

### LEVITICUS

#### Lesson 8 - Chapter 5

We should see Chapter 5 as but a continuation of Chapter 4. In fact, the specific sacrificial ritual of Chapter 4 extends into the first 13 verses of Chapter 5.....but then it changes. Put another way, the uses for the Hatta'at sacrifice, the Purification Offering, are ordained from Lev 4 verse 1 through Lev 5 verse 13; at verse 15 however things change to a different, but complementary, kind of offering.

Just as most Bible translators have called the sacrificial offering of Lev 4 the “sin offering”; they also tend to call the various offering of Lev 5 “sin offerings” (although some translators substitute the words, “guilt offering”). Keep in mind that in Torah Class we are calling the sacrificial offering of Lev 4 the Purification Offering, which translates the Hebrew word Hatta'at.

In reality, though, a new type of offering is presented to us about halfway through chapter 5. For the new type of offering that begins in verse 14 of chapter 5, we shall call it the Reparation Offering. The Hebrew word that I am translating as “Reparation Offering” is ***asham***. I think as we continue our study in Lev 5, it will become apparent why I have chosen to use that word and even more importantly the different issues that the ***Hatta'at*** and ***asham*** sacrifices deal with.

Open your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 5.

#### **READ LEVITICUS CHAPTER 5 all**

Verses 1-13 of Chapter 5 deal with a specific type of sin that is generally called the sin of omission; things we should have done but didn't. And, if we're to understand the rest of the OT, then we need to grasp and REMEMBER that there are various classes and categories and levels of sin. We've already been introduced to the concept of intentional versus unintentional sin as the first major fork in the road; that is, if a sin is unintentional, not “high-handed”, then one or more of the many sacrificial rituals of the Levitical Sacrificial system can atone for it. However, if the sin is intentional, then there is no remedy; the sinner must be executed. So far we have looked at the UNintentional class of sins, and Leviticus 4 introduced us to a subdivision of unintentional sin called “inadvertent”....an action that was an error, an accident. Leviticus chapter 5 verses 1-13 now show us another subdivision of the Unintentional type of sin called “sins of omission”. The idea is that something was called for in the Law, but it wasn't done.....and it occurred because somebody honestly forgot, or they weren't paying attention, or for some reason they were incapable of doing it (illness, an accident, something like that). And, we are given examples of what sorts of things this class of sin (unintentional

omission) encompasses.

The first example is of someone who hears of a public proclamation that anyone knowing the facts of an incident that needs to be adjudicated should come forward, but does not, is guilty of the sin of omission. This is not a person who was involved in the incident; they just possibly know something that could shed some light on the matter. What is interesting to me is that the Biblical.....or at least the Hebrew.....definition of the words “inadvertent” and “omission” doesn’t quite fit MY definition. It would seem to me that this person who refuses to come forward is doing so both intentionally AND actively. Yet, in the mind of God, THIS is one example of a type of sin that HE defines as a sin of omission. Further, the Lord says this person is guilty, meaning a punishment is technically due to him...yet he can avoid this punishment by means of the proper sacrifice. Now the ancient Hebrew commentators noticed this problem and came to the conclusion that since the person who refused to come forward only had information, and had otherwise committed no crime, then what that person did was to be somewhat “negligent” in his duty..... that is he neglected to do his civic obligation.

It is not uncommon in the church world for a person to notice wrongdoing.....say they see someone pilfer a hymnal, or enter areas of the premises where they don’t belong....and they decide to say nothing about it. Usually the rationale is they want to be merciful, or they don’t want to be a tattletale, or they don’t want to get someone in trouble. Well, the Lord says think again; when you do that you have just incurred guilt in His eyes. It is your DUTY to report whatever information you have about wrongdoing to the proper authority.

The next example of an unintentional sin of omission is what happens when a person comes into contact with any unclean **thing** (unclean meaning impure). And, in verse 2 we are given 3 categories of unclean “things”.....and they are all concerning dead things. These categories are 1) the carcass of a WILD animal, 2) the carcass of a DOMESTICATED animal, and 3) the carcass of a reptile, a snake, or any kind of animal that creeps along the ground.

But, it also says the person who became unclean by touching one of these things was unaware of it.....but later he became aware of it, and therefore he had been running around in a state of impurity without knowing it. So the idea here is that a person has become unclean, but then went some amount of time without realizing his impure state and THIS made him guilty. So the act of becoming unclean and not doing anything about it was a sin.

