

Leviticus 5

Before we cover some of the details of the individual paragraphs, it would be helpful to see the bigger picture of this chapter.

The guilt offering

The guilt offering covers a limited number of sins and it has different offerings depending on the sin and the person's income.

1. A guilt offering was limited to 4 specific sins and 3 "kinds" of sin.
2. The guilt offering for the 4 specific sins was based on a person's income.
3. The guilt offering for the 3 "kinds" of sin was a ram.

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. ² Or 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. ³ Or 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. ⁴ Or 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.

The 4 specific sins

1. Any person who does not testify when he should.
2. If a person touches the carcass of an unclean animal or swarming things.
3. If he touches human uncleanness. See chapters 11 – 15
4. 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.

⁵ 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

This sacrifice of two turtledoves or two young pigeons was intended for the poor. One bird was for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. The sin offering was always 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 was 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.

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.

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.

But why did God forbid oil or frankincense? Two possibilities come to mind.

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.

The 3 “kinds” of sin

1. If a person acts unfaithfully against the Lord’s Holy things.
2. Doing things the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware.
3. Stealing things of value (This is covered in 6:1-7)

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:**

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

⁸ **“Would anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation of you! ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this,” says the Lord of armies, “if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.**

2. Offering of an unsuitable animal for sacrifice.

See Malachi 1:8

⁸ **And when you present a blind *animal* for sacrifice, is it not evil? Or when you present a lame or sick *animal*, is it not evil? So offer it to your governor! Would he be pleased with you, or would he receive you kindly?” says the Lord of armies.**

¹⁵ **..... 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.**

The rams used for breeding were quite valuable because they were the primary means by which genetic improvement was made in a flock. Other male lambs that were not used for breeding were of less value and were often sold as meat or used in sacrifices to the Lord. The Lord asked for a ram without defect, not one of the most valuable rams in the flock.

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.

Restitution included a twenty percent penalty that was given to the priest. So whatever the ram was worth, 1/5th of that value in silver was given to the priest.

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 specific example is not recorded in the text but the following is given a possibility.

See Numbers 6:1-12

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. 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.

The 3rd “kind” of sin that was mentioned above is found in Chapter 6:1-7.

3. Stealing things of value.