

Leviticus 5

Before we cover individual paragraphs in this chapter, it will be helpful to summarize the chapter so we can see the bigger picture before we get into some of the details.

The guilt offering

The guilt offering covers a limited number of sins.

It also has different offerings depending on the sin and the person's income.

A. A guilt offering was limited to 4 specific sins and 2 "kinds" of sin

[A "kind" of sin is a general category of sin]

B. The guilt offering for the 4 specific sins was based on a person's income

C. The guilt offering for the 2 "kinds" of sin was a ram

The fact that the guilt offering for some sins was based on a person's income and that some sins required a more costly sacrifice than others tells us that God's system of forgiveness was designed with fairness and compassion.

Verses 1-4

'Now if a person sins after he hears a public appeal to testify when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt. ²Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, though it is hidden from him and he is unclean, then he will be guilty. ³Or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort his uncleanness may be with which he becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty. ⁴Or if a person swears thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, in whatever matter a man may speak thoughtlessly with an oath, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty in one of these.

A. The 4 specific sins

1. Now if a person sins after he hears a public appeal to testify

Any person who does not testify when he should

2. If a person touches any unclean thing

The carcass of an unclean animal or swarming things

3. If he touches human uncleanness

This will be covered in chapters 11 – 15

4. In whatever matter a man may speak thoughtlessly with an oath

Not fulfilling a rash vow.

Verses 5 - 13

⁵ So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. ⁶ He shall also bring his guilt offering to the Lord for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin. ⁷ 'But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the Lord his guilt offering for that in which he has sinned, two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. ⁸ He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first that which is for the sin offering and shall nip its head at the front of its neck, but he shall not sever *it*. ⁹ He shall also sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar: it is a sin offering. ¹⁰ The second he shall then prepare as a burnt offering according to the ordinance. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin which he has committed, and it will be forgiven him. ¹¹ 'But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then for his offering for that which he has sinned, he shall bring the tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not put oil on it or place incense on it, for it is a sin offering. ¹² He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as its memorial portion and offer *it* up in smoke on the altar, with the offerings of the Lord by fire: it is a sin offering. ¹³ So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin which he has committed from one of these, and it will be forgiven him; then *the rest* shall become the priest's, like the grain offering.

So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned

The person who committed one of these sins had to confess his sin.

He shall also bring his guilt offering to the Lord for his sin which he has committed

B. The guilt offering for the 4 specific sins was based on a person's income

- 1. A female from the flock, a lamb or a goat**
- 2. Two turtledoves or two young pigeons**
- 3. The tenth of an ephah of fine flour**

But if he cannot afford a lamb

This sacrifice was intended for the poor

Then he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons

One for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering

The sin offering was put on top of a burnt offering.

For a lamb or a goat sacrifice that was no problem because there was plenty of fat for the burnt offering and the lamb or goat was placed on top of the fat.

But that is not the case with birds, so one of the birds was used as the burnt offering and the other bird was placed on top of it.

But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or two young pigeons he shall bring the tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering

The ephah is thought to be about a bushel

So 1/10 of that would be about 3½ pints to 3½ quarts

This sacrifice was intended for the very poor

He shall not put oil on it or place incense on it, for it is a sin offering

Why would God forbid oil or frankincense?

Two possibilities

1. The sin offering should not have a festive character to it.
2. It would reduce the cost for a poor man.

Verses 14-16

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁵ “If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against the Lord’s holy things, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord: a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in *terms of* the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. ¹⁶ He shall make restitution for that which he has sinned against the holy thing, and shall add to it a fifth part of it and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it will be forgiven him.

C. The 2 “kinds” of sin

- 1. If a person acts unfaithfully against the Lord’s holy things**
- 2. Stealing things of value in various ways**

(Number 2 is covered in verses 5:17 thru 6:7)

If a person acts unfaithfully against the Lord’s holy things

We are not told what kind of sins this might have been but we know from Jewish history that God was not happy with the following:

1. Neglecting to pay their tithes.

See Malachi 3:8-10

2. Offering of an unsuitable animal for sacrifice.

See Malachi 1:8

Then he shall bring his **guilt offering to the Lord:**

A ram without defect from the flock

The Ram is a male lamb used for breeding and is therefore of great value.

There is a saying that the ram is half the flock.

The ram is the primary means by which genetic improvement will be made in a flock.

His genetics will be spread over many more offspring than any one ewe.

After several seasons of use more than 90 percent of the genetics in the flock will be influenced by the ram.

God was saying; don't be unfaithful to My holy things.

According to your valuation in silver by shekels, in *terms of* the shekel of the sanctuary

The shekel of the sanctuary was heavier than the ordinary shekel

All money in those days was calculated by the weight of precious metals

Coinage did not begin in Palestine prior to the fourth century B.C.

He shall make restitution for that which he has sinned against the holy thing, and shall add to it a fifth part of it and give it to the priest.

Restitution included a twenty percent penalty.

Verses 17-19

“Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. ¹⁸ He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know *it*, and it will be forgiven him. ¹⁹ It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the Lord.”

“Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, **though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment.**

A good example of this kind of situation is recorded in Numbers 6.

The whole chapter with commentary has been added below for your convenience.

Numbers 6

Verses 1 - 4

Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man or woman makes a special vow, *namely*, the vow of a Nazirite, to live as a Nazirite for the Lord, ³ he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall consume no vinegar, *whether made* from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes. ⁴ All the days of his consecration he shall not eat anything that is produced from the grape vine, from *the seeds even to the skin*.

When a man or woman makes a special vow, *namely*, the vow of a Nazirite

This chapter has the rules for those who became Nazirites.

