

LEVITICUS 4:1-5:13

Dealing with Sin

The Purification Offering (4:1-5:13)

This offering as well as the guilt offering atone for sin and its effects upon us, mainly working to make us pure before God.

4:1-5:13 is linked together by the introductory formula, *Then the Lord said to Moses (beginning 4:1 and the next section 5:14)* followed by the Hebrew word *nephesb* with the conjunction *ki* which is translated *those who (NLT)* or *if anyone (a person)* in other versions. The purification (sin) offering and the guilt offering are very similar in subject: *purification from whatever violation of the Law makes one ritually unclean before the Lord.*

'Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. This is how you are to deal with those who sin unintentionally by doing anything that violates one of the LORD's commands.

How does someone sin 'unintentionally' (see 4:2, 22, 27; ex. in 5:1-4)?

This idea is conveyed by two words for sin, the first, *חָטָא* (*hāṭā'*) **miss the mark**, and the second, *שָׁגָג* (*šāgag*) **go astray**. The picture is someone who failed to live up to the covenant demands.

The root for sin *hattah* occurs 594 times in the Hebrew scriptures, 237 times it refers to *sin, crime, bearing the blame, harmed*, but also *purify* referring to the process of dealing with the uncleanness that comes from violating some command of God.

The usual translation "sin offering" is misleading because it implies that the *hatta't* sacrifice deals only with sin as moral fault and that it is the only sacrifice to do so. As a symptom of its inadequacy, the interpretation "sin offering" generates problems that do not really exist, such as the question: How has a woman sinned in giving birth, so that she must sacrifice a "sin offering" (12:6–8)? She has not sinned at all. Rather, she has enjoyed the divine blessing to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7; 35:11). Her sacrifice is for physical ritual impurity, which is not "sin" in the sense of moral fault (see comments on Lev. 12).¹

Unintentional is *שָׁגָגָה* (*šāgāgā*) which in its verb form deals with sins of ignorance (Lev. 5:18; Num. 15:28) or of being deceived (Job 12:16 – *the deceived is unaware*), and is the natural state of sinful man before being corrected by the Lord (Psalm 119:67).

The noun appears nineteen times... First is the use in the description of the sin offering (Lev 4:2, 22, 27). In v. 13 a form of *šāgā*, not *šāgag*, is used. Accompanying this is the use in the description of the guilt/ trespass/reparation offering (Lev 5:15, 18). Thus Lev 4:22 reads, "When a leader has sinned and has done something inadvertently." Second is the paragraph in Numbers 15:22ff. dealing with atonement for sins of inadvertence (KJV, "ignorance"). Here *šāgāgā* occurs seven times: Num 15:24, 25 (twice), 26–29. Note again that the paragraph begins, v. 22, not with a form of *šāgag* but of *šāgā*, our third illustration of the intermingling of these roots.

To the above may be added the following: Eccl 5:6, "do not tell the messenger/angel that it was an (unintentional) mistake": 10:5, a reference to the "misjudgment" of rulers; Lev 22:14; Num 35:11, 15; Josh 20:3, 9 (cities of refuge as places of safety for perpetrators of acts of unintentional unpremeditated murder)....

¹ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 97.

To return to *šēgāgā*, a sin of this type may result from two causes: negligence or ignorance. Either the perpetrator knows the law but unintentionally violates it as in the case of accidental homicide (Num 35:22ff.; Deut 19:4–10; Josh 20:2–6, 9), or he acts without knowing he did wrong. Some illustrations of sins in this category would be: Gen 20:9 (Abimelech’s complaint to Abraham): Num 22:34 (Balaam: “I have sinned. I did not know you were standing in my path”). In opposition to these are sins committed with a “high hand” (Num 15:30) for which there is no atonement by any means of sacrifice. Here the NT believer can sense something of the inadequacy of the Levitical sacrificial system. The inability of this system to provide a sacrifice even for the presumptuous sin points to the way of a better sacrifice, that found in Christ.²

*Numbers 15:22–31 (NLT)

