

LEVITICUS 4:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

The law concerning the sin-offering for transgressions committed through ignorance, Lev 4:1, Lev 4:2. For the priest thus sinning, Lev 4:3-12. For the sins of ignorance of the whole congregation, Lev 4:13-21. For the sins of ignorance of a ruler, Lev 4:22-26. For the sins of ignorance of any of the common people, Lev 4:27-35.

LEVITICUS 4:2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If anyone sins unintentionally, in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them:

Verse 2

If a soul shall sin through ignorance - That is, if any man shall do what God has forbidden, or leave undone what God has commanded, through ignorance of the law relative to these points; as soon as the transgression or omission comes to his knowledge, he shall offer the sacrifice here prescribed, and shall not suppose that his ignorance is an excuse for his sin. He who, when his iniquity comes to his knowledge, refuses to offer such a sacrifice, sins obstinately and wilfully, and to him there remains no other sacrifice for sin - no other mode by which he can be reconciled to God, but he has a certain fearful looking for of judgment - which shall devour such adversaries; and this seems the case to which the apostle alludes, Heb 10:26, etc., in the words above quoted. There have been a great number of subtle questions started on this subject, both by Jews and Christians, but the above I believe to be the sense and spirit of the law.

LEVITICUS 4:3 if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bull without defect to the LORD for a sin offering.

Verse 3

If the priest that is anointed - Meaning, most probably, the high priest. According to the sin of the people; for although he had greater advantages than the people could have, in being more conversant with the law of God, and his lips should understand and preserve knowledge, yet it was possible even for him, in that time in which the word of God had not been fully revealed, to transgress through ignorance; and his transgression might have the very worst tendency, because the people might be thereby led into sin. Hence several critics understand this passage in this way, and translate it thus: If the anointed priest shall lead the people to sin; or, literally, if the anointed priest shall sin to the sin of the people; that is, so as to cause the people to transgress, the shepherd going astray, and the sheep following after him.

LEVITICUS 4:4 He shall bring the bull to the door of the Tent of Meeting before the LORD; and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and kill the bull before the LORD.

Verse 4

Lay his hand upon the bullock's head - See Clarke's note on Lev 1:4.

LEVITICUS 4:5 The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and bring it to the Tent of Meeting.

LEVITICUS 4:6 The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, before the veil of the sanctuary.

Verse 6

Seven times - See Clarke's note on Exo 29:30. The blood of this sacrifice was applied in three different ways:

1. The priest put his finger in it, and sprinkled it seven times before the veil, Lev 4:6.
 2. He put some of it on the horns of the altar of incense.
 3. He poured the remaining part at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offerings, Lev 4:7.
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LEVITICUS 4:7 The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the Tent of Meeting; and he shall pour out all of rest of the blood of the bull at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

LEVITICUS 4:8 He shall take all the fat of the bull of the sin offering off of it; the fat that covers the innards, and all the fat that is on the innards,

LEVITICUS 4:9 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away,

LEVITICUS 4:10 as it is taken off of the bull of the sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 4:11 The bull's skin, all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, its innards, and its dung,

LEVITICUS 4:12 he shall carry the whole bull outside of the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire. Where the ashes are poured out, it shall be burned.

Verse 12

Without the camp - This was intended figuratively to express the sinfulness of this sin, and the availableness of the atonement. The sacrifice, as having the sin of the priest transferred from himself to it by his confession and imposition of hands, was become unclean and abominable, and was carried, as it were, out of the Lord's sight; from the tabernacle and congregation it must be carried without the camp, and thus its own offensiveness was removed, and the sin of the person in whose behalf it was offered. The apostle (Heb 13:11-13) applies this in the most pointed manner to Christ:

"For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

LEVITICUS 4:13 "If the whole congregation of Israel sins, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and are guilty;

Verse 13

If the whole congregation of Israel sin - This probably refers to some oversight in acts of religious worship, or to some transgression of the letter of the law, which arose out of the peculiar circumstances in which they were then found, such as the case mentioned 1Sam 14:32, etc., where the people, through their long and excessive fatigue in their combat with the Philistines, being faint, flew on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground, and did eat with the blood; and this was partly occasioned by the rash adjuration of Saul, mentioned 1Sam 14:24 : Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening.

The sacrifices and rites in this case were the same as those prescribed in the preceding, only here the elders of the congregation, i. e., three of the Sanhedrin, according to Maimonides, laid their hands on the head of the victim in the name of all the congregation.

