

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS 5

This chapter treats of the trespass offering, points at the sins for which it was to be made, and the matter of it; it was for secret sins, and sins of ignorance, such as refusing to bear witness in a known case, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:1) touching unclean things and false swearing, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:2-4) the things directed to in such cases are confession, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:5) sacrifice of a lamb, or kid of the goats, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:6) and in case of poverty, two turtle doves, or two young pigeons; concerning the offering of which instructions are given, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:7-10) and if not able to bring them, then a meat offering of fine flour, about which rules are laid down, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:11-13) and for sins committed through ignorance in holy things or sacrileges, the sacrifice of a ram is enjoined, and satisfaction ordered to be made for the injury done in the holy thing, by adding a fifth part to it, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:14-16) and for sins committed ignorantly against negative precepts, only a ram is appointed for the trespass offering, (^(-RRB) Leviticus 5:17-19).

Ver. 1. *And if a soul sin*, etc.] The soul is put for the person, and is particularly mentioned, as Ben Melech says, because possessed of will and desire:

and hear the voice of swearing; or cursing, or adjuration; not of profane swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, but either of false swearing, or perjury, as when a man hears another swear to a thing which he knows is false; or else of adjuration, either the voice of a magistrate or of a neighbour adjuring another, calling upon him with an oath to bear testimony in such a case; this is what the Jews ^{f112} call the oath of testimony or witness, and which they say ^{f113} is binding in whatsoever language it is heard:

and is a witness; is able to bear witness to the thing he is adjured about:

whether he hath seen or known of it; what he has seen with his eyes, or knows by any means: of such a case, the Jews observe ^{f114}, that there may

be seeing without knowing, or knowing without seeing, and in either case a man ought to bear witness:

if he do not utter it; tell the truth, declare what he has seen or known:

then he shall bear his iniquity; he shall be charged with sin, and be obliged to acknowledge his offence, and bring a trespass offering for it: it is said ^{f115}, that the witnesses are not guilty of the oath of the testimony, but in these ten cases; if they are required; if the testimony is concerning goods; if the goods are movable; if he that requires binds himself to pay for their testimony only, in case they bear witness; if they refuse after required; if they refuse in the sanhedrim; if the adjuration or oath is made there by the name of God, or his titles; if knowledge of the testimony goes before the oath; if he particularizes his witnesses in the time of the oath, or at the time of the requirement; and if the oath is in a language they understood.

Ver. 2. *Or if a soul touch any unclean thing*, etc.] Meaning an Israelite, for only such were bound by this law, which pronounced a person unclean that touched anything that was so in a ceremonial sense; this is the general, including whatsoever by the law was unclean; the particulars follow:

whether [it be] a carcass of an unclean beast, as the camel, the coney, the hare, and the swine, (^{<BIB2>}Leviticus 11:2-3)

or a carcass of unclean cattle; as the horse, and the ass, which were unclean for food, and their dead carcasses not to be touched, (^{<BIB2>}Leviticus 11:26-28)

or the carcass of unclean creeping things: such as are mentioned in (^{<BIB2>}Leviticus 11:29-31)

and if it be hidden from him; that he has touched them; or the uncleanness contracted by touching, he having inadvertently done it; or being ignorant of the law concerning such uncleanness:

he also shall be unclean; in a ceremonial sense, by thus touching them:

and guilty; of a breach of the command which forbids the touching of them: this is by way of prolepsis or anticipation; for as yet the law concerning unclean beasts, and creeping things, and pollution by touching them, was not given: Jarchi and Gersom interpret this guilt, of eating of holy things, and going into the sanctuary when thus defiled: in the Jewish Misnah ^{f116} it is said, the word “hidden” is twice used, to show that he is

guilty, for the ignorance of uncleanness, and for the ignorance of the sanctuary.

Ver. 3. *Or if he touch the uncleanness of man*, etc.] The dead body of a man, or the bone of a dead body, or a grave, or any profluvius or menstruous person:

whatsoever uncleanness [it be] that a man shall be defiled withal: not morally, but ceremonially:

and it be hid from him; he is not sensible that he has touched any thing ceremonially unclean:

when he knoweth [of it], then he shall be guilty: acknowledge his guilt, and offer a sacrifice for it, as after directed.

