

The Jewish nation as the Scapegoat

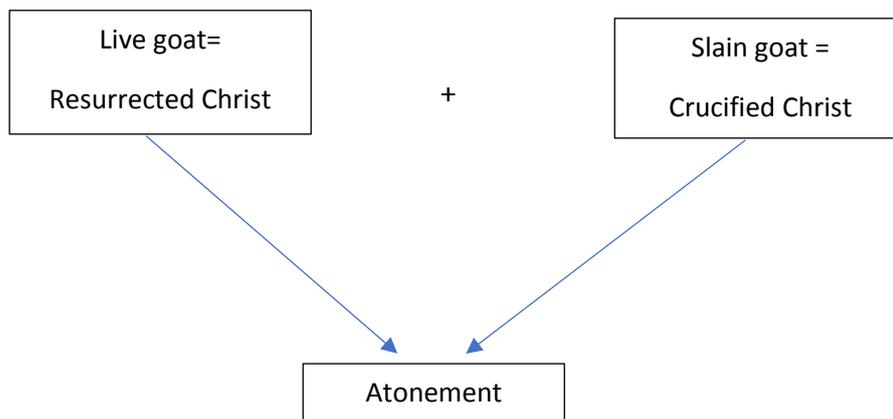
The following article is the result of a discussion on the Day of Atonement and in particular on the role of the scapegoat. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the scapegoat represents the errant nation sent into exile bearing its sin. Unfortunately, there are Christians who understand the scapegoat as symbolic of Christ. Although this subject has been addressed elsewhere, I thought it was of such critical importance that the various threads should be drawn together and restated here with the addition of some new material.

The crux interpretum

The critical verse is the following which I have rendered in the KJV translation:

^{KJV} **Leviticus 16:10** But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, *and* to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Some Christians read this verse as though the “live” (alive) scapegoat makes atonement which is contrary to biblical teaching as **only blood** can make atonement. Hebrews (9.22) is explicit in saying that *“almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission”*. So, *ipso facto* the “live” goat cannot make remission for anything. However, the argument goes that **both goats together represent** the sin offering.



According to this **defective interpretation**, the live goat represents the “resurrected” Christ and the slain goat represents his sacrificial work. Together they represent the “two aspects” of his work. Of course, the typology breaks down completely on a number of counts. Firstly, the scapegoat is not a “resurrected goat” it is simply a “living goat”. Secondly, the scapegoat **is sent away from the divine presence**.

In contrast, the resurrected Jesus resides in the presence of the Almighty because he is sinless. However, the scapegoat wanders around the wilderness (dry places) **bearing sin**. In fact, the live goat is not sent to Yahweh but is sent to **Azazel**. In Jewish legends (the book of Enoch) Azazel is a demon or evil spirit to whom, in the ancient rite of *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), a scapegoat was sent bearing the sins of the Jewish people. Was Christ sent to an unclean demon?

Of course, if it were true that the scapegoat was sent to a demon or a “rebellious angel” that would break down the messianic typology completely. According to the Book of Enoch Azazel is a fallen Angel. In the Bible, the Name Azazel appears in association with the scapegoat rite.

However, we reject the notion that Azazel represents a demon or rebellious angel and further investigations demonstrate that the concept of Azazel (as a proper name) is a Judaic corruption or innovation, nevertheless it represents (personifies) **something unclean**. Even Jesus **accommodated the traditional concept** when he played on the motif of “unclean” and “strong” (both words related to Azazel) with regards to the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness ([more on this anon](#)). Whatever the origins of Azazel in Judaism, the name denoted corruption. Scripture says that “*you will not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt you suffer your Holy One to see corruption*” (Acts 2:27). The scapegoat was sent to an unclean place and the Jews understood it as being sent to a place of demons (whether we agree with their interpretation or not that is what they believed). Babylon in Scripture is associated with demons (idol worship) and the Jewish nation was exiled to Babylon (an unclean place). Is that a fitting messianic typology? The ASV translates the verse as follows:

^{ASV} **Leviticus 16:10** But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement for him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

Note that the goat is sent to Azazel. Also note that the ASV renders make atonement for him. This demonstrates that the “live goat” was atoned for. The NKJ has make atonement upon it (the live goat) and the Jewish translation (JPS) has;

^{JPS} **Leviticus 16:10** But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the LORD, to make atonement over him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

