

LEVITICUS

Lesson 7 - Chapter 4 Continued

We left off studying Leviticus chapter 4. And, in chapter 4 we get a new kind, a new type, of sacrificial offering called the Hatta'at.....the Purification Offering. Some translators call this the Sin Offering. However, I think this translated name misses the point as this offering is not so much about payment for the sinful act or the behavior; it's about the **person** who sins having his purity restored. It's about a remedy to the state of defilement a person finds himself in when he sins. It's about the restoration of the sinner, and reconciliation with God, not payment for the sin. I used the analogy of a person being poisoned and the Hatta'at being the antidote to that poison which has so infected that person. How the poisoning occurred, and the precise nature of the poison is unimportant.....only the condition of the person who has been poisoned is at issue.

I know that sometimes it is difficult for our minds to see the difference between the person who commits a sin, and the sin itself, or even how that sin changes the condition of the sinner. So let me attempt another illustration of the purpose of the Purification Offering. A man staggers into a hospital emergency room with a gunshot wound in his chest, and collapses, unable to provide the Doctors and nurses with any information; the hospital staff immediately springs into action and sets about to determine the extent of the injury, and how to treat it.....for the purpose of the best interests of the patient. Their sole intent, all their effort, is focused on saving this person's life. How the gunshot wound happened.....**where** it happened.....**who** pulled the trigger....was it attempted suicide or an accident....was it done in self-defense, or was this person the aggressor.....none of this matters at the moment. The behavior that led to this life-threatening condition is secondary even though it was that behavior that led to this man's precarious condition. **ONLY** the condition of the person, this patient, with the gunshot wound matters. The medical staff is **NOT** treating the behavior they're treating the person. Even if this man was a criminal, shot by the police while committing a crime, it doesn't matter. The Doctors' purpose is to save the person's life.....not to alter his behavior or to administer justice.

The Hatta'at is like that. God is concerned about the person, and making sure that the effects of the sinful behavior on that person are counteracted. And the effects of sin are always the same; peace with God is endangered. Yet, there is a caveat: the Hatta'at only concerns matters when the sinful behavior which has rendered the person unclean were Unintentional.....and even more specifically, inadvertent. It was a mistake, an error, unintended.

In our last lesson we saw that unlike the first 3 sacrificial offerings, (the 'Olah, the Minchah, and the Zevah) the Hatta'at Purification offering classifies people, and also assigns certain specific sacrificial animals to each class of person. The classes are: the High Priest, the nation of Israel as a whole, the tribal leaders, and a common citizen (an individual). Because the High

Priest is the mediator between God and the people of Israel, the High Priest can do the most damage to the relationship between God and the Hebrew people. When the High Priest sins it has the effect of both polluting HIM and the entire nation of Israel. So the sacrificial offering must be the greatest: and, that sacrifice is a mature Bull of at least 3 years in age.

We also saw that in this ritual of the Hatta'at as it concerns the sins of a High Priest, only certain fats from the Bull are burned up on the Brazen Altar; and that no part of the Bull may be used by either the priests or the people. Rather it has to be removed entirely from the encampment of Israel, taken OUTSIDE THE CAMP, and burned up on a common wood fire there. The idea is to dispose of the Bull, to get rid of it, as the Bull is the substitute for the sin of the High Priest.

While I'm not going to go deeper into it just yet, let me remind you that the sacrifice of the Red Heifer is also done in a similar manner as the Hatta'at for the High Priest. And, that Hebrews tells us that Christ was killed OUTSIDE THE CAMP. You can refer to last week's lesson for a few more details on that.

So, let's now look at the next highest class of people and the ritual called for in the Hatta'at offering; the whole congregation.

After the High Priest, the sin of the whole congregation (the nation of Israel as a whole) is viewed as the most serious. Now, just to be clear, it's not that every last Israelite individual sinned the same sin at the same time. Rather, it's that the behavior, judgment, and decisions of most of the group becomes representative of the whole group. It is rather ironic that in modern western Christianity we tend to view sin as a purely personal and individual matter. That is, the only sin that has some negative affect on YOU is the sin that YOU commit. That if, in a group, you're the exception to the rule, that somehow you will escape the consequences of the behavior of the others.