Ver. 4. *Or if a soul swear*, etc.] A rash or vain oath:

pronouncing with his lips; not in his heart, as Jarchi notes; not saying within himself that he would do this, or that, or the other thing, but expressing his oath plainly and distinctly, with an audible voice:

to do good, or to do evil; which was either impossible or unlawful for him to do; whether the good or evil he swears to do is to himself or to another; whether he swears to do good to himself, and evil to another, or, good to another, and evil to himself, (see ^{<9154>}Psalm 15:4,5). The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it,

“whatsoever a man expresses, whether of anything present or future;”

as if he swears he has done such and such a thing, whether good or evil; or that he will do it, be it what it will, and it is not in the power of his hands to do it, or, if he did it, it would be doing a wrong thing:

whatsoever [it be] that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; he has forgot that he ever swore such an oath:

and when he knoweth [of it], then he shall be guilty in one of these; when he is told of it, and it is made clearly to appear to him, that he did at such a time, and in such a place, deliver out a rash oath concerning this, or the other thing, then he shall be chargeable with guilt in one of these; either in rashly swearing to do good when it was not in his power, or to do evil, which would have been unlawful. The Targum of Jonathan is,

“if he knows that he has falsified, and repents not, he is guilty.”

Ver. 5. *And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things,* etc.] Before expressed in the preceding verses; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“in one of the four things,”

which Ben Gersom particularly mentions in the oath of witness, or the pollution of the sanctuary, or the pollution of its holy things, or a vain oath:

that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that [thing]; not make confession of sin in general, but of that particular sin he is guilty of; and this he was to do before he brought his offering, or at least at the time of his bringing it; for without confession his offering would be of no avail; and which he made, as Ben Gersom says, by laying his hand on the head of the offering, thereby signifying and declaring his guilt, and that he deserved to die as the creature would about to be sacrificed for him; or he might make a verbal confession and acknowledgment of his offence. Fagius, from the Jewish writers, has given us the form of it, which was this;

“I beseech thee, O Lord, I have sinned, I have done wickedly, I have transgressed before thee, so and so have I done; and, lo, I repent, and am ashamed of what I have done, and I will never do the same again.”

Though perhaps this form may be of too modern a date, yet doubtless somewhat like this was pronounced; and they make confession of sin necessary to all sacrifices, and say^{f117}, atonement is not made by them without repentance and confession.

Ver. 6. *And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, for the sin which he hath sinned,* etc.] To make atonement for it; this was typical of the sacrifice of Christ, whose soul was made an offering for sin, **μῆσα**, “Asham” a trespass offering, (²⁵³⁰Isaiah 53:10) where the same word is used as here:

a female from the flock, a lamb, or kid of the goats, for a sin offering; it is generally thought there was a difference between a trespass offering and a sin offering; but it is not easy to say wherein the difference lies; and what has been observed by learned men is not very satisfactory: and certain it is, that the same offering is here called both a trespass offering and a sin offering; and such as were men of substance, and capable of it, were to

bring a female lamb or kid; it being for sins of ignorance, a sacrifice of a less value was admitted; yet it must be a lamb, typical of Christ the Lamb of God; and atonement cannot be made, even for sins of ignorance, but by the blood and sacrifice of Christ:

and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin; that is, by offering his sacrifice for him, which was a type of the atonement made by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish.

Ver. 7. *And if he be not able to bring a lamb,* etc.] He is not possessed of a lamb, nor able to purchase one:

then he shall bring for his trespass which he hath committed, two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, unto the Lord; either the one or the other; these were common, and in great plenty in the land of Israel, as Maimonides^{f118} observes, which was the reason of their being ordered, since to be had cheap. The turtledoves were larger, as the Targum of Jonathan calls them, being older, and the pigeons lesser, being young; or the one were grown, and not little, and the other little, and not grown, as the Jewish writers^{f119} observe; and either of them were proper emblems of Christ in his purity, innocence, and meekness, by whom an atonement is made both for the rich and poor:

one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; one of the turtle doves or pigeons, whichever were brought, was offered up as a sin offering, and the other that remained was offered up as a burnt offering; so that the poor man had two sorts of offerings out of what he brought, when the rich had but one; and may denote the completeness of his sacrifice, and the full atonement made by it.

Ver. 8. *And he shall bring them unto the priest,* etc.] Either two turtledoves, or two young pigeons:

who shall offer [that] which [is] for the sin [offering] first; that which is chosen for it, as the Targum of Jonathan; and this choice was made, not by the priest, but by the man that brought the offering, who separated it, and said, lo, this is a sin offering, and after that said, lo, this is a burnt offering^{f120}; the sin offering was offered first, which was to make atonement for sin, and then the burnt offering, to denote the divine acceptance of it; and so Ben Gersom observes, it was proper to offer the sin offering first, to atone for his sin, that after he (God) was appeased this way, he might receive his gift; for the burnt offering was as a gift. Jarchi compares it to an advocate,

who first goes in to appease, and when he has appeased, the gift goes in after him:

and wring off his head from his neck, but shall not divide it asunder: be it a turtledove or a young pigeon, so it was to be served; the head was not to be separated from the body, but was nipped by the nail of the priest “in” the neck, as it might be rendered ^{f121}; over against the neck, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan render it; the hinder part, or what is behind the throat, as Jarchi and Ben Molech interpret it; so that the part which was nipped was the neck; and this nip was made so large, as that the blood was let out by it, as appears from the following verse (^(R99)Leviticus 5:9), and yet the head was not divided from the body; the head hung by a piece of skin on the back part; of the manner of performing this, and the mystery of it, (see Gill on ^(R15)Leviticus 1:15”).

