

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS 4

This chapter contains the law of the sin offering, which was offered for sins committed through ignorance, error, and mistake, (<sup><OR01></sup>Leviticus 4:1,2) and gives an account of the matter of them, and the rites belonging thereunto, which were different according to the persons for whom it was made, as for the anointed priest, (<sup><OR03></sup>Leviticus 4:3-12) for the whole congregation, (<sup><OR03></sup>Leviticus 4:13-21) and for the ruler, (<sup><OR02></sup>Leviticus 4:22-26) and for any of the common people, (<sup><OR07></sup>Leviticus 4:27-35).

**Ver. 1.** *And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*] Continued to speak to him, or, after some pause made, proceeded to speak to him, and give things in commandment concerning the sin offering, what it should be, and for whom, as follows.

**Ver. 2.** *Speak unto the children of Israel, [saying],* etc.] For this law concerning the sin offering, as the rest, only belonged to them, and such as were proselyted to them:

*if a soul should sin through ignorance;* sin is from the soul, though committed by the body; it is the soul that sins, (<sup><OR04></sup>Ezekiel 18:4) it includes, as Aben Ezra observes, both Israelites and proselytes; who sinned through ignorance either of the law, that such things were forbidden, or of having committed them, they being done unobserved, and through inadvertency; or were forgotten that they were done, or were done through error and mistake; these sins are what the apostle calls the errors of the people, their strayings out of the way through ignorance and inadvertency, (<sup><OR05></sup>Hebrews 5:2 9:7) such sins as a man is overtaken with unawares, and is drawn into at once through temptation and the prevalence of corruption; these are the errors and secret faults which David distinguishes from presumptuous sins, (<sup><OR02></sup>Psalms 19:12,13):

*against any of the commandments of the Lord ([concerning things] which ought not to be done.)* The Jewish writers<sup>f83</sup> distinguish the commandments of the Lord into affirmative and negative, and make their number to be six hundred and thirteen; two hundred and forty eight are

affirmative, according to the number of bones in a man's body, and three hundred sixty five are negative ones, according to the number of the days of the year; and they observe<sup>f84</sup>, it is only the transgression of negative precepts that is here meant, and for which a sin offering was to be brought:

*and shall do against any of them*; it must be something done, and not merely said: hence the Jews<sup>f85</sup> say, that as the neglect of circumcision, and of the passover, does not come under this law, because they are affirmative precepts; so neither blasphemy, because there is nothing done, only something said: of these sins of ignorance, they give instances as follows; if any man eats the fat that is about the kidneys, thinking it is the fat that is about the heart; or that lies with a woman forbidden by the law, thinking her to be his wife; or that commits idolatry, by bowing to the idol, thinking that the law forbids sacrifice, incense, and libation, but not bowing; or that profanes the sabbath, thinking it is a common day<sup>f86</sup>.

**Ver. 3.** *If the priest that is anointed do sin*, etc.] That is, the high priest, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and the Septuagint version, render it; who in after times was only anointed, though at first Aaron's sons were anointed with him; so an high priest is described in (<sup><B210></sup>Leviticus 21:10) and such an one was liable to sin, and often did; which shows not only that the greatest and best of men are not without sin, but proves what the apostle observes, that the law made men high priests which had infirmity, even sinful infirmities, who needed to offer for themselves as well as for the people; by which it appeared that perfection could not be had by the Levitical priesthood, and that it was proper it should cease, and another priesthood take place, (<sup><S711></sup>Hebrews 7:11,12,18,19,27,28):

*according to the sin of the people*; committing the like sins of error and ignorance as the common people, to which he was liable as they; or "to make the people guilty"; as the margin reads; to which agrees the Septuagint version, "so that the people sin"; and the Vulgate Latin version, "making the people to sin"; either by his doctrine or example, and both through ignorance, heedlessness, and inadvertency: the Targum of Jonathan is,

"when he offers the offering of sin for the people, not according to its manner"

or rite; as if his sin lay in erring while he was offering; but be it in which way it may, whether by any unadvised inadvertent action of his own, or

ignorant instruction of the people, so causing them to err, or any ignorance or mistake in offering the sacrifices of the people:

