

Leviticus 5-6:7 • Forgive Us Our Trespasses

Introduction

The Book of Exodus ends with the glory of the Lord filling the newly constructed tabernacle. Construction of the tabernacle had been a national affair supervised by men with special crafts and gifts. It was a glorious event for the Hebrews who were now a year into their exodus from Egypt. The presence of the glory of the Lord meant that God had fulfilled His promise to dwell in their midst, thus officially making Israel a theocratic nation. The glory of the Lord was so great that even Moses could not enter the tent of meeting.

Inside the outer curtains of the tabernacle was the courtyard. Just inside the doorway to the courtyard was the altar for burnt offerings. It was here that the various offerings were presented to the Lord and administered by the priests.

Many Christians find reading about the Old Testament offerings tedious, repetitive and boring. However, to the new Jewish Christians making up the early church, the full extent of Christ's life and work could not have been appreciated without knowledge of Levitical sacrifices and offerings. The same is true today of any believer, for God continues to speak to us through every part of His Word. We will discover this as we study just one of the Levitical offerings.

¹“Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration 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.

⁵“So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. ⁶He 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.

[Read v.5:1-6]

Q: How much do you already know about the OT offerings?

A: Depending on the knowledge of the participants, some review may be required.) Chapters 1 through 6:6 present the five Levitical sacrifices. The first 3 offerings were called “Sweet Savor Offerings” and were presented voluntarily on the part of individuals. The remaining two offerings were called “Sin Offerings” and, unlike the first three, were mandatory. The offerings are as follows:

Chapter 1: Burnt Offering

Type: Free will; a soothing aroma
Purpose: Consecration and personal dedication to the Lord.
Offered: An animal (bull, sheep, goat, or if poor, dove)
Forbidden: Animal w/ defects, blemishes; feathers of doves.

Chapter 2: Grain Offering (also known as Meal Offering)

Type: Free will; a soothing aroma
Purpose: Offering service and the works of one's labors to the Lord.
Offered: Grain of fine flour, kneaded with oil, salt and frankincense
Forbidden: Leaven and honey.

Chapter 3: Peace Offering

Type: Free will; a soothing aroma
Purpose: Fellowship and communion with the Lord.
Offered: The fat and entrails of bulls, goats, sheep
Forbidden: “All fat belongs to the Lord.”

Chapter 4: Sin Offering

Type: Mandatory
Purpose: To cover unintentional sin (or sin in general), and make “atonement”; that is, to restore fellowship with the Lord.
Offered: Animals (bull, lamb)
Forbidden: A defective animal

Q: What do you suppose this offering is called? (Hint: the key word occurs six times, once in each verse.)

A: This is the “*Guilt Offering*.” It is also called in some translations, the “*Trespass Offering*” which gives us a clue to its purpose.

Q: What do you suppose is the difference between the sin offering (unintentional sins) and the guilt offering here?

A: These first covered unintentional, or general sins. The offering in chapter 5 covers willful sins. Thus it is also called the trespass offering.

Q: What is the difference between “general sin” and a “trespass”?

A: The word sin literally means “missing the mark.” In other words, man by nature falls short of God’s standards and His holiness. Man sins against God simply by his very nature, even when not knowing about it. A trespass, on the other hand, is when we do something intentionally that we know is wrong. The result of this willful kind of sin is always guilt.

Q: In verse 5, what is the one required act regarding the individual’s guilt that is not found in any other offering?

A: “...*He shall confess that in which he has sinned.*”

Q: Why is confession important when it comes to trespass offerings?

A: Because the individual must be willing to admit he has committed a wrong. Confession is required for complete repentance. In the former offering, nothing specific is mentioned. This offering is presented because the individual has committed a specific sin, including sins against his neighbor. Repentance is the key to freedom from guilt.

Application:

- *As you study these verses and the various offerings, how is God speaking to your heart concerning sin, trespasses, dedication, service and communion with the Lord?*
- *If you are lacking in any of these areas, or you are feeling guilty about any one of them, to what extremes would you be willing to go to restore fellowship with God?*
- *Why do you think God made these issues (sin, guilt, consecration, service and fellowship) so important and preeminent in the lives of the Hebrews?*
- *How important and basic are these issues when it comes to our relationship to God?*
- *In your church, how often do you hear the word “repentance” used?*

⁷But 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. ⁸He 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. ⁹He 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. ¹⁰The 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. ¹²He 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. ¹³So 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.”

¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁶He 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.

¹⁷“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. ¹⁸He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the

[Read v.5:7-13]

Q: What provision is God making for everyone in these passages, and why?

A: Even the poorest individual is capable of making a guilt offering, because even the poorest individual is capable of committing trespasses.

Q: There is a word found 3 times in these passages, in verses 6, 10, and 13. What is it and what does it mean?

A: The word is “*atonement*.” An easy way to remember the meaning of this word is “at-one-ment”; that is, doing what is necessary to make us one with God again. In the Hebrew, the word is *kophar* which means “covering.” Think of it as a cover or shield from judgment and punishment. To atonement differs from the NT in that it is a temporary covering and must necessarily be repeatedly restored. That is, sin, confess; sin again, confess again, and so on. In the NT, the atonement of Christ on the cross is permanent and eternal for all those who put their trust in Him.

Application: *Many Christians find themselves in a sin-and-confess cycle. They believe they go in and out of fellowship with God because of sin. They confuse fellowship with relationship. In Christ, our relationship is secure and eternal. We confess—not to restore the relationship—but to free us from guilt. Discuss this concept. Do you believe that if every sin is not confessed, God is not pleased with you and you are out of relationship with Him?*

[Read v.5:14 – 6:7]

Q: In verse 15, what is different about “the LORD’S holy things”?

A: Unintentional mishandling of the Lord’s property, such as the holy utensils in the tabernacle or the tabernacle itself, especially during transport, is treated the same as intentional trespasses. That is because they are set aside for the Lord’s purposes and are to be handled only by the Levites and only in a particular manner.

Q: Besides confession, what is another difference in this offering? (Hint: it is found in verses 15-16, 18; 6:4, 5.)

A: Restitution is required as well as an offering. The purpose of the **offering** is to restore one’s relationship with the Lord. The purpose of **restitution** is to restore one’s relationship with the one sinned against. If that is not possible, then restitution must be made to the priest himself and must be of equal value as the trespass, as determined by the priest.

[Continued on the next page.]

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. ¹⁹It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the LORD.”

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, ³or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; ⁴then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, ⁵or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering. ⁶Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, ⁷and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt.”

Q: How do you suppose the enactment of these penalties and punishment helped keep down the crime rate?

A: If followed through, one paid a stiff price for defrauding or “deceiving” his brother. (For a NT example of this, see the story below of Zaccheus.)

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

Luke 19:1-8

Q: Of the offenses listed in these verses, do you think they are inclusive? That is, are these the only offenses by which offering, confession and restitution need be made?

A: These are only a few immediate examples. The rest will follow.

Final Application

Now that you’ve had an introduction to the Levitical offerings, has your view changed in regard to their significance? What has God revealed to you that is new?