²² “But suppose you unintentionally fail to carry out all these commands that the LORD has given you through Moses. ²³ And suppose your descendants in the future fail to do everything the LORD has commanded through Moses. ²⁴ If the mistake was made unintentionally, and the community was unaware of it, the whole community must present a young bull for a burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. It must be offered along with its prescribed grain offering and liquid offering and with one male goat for a sin offering. ²⁵ With it the priest will purify the whole community of Israel, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven. For it was an unintentional sin, and they have corrected it with their offerings to the LORD—the special gift and the sin offering. ²⁶ The whole community of Israel will be forgiven, including the foreigners living among you, for all the people were involved in the sin. ²⁷ “If one individual commits an unintentional sin, the guilty person must bring a one-year-old female goat for a sin offering. ²⁸ The priest will sacrifice it to purify the guilty person before the LORD, and that person will be forgiven. ²⁹ These same instructions apply both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you. ³⁰ “But those who brazenly violate the LORD’s will, whether native-born Israelites or foreigners, have blasphemed the LORD, and they must be cut off from the community. ³¹ Since they have treated the LORD’s word with contempt and deliberately disobeyed his command, they must be completely cut off and suffer the punishment for their guilt.”

Who had to make these offerings?

The amount of offering varies according to the position or place of the one who sins. This passage breaks this down:

- High Priest (4.3-12)
- Community (4.13-21)
- Chieftain (4.22-26)
- Commoner (4.27-35)

The high priest had to make exactly the same sacrifice as if the whole nation had sinned. He was key to their worship and acceptance before the Lord. Without him, the fire of God would break out upon them all (Numbers 25).

² Victor P. Hamilton, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1999, 903–904.

High Priest 4:3-12	Community 4:13-21	Leader 4:22-26	Commoner (Goat) 4:27-31	Commoner (Sheep) 4:32-35
³ "If the high priest sins,	¹³ "If the entire Israelite community sins	²² "If one of Israel's leaders sins	²⁷ "If any of the common people sin	
	by violating one of the LORD's commands,	by violating one of the commands of the LORD his God	by violating one of the LORD's commands,	
bringing guilt upon the entire community,	but the people don't realize it, they are still guilty.	but doesn't realize it, he is still guilty.	but they don't realize it, they are still guilty.	
he must give a sin offering for the sin he has committed.	¹⁴ When they become aware of their sin,	²³ When he becomes aware of his sin,	²⁸ When they become aware of their sin,	
He must present to the LORD a young bull with no defects.	the people must bring a young bull as an offering for their sin	he must bring as his offering a male goat with no defects.	they must bring as an offering for their sin a female goat with no defects.	³² "If the people bring a sheep as their sin offering, it must be a female with no defects.
⁴ He must bring the bull to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle,	and present it before the Tabernacle.			
lay his hand on the bull's head,	¹⁵ The elders of the community must then lay their hands on the bull's head	²⁴ He must lay his hand on the goat's head	²⁹ They must lay a hand on the head of the sin offering	³³ They must lay a hand on the head of the sin offering
and slaughter it before the LORD.	and slaughter it before the LORD.	and slaughter it at the place where burnt offerings are slaughtered before the LORD.	and slaughter it at the place where burnt offerings are slaughtered.	and slaughter it at the place where burnt offerings are slaughtered.
		This is an offering for his sin.		
⁵ The high priest will then take some of the bull's blood into the Tabernacle, ⁶ dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the inner curtain of the sanctuary.	¹⁶ The high priest will then take some of the bull's blood into the Tabernacle, ¹⁷ dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the inner curtain.			
⁷ The priest will then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar for fragrant incense that stands in the LORD's presence inside the Tabernacle.	¹⁸ He will then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar for fragrant incense that stands in the LORD's presence inside the Tabernacle.	²⁵ Then the priest will dip his finger in the blood of the sin offering and put it on the horns of the altar for burnt offerings.	³⁰ Then the priest will dip his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar for burnt offerings.	³⁴ Then the priest will dip his finger in the blood of the sin offering and put it on the horns of the altar for burnt offerings. He will pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.
He will pour out the rest of the bull's blood at the base of the altar for burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tabernacle.	He will pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar for burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tabernacle.	He will pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.	He will pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.	
⁸ Then the priest must remove all the fat of the bull to be offered as a sin offering. This includes all the fat around the internal organs, ⁹ the two kidneys and the fat around them near the	¹⁹ Then the priest must remove all the animal's fat		³¹ Then he must remove all the goat's fat, just as he does with the fat of the peace offering.	³⁵ Then he must remove all the sheep's fat, just as he does with the fat of a sheep presented as a peace offering. He will burn the fat on the altar on top of the special gifts presented to the LORD.