*then let him bring for the sin which he has sinned*; in either way:

*a young bullock*; not an ox which was three years old, nor a calf which was but of one year, but a bullock which was of two years; so Maimonides <sup>f87</sup> observes, that wherever it is said a calf, that is a young one of the first year, but a bullock it is a young one of the second year: as are men's characters, so are the aggravations of their sins, and sacrifices were proportioned thereunto; the high priest was obliged to bring the same offering as the whole congregation did in a like case; (see ~~LEVI~~ Leviticus 4:13,14)

*without blemish*; a type of the sacrifice of Christ offered up without spot to God, as it follows;

*unto the Lord*; against whom sin is committed, and therefore sacrifice both in the type and antitype must be brought and offered up to him, by whom it is accepted, and to whom it is of a sweetsmelling savour, namely, the unblemished sacrifice of Christ:

*for a sin offering*; or "for sin": the sin offering is called sin itself, and so is Christ the antitype of it, (~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 5:21) Christ is most holy in himself, had no sin in him, nor knew any, nor were any committed by him; yet he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, took the place of sinners, and was their substitute, had all their sins laid upon him, and was by imputation made sin itself, and became an offering for it, and so fully answered the type of the sin offering.

**Ver. 4.** *And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord*, etc.] As the bullock of the burnt offering; (see Gill on "~~LEVI~~ Leviticus 1:3"):

*and shall lay his hand on the bullock's head*; the Targum of Jonathan says his right hand; (see Gill on "~~LEVI~~ Leviticus 1:4"):

*and kill the bullock before the Lord*; at the door of the tabernacle, that is, in the court, as Gersom observes; according to the above Targum, the butcher killed it, and not the priest: (see Gill on "~~LEVI~~ Leviticus 1:5") all this is typical of the imputation of sin to Christ, and of his death.

**Ver. 5.** *And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood,* etc.] Let out and received into a basin; this he did himself, and not another, for he offered for himself, and the blood was to make atonement for him:

*and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation;* out of the court where the bullock was slain, into the holy place, where were the veil that divided between the holy of holies, and the altar of sweet incense, after mentioned.

**Ver. 6.** *And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood,* etc.] The finger of his right hand, as Gersom observes, and so Maimonides<sup>f88</sup>; for blood was always taken and sprinkled with the right hand, if done with the left it was wrong, according to the Jewish canons<sup>f89</sup> and though it is only said the priest, and not that is anointed, as before, yet it seems to mean him and not another; though if a private priest did this, Gersom says, it would be right, and so Maimonides<sup>f90</sup>:

*and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord;* a figure of the blood of Christ, called, in allusion to this rite, the blood of sprinkling; which being presented before the Lord, calls for pardon from him, and sprinkled on the conscience, speaks peace there, and perfectly cleanses from all sin, which the seven times sprinkling is a symbol of:

*before the veil of the sanctuary:* the words may be literally rendered, “the face of the veil of the sanctuary”: as if the blood was sprinkled on the outside of the veil. Jarchi's note is,

“over against the place of its holiness, he directed (it) over against between the staves; the blood shall not touch the veil, but if it touches, it touches it;”

that is, it is no matter. And according to Maimonides<sup>f91</sup> the blood of bullocks and goats burnt was sprinkled seven times upon the veil, which divided between the and the holy of holies. This typified the veil of flesh, whose blood gives boldness to enter into the holiest of all, (<sup>8109</sup>Hebrews 10:19).

