jewish source that discusses material from the Bible and from Jewish oral tradition.

The Scapegoat


4. How does the scapegoat help us understand the blessing of forgiveness?

   Our sins are transferred to another (Leviticus 16:21). Then they are sent away from us (Leviticus 16:21,22). See the Web site templeinstitute.org for more information.

5. Summarize what happened after the scapegoat was sent away.

   Here is a summary of the concluding steps of the celebration.

   a. The high priest bathed and changed garments. He took off the simple garments that identified him merely as one sinner among many, and he then resumed his place as the head of the priesthood and of Israel's religious life.

      The various washings remind us that sinners must be purified before we can enjoy life in the Lord’s presence.

   b. The fat of the bull and goat sin offerings were burned. The two rams were offered as burnt offerings.

   c. The ashes of the sin offerings were carried outside the camp.

   d. The high priest went home.

   At the conclusion of this awesome day, after the service was completed and the day had waned, the high priest was accompanied by the entire multitude of worshipers back to his own home. All gave thanks to God that their high priest had successfully guided the service.

   (When the worship was held in the temple, the gates were closed as a final step.)
A Lasting Ordinance Fulfilled in Christ

Read Leviticus 16:29-34.

6. What does God say was the purpose of the Day of Atonement? (See Leviticus 16:30,34.)

The purpose of the Day of Atonement was to cleanse the people of their sins.

7. Did the Day of Atonement fulfill its purpose? Explain your answer. (See Leviticus 16:30 and Hebrews 10:1-4.)

While the animal sacrifices couldn't really pay for sin (Hebrews 10), God accepted that payment for the time being until Jesus would shed his blood for sin. Therefore an Old Testament believer who looked forward to this payment of sin by the Messiah enjoyed the benefit of forgiveness on the Day of Atonement.

8. The events on the Day of Atonement pictured what the Messiah would do in the future. In this Bible study, we will call such pictures *sacred silhouettes*. What sacred silhouettes from the Day of Atonement do the New Testament writers point out to us?

- Hebrews 9:27,28
  The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement pointed to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21
  Like the scapegoat, Jesus became sin for us.

- Hebrews 13:11-13
  The sacrifices taken outside of the camp pointed ahead to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross “outside of the camp” of Jerusalem.

- Hebrews 2:17
  The high priest foreshadowed the intercessory role Jesus would play between God and us.

9. What day of the Christian calendar do you think has replaced the Day of Atonement?

Good Friday. At Jesus’ death the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two, demonstrating that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, clearing the way to God.

Summary

The Day of Atonement has been called the Good Friday of the Old Testament. Just as the Israelites took part in the Day of Atonement by resting and fasting, so we New Testament Christians participate in an annual observance of Good Friday by resting on God’s promises and receiving the forgiveness Christ won for us!
During the Week

Read the introduction and chapters 1 and 2 of *The Bloodstained Path to God*. Reflect on the following questions:

1. In what way(s) were the Old Testament sacrifices like the Sacrament of Baptism? In what way(s) were they different?

2. Imagine watching the scapegoat trot off into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement. What sins would you be especially glad that it carried away from you? Are there sins you would be reluctant to let go of?

Take time this week to thank God for his free and full forgiveness and to ask him for the strength to turn away from *all* sin.

Research how Jewish people today celebrate the Day of Atonement.