

## February 26

**Leviticus 16:7-10 (NIV)** <sup>7</sup> Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>8</sup> He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>9</sup> Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. <sup>10</sup> But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat. **Matthew 27:21-22 (NIV)** <sup>21</sup> “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. “Barabbas,” they answered. <sup>22</sup> “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!”

I read an interesting passage comparing these two incidents. On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, the high priest was to select two identical goats. The priest would draw lots. One goat would be sacrificed as a sin offering for all the people. The other goat, the scapegoat, would be set free. This process was established by the LORD Himself. Thousands of years later, Pilate presented two men before the people. Jesus, Who was fully human, was “equal” to Barabbas. Pilate did not choose the one to die. The people did. Jesus became the sin offering. Barabbas was set free.

The Lord tells us that everything in the Bible is there to teach us. For a long time, when I read about the people yelling, “Crucify him, I would grow angry at the injustice and at the inhumanity of those people. How could they kill an innocent man and let a convicted criminal go free? This time, as I read this passage, I realized that it was I standing next to Jesus and not Barabbas. I was the convicted criminal who deserved to die. I stood next to the Lamb of God and hoped the crowd would choose to set me free. Suddenly, I could see with different eyes. I was hoping the crowd would yell my name. I was glad the crowd chose me. I was glad Jesus, Who was without sin, was going to that cross instead of me. I could also see Jesus turning to look at me. He looked into my eyes with a love that I had never seen before. He was joyful that I was going free. He was at peace going to that cross in my place. As I watched them take Jesus away and as they took my chains off, I was filled with a mixture of sadness and extreme joy that I had another chance. I was the one standing next to Jesus as the crowd made their choice.