



God Ordains the Day of Atonement

Leviticus 11–16



LESSON GOAL

Students will develop a habit of confessing sin.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God is holy and without sin.
- Man is sinful and deserves to be punished for sin.
- On the Day of Atonement, animals were sacrificed in place of the Israelites for their sin.
- Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin.
- Faith in the Lord Jesus cleanses Christians from sin.

KEY VERSE

“This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.’ And he did as the LORD commanded Moses” (Leviticus 16:34).

APPLICATION

- Confess your sin every time you sin.
- Praise God for forgiveness through Jesus’ death on the cross.
- Trust Jesus that His forgiveness is forever.

NEXT WEEK

God Requires Holy Living
Read Leviticus 19.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

The Israelites were continually bringing sacrifices to the priests in submission to God’s holy demands. God desired that they know their sinfulness and depend on His ordained means of forgiveness through faith. God further revealed His holiness by implementing prescriptions for uncleanness (Lev. 11–15). These laws showed the Israelites their sinfulness and the fallen state of the world. But God also revealed His mercy by providing the Day of Atonement, when all Israelites could be cleansed from the sins and impurity of the previous year (Lev. 16).

Leviticus 11–15: The Need for Atonement

In Leviticus 11:45, God presented His requirements to the Israelites: “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” The Israelites were to reflect God’s holiness by being holy themselves; they were to live set apart from the surrounding nations and set apart to God. When the Israelites followed the Ten Commandments, they lived holy lives that reflected God’s holiness. But holiness not only was a personal character trait of the Israelites. Holiness also was a technical distinction for something completely consecrated to God for His use in the tabernacle. For example, the high priest had a small, gold plate that read “Holiness to the LORD” attached to his turban. The high priest was completely set aside for tabernacle use. Likewise, an offering brought to the tabernacle also became holy; it was for God’s use, and he could choose how it would be offered. Only holy things could enter the tabernacle.

Everything in Israel could be divided into categories of unholy and holy. Everything could also be divided into categories of clean and unclean (or pure and impure). Only clean things could become holy things; unclean things could never become holy. Sometimes being unclean was an object’s perpetual state. For example, an unclean animal such as a pig could never become a holy sacrifice; Levites who had certain incurable skin diseases could never function as priests. At other times, being unclean was a temporary state. If a dead mouse fell on a piece of clothing, the clothing would become unclean; if the piece of clothing was washed, it would become clean again that evening. A woman who had a child would be unclean for 40 to 80 days after giving birth. When something became unclean, a period of time had to elapse and instructions had to be followed in order for that object or person to become clean. Only clean people wearing clean clothes could participate in tabernacle worship.

The distinction between clean and unclean was an additional reflection of God’s holiness. God’s holiness and the holiness He required from the Israelites required that they make a distinction between clean and unclean. God commanded the Israelites to not “make yourselves unclean with [creeping animals, such as mice or lizards], lest you be defiled by them. For I am the LORD your God...and you shall be holy” (Lev. 11:43–44). God warned Moses and Aaron to “separate the

Additional Reference Materials

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur

Holiness to the Lord
by Allen P. Ross

children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them” (Lev. 15:31). Coming to the tabernacle in a state of uncleanness could result in death. Certain types of uncleanness (as from touching a human corpse) resulted in the unclean person being placed outside the Israelite camp “that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I [God] dwell” until they became clean again (Num. 5:3).

The tendency with the words “clean” and “unclean” is to equate clean to holy and unclean to sinful. But this is not the case. Someone who was ceremonially clean could have an unrepentant heart. (The Pharisees are a great example of this.) On the other hand, someone who was ceremonially unclean, such as someone with a skin disease or someone who had just had a child, could be enjoying a vibrant relationship with God. (In Luke 2:22–24, Mary was unclean after she had given birth to Jesus and needed to bring a sacrifice.) In fact, the same God who created the animals named some of them unclean. The same God who commanded that people multiply and fill the earth declared that the Israelite mother was unclean after giving birth.