Ver. 9. *And he shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin [offering] upon the side of the altar*, etc.] Or “wall” ^{f122} it is asked ^{f123},

“what is the wall at which the rest of the blood is wrung out? this is the lower wall, namely, the half of the height of the altar below, under the thread (of scarlet that goes round the middle of the altar) that the rest of the blood may be squeezed at the bottom of the altar, and because of this the sin offering of the fowl is below,”

that is, the sprinkling of its blood. And so Ben Gersom observes; from hence we learn, says he, that the sprinkling of the sin offering of the fowl was in the lower part of the altar; and I think this sprinkling, adds he, was not in the length, but in the breadth:

and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the bottom of the altar; the blood sprinkled was that which dropped from it when nipped by the priest; this here was squeezed out by him, and was shed at the foot of the altar; so that the altar had all the blood, and nothing but the blood of the fowl, all the rest belonged to the priest ^{f124}: this might be an emblem both of the drops of blood which fell from Christ in the garden, and of the shedding of his blood upon the cross, whereby remission of sin was obtained, and atonement made:

it [is] a sin [offering]; an offering whereby sin was typically expiated and stoned.

Ver. 10. *And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the manner,* etc.] That is, the second turtledove or young pigeon, after the other was made a sin offering; and the manner according to which this was offered was not according to the rite or manner of the bird chosen first for a sin offering, as the Targum of Jonathan, but according to the burnt offering of the fowl in (^{<RB15>}Leviticus 1:15-17) so Jarchi and Ben Gersom:

and the priest shall make an atonement for him, for his sin which he had sinned, and it shall be forgiven him; upon the atonement made; and so forgiveness of sin with God proceeds upon the atonement made by the blood of Christ, (^{<RB2>}Hebrews 9:22). God never took one step towards it, without a regard to Christ the propitiation for sin; he promised it with a view to him; there is no instance of pardon under the Old Testament but in this way, and God always has respect to Christ in pardon, it is for his sake; and this way of forgiveness best provides for the glory of the divine perfections; there can be no better way, or infinite wisdom would have used it; there could be no other way, considering the council and covenant of peace; to pardon, without atonement and satisfaction, is not consistent with the purity, justice, and veracity of God; and to observe this great truth, the phrase is afterwards frequently repeated,

Ver. 11. *But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons,* etc.] Which is supposing a man to be in the poorest circumstances he can well be; and such is the grace and goodness of God, that he has provided for the atonement and forgiveness of the poorest, as well as of the rich:

then he that hath sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; which is an omer, (^{<RB6>}Exodus 16:36) and is as much as a man can eat in one day, as Aben Ezra remarks:

he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put [any] frankincense thereon; to distinguish it from the common meat offering, which had both, (^{<RB1>}Leviticus 3:1) and to make it as easy, and as little chargeable to the poor as possible, both oil and frankincense being things of value; and some think that these were prohibited, to show that atonement and forgiveness, and even the salvation of men, are not owing to grace in them, comparable to oil, or to their prayers, signified by frankincense, and so to any or all of their duties, but to Christ alone, and his atoning sacrifice: or these were forbidden, because emblems of joy and gladness, and therefore not so proper at a confession of sin, and humiliation for it: or rather to show how

disagreeable and offensive sin was to the Lord, being contrary to grace, of which oil was an emblem, and far from being acceptable to him, which frankincense might signify; and therefore being prohibited, might denote how unacceptable, yea nauseous, sin is to him; which agrees with the reason given;

for it [is] a sin [offering], and therefore must not be honoured, as Jarchi, or must have everything removed from it that is beautiful and amiable, as Ben Gersom, such as oil and frankincense.

Ver. 12. *Then shall he bring it to the priest*, etc.] The flour just as it was, not kneaded and made into a cake, as appears by what follows:

and the priest shall take his handful of it; as much of the flour as he could hold in one hand:

[even] a memorial thereof; to bring to mind his sin, and the goodness of God in admitting of an offering for it, and forgiving it upon that:

and burn [it] on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the Lord; in the same manner as other burnt offerings were made:

it [is] a sin [offering]; or an expiatory sacrifice for sin.