**Ver. 7.** *And the priest shall put [some] of the blood,* etc.] With his finger, which he dipped into it:

*upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation;* this was the golden altar on which incense was offered: it was placed before the veil, on the outside of it, in

the holy place, (see <sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Exodus 30:1-6) and the priest, when he put the blood on the horns of it, began at the northeast horn, so to the northwest, then to the southwest, and last to the southeast <sup>f92</sup>; and the priest dipped his finger at every horn, and when he had finished at one horn, he wiped his finger at the edge of the basin, and after that dipped a second time; for what remained of the blood on his finger was not fit to put upon another horn <sup>f93</sup>. This rite shows, that the intercession of Christ, signified by the altar of sweet incense, proceeds upon the foot of his blood and sacrifice, (<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Revelation 8:3,4) (<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>1 John 2:1,2):

*and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation;* this altar stood without the holy place, and the altar of incense within; and after the priest had sprinkled of the blood of the bullock, upon the horns of the altar of incense, what remained he poured at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering; for though it is said “all” the blood, it can mean no more than what was left; wherefore the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “all the remaining blood”: and Jarchi’s explanatory note is, the rest of the blood. The place where this was poured, according to Maimonides <sup>f94</sup>, was the west bottom of the altar; and Gersom on the place observes the same. This denotes the efficacy of Christ’s blood to make atonement for sin, and the reverent esteem it ought to be had in, being precious blood.

**Ver. 8.** *And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering,* etc.] When the priest had killed the bullock, and sprinkled and poured the blood, as before commanded; he then cut up the bullock, and took out its inwards, and put them in a vessel, and salted them, and strowed them on the fires <sup>f95</sup>, and burnt them, and the fat of them, as he did with the sacrifice of the peace offerings; so that what is here said, and in the two next verses (<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 4:9,10), is the same with what is ordered concerning them in (<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 3:3-5 (see Gill on “<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 3:3”) (see Gill on “<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 3:4”) (see Gill on “<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 3:5”)). Jarchi and Gersom both observe that they agree, that as one brings peace into the world, so does the other.

**Ver. 11.** *And the skin of the bullock,* etc.] Not taken off; for the sin offerings that were burnt were not flayed at all, but were cut in pieces with their skins on them <sup>f96</sup>; in other burnt offerings the skin was taken off, and was a perquisite of the priest, (<sup>(~~CRB~~)</sup>Leviticus 7:8) but this being an offering for the priest, the skin was burnt with the rest:

*and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung*; the burning of these denoted the sufferings of Christ, and these several parts the extent of them, they reaching to all parts of his body as stretched upon the cross; and the dung particularly the reproach of them, he dying the death of the cross, and was made sin and a curse for his people.

**Ver. 12.** *Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp,* etc.] The Jewish writers interpret it without the three camps<sup>f97</sup>, the camp of the tabernacle, the camp of the Levites, and the camp of the Israelites; when the temple was built, such sacrifices were carried and burnt without the city of Jerusalem; there were three places for burning; one was in the midst of the court, where they burnt such sacrifices as were unfit and rejected; the other was in the mountain of the house called Birah, where they burnt such as any accident befell them, after the carrying of them out of the court; and the third place was without Jerusalem, called the place of ashes<sup>f98</sup>: this was typical of Christ being had out of the city of Jerusalem, and suffering without the gates of it, (<sup><8131></sup>Hebrews 13:11,12):

*unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out*; the ashes of the burnt offerings. This, according to Ainsworth, answered to the place where Christ was crucified, being a place of skulls, or dead men's ashes, (<sup><8197></sup>John 19:17):

*and burn him on the wood with fire*; any wood might be used for the burning of it, even straw or stubble, which in the Hebrew language are called wood, as Gersom on the place observes, and so Maimonides<sup>f99</sup>; and it is added, "with fire", as the last writer says<sup>f100</sup>, to exclude lime and cinder coals:

*where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt*; openly without; and seeing it is not said, that the priest shall carry forth the bullock, and shall burn it, it is concluded by Gersom on the place, that both may be done lawfully by a stranger, and so Maimonides<sup>f101</sup>.