Hebrews have always had a concept of both corporate.....group.....responsibility and individual responsibility. And they get it from the Scriptures. In the Bible we find Israel being removed from their land, exiled and dispersed because as a group they brought God's wrath upon themselves. The innocent and the guilty both suffered, so to speak. We find all throughout the Bible that nations, communities, even families will suffer dire consequences due to the sins of some members of their group....but not all. In the end times we're told that entire nations will be judged based on their treatment of Israel. Yet I can assure you that every nation on earth at that time will have many Believers among them that love and bless Israel. Nonetheless, as a whole these nations will be judged on their national policy and collective action; God will hold us ALL responsible, as a group, for the actions of our nation. Those Believers (even though they may love Israel) who living among those nations who go against Israel, will be affected according to God's judgment upon the whole group to which they belong.

Now I'm NOT talking about Salvation, here. Personal Salvation *is* a matter between one individual and the Lord. Your entire family, or nation, can be Unbelievers.....but if YOU accept Christ, you are singled-out and saved from eternal separation from God. Let's remember, though, that personal salvation is very narrow in its scope. Sadly, because of our western

culture that has become so individualistic, and has abandoned extended families in favor of the nuclear family....parents and their children and no one else...we tend to extend that concept too far; and we distance ourselves from the group, or community, of which we are part. We think we can kind of huddle in our home and shut out the world and escape all the injustices and rejection of our Lord that is displayed on a corporate level by our government. Well, guess what.....that's not how Yehoveh sees us. He sees us as individuals in light of salvation, but as part of a group when it comes to the overall behavior of that group and the divine wrath that group will be subjected to.

We see the order of importance between a group and an individual right here in Leviticus chapter 4. After the High Priest, God places more importance and responsibility on the group as a whole, then the leaders of the group, and finally an individual acting alone.

So, in verse 13, we're told that if the whole assembly, the nation of Israel as a whole, commits some kind of sin.....in the form of an error, an act that is against God's commands and laws.....and then they suddenly become aware of it, they are to seek atonement via the Hatta'at.

Let's re-read part of Leviticus chapter 4.

READ LEVITICUS CHAPTER 4:13 to end

Now, the sense of this is not that the community of Israel at large KNEW they were trespassing against Yehoveh and sort of hid it or refused to acknowledge it. Rather they simply were unaware of what they did, but then something caused them to be aware. Even so, even if they had no intention of doing anything wrong, God pronounces them as living in a state of guilt. Now you and I may look at this and say, man, that's pretty harsh...it doesn't seem fair. It's like driving in a 55 mph zone, and then encountering a 35 mph speed zone, but the 35 mph speed sign is behind a bush that grew up and covered it. Then a cop with a radar gun nabs you and tickets you, and says it doesn't matter.....the law is the law. That just seems unfair to us. But as we'll see at the end of verse 20, by following God's prescribed procedure of atonement the group will be forgiven and restored to fellowship with the Lord. And, really, that isn't fair either because the price to restore the group to a pure condition is paid for by an innocent animal, not the people who were responsible. God's justice system is not man's justice system. God declares guilt and forgiveness according to HIS standards. We are declared guilty according to God's rules, not ours. And, we're declared forgiven according to God's rules, not ours. And that principle is the biggest stumbling block for most people when it comes to accepting Yeshua as Savior; we prefer to judge for ourselves what is right and wrong, and even more what the price should be to set things right.

When the whole congregation sins the required animal sacrifice is a young bull. A young bull was generally defined as a yearling. A mature Bull, which was required when the High Priest sinned, was generally at least 3 years old. So the same type of animal is used for both when the High Priest sins, and when the whole congregation sins.....the only difference is in the age of the Bull, but that age difference also creates the value. This also indicates just how similar in seriousness and responsibility are the sins of the High Priest as compared to the sins of the

whole congregation.

