

# Abiding Fruit

John 15:16



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## Inside The Veil Leviticus 16:2, 12, 15

This phrase, *“inside the veil”* only occurs in these three verses in this form in the Old Testament in the ESV. The KJV lists two other verses (Exodus 26:33; Num. 18:7) but instead of *“inside the veil”* has the archaic *“within the veil”*. The NASB lists the Leviticus occurrences and has in addition the Numbers 18:7 occurrence as *“inside the veil.”* The NIV lists *“inside the veil”* as *“behind the curtain.”* The words *“within”* and *“behind”* do convey, I think, a better understanding of the action taken by Aaron – he goes behind the veil, the curtain, in contrast to inside the veil. One cannot really be inside a veil unless one wears a curtain or veil. The word for *“inside”* or *“within”* is derived from the Hebrew word for “house” (בַּיִת bayith). Curtain or veil is readily understood and reflects the reality of a curtain or veil.

Leviticus 16 is about the “Day of Atonement”. It is one of the annual feasts of Israel and was considered a “fast day” (Acts 27:9). Leviticus 23 gives a full list of all the feasts of Israel. The Day of Atonement took place on the tenth day of the seventh month – Tishri (Lev. 16:29; 23:27), our October-November. Leviticus 16 provides an overview of what would happen on the Day of Atonement in vv. 6 – 10. There is; a). the sin offering of a bull for Aaron and his house (also vv. 11 – 14, 24, 25, 27); b). the sin offering of the two goats for the sins of the people – one being for sacrifice and the other to be a scapegoat or Azazel (vv. 7, 8; 15 – 19; 24, 25); and c). the sending out of the scapegoat into the wilderness (vv. 20 – 22). The Day of Atonement was instituted by the Lord specifically after (16:1) the two disobedient sons of Aaron had offered their strange fire before the Lord and subsequently died as a result (Lev. 10:1, 2). God’s instruction to Aaron was that he could not come any time he wanted into the Holy of Holies (16:2). His access was restricted to once a year (16:29, 34).

The reason Aaron could not go into the Holy of Holies which was behind the veil, was because that was the dwelling place of God. God dwelt inside the veil, before the mercy seat, on the Ark of the Covenant, in the cloud of glory. If Aaron were to come at any time he would die (16:2). This teaches us that access to God was restricted. When Aaron was permitted to come on the tenth day of the seventh month, he could only appear with sacrifice – a bull and a ram (16:3). This teaches us that God is approached through sacrifice or atonement.

Leviticus 16 outlines specific requirements for Aaron in his approach to God. He was to prepare himself by washing and putting on garments that reflected his holy status or office (16:3 – 5). Only those who are clean and dressed accordingly can approach God. Our worship of God is restricted to that which God requires, and not that which we deem necessary or important. Only clean hearts and hands can approach God in holy activity Psalm 24:3 – 6 makes this clear, *“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah”*.

This is why the issue of a clean heart, clean mouth, and a clean life was so vitally impressed upon Isaiah the prophet in his encounter with the thrice holy God of Israel in Isaiah 6. Approach to God is always on God's terms.

Aaron did two major things in relation to sacrifice for sin. He offered a sacrifice for his own sin (16: 11 – 14), and then he offered a sacrifice for the sins of all the people (16:15 – 17). On the Day of Atonement, Aaron would enter the Holy of Holies, situated with the Holy Place, separated by the veil or curtain on three occasions. The first occasion was when he would take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small (16: 12, 13). He was to place the incense on the fire and this would create a cloud thus putting up a screen in front of God's holy presence. In verse 14, Aaron would then enter again, taking some of the blood from the bull that had been sacrificed and he was to sprinkle the mercy seat with this blood on his finger seven times. The third occasion would be when he would take the blood from one of the two goats (the one slain), and do the same before the mercy seat, as he had done previously with the blood of the bull. These acts are described in verse 16 as making "atonement." This atonement would cover the Holy Place, the altar, Aaron and the people."

Entrance into the presence of God is therefore by the shedding of blood. If Aaron went on the tenth day of the seventh month without the blood of the bull and the goat, he would have been slain by God. Access is always by blood, by death.

The sin offering for the people consisted of two actions. The first was the sacrifice of the one goat. The second goat was called the scapegoat or as it is in Hebrew, Azazel. Azazel is only found in the Old Testament in Leviticus 16:8, 10, and 26. It was over the head of this goat, that Aaron would confess all the sins of the people, including his own. Leviticus 16 represents the second goat as bearing away the sins of the people into the wilderness, into no man's land. Sacrifice involves death and blood shedding in order to enter God's presence, but it also involves the removal of our sins from us. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who completely satisfies and meets all these requirements of sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews refers to sacrifice or atonement as displayed in the Old Testament as simply a pre-figuring or type of what Jesus would do for His people under the New Covenant.

Aaron was obligated to offer a sacrifice for his own sins (Heb. 5:3), our Lord Jesus was not, because He had no sin of his own (he possessed no sin nor could He sin). Unlike Aaron (and every subsequent high priest) who had to offer this sacrifice every year, our Lord has offered Himself once as our sacrifice (Heb. 9:26). Unlike Aaron, whose work was never done, our Lord Jesus having accomplished our redemption through His once for all time sacrifice has seated Himself next to the Father on high (Heb. 10:12), having finished the work of redemption.

The word "atonement" is found in the KJV only in Romans 5:11, where it is usually rendered "reconciliation." Atonement purges away sin and reconciles us to God. Atonement is always by the shedding of blood, the sacrifice of life. The sacrifice of animals cannot suffice (Heb. 10:4). The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus is the only perfect sacrifice to take away our sins (Heb. 9:26; 10:5 – 10). Through His death, our Lord has secured salvation, accomplished redemption, effected propitiation and made reconciliation. He has done for us what we could never accomplish for ourselves. Like Aaron, we must be obedient. We must confess our sins to Him. We must identify with Him as our sacrifice. We must see the Father placing His hands upon the head of His Son at Calvary, where all our sins are confessed, as if they were, over our Lord Jesus, who is made to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus as our High priest has gone behind the veil on our behalf and has offered Himself as our Sacrifice and the sweet aroma of His accomplishment has ascended to God accepted on our behalf. That's what happened *inside the veil* – our atonement.