**Ver. 13.** *And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance,* etc.] That is, all Israel, or the greatest part of them, as Gersom interprets it, through the ignorant teaching of the judges, who by their instruction cause the people to err, and commit sins of ignorance, as Baal Hatturim on the place observes, and Maimonides elsewhere<sup>f102</sup>; wherefore Jarchi, and some others, by the congregation of Israel understand the sanhedrim, or the

bench of judges, consisting of seventy one. Ainsworth remarks on the words, that the church may err:

*and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly*; congregation or church, so that they do not know that it is a sin which they have committed:

*and they have done [somewhat against] any of the commandments of the Lord, [concerning things] which should not be done*; transgressed negative precepts:

*and are guilty*; of sin, though as yet they know it not.

**Ver. 14.** *When the sin which they have sinned against it*, etc.] Any of the commandments of the Lord forbidding such a thing to be done:

*is known*; is made known to them by the priest, or any other, so that they are convinced that what has been done is wrong, though done through ignorance:

*then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation*; the same offering with that of the anointed priest, he being, as Aben Ezra on the place observes, equal to all Israel.

**Ver. 15.** *And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord*, etc.] These must be two at least, some say three, and some say five<sup>f103</sup>; the more generally received notion is, that they were three of the sanhedrim<sup>f104</sup>; though the Targum of Jonathan makes them to be the twelve rulers of the twelve tribes:

*and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord*; in the court near the altar of burnt offering, either by a priest, or Levite, or by a butcher, as the above Targum expresses it.

**Ver. 16-21.** *And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood*, etc.] That is, the chief priest, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan explain it:

*to the tabernacle of the congregation*; as he brought the blood of his own bullock, (<sup><OR45></sup>Leviticus 4:5) from hence to the (<sup><OR46></sup>Leviticus 4:16-22) an account is given of the same rites to be observed in the sin offering, for the

congregation, as for the anointed priest; (see Gill on “<sup>CR016</sup>Leviticus 4:6, 7, 12”).

**Ver. 22.** *When a ruler hath sinned*, etc.] Or “prince”, the “nasi”, one that is lifted up above others in honour, power, and authority, or that bears the weight of government: the word comes from one which signifies to lift up, or to bear; it may be understood of a governor of a family, or of a tribe, as Aben Ezra observes; and so in the Talmud <sup>f105</sup> it is said, it means the prince of a tribe, such as Nachson the son of Amminadab, prince of the tribe of Judah. Maimonides <sup>f106</sup> says a king is designed, over whom none has power; and so Gersom on the place, who observes, that David the king is called a prince, (<sup>CR014</sup>Ezekiel 34:24 46:2)

*and done [somewhat] through ignorance [against] any of the commandments of the Lord his God*; the phrase, “his God”, is here added, and is not used neither of the anointed priest, nor of the congregation, nor of one of the common people; only of the prince, to show, that though he is above others, God is above him, and he is accountable to him; he is his God, of whom he is, and by whom he rules; wherefore if he breaks any of his commandments, though ignorantly, he must bring a sacrifice for it:

*[concerning things] which should not be done, and is guilty*; of transgressing negative precepts, which are as binding on him as others.

**Ver. 23.** *Or if his sin wherein he hath sinned come to his knowledge*, etc.] Or rather, “and if his sin”, etc. <sup>f107</sup> either by means of others informing him of it, or of himself calling to mind what he has done, and considering it to be a transgression of the law:

*he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish*; his offering was to be a “kid of the goats”, a fat and a large one; because, as Baal Hatturim observes, he ate fat things every day; and to distinguish it from the offering of one of the common people; and “without blemish”; as all sacrifices were, that they might be typical of the offering of Christ without spot.

**Ver. 24.** *And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat*, etc.] His right hand, as the Targum of Jonathan; (see Gill on “<sup>CR016</sup>Leviticus 1:4”)

*and kill it*; not the prince, but the priest after mentioned, or the butcher, as the same Targum:



*in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the Lord*; in the court on the north side of the altar, (see <sup><GR11></sup>Leviticus 1:11 6:25):

*it is a sin offering*: an offering for his sin of ignorance, or “sin”; so Christ our offering is said to be, (<sup><GR2></sup>2 Corinthians 5:21).