Of course, the objection is voiced that “over him”, and “upon him” is *added by the translators*. This is disingenuous as even the LXX (Greek Septuagint) version (translated from Hebrew centuries before Christ) translates as follows (CATTS LXX electronic edition);

καὶ and τὸν the (acc) χίμαρον ἐφ’ upon/over (+acc,+gen,+dat) ὃν who/whom/which (acc); while being (nom|acc|voc, voc) ἐπῆλθεν he/she/it-COME-ed-UPON/APPROACH ἐπ’ upon/over (+acc,+gen,+dat) αὐτὸν him/it/same (acc) ὁ the (nom) κληρὸς lot (nom) τοῦ the (gen) ἀποπομπαίου στήσει he/she/it-will-STAND, you(sg)-will-be-STAND-ed (classical) αὐτὸν him/it/same (acc) ζῶντα while LIVE-ing (acc, nom|acc|voc) ἔναντι before (+gen) κυρίου lord (gen); authoritative (gen) τοῦ the (gen) ἐξιλιάσασθαι to-be-MAKE-ATONEMENT-ed ἐπ’ upon/over (+acc,+gen,+dat) αὐτοῦ him/it/same (gen) ὥστε so that ἀποστεῖλαι to-SEND-FORTH, be-you(sg)-SEND-FORTH-ed!, he/she/it-happens-to-SEND-FORTH (opt) αὐτὸν him/it/same (acc) εἰς into (+acc) τὴν the (acc) ἀποπομπὴν ἀφήσει he/she/it-will-LEAVE/DISSMISS/FORGIVE, you(sg)-will-be-LEAVE/DISSMISS/FORGIVE-ed (classical) αὐτὸν him/it/same (acc) εἰς into (+acc) τὴν the (acc) ἔρημον deserted (acc, nom|acc|vo

^{LXE} **Leviticus 16:10** and the goat upon which the lot of the scapegoat came, he shall present alive before the Lord, **to make atonement upon him**, so as to send him away as a scapegoat, and he shall send him into the wilderness.

It is quite clear then that even in centuries old translations such as the LXX **the blood of the slain goat makes atonement for the living goat which is then sent away**. Note that the Greek versions do not have the name Azazel.

Following the Septuagint (LXX), the Latin Vulgate, Martin Luther and the King James Version also give readings such as Young's Literal Translation: "And Aaron hath given lots over the two goats, one lot for Jehovah, and one lot for a goat of departure".

According to the Peshitta, Azazel is rendered Za-za-e'il (**the strong one against/of God**), as in Qumran fragment 4Q180¹

Interim conclusion

It is clear that the “live” goat required atonement. The point is that the “live” goat that was symbolically “full of national sin” *should have been slaughtered*. After all, *the soul that sins will die*. **This means that the nation should have been extinguished**. However, this would have annulled the covenant therefore Yahweh accepted the blood of the other goat as an

¹ D.J. Stökl in *Sacrifice in religious experience* ed. Albert I. Baumgarten p. 218

atonement. The blood of the goat “for Yahweh” was sprinkled on the mercy seat. Atonement was for him/upon him (=the scapegoat). The scapegoat was therefore not killed, instead it was punished by being driven into an unclean place. The nation was driven into exile as punishment it was not completely obliterated. The goat for Yahweh was **the sin offering** and therefore represented Christ. The sinful goat that required atonement was the nation.

Leviticus 16:15-16 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

The blood of the slaughtered sin offering makes atonement for the sin bearing goat (scapegoat) that should have been killed (but was instead sent away).

Typology

That the above reading is correct is established through numerous types and anti-types which make the above conclusion irrefutable.

The exile of Cain (Genesis 4)

Cain brought the wrong sacrifice. His sacrifice was not acceptable because it was grown from the cursed ground by the “sweat of his brow”. God rejected his sacrifice because it represented “works” (of the Law). **Works without faith are not acceptable**. Rejection made Cain angry and in a jealous rage he killed his brother Abel. Ironically, the “offering” that Cain brought was **his own brother**.

We have then **two goats** - Cain and Abel – one killed the other **sent away**. Note that both Cain and Abel were at the “door” (gate) of the sanctuary (Eden). The sacrifices were obviously consumed by the flaming sword of the Cherubim that guarded the entrance (cf. Heb 4:12).

