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The Purification Offering: Purified by Blood 4:1 to 5:13

The purification offering DIG: What difference is made between intentional (Num 15:30-31) and unintentional sin (Num 15:22-29)? Why is there little mercy shown for the defiant sinner? What distinctions are made between the communal sin and the individual sin? Why such distinctions? What does this say about God's view of sin? Why do you think sacrifice is required for unintentional sin? What does that say about God's nature? About human nature? What does this teach us about reconciliation?

REFLECT: What do you see as the difference between intentional and unintentional sin in your own life? How do you deal with each kind of sin? How does this help to mend your relationship with God? What steps does a believer today take to restore his or her relationship with YHVH and the community of fellowship? What does "washed in the blood" mean to you? How could you explain it to an unbeliever?

Both of the purification offering and the guilt offering form a single picture, to show us how we can make peace with YHVH.

God, in **His** grace, has made provision for our cleansing. This provision was absolutely necessary because of our old sin nature and its effects on our lives (see the commentary on **Romans**, to see link click [Bm](#) - **The Consequences of Adam**). Our deprived nature must be dealt with if communion with **YHVH** is to be maintained. Even true worshipers, people who are steadfast in their devotion to **the LORD**, and who seek to live in obedience to **His Word**, find the need for **God's** gracious provision of cleansing if they are to continue in fellowship with **Him**.⁴⁷

The Tabernacle courtyard was shaped like a rectangle (see the commentary on **Exodus Ex** - **The Courtyard and Gate of the Tabernacle**). Inside the Sanctuary, **the Most Holy Place** housed **the ark of the covenant** and **the mercy seat**. **Outside** the Sanctuary, there was a **bronze basin** where the priests constantly washed and purified themselves. Then, right in front of the gate was **the bronze altar** of sacrifice. **No one could enter the presence of God without a sacrifice. The burnt offering, the grain offering and the**

peace offering all have **Messianic** implications. First, **the burnt offering** emphasizes the total devotion, commitment and surrender to **the Messiah**. Secondly, **the grain offering** points to **Messiah** who is the bread of life. And thirdly **the peace offering** celebrates our **peace** with **God** after **Messiah** has given **Himself** for us.

Each of these three voluntary **offerings** maintained a relationship with **YHVH**. **The peace offering**, for example, was not to *make peace* with **God** but to *maintain peace* with **God**. So the question needs to be asked, “How do we make **peace** with **God** to begin with?” Or stating it another way, “How does one first enter **the Temple courtyard** to offer a **sacrifice** and have fellowship with **YHVH**?” Were there any requirements to be made before one might offer **the burnt offering**, **the grain offering**, or **the peace offering**? Yes, it was **the purification** and **guilt offerings**. This is where **the Israelite** found **himself** estranged and separated from **God**. How could **he** come near to **YHVH**? It was through **the purification** and **guilt offerings**. Both of these **offerings** form a single picture of how one makes peace with **YHVH**. **The purification offering** was prompted by *the root of sin*, or our old sin nature. When **the Israelite** sensed **his** separation from **God**, being **outside** the perimeter of blessing, **his** path back was, first, repentance, then **confession** through **the purification** and **guilt offerings**. Only then could **he** make **his burnt, grain, and peace offerings**.

The word translated as **purification offering** many times in our English Bibles is the Hebrew word *chatat*, which means *sin*. But it can be more picturesque than this, because the word carries with it the idea of *missing the mark*. Hence, **its** purpose was to help **the sinner** keep in check any undisciplined thinking or actions coming from **his** old **sin** nature that would cause **him** to *miss the mark*, and **unintentionally sin** (*chatta*). Such **sins** were often committed when one was not as careful or disciplined in their walk with **ADONAI** as they should have been. As a result, **Leviticus** mandated a **purification offering** (*chatat*).⁴⁸

Yet, it is not always so simple. There are several instances when a *chatat* must be brought even though there is no **sin** committed. For example: **A woman after childbirth** must bring a *chatat* (**Leviticus 12:6**); **a leper**, after **his** cleansing was mandated to bring a *chatat* (**Leviticus 14:19**); **a nazirite who had come in contact with a corpse** had to bring a *chatat* (**Numbers 6:11**); and **a nazirite who had completed the term of his vow** must bring a *chatat* (**Numbers 6:14**). None of these people had committed a **sin**. Therefore, *the chatat* should not be understood to be simply an offering for **sin**. Actually, a better conceptual translation for *the chatat* would be **purification offering**, and that is what I will be using. The Hebrew word *chata* sometimes denotes a **purification** instead of a **sin** (see the Hebrew of **Leviticus 8:15, 14:49, 19:9**). As we study the ritual procedure, we

will see that **the blood** of *the chatat* is **sprinkled** in various **purification** rights.