Ver. 13. *And the priest shall make an atonement for him*, etc.] By burning the handful of flour brought by him, as an emblem of the painful sufferings of Christ, whereby he made atonement for the sins of his people:

as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these; for whatsoever sin he had committed in any of the above cases, (^{<RB1>}Leviticus 5:1-4):

and it shall be forgiven him; upon the foot of the atonement made; (see Gill on "^{<RB2>}Leviticus 5:10"):

and [the remnant] shall be the priest's as a meat offering; the whole tenth part of an ephah of fine flour was the priest's, excepting the handful he took and burnt, just as in the case of a common meat offering, (^{<RB3>}Leviticus 2:3).

Ver. 14. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] Out of the tabernacle of the congregation, (^{<RB4>}Leviticus 1:1) he continued to speak to him:

saying, as follows.

Ver. 15. *If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance in the holy things of the Lord,* etc.] In the payment of tithes, or offering first fruits as he ought, by withholding them, or any part of them, or through eating of sacred things he ought not:

then shall he bring for his trespass unto the Lord; for it being a trespass in holy things, it might be properly called a trespass to or against the Lord; unless this is rather to be understood of the offering brought to the Lord for his trespass as follows:

a ram without blemish out of the flocks; out of the sheep and not the goats, as Ben Gersom observes; and this being for sacrifice, or for a trespass in holy things though ignorantly done, an offering of more value is required than for sins of ignorance in other cases, (⁴⁸⁸⁶Leviticus 5:6) a type of Christ, who for his strength may be compared to a ram, and to one without blemish, for his purity and holiness, and to a choice one, selected out of the flock, for his being chosen out from among the people:

with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering; that is, either an estimation was to be taken of the damage done in the holy things, an account of which was to be brought along with the ram, and the cost paid; or else the ram brought was to be of the value of, or worth shekels of silver; and the least of many being two, as Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom observe, the sense is, that the ram brought for the trespass offering should be at least worth two shekels of silver; so Jarchi and Ben Gersom.

Ver. 16. *And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing,* etc.] This seems to favour the sense of the word “estimation”, in the preceding verse, as understood of the estimate of the damage done in the holy things, which belonged to the priests, for which recompense was to be made according as the damage was valued:

and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest; besides paying the whole damage, he was to give a fifth part of the whole to the priest; which was ordered to show the evil nature of the sin of sacrilege, though done ignorantly, and to make men careful and cautious of committing it: the fifth part, according to the Jewish writers ^{f125}, is the fourth part of that of which a man eats, (“viz.” of the holy things,) which is the fifth of the whole; thus, if he eats the value of a penny, he pays the penny and the fourth part of one, and so it is in all the fifths mentioned in

the law; or, as Ben Gersom on the place expresses it, if he has had profit by the holy things to the value of four shekels, he pays five shekels; for the fifth of the shekels they add the fifth part to the four shekels; in this he observes, all are alike, the priest, the anointed, the prince, and a private person, for the law makes no difference between them in this:

and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering; by offering it up for him:

and it shall be forgiven him; after he has paid the whole damage, and a fifth part besides, and offered the trespass offering for atonement; (see Gill on “^{<CR60>}Leviticus 5:10”).

Ver. 17. *And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord*, etc.] Respecting holy things:

though he wist it not; or did not know that he had transgressed a negative command:

yet he is guilty, and shall bear the iniquity; be chargeable with guilt, and is liable to punishment, and must make an atonement and satisfaction for it; (see ^{<CR28>}Luke 12:48).

Ver. 18. *And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<CR65>}Leviticus 5:15”)

with thy estimation for a trespass [offering] to the priest; along with the offering was to be brought an estimate of whatsoever damage had been done through the breach of any of the commands of God, where damage could take place, that so recompense be made as before directed; or else the ram brought was to be valued, and examined whether it was worth two shekels of silver, as before explained, (see Gill on “^{<CR65>}Leviticus 5:15”) but no fifth was required as in the former cases:

and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred, and wist [it] not, and it shall be forgiven him; (see Gill on “^{<CR60>}Leviticus 5:10”) this is what the Jews call “Asham Talui”, doubtful trespass offering.

Ver. 19. *It [is] a trespass [offering]*, etc.] An offering for a trespass committed:

he hath certainly trespassed against the Lord; though committed ignorantly, and therefore an offering must be brought; for no sin of any kind must be overlooked, passed by, or forgiven, without a sacrifice, or without atonement made by sacrifice: or, “he shall offer a trespass offering to the Lord”, or before the Lord, as Onkelos; or before the Word of the Lord, as Jonathan; and Maimonides out of Siphri^{f126} observes, that whereas it is said, a trespass or trespass offering to the Lord, it was not lawful for the priests to eat of it.