And we see that the ritual is that the young bull is brought to the Tabernacle, and the elders of the community are to lay their hands on the animal. In Hebrew this act of laying on hands is called Semikhah. Elders (in Hebrew **zekenim**) were the people's representatives. How they were chosen is not entirely certain; but the key is to understand that these were not tribal leaders who inherited authority. Rather they were common folk who had in some way set themselves apart as having great wisdom and good judgment, leadership skills and a heart for the people. And there would have been hundreds, if not more, of these elders to serve the 3 million Israelites. They had a hierarchy among themselves so it would have been the chief elders who were called to lay their hands on the bull. And, again, the concept of laying on hands is to symbolize the transference of the guilt of the people onto the innocent animal, who would then lose its life as ransom to remove the guilt of the people and restore them to the Lord.

At the end of verse 15, we get a little phrase that you would do well to put into your memory banks. And it occurs where it says "and the bull shall be slaughtered **before the Lord**". This phrase "before the Lord" is significant in that it tells us WHERE the associated action occurred. During the days of the Wilderness Tabernacle, and later in the 1st Temple era, and even later in the 2nd Temple era of the NT, when the phrase "before the Lord" is used it indicates that whatever the action is, it is happening to the EAST of the door into the Sanctuary.....the Holy Place. And the idea is that if one were standing at the door into the Sanctuary he should be able to see the ritual action occurring. I demonstrated this to you in the offering of the Red Heifer.....it had to be an offering "before the Lord". Yet it also had to occur at least 3000 feet away from the door to the Sanctuary because it was required that the sacrifice happen OUTSIDE THE CAMP. So in order for both of those conditions to be met, the ritual had to occur at a spot high enough, with enough elevation for the officiating priest to view the door into the Sanctuary, albeit from a distance. So, the spot selected for the Miphkad Altar, the place where the Red Heifer was burned up, was near the summit of the Mt. of Olives.....which was beyond the 3000 foot camp boundary and high enough to be seen from the door of the Sanctuary.

The idea behind all this is that in the minds of the Biblical Hebrews Yehoveh inhabited the Holy of Holies in the Sanctuary, and the Sanctuary faced directly EAST. So with the Lord sitting atop the Mercy Seat, in the Holy of Holies, His view was to the East. If any ritual was to be "before the Lord" it had to be performed both to the East and in view of the door to the Sanctuary. Now we can scoff at this concept a bit, but that's not the point; the point is that when in the Scriptures we get the phrase, "before the Lord" it is usually indicating something that is done in view of the Sanctuary door, East of it, and so helps us to locate the place of that action.

So the elders of the people lay hands of the young bull, it is slaughtered, and the blood caught in a container. Then the High Priest sprinkles some blood on the Parokhet, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and smears some blood on the horns of the Incense Altar just as he did in the ritual to atone for his own sin, with the remainder poured out on the base of the Brazen Altar. Except for the age of the Bull the ritual of Hatta'at for the High Priest and for the whole congregation are identical, demonstrating the near equality of the extreme

seriousness and responsibility of their sins.

Notice what it says at the end of verse 20: "...thus the Priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven". We've talked about this before, and we'll talk about it again because sadly the Church is nearly unanimous in its misunderstanding of this principle. The Hebrew word used in this sentence to express the translation "make atonement" or "expiate" (depending on your bible version) is *kipper*. The Hebrew has always been very clear on the meaning: it means to wipe clean, to cleanse, or to disinfect. We also discussed that Hebrew is a cognate language of Akkadian and in the Akkadian is the cognate word *kuppuru*.....which also means to make clean or wipe clean. However it is an axiom within Western Christianity since the time of Constantine that sins in the OT were NOT atoned for, they were but "covered" by the blood of an animal sacrifice, and it is customary in Hebrew -English dictionaries that have been edited by gentiles to define the word *kipper* as "covered over". How often have you heard that the difference between what the animal sacrifices of the priests did and what Christ did is that in the OT a man's sins could be only be "covered" but they weren't "wiped clean"? Or that his sins weren't REALLY forgiven, they were just "covered over" which is a kind of inferior forgiveness? Nothing could be further from the truth. Over and over again we see in the Torah that if a priest will make *kipper* for the worshipper his sins will be *salach*....forgiven, pardoned.....as an act of grace by Yehoveh.