How could one come in contact with an impure animal and not know it? Well, it could be as simple as walking along and stepping on a tiny frog and being totally unaware.... but, when you get back to your tent, your wife says “ooh, yuk.....there’s a dead frog stuck on the bottom of your sandal! Get it out of here!! “. But, more often, it had to do with eating cattle or sheep that under normal circumstances were perfectly acceptable for food..... ritually clean.... but for some reason THIS time it was NOT ritually clean. For instance, since almost all the meat eaten was part of a sacrifice, perhaps the sacrifice was defective in some way....procedurally speaking....and you didn’t find out about it until after you ate it. Or perhaps someone gave you some meat, you ate it, and then it turned out the animal from whence it came was killed by wild beast.

A third example is when a person touches HUMAN impurity.....for instance, a man touches his wife after she gives birth but the allotted time has not passed and she is yet to perform her required purification ceremony. This is because immediately upon giving birth, a woman is considered to be in an unclean state. Or, a man has sex with his wife, who suddenly begins her period. A woman, during her cycle, is considered unclean and so the man has now accidentally become unclean.....but he didn't notice and only find out later.

These types of uncleanness are of lesser severity as opposed to one of the MOST severe kinds of impurity, touching a human corpse. Notice that impurity from touching a dead body is NOT included because stringent purification rituals must be performed in that case.

I hope that you're beginning to see this IMPORTANT developing principle that guilt, in God's eyes, is not a matter of a person being **aware** of his guilt. It is a matter of either **not** doing something that he should have, or doing something that he should **not have** done.....all in accordance with God's commands and laws. To carry that theme a little further: the fact that someone is unaware that, by nature, he was born a sinner (something that really isn't even his own fault) doesn't change the reality that to God that person is guilty. In other words a person who has never heard the gospel is in the same basic condition as someone who has heard it, but has rejected it. Both bare guilt because awareness or unawareness of your guilt has no bearing on the matter. And, that same principle that was in effect in the OT, remains in effect today.

The 4th example given (verse 4) is when a person gives an oath, makes a vow, a promise to do something.....whether that vow is to do evil **or** good.....and then time passes and he forgets about it.....that is, he doesn't do what it is he has vowed.....then he is guilty before God of an inadvertent sin of omission.

Now, this is kind of interesting....particularly the part about whether the oath is to do evil OR good. First, the idea here is that the person has sworn in the NAME OF GOD to do something. It is a vow because by definition this person has invoked Yehoveh's name. Second is that it doesn't matter what the nature of the promise was; it could have been that you impulsively promised revenge.....even to kill your spouse for making you angry; perhaps you didn't really mean it, you just did it rashly; but NOT following through makes the person who made the vow guilty of a sin of omission!

The point, of course, is NOT that one is to carry out a vow even if it's an evil thing. Later in the Old Testament, and again in the New, we get warnings against making vows to God ALTOGETHER. For example, we're told to just make our "yes", yes.....and our "no", no. Invoking God's name carries serious consequences and we're better off to avoid it. We tend to invoke God's name very casually and carelessly.....and the more we do it, the more it just becomes an unconscious habit.....and the far more likely we are to just forget about whatever it was we vowed in the first place.

Now, in the ancient days, oaths and vows were more serious matters than they are in our day because there were fewer written legal codes and therefore fewer lawyers and written contracts. Vows and oaths were the traditional method of making legal agreements. In Western

society WRITTEN promises or vows, called contracts, is the norm; and part of the basis of our legal system is that an illegal contract is not binding. What that means is that, for example, you sign a contract (in Bible terms you make a vow) with a man to steal a car and sell it to you for a cheap price....you give him half of the money upon his agreeing to do the dirty deed, and the rest when he turns the stolen car over to you. But, instead, he takes your money and never shows up with the car. In modern Western law you cannot then take this person to court demanding your "down payment" be returned.....because the nature of the subject of the contract itself is an illegal act; and a contract concerning an illegal act (in Biblical terms, an "evil" act) is not binding.

But here in Leviticus we see that making a promise of ANY kind in the name of Yehoveh, whether the nature of the promise is to do something **against** God's Law or in **accordance** with God's Law, IS binding as God sees it. Obviously, to vow to do something against God's Law.....such as promising to murder someone or to steal from them.....carries a double whammy with it.

The bottom line is that you and I may impulsively and insincerely make a vow invoking God's name.....and then just blow it off....forget about it.....or change our minds because we realize it was a bad thing.....but God doesn't forget about it. It makes US guilty in His eyes when we don't fulfill a vow made in His name. So let's follow the Biblical advise and avoid making vows in the first place....unless they are of the most serious AND necessary nature.