loins, and the long lobe of the liver.				
He must remove these along with the kidneys, ¹⁰ just as he does with cattle offered as a peace offering, and burn them on the altar of burnt offerings.	and burn it on the altar, ²⁰ just as he does with the bull offered as a sin offering for the high priest.	²⁶ Then he must burn all the goat's fat on the altar, just as he does with the peace offering.	He will burn the fat on the altar, and it will be a pleasing aroma to the LORD.	
	Through this process, the priest will purify the people, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven.	Through this process, the priest will purify the leader from his sin, making him right with the LORD, and he will be forgiven.	Through this process, the priest will purify the people, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven.	Through this process, the priest will purify the people from their sin, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven.
¹¹ But he must take whatever is left of the bull—its hide, meat, head, legs, internal organs, and dung— ¹² and carry it away to a place outside the camp that is ceremonially clean, the place where the ashes are dumped. There, on the ash heap, he will burn it on a wood fire.	²¹ Then the priest must take what is left of the bull and carry it outside the camp and burn it there, just as is done with the sin offering for the high priest.			
	This offering is for the sin of the entire congregation of Israel.			

What was similar and what was different in their offerings?

While most of the procedures are the same among the four offerings, there are some key differences:

1. The high priest had to offer a young bull, this was also the offering if the entire nation sinned, while a leader only had to offer a male goat and the member only females of the herd. There is a definite degression of value or cost in the offerings.
2. The blood was sprinkled inside the Holy Place and put on the Altar of Incense for the High Priest and Israel's sin as well as on the Burnt Altar. The blood from the leader and member's offering did not go inside the Tabernacle.
3. Everything was burned in the leader and nation's offering, but the priest receive his portion of the leader and member's offering.
4. For the poor birds would work as an offering. If really poor, not even blood had to be shed.

Why the differences?

1. The more valuable animals reflected the greater influence the sin of a leader had on those below him.
2. Since the atonement of the blood effected the entire nation, particularly the high priest's ability to come on behalf of the nation to God, the blood must be sprinkled seven times before the most Holy place and the horns of the place of prayer, the incense altar, must have the atoning blood applied.

3. Since the high priest was making atonement for his own sin, he could not receive any ‘pay’ for his service. As a member of the nation, this was true for a national offering as well.
4. Atonement, forgiveness is not a matter of man’s ability to pay, even the very poor could make the offering. Ultimately, God will pay it all in Jesus.

How was this offering similar and different from the burnt and peace offering?

Some elements were similar to the burnt offering (chapter 1) and the peace offering (chapter 3), but there were some key differences as well. It is close enough in procedure to see that these two offerings were the ‘base’ offerings from which the other offerings were variations on a theme.

They key differences were:

1. Even the hide was burnt from the high priest’s sin offering. No one got anything.
2. The sin offering was not the peace offering. The worshipper lost it all.

The high priest is the one who makes this offering as no one else could represent him before God.