Let me say it again so that there can be no doubt: the sins of an Israelite who made the proper sacrifice and did so with a contrite and sincere heart had that sin forgiven by the Father. He was relieved of his guilt and did not have to face it again. So do NOT be thinking that these animal sacrifices were somehow ineffective; they were completely effective **for what they were created to do**. However.....the thing they could NOT do was make atonement and thereby gain forgiveness for ALL sins. Some sins, generally classified as "intentional" and "high-handed", could NOT be forgiven; there was no sacrifice designed to atone for those sins, and that person died in his sin and was therefore permanently separated from God. Also with each new act of sinful behavior another animal sacrifice was needed. Even more, even though the Israelite was forgiven of his sins his nature was still such that he could not stand before the Father in His heaven. Christ remedied each of these terms and conditions of the sacrificial system. As one who trusts in Yeshua even high-handed sins can be atoned for; His sacrifice was once and for all and another is not needed (or available), and by means of His death for a preparation of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit our natures are made clean so that we CAN stand in the presence of the Father in His heaven.

I've been asked so many times this question: "So what happened to OT Hebrews who kept Torah and died in good stead with the Lord?" Or as the NT sometimes refers to them, "the Saints of old". According to Luke 16 the righteous went to a place called Abraham's Bosom whereas those who did NOT keep Torah went to a different place, often translated as Hades. While in no way am I dogmatic about this because there is too little information to be absolutely certain, it appears that there was a temporary place where those who had been obedient went to after death. And there were held captive there (safe and sound) UNTIL Christ announced the good news that they were now free to go to Heaven. Notice that it was AFTER His crucifixion but BEFORE His ascension that He went "down into the earth" to confront both the dead in sin and the dead in Torah. A gap is described; a separation between the two chambers

and those in the place of darkness and torment, only awaiting their eternal fate of destruction, could view those who had joined Abraham in a chamber of joy and light and shalom. That chamber of Abraham's Bosom is now empty for it has no further use. Those who were in it were freed by Yeshua's sacrifice, and those who have trusted in Christ go directly to the presence of the Father (absent in the body, present with the Lord).

Why was a temporary place (Abraham's Bosom) even needed? Once again: it was because even though sins could ABSOLUTELY be forgiven by means of animal sacrifices coupled with repentance, man had to have a "nature exchange" in order to be pure enough to be admitted to God's Heaven. That nature exchange happened on Shavuot, Pentecost, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Believers.

Let's move on.

Next in the hierarchy of Israeli societal importance (and therefore responsibility before God) are the tribal leaders. And here we see a definite shift because the sacrificial animal is no longer a Bull, but a male goat. The male goat is a step down in value from a Bull. The same basic steps are taken: the goat is brought to the Tabernacle, the guilty tribal leader lays his hands on the goat so that his guilt is transferred to the chosen goat, the goat is slaughtered and some of its fat is burned on the Brazen Altar.

Next additional differences between the Hatta'at ritual for the tribal leader as compared to the High Priest and the whole congregation arise. Certain portions of the goat are given to the priests as food (this is known because in verse 26 it is explained that the goat carcass is to be used as in the Zevah Shelamim offering).....rather than the remainder of the goat being destroyed OUTSIDE THE CAMP as was done with the Bulls. Further, the blood ritual, that is the sprinkling of the goat blood, takes place on the **outside** of the Sanctuary..... and, it is performed by a common priest, NOT the High Priest. Blood is also dabbed NOT on the Incense Altar horns, but on the Brazen Altar horns (outside the Sanctuary).