Verse 5 presents us with a very important and overlooked aspect of the sacrificial system: confession. It is common for Christians to think (and accuse the ancient Jews) of "mechanical legalism" for they're following of the sacrificial system. In fact the first step of seeking forgiveness for sins in the sacrificial system is CONFESSION to Yehoveh that you HAVE sinned against Him. We will find passages all throughout the OT that makes it clear that one must have a repentant and contrite heart (mind) in order for the animal sacrifices to be efficacious. Certainly we will read again and again in the Bible of those hypocrites who go through all the rituals but who are proud and inwardly unrepentant; but we have exactly that same thing happen in modern Christianity. We have many professed Believers go through the outward motions but the trust and condition of the heart are completely lacking.

For each of these first 4 cases of inadvertent sins of omission listed in Leviticus 5 the prescribed sacrifice is called out in verse 6; and it is a Hatta'at sacrifice that consists of a **female** sheep or goat. We'll not review the procedure; you can just refer to the last couple of lesson if you want to know more about that.

From verses 7 through 13 we get a list of what animals may be substituted when the worshipper simply does not have the financial means to bring the prescribed animal (a female sheep or goat) for his Hatta'at offering. For instance if he can't provide a lamb for his Hatta'at offering then two pigeons or doves will suffice. As cheap and plentiful as birds were if that person was utterly destitute and couldn't even afford birds, then he may bring two quarts of semolina.....fine flour as its usually translated.....instead. Also notice that the usual requirement when offering up grain.....semolina....fine flour.....for sacrifice is that Olive Oil and Frankincense (an expensive luxury that had to be added to the mixture) is waived.

So, what we see here is a sort of sliding scale set up not only according to the class the person belongs to (High Priest, whole congregation, tribal leader, or individual), but even how much that individual person is able to reasonably provide. Remember, this concerns ONLY this particular sacrifice.....the Hatta'at. But also notice, under no circumstance does even the absolute poorest person get by with NO sacrificial offering. At the least some semolina is required. Again, we see an important God-principle set up: NO ONE is exempt from paying a ransom for his sin to the Lord. With the advent of Christ, the sliding scale ended; Christ is the fixed and unchangeable price for everyone, rich or poor.

Let me mention something here that is quite interesting and I'm not sure I have an answer for it that I'd take to the bank: a foundational Biblical principle is that only blood can atone for sin; yet here we see that the absolute poorest person can in this case provide grain, plant life, and not animal life in order to expiate his guilt. The only reason I can come up with for this anomaly is that what is really being dealt with is impurity. The SIN comes from not realizing one's accidental impurity; it's NOT that one's sin has made one impure. I have said on a number of occasions that the typical Christian doctrine that God doesn't grade sins on a curve is simply not at all borne out by the Scriptures. Here is one of the finer examples: inadvertent sins of omission whereby even grain can be used to pay for the guilt. This is the absolute lowest category of something that can even be called sin, and obviously God makes some kind of special allowance for it.

This section also gives me an opportunity to show you how we are to understand the concept of taking the Bible "literally". As I have taught you before "literal" means that we are to seek out what the words or phrase actually mean, as opposed to trying for direct word for word translations, which can often produce a sentence that we can't even understand. In addition the meaning of a phrase must be taken in its cultural sense AT THE TIME IT WAS WRITTEN, and should NOT be allegorized, or taken as a metaphor unless the context indicates that that is what the phrase is meant to be. Verse 7, depending on your version, starts out like this: "***If he can't afford a lamb***".....or others might say "***But if his means did not suffice....***" Or something like that. Now the Hebrew words being translated here are "***'im 'ein yado masseget***". Translated directly word for word, we get, "if his hand cannot reach". That doesn't make much sense, does it? You see that phrase "if his hand cannot reach" is a fossilized Hebrew idiom, which simply means in modern western English "if that person can't afford it". So here we have a good literal translation.....but it is NOT a word for word translation or all but the most versed Bible scholar in ancient Hebrew would be lost trying to understand it.