Rather than thinking of clean as sinless and unclean as sinful, clean and unclean should be seen as categories that God instilled in Israel as a reminder of His holiness. The distinction between clean and unclean animals (Lev. 11), the impurity that followed childbirth (Lev. 12), the presence of infectious diseases and mildew (Lev. 13 and 14), and both temporary, healthy bodily discharges and continual unhealthy discharges (Lev. 15) made the people continually conscious of their need to be ceremonially clean before God. Israelites could daily go from being clean to being unclean. Israelites could be seen throughout the camp washing themselves or their clothes in order to be made clean again at evening. Others lined up before the priest to have their rashes checked to see if their diseases were persistent or to determine if their homes needed to be destroyed because of mildew. Many people would have a family member who had to live outside the camp because of certain types of uncleanness. Distinctions between clean and unclean would keep the people of Israel in a constant state of flux. As the Israelites followed God’s law of cleanness and uncleanness, they were continually being humbled by God’s standard. They were learning to value the blessing of coming into His presence. They were reminded that there was something inherently wrong with this world that offended God’s holiness. They were kept apart from the Gentiles, who did not follow God’s standard of purity. God did not intend for any Israelite to stay in a state of purity. Both normal life processes such as intercourse or childbirth, and random events such as the dropping of a dead lizard into a bucket, ensured that every Israelite would deal with uncleanness and be reminded of the holiness of God.

Leviticus 16: The Day of Atonement

God intentionally placed the description for the Day of Atonement after the laws concerning uncleanness. All through the year, Israel struggled to maintain a state of purity and regretted periods of uncleanness that separated them from tabernacle worship. But once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the priest made “atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins” (Lev. 16:16).

The Day of Atonement was the most important day of the year for the Israelites. (Jews today still celebrate Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.) It was only on the Day of Atonement that the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the inner room of the tabernacle. If he entered any other day, he would die (Lev. 16:2). Inside the Holy of Holies, God’s glory rested above the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant. God’s throne among the Israelites was the mercy seat. Through

the mediation of the high priest, all Israel could enjoy entering God's special presence on the Day of Atonement.

The sacrifices at the beginning of Leviticus taught that God's presence could be entered only through blood. The same was true on the Day of Atonement. The high priest took off his normal priestly clothing, washed himself, and put on simple, linen clothes instead of the ephod and robe of the high priest (Lev. 16:4). He offered a bull as a sin offering for himself and his family (v. 11). The first time he went into the Holy of Holies, he brought a censer full of burning coals and incense so that the cloud of smoke covered the mercy seat (16:12–13). The smoke acted as a screen so that the priest would not see God's glory and die (16:13). The second time he went into the Holy of Holies, the high priest sprinkled blood from the sin offering onto the mercy seat. The blood atoned for the sins of him and his family. Forgiveness was given, and the tabernacle was cleansed of the priests' fallen presence. The high priest then offered one of the two goats; which one had been decided previously by casting lots. The slain goat was a sin offering for all Israel. The goat's blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat as the high priest entered the Holy of Holies the third time. For a whole year, Israel's sins and impurity had been an offense to the Holy God Yahweh. When the priest sprinkled the blood on behalf of the people, atonement was made for the tabernacle, "which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness" (16:16). The people were forgiven and the tabernacle purified (16:16–17).

When the high priest had finished atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he was to take the other goat and "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...send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man" (Lev. 16:21). The goat bore "all the iniquities to an uninhabited land" and was released into the wilderness (16:22). The goat, traditionally translated as "scapegoat" (Lev. 16:10), carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness. It was a vivid picture of the fact that Israel's sins had been removed from the presence of God and would not return. After he had finished confessing the sins of Israel, the high priest offered burnt offerings for himself and Israel. Atonement had been made, and Israel embraced their communion with God through sacrifice.

The Significance of the Day of Atonement

Every year, on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Israelite year, Israel was to observe the Day of Atonement. All the people were to do no work and to "afflict" themselves, probably indicating self-denial and fasting (Lev. 16:29). This day was to be truly special to all Israel. God told Israel, "On that day...you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (Lev. 16:30). The Day of Atonement was an "everlasting statute...to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year" (Lev. 16:34). Throughout the year, the people were continually becoming unclean and continually bringing sin offerings. But on the Day of Atonement, every breach of God's holiness was atoned for. Even the premeditated sin, the blatant act of rebellion, and disavowal of the Ten Commandments, for which there was no other sacrifice, were atoned for on this day. The people were cleansed from every sin, and the sin of every repentant person was forgiven.