**Ver. 25.** *And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger*, etc.] With the finger of his right hand, as the Talmudists <sup>f108</sup> observe, and Gersom on the place; the priest first received the blood into a basin or ministering vessel, and then dipped the finger of his right hand into it, that next the thumb:

*and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering*; the four horns of it; in this there was a difference between the sacrifice of the anointed priest and of the congregation, and this of the ruler; the blood of the former was put upon the horns of the altar of incense, this upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering:

*and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering*; the South bottom of it; the order of the priest’s proceeding in putting the blood was different from that used in putting it on the horns of the altar of incense; here he first put the blood upon the southeast horn, then upon the northeast, next upon the northwest, and then upon the southwest; and upon the bottom of that horn where he finished, he poured the remainder of the blood, which was the southern bottom <sup>f109</sup>.

**Ver. 26.** *And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar*, &c.] Of burnt offering, that is, the priest shall do it:

*as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings*; (see <sup><GRB></sup>Leviticus 3:3-5)

*and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin*; in a typical way, directing to the great sacrifice of Christ, which is the only real atonement and propitiation for sin: the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render, “the priest shall pray for him”: for the pardon of his sin:

*and it shall be forgiven him*; not for the prayers of the priest, nor for the sacrifice offered up, but for the sake of Christ, the antitype of such sacrifices, and when faith was exercised on him; or the meaning is, he shall not be punished for it.

**Ver. 27.** *And if anyone of the common people sin through ignorance*, etc.] Or, “if one soul of the people of the earth”: that is, a single person, and so

is distinguished from the congregation, one of the common sort of people; however is neither an high priest, nor a prince, or king, but either a common priest, or Levite, or Israelite; no man is free from sin; all sorts of persons, of all ranks and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, men in office, civil or ecclesiastical, or in whatsoever state of life, are liable to sin, and do sin continually, either ignorantly or willingly; and Christ is a sacrifice for all sins and for all sorts of sinners:

*whilst he doeth somewhat*; etc. (see Gill on “<sup><BIBL></sup>Leviticus 4:2, 13, 22”).

**Ver. 28.** *Or if his sin which he hath sinned come to his knowledge*, etc.] So that he is convinced that he has sinned:

*then he shall bring his offering*; to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to the priest there:

*a kid of the goats*: a young goat:

*a female without blemish*; and so inferior to the offering of the ruler or prince; for the characters of men are aggravations of their sins, and sacrifices were to be in some measure answerable to them, and suitable to their circumstances:

*for the sin which he hath sinned*; to atone for it in a typical way.

**Ver. 29.** *And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering*, etc.] His right hand, as the Targum of Jonathan; not the priest that shall offer it, but the man that has sinned, that brings it, thereby confessing his sin, and transferring it to the sacrifice:

*and slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering*; that is, on the north side of the altar.

**Ver. 30-31.** *And the priest shall take of the blood*, etc.] So that all the preceding actions, the bringing the offering, the putting the hand upon the head of it, and slaying it, were done by the man that sinned; of this and what follows here and in the next verse (<sup><BIBL></sup>Leviticus 4:31), (see Gill on “<sup><BIBL></sup>Leviticus 4:25-26”).

**Ver. 32.** *And if he bring a lamb for a sin offering*, etc.] As he might if he would; the Jews observe, that in all places a lamb is put before a goat, as being more excellent in its kind; but here it is mentioned after, which shows, they say, that they are equally alike<sup>f110</sup>:

*he shall bring it a female without blemish*; typical of Christ the Lamb of God, without spot and without blemish, (<sup>f119</sup>1 Peter 1:19).

**Ver. 33.** *He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering*, etc.] On the head of the lamb, as on the head of the goat, even his right hand, as the above Targum, as before:

*and slay it for a sin offering, in the place where they kill the burnt offering*: for if it was not slain for a sin offering, but for something else, or on any other account, as for a burnt offering, it was not right <sup>f111</sup>.

**Ver. 34-35.** *And the priest shall take of the blood*, etc.] (See Gill on <sup>f105</sup>“Leviticus 4:25-26”).