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear. (ἀφεθῆναι aphethēnai) (Gen 4:13 LXX)

The same root form of the verb is used in the **LXX of Lev 16:10**

But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, *and* to let him go (ἀφήσει aphēsei) for a scapegoat into the wilderness. (Lev 16:10)

In the New Testament the Greek (ἀφήσει aphēsei) is **only used** in Luke 4:18 with regards to Jesus quoting Isaiah (61:1-3) in reference to the **release of the captivity** (prisoners). In the Old Testament LXX it is used five times in Leviticus 25 in connection with the **Jubilee release** (which included manumission of Hebrew slaves) and once in Isaiah 58:6 with regards to **releasing the chains of wickedness** (captivity/bondage) in connection the **DAY OF ATONEMENT** (the fast that I have chosen). Jesus was **not the scapegoat** he had come to release the scapegoat (nation) from captivity (bondage).

So, Cain becomes a powerful type of the “wandering Jew” (scapegoat) sent into exile. Into the land of Nod (wandering). Cain is expelled from the divine presence and is condemned to drift bearing his sin, nevertheless, Cain is under divine protection. That is because at some future point the possibility of forgiveness and restoration exists (if Cain repents).

The exile of Absalom (2 Samuel 14)

Absalom was exiled because he had murdered his brother Amnon. David was depressed and yearning for the presence of his exiled son. Joab, his army captain devised a ruse whereby an old woman would approach David for his advice. She told him that she had two sons and one son had killed the other. Her dilemma was that under the law her only remaining son should be put to death for murder and she would be left destitute. Note that the story that she told is based on **Cain and Abel**. How do we know this? We know this because it refers to a “field” which some of the oldest versions have.

The NETBible says that the MT has simply “and Cain said to Abel his brother,” omitting Cain’s words to Abel. It is possible that the elliptical text is original. Perhaps the author uses the technique of aposiopesis, “a sudden silence” to create tension. In the midst of the story the narrator suddenly rushes ahead to what happened in the field. It is more likely that the ancient versions (Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac), which include Cain’s words, “Let’s go out to the field,” preserve the original reading here. After writing אָחִיו (‘akhiyv, “his brother”), a scribe’s eye may have jumped to the end of the form בְּשָׂדֵה

(basadeh, “to the field”) and accidentally omitted the quotation. This would be an error of virtual homoioteleuton. In older phases of the Hebrew script the sequence י' (yod-vav) on אַחִיו is graphically similar to the final ה (he) on בַּשָּׂדֶה.

This is what the old woman tells David:

“And thy handmaid had two sons, and **they two strove together in the field**, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him” (2 Sam 14:6).

Obviously, the story is based on Cain and Abel. Cain (like Absalom) is sent into exile for killing his brother. Note the powerful conclusion of the story offered by the old woman (I suggest you read the chapter in full):

“For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him”. (2 Sam 14:14)

Effectively she is saying to David – look, we are all exiled (alienated) from God because of sin. We all die without exception. And yet God has ways to restore the banished (exiled) to him. You David should do the same and bring your son back. David listened and restored his son and Absalom repaid his father by rebelling with the help of Joab!

The unclean spirit

The following parable in Luke 11:21-26 (with annotations) is produced below. The context is that Jesus was accused of casting out unclean spirits with the help of Beelzebub. In other words, you (Jesus) are doing these miracles by the power of Satan (v.18) or by the power of Azazel (the strong one against God). Jesus answers as follows:

²¹ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

²² But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

²³ He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

²⁴ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

²⁵ And when he cometh, he findeth *it* swept and garnished.

²⁶ Then goeth he, and taketh *to him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. (Luke 11:21-26)

Notes:

(v.21) The word *man* is not in the original. The text simply says when a strong. Azazel as the “strong one” has been found in Qumran texts and the Peshitta.

(v.22) Trusting in armour contrasts with Abraham to whom God said that he was Abraham’s shield and reward. Abraham refused to divide the spoils with the king of Sodom. Instead he was blessed with bread and wine by Melchizedek (Genesis 14-15). God gave Abraham the victory because God was “stronger” than the coalition of the king of Shinar (Babylon). The Jews should have displayed the faith of Abraham because one greater than Melchizedek stood before them.