For the New Testament believer, there is only one Day of Atonement. On the day Jesus Christ was killed, He became the offering for our sins. He was so closely identified with the believer's sin that 2 Corinthians 5:21 says He became "sin for us." First Peter 2:24 says that Christ "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Christ has borne the wrath that we deserve. The believer needs no more atoning sacrifice than that which has been paid. Christ is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

When Jesus died, God the Father ripped the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). The ripping of the veil symbolizes the openness, intimacy, and assurance that the believer has in coming before God. Jesus, as our high priest, has entered into God's presence and has sprinkled His own blood before the throne of God. His blood that was offered on that last Day of Atonement has cleansed for eternity the one who trusts in His sacrifice. God is eternally satisfied with the sacrifice of our Lord. What confidence we can have coming before Him, like an anchor for our souls, knowing that His blood has accomplished our cleansing (Heb. 6:19–20)!

POINT TO THE TRUTH

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What was a priest?

A person who helped the Israelites come to God.

Why did Israel need priests?

They were sinful.

Did the priests have special rules to follow?

Yes. They had to make sacrifices for themselves, and they had to offer all the sacrifices in a special way.

Why was God pleased when Aaron offered his sacrifices?

He followed God's rules completely.

What happened to Nadab and Abihu?

They were killed because they did not follow God's rules.

Who is the high priest for believers?

Jesus. He is the perfect high priest forever.



Dirty Clothes

Materials: dirty clothes, clean clothes, bandage, toothbrush

Directions: Illustrate the need for atonement for sins by using dirty clothes. Take a set of very dirty clothes to show the class. Ask the students, "Would your parents allow you to go to church wearing dirty clothes like these? Of course not." Next, show a bandage. "Would your parents let you go into church with a big open cut without a Band-Aid?" Show a toothbrush. Ask the students, "Would your parents let you go to the dentist's office without brushing your teeth first? No. You would want to get yourself prepared before you arrived." These illustrations demonstrate



Perfectly Clean

Materials: large soft sponges, scissors, brads

Directions: Have the students cut the sponges into long strips. Place one strip on top of the other and secure them in the center with a brad. Turn the top strip horizontally until it forms a cross. Trim the edges.



Hand Soap

Bring in a small bottle of hand sanitizer. Sometimes we go places where we cannot wash our hands. We can use special lotion to kill the germs on our hands and make them clean. Put a small amount of hand sanitizer on each student's hands to make them clean. We all have sin in our lives. Every day, we need to be cleansed from sin. The Israelites were the same. We are going to learn about the Day of Atonement today. Once a year, a special sacrifice was made to cleanse the people from their sin. The goats we will learn about did not really take the sin away, but belief in God's promise did.



Clean and Unclean Animals

Read Leviticus 11 to learn about the kinds of animals that were clean and unclean. Bring in children's books that contain pictures of common animals. Identify each animal as clean or unclean. Show these pictures to the students before the class begins. Tell them that God wanted Israel to act differently than the nations that hated God, and He wanted them to eat different food than the nations that hated God. This is one of the reasons that God called some animals clean and some unclean. They were not unclean because they were dirty. Israel's obedience to God's rules would show that they were holy. Much later, God told Peter that it was not necessary to follow these rules anymore. But in Israel's time, visitors from other countries would know that Israel served the Lord by what they ate.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read portions of Leviticus 11–16.

God had chosen the Israelites to be His special people. He gave them many special rules to obey. When the people did not obey, they had to bring sacrifices to God. This was their way of showing God that they were sorry for not obeying all that He commanded. There were rules about what they could eat. There were rules about how it should be cooked. There were rules about what to do if they touched certain things.

