



## Daily Verse and Comment

### Leviticus 16:8

(8) Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat.

### Leviticus 16:10

(10) 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.

### Leviticus 16:26

(26) And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

*New King James Version*

The [Day of Atonement](#) ([Yom Kippur](#)) is a [Sabbath](#) of solemn rest, set apart by its unique requirements to afflict one's soul and do absolutely no work ( [Leviticus 23:26-32](#)). Within its instructions are a few rituals that make it even more extraordinary. Chief among these is the ceremony of the [two goats](#) found in Leviticus 16, part of a larger cleansing ritual performed once a year by the high priest.

With the passage of time and the difficulties of translation, the instructions for the two goats are far less clear to us than they were to their original recipients. In particular, the Hebrew word *azazel*, used for the second goat ( [Leviticus 16:8](#), 10, 26), is surrounded by speculation and contradictory assertions. A common belief among Sabbatarians is that *azazel* is the name of a wilderness demon. From this foundation springs the conclusion that the *azazel* goat—often translated as “scapegoat”—represents [Satan](#).

If we solely use the Bible as our source, we will find no definitive statement for *azazel* representing Satan. What appears instead is that Satan—whose original name was Helel—has coopted the term to apply to himself in the same way he coopted one of the titles of [Jesus Christ](#), “light-bringer” or “light-bearer” ([Lucifer](#)), for himself (see [Isaiah 14:12](#); [II Peter 1:19](#); [Revelation 22:16](#)). Yet it is not possible for Satan to be a part of the atonement [God](#) provides for His people, a role that can be fulfilled only by the Savior.

*Strong's Concordance* does not define *azazel* as a name at all, instead giving the meaning as “goat of departure.” It identifies two roots for this word, the first of which means “goat” or “kid” (#5795). The second root (#235) means “to go away, hence, to disappear.” *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* says it means “complete removal.” These definitions not only fit with the Hebrew, but they also align with the instructions in Leviticus 16.

But to start with *azazel* as the name of a fallen angel—representative of Satan—is, at best, to begin with a conclusion, and at worst, to base crucial understanding on an apocryphal tradition. When we look at the totality of what Scripture says, a very different picture emerges.

There is [wisdom](#) in not basing a doctrine on the meaning of a word, since meanings can change or become lost with time. A far more solid foundation beyond a word's common definition must be laid. Moving past the definition of *azazel*, then, another foundational principle of Bible study is that significant matters—especially doctrinal ones—must be established by “two or three witnesses.” By comparing what the [azazel goat](#) accomplishes with the rest of God's revelation, its role—and thus, its identity—becomes clear. There is no second, let alone third, witness for Satan playing a role within this chapter or in the atonement for [sin](#).

— David C. Grabbe

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**[Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—Satan or Christ? \(Part One\)](#)**

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