(v.23) Joshua encounters a “man” (angel) with a drawn sword; “*Are you for us or for our enemy (=Satan)?*” The context – the nation circumcised with “flint knives” because the young generation had wandered uncircumcised in the wilderness (scapegoat). They enter the land at Passover and conquer Jericho (Joshua 5). The **new Joshua** stood ready to take them into the promised Land, but this faithless generation was uncircumcised in their hearts and they were against him.

(v.24) The unclean spirit walks (wanders) in dry places (wilderness) he cannot find “rest” (sabbath rest) and decides to return home to his “house”. This describes the ritual of the **Day of Atonement**. The scapegoat wanders in the wilderness. The unclean spirit wanders in the unclean place. The nation was exiled to Babylon described by Jeremiah as follows: “A drought is upon her waters; (=dry places) and they shall be dried up: (=dry places) for it *is* the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols. (Jer 50:38). It was a place of unclean spirits....in the NT; “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev 18:2). The Jews were exiled to Babylon **and became unclean**. The Jews returned to their house (temple) after the exile.

(v25) The Jews considered the temple “their house” indeed Jesus called it “Your house” (Matt 23:38) as it was no longer the house of God. Jesus swept the house clean; “And the Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables” (John 2:13-15). Just before the Passover the Jews practiced the **feast of unleavened bread**. “Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters” (Exod 13:7). Leaven or yeast represented corruption –

only a small amount of yeast could “leaven” the whole loaf. It became traditional for the Jews to do a “spring clean” and sweep out the home. In order to remove the leaven Jesus swept the temple clean just before Passover. The symbolism of this act would not have gone unnoticed to the Jews.

(v.26) The unclean man returns to his house (= the temple) and finds it swept clean (=by Jesus). Instead of being thankful he takes “seven other wicked spirits” and becomes **completely insane**. This is exactly what occurred. The number seven represents completion and coincidentally (sic) the dynasty of Caiaphas (there were seven including his son in law) controlled the temple until it was destroyed.

To sum up - this passage alludes to different feasts, namely, the **Day of Atonement** (scapegoat) and the **Feast of unleavened bread/Passover**. The nation was sent into the wilderness **like the scapegoat**. In the past the unclean nation had been sent to unclean Babylon. Their accusations against Jesus and against the power of the Spirit were an affront to God. If they did not accept his healing, they would go totally mad and be expelled yet again.

The healing of Legion

The healing of Legion represents another acted parable. The mad man is a type of the nation who is depicted as incredibly strong (Mark 5:4). He can even break the chains (Jer 52:11) with which he is restrained. He is immensely strong like his forefather Jacob who removed the great stone from the well (Gen 29:10); yet even his herculean strength could not protect their forefather Jacob (the deceiver) in his hour of need. This mad man cuts himself with flints (like the wilderness generation circumcised by Joshua compare Mark 5:5 with Joshua 5:2-3)² he sleeps among the unclean graves (Mark 5:3 compare Isa 65:4). **He begs Jesus not to send him out of the country** (Mark 5:10). The unclean spirit is cast out of the man and placed into the **unclean beasts** (the pigs) who drown in the abyss³ (in the Apocalypse the beast re-emerges from the abyss).

The healing of Legion is based on the **Day of Atonement ritual**. Jesus had come to heal the insane and unclean nation. Jesus was stronger than Jacob (*Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?* John 4:12). Jesus was a well of “living water” and an even greater stone would be removed (Matt 28:2). Jesus was even stronger than Azazel (**the strong one against God**) – the “traditional” Jewish bogeyman who represented rebellion against God. In this story Jesus depicts the “fit” or “timely” (Lev 16:21) man whose task it is to release the scapegoat in the wilderness; *“art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”* (Matt 8:29). The “fit” or “timely” man had come early to remove the unclean spirit.

² The KJV of Joshua 5:2-3 has “sharp knives” but the Hebrew should be translated as “flint” or “stone” knives.

³ **Luke 8:31**; “To go out into the deep” (Greek *abusos* or abyss same word as Rev 11.7 -bottomless pit) See PRITA apocalypse commentary (under the heading further reading).

Luke even adds that the madman was “*driven of the devil into the wilderness*” (Luke 8:29) which is the place where the scapegoat was released; in the past the nation had been put in chains and exiled into a far country. So, every part of the narrative depicts **the nation as the scapegoat**. The man (nation) was insane, unclean, circumcised (cutting himself with stones), chained, strong, afraid of exile etc.