God wanted the Israelites to be holy. *Holy* means “different.” The Israelites were to show the world who God was: the one true God. Many of the people around Israel worshiped false gods. This made it hard for Israel to keep themselves holy before God. God wanted them to act differently. He asked them to stay away from some things and not eat certain things. These things were called “clean” and “unclean.” Soap and water could not make them clean. God made some things right to do and some things wrong. Sometimes, it was because the nations around Israel used some things in a sinful way. Other times, it was just because God wanted to show that He is different.

Let us look at some examples of what God said.

God said some animals were clean and some were unclean. Are some animals sinful? No. God made everything good, but He wanted His people to be different. When a person came from another country and visited an Israelite, he would notice that the Israelite did not eat some foods. This was the rule: “These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth: Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat” (Lev. 11:2). The Israelites could eat cows, quail, goats, and sheep, to name a few. There were some animals they could not eat, such as pigs, spiders, lizards, and clams. God wanted His people to know exactly what was clean. God gave them a very long list of things so they would be sure to know how to live holy lives.

God always wanted the Israelites to bring a perfect animal for the sacrifice, usually a sheep, a goat, or a pair of turtledoves. The animals had to be killed and their blood shed for the people. This was a picture of the sacrifice Jesus would one day make to remove sin from those who accept His offer of salvation.

God also had one other very important part to this set of rules. The priests, who were God’s special chosen leaders for the people, were to bring a special sacrifice once a year for all the people and all the uncleanness, and everyone would be cleansed. It was called the Day of Atonement. This was a special day, and much preparation was made for this day. Leviticus 16:29–30 says, “This shall be a statute forever for you; In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.” This was a yearly reminder that God really loved His special people. He wanted them to live lives that were holy and right before Him.

The priests would take two goats to the front of the tabernacle. A priest would put his hands on the first goat. Then another priest would kill the goat. That would show that the sin of the people had a sacrifice. Then the priest would put his hands on the other goat. After that, he led the goat out of the camp and chased it away. This showed that the Israelites’ sin was taken far away. This was the most important part of the Day of Atonement. The people saw that they had to be cleansed of their sin.

God wants the same for us today. We need to remember to ask forgiveness for our sins each day. We know that Jesus came to earth and died to forgive believers. We celebrate this every year, as Israel did. We call our celebration Easter. We think about the cross and Jesus dying for our sins. We remember that He was buried, but



only for three days, because He rose from that grave and gave victory over death. We should thank Jesus for this and show the world how much we love Him. We should live our lives in a holy and clean way. If we sin, we can go to God and ask for forgiveness. First John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We need to tell God how thankful we are that He loved us that much. We also need to thank Him because He is holy. Let us always remember that God gave His only Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. Let us thank Him right now.

Lesson Questions

Did God make special rules for Israel to obey? Why?

Yes. It showed that He was holy.

What does *holy* mean?

Holy means "sinless." It also means that God is very, very different from everything else.

Did God make rules about eating animals? What were the rules?

Yes. God said some animals were clean and some were unclean. They were not sinful, but it was against the rules to eat the unclean ones. The Israelites could not eat pigs, spiders, or clams, to name just a few.

Why else did God make special rules to obey?

So the people from other countries would see that the true God was different from the false gods.

What special day did Israel celebrate to be cleansed from their sin?

The Day of Atonement.

What happened to the two goats?

One goat was killed for the people's sin. It showed that their sin was paid for. The other goat was let go. This showed that the people's sin was taken away.

How are we cleansed from sin today?

By trusting in the Lord Jesus and believing that He died for our sin. We are cleansed every day when we confess our sin to Jesus.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Clean Inside and Out

Materials: cleaning bucket, assortment of sponges and scrubbers, spray bottle, washcloth, bar of soap, small Bible

Directions: Ask the students how they get clean on the outside. Pull out the spray bottle, sponges, and scrubbers and ask if they use these things to clean themselves.

(This should elicit a negative response.) Pull out the washcloth and soap and ask if they use these things to clean themselves on the outside. (This should get a positive response.) Then ask the students how they clean themselves on the inside—their minds and hearts. Show your Bible and explain that only God's Word can make you clean inside. In today's lesson, they will learn about some of the rules God set up to remind Israel that they were dirty and needed cleansing with God's Word.

Praise and Worship

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Holy, Holy

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus



Holy and Clean

The difference between God and man,
(Start with hands together; then spread wide apart.)