	High Priest	Community	Leader	Commoner	Poor	Really Poor
Offering	Young Bull	Young Bull	Male Goat	Female Goat/Sheep	1 Bird for Sin 1 Bird Burnt	1/10 Ephah Flour No Oil or Frankincense
Identification	High Priest’s Hand on Head	People’s Elders Hand on Head	Hand on Head	Hand on Head		
Place	Entrance	Entrance	Burnt Offering Place	Burnt Offering Place		
Blood	7 times Inner Curtain	7 times Inner Curtain				
	Horns of Incense Altar	Horns of Incense Altar	Horns of Altar of Burnt Offerings	Horns of Altar of Burnt Offerings		
	Base Altar Burnt Offerings	Base Altar Burnt Offerings	Base Altar Burnt Offerings	Base Altar Burnt Offerings		
Fat	Remove Fat, Kidney, Liver Burned on Outside Altar	Remove Fat, Kidney, Liver Burned on Outside Altar	Burned as Peace Offering	Burned as Peace Offering		
Rest	Hide & Meat Burned on Wood Fire Outside Camp	Wood Fire Outside Camp	Priest’s Portion (6:26)	Priest’s Portion (6:26)		Priest’s
	Priest gets nothing because blood applied inside (6:30)					

What resulted from this offering (4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13; compare 1:4)?

Atonement, i.e., they were purified and made right with God. This enabled them to be forgiven and thus welcomed into a walk with God. This was clearly seen in the Tabernacle which moved with them throughout the wilderness.

FOUR CASES OF SIN (5:1-4)

By case law, the concepts of ‘unintentional’ sin is explained.

How could someone unintentionally violate God’s commands (5:1-4)?

They could fail to speak up when called upon by oath to testify, or they could run their mouth off and vow things they should not (1, 4). There were also inadvertent ways of becoming unclean, such as through touching even the carcass of an unclean animal, or, touching human uncleanness, such as a skin infection (2, 3)

REMEDY: CONFESSION AND SACRIFICE (5:5-6)

⁵“When you become aware of your guilt in any of these ways, you must confess your sin.

⁶Then you must bring to the LORD as the penalty for your sin a female from the flock, either a sheep or a goat. This is a sin offering with which the priest will purify you from your sin, making you right with the LORD.

The remedy for all four of these cases is to have one’s purity before the Lord restored through the sin offering which would purify them of unintentional violations of the law’s demand for purity. This is true, even when we would not consider something sin, just uncleanness.

What provision was made for the poor (5:7-13)?

We have noticed through all of these sacrifices that the Lord has made them within the reach of the poor. Here is the most extreme example seen so far. Not only are they granted the poor person’s offering of the birds from the burnt offering, the poorest among them are able to bring a flour offering from the grain offering for atonement.

LESS EXPENSIVE OFFERINGS (5:7-13)

BIRDS

⁷“But if you cannot afford to bring a sheep, you may bring to the LORD two turtledoves or two young pigeons as the penalty for your sin. One of the birds will be for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.

⁸You must bring them to the priest, who will present the first bird as the sin offering. He will wring its neck but without severing its head from the body.

⁹Then he will sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the sides of the altar, and the rest of the blood will be drained out at the base of the altar.

This is an offering for sin.

¹⁰The priest will then prepare the second bird as a burnt offering, following all the procedures that have been prescribed. Through this process the priest will purify you from your sin, making you right with the LORD, and you will be forgiven.

FLOUR

¹¹“If you cannot afford to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, you may bring two quarts of choice flour for your sin offering. Since it is an offering for sin, you must not moisten it with olive oil or put any frankincense on it.

¹²Take the flour to the priest, who will scoop out a handful as a representative portion. He will burn it on the altar on top of the special gifts presented to the LORD.

It is an offering for sin.

¹³Through this process, the priest will purify those who are guilty of any of these sins, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven.

The rest of the flour will belong to the priest, just as with the grain offering.”

What portion of the offering went to the priest (6:26,30; 7:31-36; see also 5:13)?

With the exception of offerings which involved himself, a priest received the right thigh as his portion for the work he was doing.

We can also discern that the high priest's services were not required for atoning for the sins of ordinary leaders or people.

ADDITIONAL HELP ON THE PASSAGE

4:2 sin (*chata*) the root means 'to miss the way' (*Proverbs 19:2*), and is the normal word for 'sin' in the Hebrew scriptures, but not always. The verb form refers to purification of objects which had no ability to sin such as an altar (*8:15*) and a house (*14:49*). Similarly, a woman who gives birth has not sinned, but needs to be purified ritually from the flow of blood (*12:6-8*) as would a man who had a discharge (*15:14-15*).