Verse 14 takes us to a new type of sacrificial offering, the '***asham***, because we will be introduced to a new class of sins. Here we are presented with the concept of paying a penalty for an act of misbehavior. This is totally different that what went on in the first 13 verses of chapter 5, whereby a person did NOT misbehave; rather he accidentally contracted an impurity and when he didn't realize it that made him guilty. But a better word than "penalty" is reparation; because reparation indicates something that is owed. When we get a speeding ticket and pay a fine, it is a penalty in its more pure sense. It's not that we're paying something that is owed, it is that we have made a legal error, been fined, and now AS A PUNISHMENT we pay that fine. After we pay that traffic fine, we are not forgiven, or excused. Paying the fine doesn't somehow "make-up" or "substitute" for our breaking the law. And, as



we know in Florida, getting a traffic ticket and paying for it doesn't end the process; we are then assessed points, which can affect our insurance rates.

A reparation in the sense meant here in Leviticus 5, in fact DOES bring restoration and forgiveness. It is NOT about punishment. And because one has transgressed against God's holiness, the 'asham sacrifice pays reparations for the person who was the transgressor, in order that He indeed has this required debt owed to God paid in full....and is therefore restored in relationship to God. So we are going to call the '**asham** offering, the Reparation Offering.

Now it might seem that these different types of sacrifices that we have so far discussed (the 'Olah, Minchah, Zevah, Hatta'at, and now the 'asham) are really only different from each other in minor ways, and that we are slicing this onion awfully thin as we attempt to draw distinctions among them. Yet my hope is that after we have been introduced to each of these, and then a little later in Leviticus see them applied, we will begin to develop the fuller sense of them that I believe was intended; and it is that sin and forgiveness are complex and multi-faceted.

One way to think of all that we have learned so far about the sacrificial system is that it gives us a set of tools and examples that describe not only what sin is, but its effects and what can be done about those effects.

Gordon Wenham describes these tools and examples as "models". So using his term of "models", the 'Olah, the burnt offering, gives us a model which is personal in nature; that is, we see a human being who is declared guilty by Yehoveh for his sin nature, and then we see an animal having to die in his place, as a substitute, in order that communication and peace between God and that particular man can occur. The Zevah, the Peace offering that most translators label as the "sin offering" (incorrectly in my view), uses medical terms to look at yet another aspect of sin. I used the example of a person being poisoned. Sin makes the world so polluted (just as poison so pollutes human organs and tissues) that God can no longer dwell there. Therefore the blood of an innocent animal becomes the antidote, which counteracts the poison....or the blood disinfects the polluted sanctuary.....after which Yehoveh may once again be with His people. The 'asham, the reparation offering, gives us yet another view of sin by giving us a commercial model; as we will see as we study the 'asham, sin ALSO creates a debt which man incurs to God. The debt is paid.....reparation is made.....by means of the blood of an innocent animal.

I took you off on this bit of a tangent because we have all heard preachers and teachers present their takes on sin and the effect of sin. And, usually, each denomination will choose within their overall doctrine one or two aspects of sin as their "effect of choice", and declare that the other effects of sin are somehow not valid, or they are of lesser importance, or not worthy of discussion. What we can see in Leviticus is that God is attempting to teach we earthbound creatures some of the most basic aspects of sin and its awful consequences. And the way He seems to be accomplishing this is by breaking it down into bite-sized (and somewhat simplistic) chunks so we can digest it. These bite-sized physical chunks are the various kinds of sacrifices and rituals and their specific purposes that God is teaching His people. After all, when we address sin, we are dealing with a spiritual matter.....and in our

current physical condition we simply are unable to comprehend very much about the spiritual universe. Unsaved people are unable to comprehend even less that we, as born-again Christians, are capable.

So what exactly was the **'asham** for? As we move through the Torah we find that many of the laws, commands, and rituals specified in Leviticus are further fleshed out, expanded, and given more detail in Numbers and Deuteronomy.....the **'asham** is no different. So, for now, we'll cover primarily what we find in Leviticus.

Beginning in verse 14, the first case of the kind of sin that the 'asham sacrifice is meant to atone for is described as **"sins against the Lord"**.....or even more specifically, **"inadvertent sins against the Lord's sacred property"**. A great deal of commentary has been written by Jewish Rabbi's and ancient Hebrew sages on exactly what constituted an "inadvertent sin", and what exactly was the "Lord's sacred property". I hope you will soon gain a sympathetic outlook on the usually honest attempt by these ancient Jewish religious authorities to try to define what are often very generalized commands and rituals that we find in the Torah.....because these commentaries are what form the basis of the Talmud. We should not be so quick to judge these writers as self-important or as men who tried to alter God's commands. Their purpose, generally but not always, was noble....it was meant to find ways to carry out God's commands....many of which were very hazy in their Biblical explanations, just as we encounter here in Leviticus 5.