Is not too hard to understand.
(Point to temple and shake head back and forth.)

God is righteous, good, and true;
(Point up with left hand; place right hand over heart; nod.)

Man's like the gunk found on your shoe.
(Point down; lift foot and point to bottom of shoe.)

But God wanted Israel to be clean,
(Twist hands together as if washing.)

Their food, their house, their clothes, their skin.
(Pretend to scoop food into mouth; then make pyramid with hands; then pull at clothes; then rub cheeks with hands.)

Cleaning daily and once a year,
(Rub hands together; rub arms.)

Would make their sin show crystal clear.
(Hold hand up toward light and turn it back and forth.)

Now Jesus is our scrubbing soap.
(Make a cross with fingers.)

He cleanses our hearts and gives us hope.
(Rub hand on chest in a circular motion and nod.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Day of Atonement

Materials: cutout pictures of goats, the high priest, the bronze altar, and the verse (see back of lesson); glue; crayons

Directions: Before class, cut out the pictures of the priest, goats, and bronze altar. During class, have students color the pictures. On a separate sheet of paper, have students glue the pictures in the following order from left to right: goat (looking back), priest, altar, and goat facing away. Glue the verse to the bottom of the page. Explain to the students that one goat was sacrificed and one goat was sent away. Jesus atoned for the sins of believers, so goats no longer need to be sacrificed.



“God Is Holy” Bracelet Reminder

Materials: small strips of Velcro tape; 1 x 8 1/2-inch strips of cardstock in various colors; “God Is Holy” strips; gold, silver, and purple crayons; glue

Directions: Before class, fasten a Velcro piece on one end of each cardstock strip. Do not remove the protective backing on the unused side until class time. During class, put gold, silver, and purple crayons on tables for the students to use. Give each student a “God Is Holy” strip of paper (see back of lesson). Have the students color the letters. Gold and silver represent God’s great worth, and purple represents royalty. Tell the students that all these together remind us that God is holy. While the students are coloring, take turns custom fitting the strips of cardstock as bracelets for each student. Cut off the excess paper. Then fasten the Velcro to the other end, making bracelets that the students can put on and take off. Finally, open the bracelet and glue the “God Is Holy” strip to the outside.