So with the atonement ritual for the tribal leader we see a significant step down in the importance of both the sacrificial animal and the one who must perform the sacrifice, as compared to if a High Priest sins or the whole congregation sins. From a Bull, we step down to a male goat. From the entire animal being destroyed outside the camp, now parts of the goat can be used for food. From the High Priest having to perform the sacrifice, now a common priest can officiate.

Everything we'll find in Leviticus completely blows apart the standard Western Christian concept that a sin is a sin is a sin before the Lord. That God doesn't grade or classify sins; that pilfering a candy bar makes you just as guilty as committing premeditated murder. That whether as the President of the US, a Pastor of a congregation, or member of a church, He holds us all equally accountable. As for Salvation that is correct; as for responsibility in our earthly duties and the seriousness of those occasions that we sin, that is totally wrong. Both the nature of that sinful behavior and the position one holds in society matters.

And finally, verse 27 deals with individuals, the lowest class of Hatta'at. Let me state that

when I refer to class, it's not about the **worth** of an individual versus a High Priest, or that a person's individual value to God versus the value of a group of people or a leader is less or more. It's about the reality that the High Priest's sins are far more dangerous to Israel's peaceful relationship with God than when the whole congregation sins; the whole congregation united in a sin is more dangerous than when a tribal leader sins; and a tribal leaders' sins are more dangerous (because he can influence those under his authority) than when a common individual sins.

This is an important truth that we have no choice but to wake up to and acknowledge. In today's terms, for example, the sins of a general congregation of Believers.....whether it's Torah Class, a Baptist Church assembly, a Lutheran congregation, or a Messianic Synagogue.....carries with it a higher consequence and more importance than even the leader of that group bears. And, the sins of the leader of that group carry with it greater importance and danger than the sins of an individual group member. And, by the way, notice I skip over the High Priest and begin with the whole congregation in my comparison. Do NOT equate a teacher, pastor, bishop or whatever with the High Priest. The High Priest position is permanently taken, and there is only ONE of them, Yeshua, and He's already passed His test. Let me say that again: the congregation as a whole is more accountable, and creates greater danger, when it comes to sinning before the Lord, than the congregation leader. We tend to want to see it the other way around. So, when you join a group, particularly a group of professed Believers, it is no small decision. If that group operates outside of Holy Spirit guidance, and you belong to it, you cannot both renounce it and stay in union with it at the same time. You cannot determine for yourself that you're above it all.....so says the Lord, right here in Leviticus. Don't get me wrong; the idea that every individual will agree wholeheartedly with every other individual in the group is not the issue nor is such a thing very likely under the best of circumstances.

So the individual is to bring as his Hatta'at offering a female goat or, as it shows us in verse 32, optionally a female sheep may be offered. A female animal is generally considered of lesser value than a male animal of the same kind. So we see yet another step downward in the price of the ransom for an individual making Hatta'at than for any other class. The ritual is now familiar to us: the female goat or sheep is brought to the Tabernacle where the individual lays his hands onto the animal to transfer guilt. Next the animal is slaughtered, a common priest smears blood on the horns of the Brazen Altar, and the organ fat is removed and burned up on the Brazen Altar. We're reminded again of the purpose of the burning of the animal parts in verse 31: it is to create SMOKE, which contains a pleasing odor to God. And, verse 35 reinforces the practice whereby the priests can keep certain parts of the sheep or goat for their personal food, as God says this aspect of the ritual is to take the form of the Zevah Shelamim.

Notice once again (and I'm going to point this out often as we go through Leviticus) that the Scripture states....and these are the final words of Leviticus chapter 4..... that the priest shall make **kipper** and the sinner shall be forgiven. The ritual sacrifice "wipes clean" the defilement of the one who sinned, and thus is the sinner restored to full relationship with the Father.

Next week we'll begin Leviticus Chapter 5.