Vagabond Jews

Cain was ejected from the vicinity of the sanctuary and condemned to become "a vagabond in the earth" (Gen 4:12). Thus, the myth of the "vagabond or wandering Jew" is born.⁴ The apostle Paul relates a miracle (an acted parable) concerning the fall of the Jewish temple and the priestly dynasty of Ananias (and his relations) using the trope of the **vagabond⁵ Jew**:

“Then certain of the **vagabond Jews**, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” (Acts 19:13-16).

Here then we have "Cain" (**vagabond Jews** i.e., representing Sadducee priests returned from the Babylonian exile) using "magic incantations" and the name of Jesus⁶ to expel "unclean

⁴ Le Juif Errant (The Wandering Jew), an 1844 novel by Eugène Sue, Le Juif errant (opera), an 1852 opera by Fromental Halévy, loosely inspired by Sue's novel, The Wandering Jew (Heym novel) 1981, The Wandering Jew (1923 film), The Wandering Jew (1933 film), The Eternal Jew (1934 film), a British fantasy also known as The Wandering Jew, "The Wandering Jew" (ballad), a 17th-century English "broadside Ballad"

⁵ The Hebrew uses a word usually translated as vagabond in Gen 4:12-13. Two similar sounding synonyms are used here: נָנֵד נָעַד (na' vanad, "a wanderer and a fugitive"). This juxtaposition of synonyms emphasizes the single idea. In translation one can serve as the main description, the other as a modifier. Other translation options include "a wandering fugitive" and a "ceaseless wanderer" The LXX uses a phrase translated as "thou shalt be **groaning and trembling** on the earth" in Gen 4:12 rather than "vagabond" or "wanderer". In this case the NT Greek περιερχομένων (*perierchomenōn*) in Acts 19:13 gives a better sense of the original Hebrew as it is usually translated as "vagabond" or "itinerant" Jew.

⁶ According to the Encyclopedia of Magic, Myth, and Mysticism; "The [Jewish] exorcist then uses the power of the demonic spirit's own name to "overpower" it, by round after round of scripted ritual actions involving threats and rebukes, getting more intense and invasive with each effort. A few ceremonies on record reached the point of actually "beating" the demon out, but most simply involved verbal coercion". <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-exorcism/> Reprinted with permission from the Encyclopedia of Magic, Myth, and Mysticism (Llewellyn Worldwide). If this is correct, then the Jewish (priestly) exorcism was inferring that the madman was "possessed" by a demon called "Jesus" and "Paul". In other words, the "madman" was infected with a demon called "Christianity" that required priestly removal to restore him to the "sanity" of Judaism. Instead, the madman beat them and stripped them, and they fled naked. Nakedness is the condition of Adam before he used the "fig" leaf. In effect they are being told that they will be banished from the sanctuary (garden/temple etc) and they will not be able to cover their nakedness with nationalism (Zionism) or "Jewish exclusivity". The fig tree was cursed. Cain was banished. The scapegoat was sent away.

spirits" (demons). These "seven" Jewish priests are beaten and abused by the madman and they flee the house (temple) naked. In other words, the Sadducee dynasty and its temple would be destroyed, and the Jews would end up **as vagabonds⁷ once again**.

Two sons of the father

The Fourth Gospel brings the rituals of **Atonement and Passover together** with the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Christ. Barabbas means **Son of the father** and this contrasts with Jesus who is the Son of God. One son is released, and the other son is crucified. One goat is for Yahweh and the other for Azazel. One goat makes blood atonement the other is released.

The nation was God's son. *"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt"* (Hos 11:1). Jesus was also understood (whether Peshier interpretation or not) as the fulfillment of this; *"And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son"* (Matt 2:15).

Two sons from the same father. One is released and the other killed. One makes atonement the other has to bear his sin and is forced to wander in "dry places". In BC 586 the nation was sent into Babylonian exile as declared in Ezekiel;

"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face" (Ezekiel 20:35).

This is obviously **not a literal wilderness** as the previous verse in Ezekiel (v.34) makes clear that that the Jews will be taken out of the *"countries where you have been scattered"*. It is a mistake to attempt to read prose as sequential or literal. The Jews will not literally be placed in a literal wilderness and literally be made to pass under the "rod of the covenant" as some are wont to believe. The initial fulfillment of this prophecy was the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple under Darius. Symbolic language should not be forced into literalistic paradigms and chronological "prophetic" sequences. The meaning is clear, just as in the past so also in the future God will once again disperse and filter his people.