Coloring Sheets

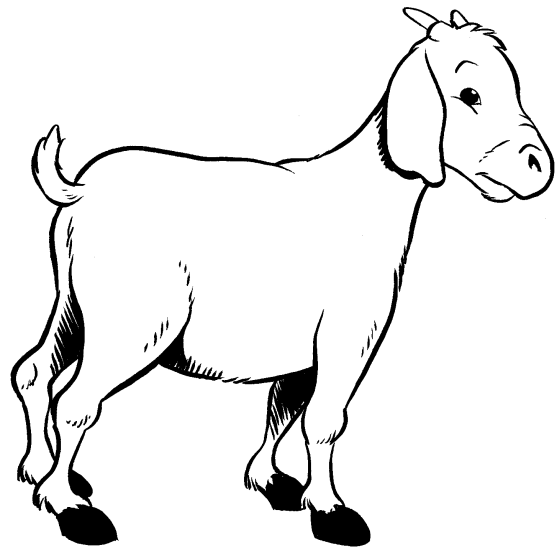
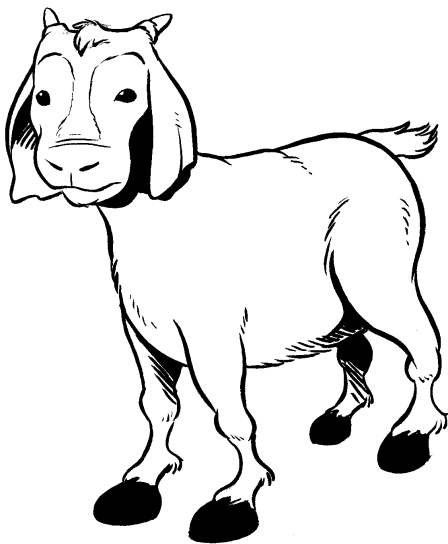
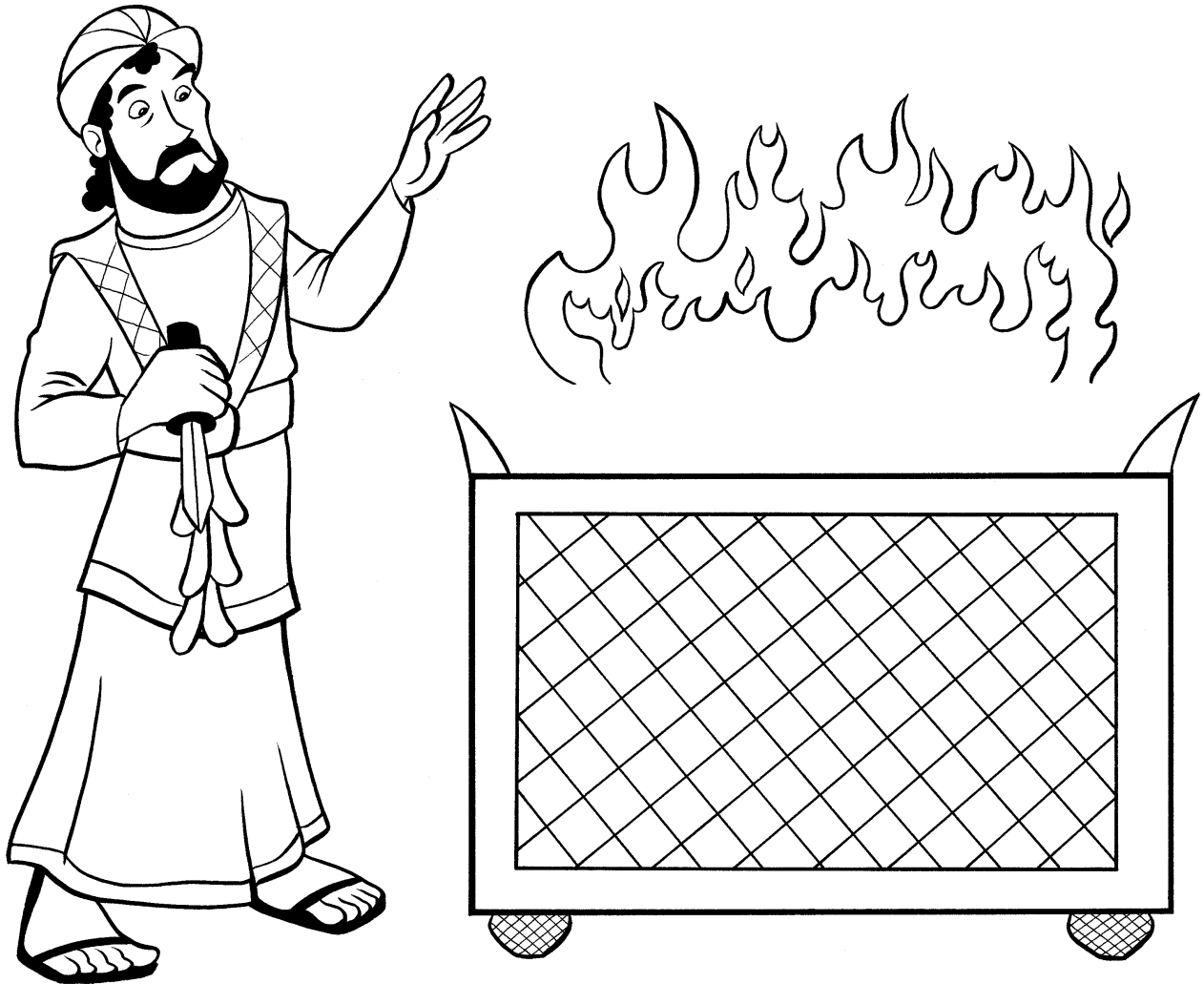
Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy’” (Leviticus 19:2).

Day of Atonement



“And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering” (Leviticus 16:5).