This makes a good deal of sense. A *chatat* is often mandated for an individual that has become ritually unclean. The unclean person has not **sinned**, but he or she is in need of **purification**. Understanding a *chatat* as a **purification offering** instead of a **sin offering** resolves the difficulties and helps us better understand the rituals involved.

But if a *chatat* is actually a **purification offering**, why must it be brought when a person **sins**? **Sin** and ritual impurity are two very different things. Being in a state of ritual impurity is not **sinful**. It is a normal, human condition which begins at birth. Nevertheless, the Bible makes it clear that **sin** makes us **unclean** (see comments on **Leviticus 12**). Ritual uncleanness is not **sin**, nor is it **sinful**. It arises from many sources which are not **sinful** at all. But it is also true that **sin**, in some way, leaves us spiritually and ritually unclean.

When a person **sins**, the **sin** leaves a Levitical defilement, a “stain” upon the sinner which is akin to ritual impurity. Technically, this “stain” is not the same as ritual impurity. Ritual impurity is a physical state that applies to the physical body. The “stain” of the **sin** is spiritual in nature, but the imagery overlaps. In some sense, just as **sin** makes us “feel dirty,” there is a physical component in need of ritual purification. *The chatat* is a **purification offering meant** to remove that “stain” from the flesh. Obviously then, before we can fully appreciate how **the chatat** functions as a **purification offering**, we must first possess a firm grasp of the Levitical concept of ritual purity. We will talk about this later in **Leviticus**. **ADONAI**’s remedy for uncleanness is **purification**. We will discuss other **purification** rituals, but for right now it is enough to know that the cornerstone of **purification** is *the chatat*.⁴⁹

The purification offering was a mandatory atonement for unintentional sin, confessed sin, and forgiveness for sin where restitution was not required. God accepted the blood of the animal as payment for the specific sin of the offeror. It averted God’s wrath on the sinner, and ultimately directed that wrath to Messiah where He became sin for us on the cross (Second Corinthians 5:21; First Peter 2:24).

Then **YHVH** said to **Moses**, speak to the **Israelites** and say to them: **When anyone** (Hebrew: *nephesh*, meaning *soul*) **sins** (first mention in **Leviticus**) **unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the 365 of My mitzvot, he must bring a purification offering** to Me (**4:1-2**). Not for salvation, but to reestablish communion with **YHVH**. This points to our old **sin** nature and disturbs the life of the believer. It separates us from **God**. The first thing we note as we read this passage is that ignorance did not excuse the sinner.

The Holy Spirit presents **the purification offering** in a descending order, from **the high priest**, to **the Sanhedrin** (see **The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**), to **a tribal leader**, to **a common person**, to **the poor**, and then to **the poorest of the poor**. **The purification offerings** were weighted according to the ability to pay. **The high priest** and **the Sanhedrin** were required to offer **a young bull**, **a tribal leader** was required to offer **a male goat**, **a common person** was to offer **a female goat or lamb**, **the poor** were expected to offer **two doves or two young pigeons**, and **the poorest of the poor** only needed to offer **a tenth of an ephah of fine flour**.

If the anointed priest (Hebrew: *ha'cohen ha'mashich*) **sinned unintentionally**. Normally, **the high priest** is called *cohen ha'gadol*. But it is only in **Leviticus 4, 5 and 6**, dealing with the purification and guilt offerings, that he is called *ha'cohen ha'mashiach*, with no further explanation. For us this title reminds us of **the ultimate High Priest** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bg - The Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of Jesus**). **David** prophesied that **the Messiah** would be **a priest** forever in **Psalms 110:4**, "ADONAI has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek' (see **Hebrews Ay - Messiah's Qualifications as our Great High Priest**)."