There were two types of this vow:

1. The Nazirite for Life

They were dedicated to the Lord by their parents before they were born.

Samson Judges 13:5

Samuel 1 Samuel 1:11

John the Baptist Luke 1:15

Neither Samuel nor John the Baptist is called a Nazirite but due to the circumstances of their birth and the manner of their life, they are usually designated as Nazirites for life.

2. The Nazirite of Days

This included any man or woman who offered themselves to God with the Nazirite vow for a short period of time.

The Nazirites were a special class of people raised up by God

See Amos 2:11 - 12

All the days of his consecration he shall not eat anything that is produced from the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin.

The prohibition was absolute; nothing of the grapevine was permissible to the Nazirite.

The Jews made a sour drink that was made from the seeds of unripe grapes and cakes were often made of the husks (skins) of grapes.

These products would have been forbidden for a Nazirite.

Verse 5 - 8

⁵‘All the days of his vow of consecration no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled which he lives as a Nazirite for the Lord; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long. ⁶‘All the days of his life as a Nazirite for the Lord he shall not come up to a dead person. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his consecration to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his consecration he is holy to the Lord.

All the days of his vow of consecration no razor shall pass over his head

For those who took the Nazirite vow long hair was a sign of devotion to the Lord.

When Samson disobeyed this vow (by telling Delilah the secret of his great strength) he paid a high price for doing so (they gouged out his eyes, restrained him with chains and put him in prison) but when it grew back he won a huge victory over the Philistines.

See Judges 16

All the days of his life as a Nazirite for the Lord he shall not come up to a dead person.⁷ He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister

This rule was stricter for the Nazirite than for the priests.

See Leviticus 21:1-3

However, this was the same restriction given to the High Priest

See Leviticus 21:10-11

Verse 9 - 12

⁹‘But if *someone* dies very suddenly beside him and he defiles his consecrated head of *hair*, then he shall shave his head on the day when he becomes clean; he shall shave it on the seventh day. ¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young doves to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹¹ And the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the* other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him regarding his sin because of the *dead* person. And on that same day he shall consecrate his head, ¹² and shall live his days of consecration as a Nazirite for the Lord, and shall bring a male lamb a year old as a guilt offering; but the preceding days will not count, because his consecration was defiled.

But if *someone* dies very suddenly beside him

This concerns a violation of the law that was unintentional.

See Leviticus 5:17

Can sin be unintentional?

1. Peter told his Jewish brothers they killed the Author of life because they acted in ignorance.

See Acts 3:17 - 19

2. Paul told his Greek audience that God had overlooked the times of ignorance.

See Acts 17:30

Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young doves to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹¹ And the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the* other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him regarding his sin because of the *dead* person

Even though what happened was unintentional it required the following:

1. A sin offering
2. A burnt offering
3. Make atonement regarding his sin

And on that same day he shall consecrate his head, ¹² and shall live his days of consecration as a Nazirite for the Lord, and shall bring a male lamb a year old as a guilt offering; but the preceding days will not count, because his consecration was defiled.

4. A guilt offering (a male lamb)
5. Begin the full term of his vow over again

Even though Samson did not willingly have his hair cut off, rather Delilah called for a man to come in while Samson was asleep and he shaved off the seven locks of his head, he was not without sin concerning the Nazirite vow.

What happened may have been unintentional and out of ignorance in trusting Delilah but Samson broke the Nazirite vow.

This demonstrates how important the vow of the Nazirite was in the eyes of God.

Verses 13 - 20

¹³ 'Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his consecration are fulfilled: he shall bring his offering to the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹⁴ And he shall present his offering to the Lord: one male lamb a year old without defect as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb a year old without defect as a sin offering, one ram without defect as a peace offering, ¹⁵ and a basket of unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering. ¹⁶ Then the priest shall present *them* before

the Lord and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. ¹⁷ He shall also offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, together with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. ¹⁸ The Nazirite shall then shave his consecrated head *of hair* at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and take the consecrated hair of his head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings. ¹⁹ And the priest shall take the ram's shoulder *when it has been* boiled, and one unleavened loaf from the basket and one unleavened wafer, and shall put *them* on the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated *hair*. ²⁰ Then the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord. It is holy for the priest, together with the breast *offered as a wave offering*, and the thigh *offered as a contribution*; and afterward the Nazirite may drink wine.'

Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his consecration are fulfilled:

He shall present his offering to the Lord:

One male lamb a year old without defect as a burnt offering,

One ewe lamb a year old without defect as a sin offering,

One ram without defect as a peace offering,

A basket of unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil

An unleavened wafers spread with oil

Along with their grain offering and their drink offering

Why did the completion of a Nazirite vow require a sin offering?

The answer to this question seems to be an enigma.

The Nazirite shall then shave his head *of hair* at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and take the consecrated hair and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings

Why was the hair burned?

This may be one of those unanswerable questions.

Verse 21

²¹ “This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the Lord according to his consecration, in addition to what *else* he can afford; corresponding to his vow which he makes, so he shall do according to the law of his consecration.”

Those who took the Nazirite vow had a feast when it was completed. The feast was augmented by whatever else the Nazirite was able to bring.

The friends who attended may have added to the feast

See Acts 21:23-26

Verse 22 - 27

²² Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘In this way you shall bless the sons of Israel. You are to say to them:

²⁴ The Lord bless you, and keep you;

**²⁵ The Lord cause His face to shine on you,
And be gracious to you;**

**²⁶ The Lord lift up His face to you,
And give you peace.’**

²⁷ So they shall invoke my name on the sons of Israel, and *then* I will bless them.

This blessing is commonly called the Aaronic Blessing. It was used following the daily sacrifices.

It is a beautiful blessing.