“God Is Holy” Bracelet Reminder

God Is Holy

God Is Holy

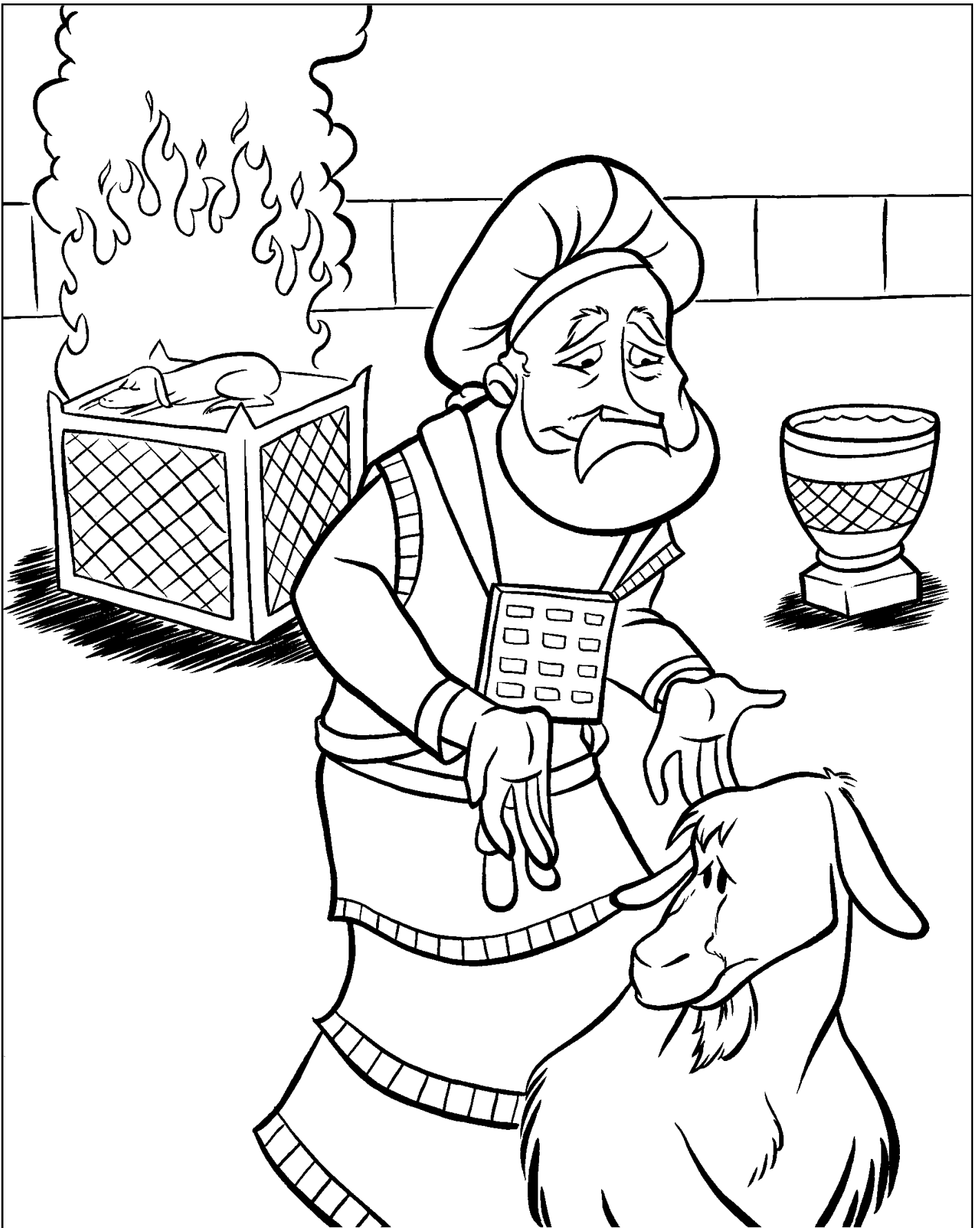
God Is Holy

God Is Holy

God Is Holy



Two goats were offered on the Day of Atonement to cleanse Israel from their sin (Leviticus 16:5).



On the Day of Atonement, one goat was sacrificed, and one was chased into the wilderness to show that Israel's sin was taken away (Leviticus 16:15–22).