If the anointed priest (Hebrew: *ha'cohen ha'mashich*) **sinned unintentionally, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to YHVH a young bull without defect as a purification offering for the sin he has committed. He is to present the bull at the entrance to the tent of meeting before YHVH. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it there before YHVH (Leviticus 4:3-4)**. It is interesting that the first person instructed to bring **a purification offering** is **the high priest himself!** Who would suspect that **he** was a sinner? **The one** who was to represent the people to **God**. Knowing this, who could possibly represent the people?

The bull was the biggest **animal** you could bring in the sacrificial system. When **the high priest** would bring **a young bull** to **the Tabernacle**, everyone would take notice. If **the high priest** was a sinner, then everyone must be **a sinner**. Reading **Leviticus**, one would be forced to look for another mediator, and that mediator would come in the form of **the Messiah** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Dk - A Prophet Like Moshe**).

If the anointed priest sinned unintentionally to bring guilt on the people, he needed to bring to God a young bull without defect as a purification offering for the sin he had committed. This was an expensive offering. **He laid his hand on its head** as a point of identification, **and then slaughtered it. Then he took some of the bull's blood and carried it into the Holy Place**. There **he sprinkled some of it seven times towards the**

inner veil in the Sanctuary. Then the priest put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of incense that was in front of the inner veil in the Holy Place. The rest of the bull's blood he poured out at the base of the bronze altar. Then he removed all its fat and burned it on the bronze altar (4:3-11).

After the sacrifice, **all the rest of the bull, its hide and all its flesh must be taken outside the Tabernacle to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burned in a wood fire on the ash pile (4:12).** Only the more valuable innards of the bull were sacrificed on the bronze altar. Then, the remaining carcass was carted **outside the Tabernacle to be burned.** The book of **Hebrews** explains why this was the case: **The high priest carries the blood of the animals into the Holy Place as a purification offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Yeshua suffered outside the city gate of Jerusalem to make the people holy through His own blood (Hebrews 13:12).** Just as **the bull** was sacrificed with many people watching, **Yeshua** was sacrificed **outside the city gate where many people stood and watched (Luke 23:35a).**

If the leaders of Isra'el, the Hebrew word *adat Isra'el* refers to *a large body within the nation*, **sinned unintentionally**, and did **what was forbidden in any of the commandments, even though the Jewish community was unaware of the matter, the Jews would still be guilty** because the *adat Isra'el* represented them. **In rabbinic tradition, this would refer to the seventy members of the great Sanhedrin** (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin](#)). If the Torah had been neglected to the point that **the leaders of Isra'el became aware of the sin that they had committed, they needed to bring a young bull as a purification offering. The atonement was made in the same way as the atonement for the high priest.** The sacrifice was slaughtered on the north side of **the bronze altar.** Because it was a **most holy sacrifice, the priest who offered it needed to eat it and wash any blood that might have splattered onto his garment in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. Any male in the priest's family could eat it**, since women were not allowed **in the courtyard. But any purification offering whose blood** was symbolically sprinkled toward the mercy seat, or whose **blood** was applied to **the horns of the altar of incense, could not be eaten.** In that case, it needed to be totally burned, because it was a **purification offering (Leviticus 4:13-21, 6:24-30).**

When a tribal leader, the Hebrew word *nasi*, meaning *a tribal leader or lifted up one*, as seen in **Numbers 34:18, sinned unintentionally, he was guilty. When he was made aware of the sin he committed, the whole community was to offer a young bull for a burnt offering, along with its prescribed grain offering and drink offering, and a**

male goat without defect for a purification offering (Numbers 15:22-24). He was to lay his hand on the goat's head and then slaughter it on the north side of the bronze altar. But instead of taking the blood into the Holy Place, he took some of the blood of the purification offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the bronze altar and poured out the rest of the blood at its base. He then burned all the fat on the bronze altar, just as he burned the fat of the peace offering. This blood had not come in contact with the Holy Place, so he did not need to dispose of it outside the camp of Isra'el. When this procedure was followed in faith, the leader's sin was atoned for and he was forgiven.⁵⁰ But more than that, the whole Israelite community and the aliens living among them were also forgiven, because when the tribal leader represented all the people, they were also unintentionally involved in the sin and needed forgiveness (Leviticus 4:22-26: Numbers 15:25-26).

