

## A Witness from the Talmud to Jesus Being the Scapegoat of Lev 16:1-34

By Dr. David Stern in The Jewish New Testament Commentary

**The *parokhet* in the Temple.** Exodus 26:31–35 describes this curtain as it existed in the desert Tabernacle. It separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Only the *cohen hagadol* was allowed to pass through it into the Holy of Holies; and that he could do only once a year, on *Yom-Kippur*, to make an atonement sacrifice for his sins and for the sins of the Jewish people. When it was **ripped in two from top to bottom** it symbolized the fact that God was giving everyone access to the most holy place of all in heaven, as taught explicitly at MJ 9:3–9, 10:19–22.

The Talmud bears **an amazing witness** to the work of Yeshua in altering the system of atonement. The background is that on *Yom-Kippur*, when the high priest (*cohen hagadol*) sacrificed a bull (Leviticus 16), a piece of scarlet cloth was tied between its horns. If it later turned white, it meant that God had forgiven Israel's sin in accordance with Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they will be white as snow."

"Our Rabbis taught that throughout the forty years that Shim'on the *Tzaddik* served, ... the scarlet cloth would become white. From then on it would sometimes become white and sometimes not .... Throughout the last forty years before the Temple was destroyed ... the scarlet cloth never turned white." (Yoma 39a-39b)

Thus in the days of Shim'on *HaTzaddik* the sacrificial system established by God in the *Tanakh* was observed, and it was effective. But afterwards Israel's spirituality declined, so that the sacrificial system was effective only sometimes. Finally, after Yeshua's death, forty years before the destruction of the Temple, it was never effective. The Talmud does not say it, but what had become effective for forgiving Israel's sin was the sacrificial death of Yeshua the Messiah.

*Acts 2:36-39 NIV 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

*Acts 6:7 NIV 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*

The Talmud