LEVITICUS 4:14 when the sin in which they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for a sin offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting.

LEVITICUS 4:15 The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD; and the bull shall be killed before the LORD.

LEVITICUS 4:16 The anointed priest shall bring of the blood of the bull to the Tent of Meeting:

LEVITICUS 4:17 and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, before the veil.

LEVITICUS 4:18 He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before the LORD, that is in the Tent of Meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

LEVITICUS 4:19 All its fat he shall take from it, and burn it on the altar.

LEVITICUS 4:20 Thus shall he do with the bull; as he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this; and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

LEVITICUS 4:21 He shall carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull. It is the sin offering for the assembly.

LEVITICUS 4:22 "When a ruler sins, and unwittingly does any one of all the things which the LORD his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty;

 Verse 22

When a ruler hath sinned - Under the term נָשִׂיא nasi, it is probable that any person is meant who held any kind of political dignity among the people, though the rabbins generally understand it of the king.

A kid of the goats was the sacrifice in this case, the rites nearly the same as in the preceding cases, only the fat was burnt as that of the peace-offering. See Lev 4:26 and Lev 3:5.

LEVITICUS 4:23 if his sin, in which he has sinned, is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without defect.

LEVITICUS 4:24 He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD. It is a sin offering.

LEVITICUS 4:25 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. He shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 4:26 All its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and he will be forgiven.

LEVITICUS 4:27 "If anyone of the common people sins unwittingly, in doing any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and is guilty;

Verse 27

The common people - עַם הָאָרֶץ am haarets, the people of the land, that is, any individual who was not a priest, king, or ruler among the people; any of the poor or ordinary sort. Any of these, having transgressed through ignorance, was obliged to bring a lamb or a kid, the ceremonies being nearly the same as in the preceding cases. The original may denote the very lowest of the people, the laboring or agricultural classes.

The law relative to the general cases of sins committed through ignorance, and the sacrifices to be offered on such occasions, so amply detailed in this chapter, may be thus recapitulated. For all sins and transgressions of this kind committed by the people, the prince, and the priest, they must offer expiatory offerings. The person so sinning must bring the sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle, and lay his hands upon its head, as in a case already referred to, acknowledging the sacrifice to be his, that he needed it for his transgression; and thus he was considered as confessing his sin, and the sin was considered as transferred to the animal, whose blood was then spilt to make an atonement. See Clarke on Lev 1:4 (note). Such institutions as these could not be considered as terminating in themselves, they necessarily had reference to something of infinitely higher moment; in a word, they typified Him whose soul was made an offering for sin, Isa 53:10. And taken out of this reference they seem both absurd and irrational. It is obviously in reference to these innocent creatures being brought as sin-offerings to God for the guilty that St. Paul alludes 2Cor 5:21, where he says, He (God) made him to be sin (ἁμαρτίαν, a sin-offering) for us Who Knew No Sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God - holy and pure by the power and grace of God, in or through him. And it is worthy of remark, that the Greek word used by the apostle is the same by which the Septuagint, in

more than fourscore places in the Pentateuch, translate the Hebrew word חַטָּאָה hattaah, sin, which in all those places our translation renders sin-offering. Even sins of ignorance cannot be unnoticed by a strict and holy law; these also need the great atonement: on which account we should often pray with David, Cleanse thou me from secret faults! Psa 19:12. How little attention is paid to this solemn subject! Sins of this kind - sins committed sometimes ignorantly, and more frequently heedlessly, are permitted to accumulate in their number, and consequently in their guilt; and from this very circumstance we may often account for those painful desertions, as they are called, under which many comparatively good people labor. They have committed sins of ignorance or heedlessness, and have not offered the sacrifice which can alone avail in their behalf. How necessary in ten thousand cases is the following excellent prayer! "That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to thy Holy Word." - Litany.

LEVITICUS 4:28 if his sin, which he has sinned, is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without defect, for his sin which he has sinned.

LEVITICUS 4:29 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 4:30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.

LEVITICUS 4:31 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat is taken away from off of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma to the LORD; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

LEVITICUS 4:32 "If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without defect.

LEVITICUS 4:33 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 4:34 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.

LEVITICUS 4:35 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them on the altar, on the offerings of the LORD made by fire; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned, and he will be forgiven.