Some of the possibilities these learned men include in the category of "inadvertent sins against the Lord's sacred property" are: eating Holy Food (we find reference to this in Lev. 22:14)...which is generally defined as a non-priest eating food that should have been eaten only by priests; or priests eating food in their home that was given as a sacrifice, which should ONLY have been consumed at the Tabernacle area. Another was failing to fulfill some types of vows, or failing to present a prescribed tithe at the sanctuary for some type of dedication ceremony. Even then, Leviticus 5 seems to break these down into two different types: inadvertently sinning against the Lord AND BEING AWARE OF IT, and, inadvertently sinning against the Lord AND NOT being aware of it until sometime later.

What is important to grasp is that these particular sins, or trespasses, are of a more serious level because they are considered to be DIRECTLY against the Lord. All sins are in some way against Yehoveh because every sin by definition involves going against God's commands, or laws, or His will in some fashion. In our Bibles in Lev.5:14, we find the English word "sin" or "trespass".....and the Hebrew word this is translating is **"ma'al"**. Ma'al is one of several Hebrew words that wind up being lumped together and then translated to English as "sin" or "trespass". But Ma'al is used in Hebrew to denote primarily the most SERIOUS sins.....and later in the Torah we'll find this same Hebrew word used to describe the sin, the ma'al, of adultery; and of the ma'al of worshipping other gods (idolatry). We'll find a certain king of Judah committing a "ma'al" because he wanted to personally burn incense on the Incense altar to honor Yehoveh, even though this privilege was assigned ONLY to priests. In fact we find that depending on whether the sin against the Lord was known immediately, or not realized until later, brought about slightly different rituals to atone.

Sinning against the Lord's sacred property and **being aware** of it at the time, is what is being addressed in verses 14-16. Sinning against the Lord's sacred property and NOT being aware of the affront to God until sometime later is discussed starting in verse 17.

If the worshipper was aware of his transgression at the time it occurred he was to bring a male sheep, a Ram (which would have been at least 1 year old), as his offering. This was to be a PERFECT Ram (not all sacrifices required the animal to be perfect, but this one had to display the highest quality of perfection). As a further definition of the sacrificial reparation we get a very vague and often disputed instruction that the sacrifice is supposed to equal some monetary value as measured by the Temple standard for silver shekels. Let me attempt to untangle this just a bit, because this monetary system was still in use in Jesus' day and this will help you picture some of the Biblical stories which took place in NT times.

First, a shekel is a somewhat fixed monetary unit. Just like a dollar is a fixed monetary unit. However, in more ancient times, just how much of a particular precious metal was contained in a shekel varied. Shekels could have been made of copper, bronze, or silver. Further the person who minted the coins could have been a king, or a very wealthy man, or the Temple authorities. All of these different kinds of shekels were floating around at the same time so there was disparity between the value of various shekels depending on who minted it and what kind of metal it consisted of.

Early in Israelite history it was determined that when money was to be used for religious purposes the standard was to be the weights and measures as used by the Temple authorities. By Jesus' day (well before, actually) a system was set up whereby moneychangers would exchange shekels minted by an aristocrat or a king for shekels minted by the Temple. Naturally these moneychangers charged a commission for this service and often cheated the people who had no other choice than to use these officially licensed moneychangers who were required to give a portion of their profits to the High Priest. That is what the whole deal was with Jesus overturning the moneychangers' tables in the Temple grounds was about.....it had all become simply a commercial foreign money exchange operation.

Part of the reason that a monetary value of the Ram that was to be used in the sacrifice had to be set was that in the 'asham offering for sinning against the Lord and being aware of it, there was an additional amount to be added as a penalty; and that amount was 20%. How does one give a live Ram plus 20% more of a Ram? Well the idea was that the 20% would be given in money, shekels. So the Ram was assigned a monetary value.....let's say 100 silver shekels according to the Temple standard.....and then the worshipper was required to add another 20% to it. So, in my example, he'd bring a Ram PLUS 20 silver shekels as his total 'asham offering. Eventually it became possible to simply give the Temple the monetary value of the Ram (plus the 20%) instead of producing an animal.

Verse 16 ends with the words, "and he shall be forgiven". The worshipper was completely absolved from this sin by God if he confessed his sin, came forward with a contrite and repentant heart, and produced the required Reparation Offering. The sacrificial system was not defective; it did exactly what it was designed to do.



## Lesson 8 - Leviticus 5

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Next week we'll continue at verse 17 in Leviticus chapter 5.