Unintentionally (*shegagah*) also means 'to go astray', but implies that the offender was 'unaware' either of what he did or that what she did was wrong.

Violating is literally *do not*. Instead of keeping the command, the violator did not do what was commanded. This can imply inadvertent action as well as failure to do something one should have done under the Law.

Commands - it was by commands that God brought the world into existence. The word can also be used to refer to one's deed to property (*Jeremiah 32:11*). In the Pentateuch, it refers to things like the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 24:12*) along with all the other things God shared with Moses to give us "insight to the meaning of life" [TWOT].

4:3 high priest is literally the 'anointed' priest of which there would only be one at a time (*Leviticus 6:22*). This one was *set apart* from all the rest for that unique position.

Guilt comes from trespass against the Law and implies punishment that is due because of it.

Sin offering is from the same root as the word for sin. This offering purifies the guilty.

4:6 Seven times has both a literal and symbolic significance. In creating a ceremonial for Israel the Lord himself establishes and confirms the symbolic and sacred significance of seven.... Ex 29:30 the garments of a new high priest were ordered by Moses speaking for the Lord to be consecrated for seven days. This was a ceremonial action and it could just as well have been accomplished in more or less days, yet the Lord prescribed exactly seven! In Ex 23:15 the unleavened bread was to be eaten seven days, and in Ex 25:37 the Menorah, or sacred lamp stand of the tabernacle, was to have one main stem with six lateral stems, making seven.... The prime example, however, must lie in the special hallowing of the seventh (*šēbīʿ*) day as the sabbath day and hence the chief day of normal worship activities (Ex 20:10; Deut 5:14).... That there is such a significance in the number is confirmed further by such passages as Zech 4:2, 10. Here the seven flames of the Menorah are said to represent "the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth" (verse 10).³

Inner curtain is the *veil* which separated the outer room, the Holy Place, from the inner room, the Most Holy, where the presence of the Lord rested upon the ark of the covenant.

4:7 Altar for Fragrant Incense was set before the *veil* and came to symbolize the prayers of the Lord's people ascending like the smoke of the incense ascended. The blood would purify this area and the prayers offered.

Lord's Presence refers to the resting of His presence upon the ark inside the veiled inner room.

4:12 Outside the Camp means outside of Israel where all the impurity was to dwell, not in the camp which was to be clean (pure) so that God's holy presence could dwell there without destroying impurity.

Ceremonially Clean the word is simply 'clean,' but 'ceremonially' has been added in the *NLT* to clarify that physical cleanliness is not the goal. Instead they are to be spiritually clean, which is an internal matter as well.

³ Gary G. Cohen, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1999, 898.

4:14 Become Aware translates the verb *yada*, *become known*. The *Hof'al* form of the verb is passive, reinforcing the idea that the violator was unaware previously, but only now has *become aware* of the sin.

4:20 Purify ... making them right is the word translates the word *kapper* meaning “make atonement” (see 1:4).

Forgiven is a sacred word, *salach*, used only of God’s forgiveness, never of one person forgiving another. Moses had already invoked God’s forgiveness for their idolatry (*Exodus 34:9*), but here it is clearly seen that this pardon is given in response to the procedures outlined here. Moses will once again invoke God’s gracious forgiveness in response to the nation’s lack of faith at Kadesh-Barnea (*Numbers 14:19-20*).

4:22 One of Israel’s leaders would have been well-known to Israel as the tribal leaders who were mentioned in *Numbers 1:5-16*. This would also apply to their successors.

4:31 pleasing aroma means that this offering satisfies the just wrath of God.

5:1 testify translates the call to bear witness which is stated totally with four words here: *shema* (*call to hear*) followed by *qol alah* (*wailing voice of oath*) and *ad* (*witness*). It is as though a bailiff were to cry, “Oyez, Oyez. (meaning hear, hear). All persons having evidence before this Honorable Court are admonished to draw near and give their attention for the Court is now sitting. I adjure you before the living God to tell the truth” (See *Matthew 26:63* for one example).

