



## [Leviticus 16:5](#)

(5) 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.

*New King James Version*

The two goats of the unique Day of Atonement ceremony are first mentioned in [Leviticus 16:5](#), which contains an often-overlooked detail: “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” (emphasis ours throughout unless otherwise noted).

The “two kids of the goats” *together* are a *single sin offering*. That is, the two young goats are distinct elements that *jointly* accomplish this offering for sin; both parts are absolutely required for the offering to be accepted. A typical sin offering consists of only one animal, but this sin offering consists of two. This shows that something additional is being accomplished here, something beyond just the payment for sin.

The biblical sin offering, detailed in Leviticus 4, is God's prescribed way to show sins being paid for through a death. While “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” ([Hebrews 10:4](#)), [God](#) still required blood to be shed to remind the people that sin incurs the death penalty.

A critical part of the sin offering involves the priest placing his hands on the head of the animal before it was slain to show that the animal would stand in the place of the party under judgment. The unblemished, innocent animal, representing the guilty party, symbolically received the guilt. This detail is reiterated four times within the instructions for the sin offering ([Leviticus 4:4](#)

, 15, 24, 29), as well as in the initial consecration ceremony for Aaron and his sons ([Exodus 29:10](#)). A sin offering is incomplete without this symbolic transference taking place.

Every sacrificial animal—through the requirement of it being unblemished—is portrayed as being sinless ([Deuteronomy 17:1](#); [Leviticus 22:17-25](#)). The Pentateuch contains at least forty injunctions that the sacrificial animals, either in specific offerings or in general, had to be without blemish or defect. In addition, [Malachi 1:6-14](#) records God's indignation at later priests for offering blind, maimed, and diseased animals. A reason the animals had to be of the highest quality is that they were offered to God, who deserves only the best. A second reason is that *every* sacrificial animal prefigured the Savior, who was entirely without blemish or defect.

In the symbolism of a substitutionary sacrifice, an innocent participant is chosen to bear the sins of the guilty. However, this utterly fails to apply to [Satan](#), for his millennia of sin make it impossible for him to be pictured as unblemished or innocent. Not by any means!

— David C. Grabbe

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