⁷ See Psalm 109. The same (Hebrew) root for vagabond is used (v.10) as in Gen 4:12-14. Jesus and Christians were cursed and excommunicated from the synagogues and sometimes murdered. This Psalm seems like an appropriate response.

“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, the evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.” (Amos 9:9-10)

Literal readings of nonliteral texts can also lead to fraudulent readings, dogmatic tenacity to ahistorical or unscientific claims, and the loss of credibility for those who insist on nonsensical interpretations. **Dry places** are a reference to Babylon and the drying of the Euphrates as predicted by Jeremiah. “A drought is upon her waters; (=dry places) and they shall be dried up: (=dry places) for it *is* the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols. (Jer 50:38). It was the place of unclean spirits (demons-idols). It was the "wilderness" (of the people) where the Jews were sent (like the scapegoat) where they built a base (in Shinar Zech 5:11) and wrote their **unclean Babylonian Talmud** which became an unclean idol that replaced the Torah. Those who suffer from “over literalism” will declare that Babylon was not a “dry place” when the Jews were exiled there. In fact, Babylon was well watered with canals and hanging gardens. However, if you must have a literal interpretation, Herodotus informs us that Cyrus diverted (dried up) the Euphrates when he conquered the city. Jeremiah predicted that the future of Babylon would be a wilderness ruin like her sister city Nineveh. Therefore, Babylon becomes a **supra historical symbol** in the New Testament that represents ruin and dryness (a wilderness). Babylon came to represent exile, uncleanliness and idolatry. In the Apocalypse (Rev 16:12) the Euphrates is “dried up”. Clearly Jeremiah’s words still have a *future fulfilment*. **Babel** the precursor to Babylon symbolized the place of the *confusion of languages and scattering* and this was reversed by the preaching of Acts 2:8 when everyone heard the apostles in their own language. Moreover, the “wilderness” is not only a place of sifting and punishment but also a place of preservation.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev 12:6).⁸

So, we would do well not to become “over literal” in pressing everything into a nice, neat one-dimensional, sequential exposition as the symbol of the wilderness (where the scapegoat was sent) is flexible and often metaphorical.

⁸ For an exposition of Rev 12 see the PRITA commentary

Conclusion

The scapegoat represents the nation sent into exile it does not represent Christ. Indeed, it cannot represent Christ for the following reasons:

1. The scapegoat is atoned for **by the blood** of the goat for Yahweh (=the sin offering)
2. The scapegoat is sent away from the divine presence
3. The nation must bear its sin until such a time as it is restored and forgiven
4. Historically, the Jews have been exiled twice (they will be exiled one more time)
5. Typological fitting of the Atonement Day ritual (*Yom Kippur*) points to the scapegoat being the nation (e.g. Cain and Abel, Barabbas and Christ, Legion etc).
6. Theological fitting of the scapegoat would suggest that sins are transferable to Christ. This is **not true** as Christ **is not a substitute for the sinner**. Christ does not die instead of us (because we all die) therefore he is not a substitute. Christ **represents** the sinner as he bears the same nature as us (Heb 2:14). Christ overcame sin and acts as our representative (federal head). We identify with him through baptism and obedient faith and are saved by grace. As such Christians are no longer in Adam but in Christ. **The bible does not teach penal substitution**. Therefore, as the sins of the nation were symbolically transferred onto the scapegoat by the laying on of priestly hands **the scapegoat cannot theologically represent Christ**.

To sum up – understanding the scapegoat as symbolizing Christ is typologically wrong, historically wrong, theologically wrong and linguistically-semantically wrong. **In other word it is about as wrong as you can get.**

Recommended further reading

This article examines the etymology of Azazel <https://www.biblaridion.info/resources/scapegoat.pdf>

Holy cow: the ritual of the red heifer https://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/red_cow.pdf

Rom 11.26-27 and Revelation 11 <https://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/ungodliness.pdf>

The online Apocalypse Commentary (PRITA): https://www.biblaridion.info/PDF/Rev_8.pdf (page 133);

“First century Pharisaism won the day and endured the centuries as it developed into fully fledged Rabbanism. Most importantly, the exile of Israel to a “dry place” (Babylon) alludes to the sending away of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, the very ritual that introduces the trumpets”.

https://www.biblaridion.info/PDF/Rev_11.pdf (page 50)