5:2 Defilement and guilt – defilement is the same word translated *ceremonially unclean* in 4:12. *Guilt* is the word *asham* which has been seen in 4:13,22, and 27.

5:3 realize – literally means *come to know* from *be aware* in 4:14, but here *all has come to light*.

5:4 foolish vow – is rash in one’s speech, i.e., made without thinking through the implications. Swearing to tell the truth and not doing so is one example of this (*19:12*), but there are others (see 6:1-3, 5).

5:5 confess – primarily meant to acknowledge one’s trespass of God’s Law to the Lord (*Psalms 32:5*). Annually there was an example of this on the Day of Atonement (*16:21*).

5:6 Penalty – is from the same root family as the word for *guilt* (*4:13,22,27; 5:2,3,4,5*). Here the noun focuses on the cost of the trespass of the Law, namely the sin offering.

Purification [Sin] Offering (6:24-30)

²⁴Then the LORD said to Moses,

²⁵“Give Aaron and his sons the following instructions regarding the sin offering. The animal given as an offering for sin is a most holy offering, and it must be slaughtered in the LORD’s presence at the place where the burnt offerings are slaughtered. ²⁶The priest who offers the sacrifice as a sin offering must eat his portion in a sacred place within the courtyard of the Tabernacle. ²⁷Anyone or anything that touches the sacrificial meat will become holy. If any of the sacrificial blood spatters on a person’s clothing, the soiled garment must be washed in a sacred place. ²⁸If a clay pot is used to boil the sacrificial meat, it must then be broken. If a bronze pot is used, it must be scoured and thoroughly rinsed with water. ²⁹Any male from a priest’s family may eat from this offering; it is most holy. ³⁰But the offering for sin may not be eaten if its blood was brought into the Tabernacle as an offering for purification in the Holy Place. It must be completely burned with fire.

What are ‘unintentional’ sins?

	TESTIMONY	ANIMAL	HUMAN	VOW
CASE	“If you are called to testify about something you have seen or that you know about,	² “Or suppose you unknowingly touch something that is ceremonially unclean,	³ “Or suppose you unknowingly touch something that makes a person unclean.	⁴ “Or suppose you make a foolish vow of any kind,
SPECIFICS	it is sinful to refuse to testify,	such as the carcass of an unclean animal.		whether its purpose is for good or for bad.
PENALTY	and you will be punished for your sin.			

AWARENESS		When you realize what you have done,	When you realize what you have done	When you realize its foolishness,
ADMIT		you must admit your defilement and your guilt.	you must admit your guilt.	you must admit your guilt.
SPECIFICS		This is true whether it is a wild animal, a domestic animal, or an animal that scurries along the ground.		

What if you are poor?

⁵“When you become aware of your guilt in any of these ways, you must confess your sin. ⁶Then you must bring to the LORD as the penalty for your sin a female from the flock, either a sheep or a goat. This is a sin offering with which the priest will purify you from your sin, making you right with the LORD.

Poor <i>5:5-10</i>	Really Poor <i>5:11-13</i>
⁷ “But if you cannot afford to bring a sheep, you may bring to the LORD two turtledoves or two young pigeons as the penalty for your sin.	¹¹ “If you cannot afford to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, you may bring two quarts of choice flour for your sin offering.
	Since it is an offering for sin, you must not moisten it with olive oil or put any frankincense on it.
One of the birds will be for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.	
⁸ You must bring them to the priest, who will present the first bird as the sin offering.	¹² Take the flour to the priest,
He will wring its neck but without severing its head from the body.	who will scoop out a handful as a representative portion. He will burn it on the altar on top of the special gifts presented to the LORD.
⁹ Then he will sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the sides of the altar, and the rest of the blood will be drained out at the base of the altar.	
This is an offering for sin.	It is an offering for sin.
¹⁰ The priest will then prepare the second bird as a burnt offering, following all the procedures that have been prescribed.	
Through this process the priest will purify you from your sin, making you right with the LORD, and you will be forgiven.	¹³ Through this process, the priest will purify those who are guilty of any of these sins, making them right with the LORD, and they will be forgiven. The rest of the flour will belong to the priest, just as with the grain offering.”

ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY QUOTES

The *distinctive purpose* of the sin offering was to atone and provide forgiveness for specific unintentional or nondefiant sins where (in contrast with the guilt offering) no restitution was involved. God accepted the slaughter of the animal as a ransom payment for the particular sin which occasioned it, thus diverting His wrath from the sinner and (ultimately) to Christ on the cross.

The *typology* of the sin offering emphasizes the death of Christ as a satisfactory substitutionary sacrifice to provide the forgiveness of sins (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7). Identification with Him through personal faith leads to the practical experience of this forgiveness.¹

¹ F. Duane Lindsey, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 1985, 1, 182–183.

FORGIVENESS

The word translated *forgiveness* in 4:20, 26, 31, 35 is the word *salach* (סלח) which exclusively means God's forgiveness of man and is never used of one person forgiving another. There are four other words commonly translated *forgive*:

1. Don't be angry (*l' chara* - Genesis 31:35)
2. Lift the load (*ns'* - Genesis 50:16-17; see also Ex. 34:7 with Num. 14:18)
3. Appease, Atone (*kippur* - Ex. 32:30; see Isaiah 6:7)
4. Pardon (*slichab* - Exodus 34:9; Psalm 130:4).

This verb, [like] *bāra'* "to create," is used in Scripture solely of God. *sālah* is used of God's offer of pardon and forgiveness to the sinner. Never does this word in any of its forms refer to people forgiving each other.

One of the greatest evangelical notes in the OT is struck by this word: forgiveness and pardon from the very God of forgiveness. It also raises the greatest problem as well: What was the nature of this forgiveness? Hebrews *seems* to state just as categorically that OT forgiveness was ineffective and impossible (Heb 9:9; 10:4).

The resolution is clear. In the first place, Jehovah himself announces, in response to Moses' prayers for Israel, that he has forgiven Israel at two of their darkest moments, the golden calf incident and the murmuring at Kadesh Barnea (Ex 34:9; Num 14:19–20).

In the second place, on the basis of Mosaic legislation, real atonement and forgiveness were available for all sins except those of the defiant and unrepentant sinner (Num 15:30–31) who "despised the word of the Lord."

³⁰"But those who brazenly violate the LORD's will, whether native-born Israelites or foreigners, have blasphemed the LORD, and they must be cut off from the community. ³¹Since they have treated the LORD's word with contempt and deliberately disobeyed his command, they must be completely cut off and suffer the punishment for their guilt."

The claim is made repeatedly (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35, 5:10, 13, 16, 18, 26; 19:22) that when atonement was made, the sinner's sins were forgiven. For all such sins as lying, theft, perjury, fraud (Lev 6:1–7 [H 5:20–26]), or those "against any of the Commandments of the Lord" (Lev 4:2), it was possible to obtain divine pardon. Rather than being excluded, these sins were specifically included in God's provision for the OT believer along with "sins of ignorance" (Num 15:25, 26, 28). As if to emphasize the point, it is stated repeatedly that on the Day of Atonement, "all the iniquities" and sins of Israel were atoned (Lev 16:21, 30, 32, 34). But the individual Israelites had to properly "humble themselves" in true confession (Lev 16:29, 31). . . .

So exciting was the openness of this offer of forgiveness that Isaiah (55:7) featured it as the heart of his invitation to salvation. So ready was their Lord to forgive, that Isaiah's listeners must forget all notions based on the reluctance of men to forgive each other.

The experience of forgiveness in the OT was personally efficacious, although objectively the basis and grounds of that forgiveness awaited the death of Christ.

Other terms used for forgiveness stressed the ideas of wiping out or blotting out the memory of the sin (*māḥâ*), covering or concealing the record of the sin (*kāsâ*), lifting up and removal of sin (*nāsâ*), passing by of sin (*ābar*), and pardoning on the basis of a substitute (*kāpar* in the Piel q.v.).

Three texts in Jeremiah, 31:34; 33:8; 50:20, celebrate a future forgiveness of our Lord in connection with the New Covenant and ultimately his second coming.²

² Walter C. Kaiser, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1999, 626.