When a common person sinned unintentionally, atonement was made the same way, except **his offering was a year-old female goat.** However, **he** had a choice. **If he** chose to bring a lamb as his purification offering, **he was to bring a female without defect. The priest was to make atonement before ADONAI for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement had been made for him, he was forgiven. The same mitzvah applied to everyone who sinned unintentionally, whether he was a native-born Israelite or an alien (Leviticus 4:27; Numbers 27-29).** It was significant that **the fat burned on the altar was an aroma pleasing to God, highlighting His acceptance of the purification offering which, when brought in faith, resulted in atonement and forgiveness.⁵¹**

Then **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh gives four examples of sin** that would require an offering. **If anyone deliberately sins because they do not speak up when they hear (what we listen to) a public charge to testify regarding something they have seen (what we look at) or learned about, they will be held responsible (5:1). He** witnessed or heard of a sin and kept quiet about it. Nothing is easier than doing nothing. **His** silence brought an innocent man to be condemned. These are seemingly small and insignificant sins. But **Paul** informs us: **I would not have known what sin was except through the Torah. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the Torah had not said, "Do not covet" (Romans 7:7b).** This is the great outcome of studying **Leviticus.** We also learn that sin is not only what we do, but what we do not do. What we neglect to do.

If anyone becomes aware that they are guilty - if they unwittingly touch (what we handle) anything ceremonially unclean (whether the carcass of an unclean animal, wild or domestic, or of any unclean creature that moves along the ground) and they

are unaware that they have become unclean, but then they come to realize their guilt (5:2).

Or if they touch human uncleanness (anything that would make them unclean) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt (5:3). The concepts of **clean** and **unclean** will be more fully discussed later in this commentary (see **Bk - Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals**). But for now, let it suffice to say that these terms do not imply “being dirty” as in a mud stain of a white rug. **Unclean** has to do with coming in contact with the realm of **sin** and/or death. Such contact would hinder the fellowship of **the Israelite** with **ADONAI** because **He** has absolutely no contact with it in **His** realm. **He** is in an entirely different universe that is characterized only by life and righteousness. Whatever this kind of **uncleanness** means, **the purification offering** took it away from both **the worshiper** and the objects in which **the Tabernacle** was affected. Therefore, we can safely say the sin defiles us (and in the Dispensation of Torah, both **the Tabernacle** and eventually **the Temple**), and that the proper means of purification was **animal blood**.

Or if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath (what we say) to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt (5:4).

Notice the process: First, when an **Israelite** felt the weight of **his** old **sin** nature (however that came to be), and recognized **his** separated condition from **God**, **he became aware that he was guilty in any of these matters, he** then needed to **repent** with the help of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**. Secondly, **he** needed to **confess his sin in whatever way he had sinned**. Thirdly, **he** would bring **his purification offering**. As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to **YHVH** a female lamb or goat from the flock as a purification offering; and the priest shall make **atonement** for them for their sin (5:5-6). That is **the purification offering**. Yes, you must **confess**, but you must also bring your **purification offering** to **God**. Fourthly, **the guilt offering** is made.

When a poor person sinned unintentionally, if he could not afford a lamb, **he was to bring two doves or two young pigeons** to **ADONAI** as a penalty for his sin - one for a purification offering and the other for a burnt offering. Mary, the mother of **Christ**, obeyed this command when she took the baby **Jesus** to the Temple and offered her sacrifice of a pair of doves and two young pigeons (**Luke 2:24**). The fact that she brought a purification offering to **God** proved that she believed she had **sinned**. The worshiper was to bring both birds to the priest, who first offered the one for the purification

offering. He wrung its head from its neck, not severing it completely, and then sprinkled some of the blood of the purification offering against the side of the bronze altar; the rest of the blood was drained out at its base. It was a purification offering. The priest then offered the other bird as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and made atonement for him for the sin he had committed, and he was forgiven (5:7-10).

If, however, the poorest of the poor sinned unintentionally, and could not afford two doves or two young pigeons, he was to bring a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a purification offering instead. That was two quarts or four pints of fine flour, as much as a man ate in one day. This was a bloodless offering, but the worshiper would eventually be covered by the blood offering made on the Day of Atonement (see Ef - Yom Kippur). The writer to the Hebrews may have been thinking of this when he wrote: The Torah requires that *nearly* (emphasis added) everything be cleansed with blood (Hebrews 9:22a). In contrast with the fine flour brought as a grain offering, he could not put oil or incense on it because it was a purification offering. He brought it to the priest, who took a handful of it as a memorial portion. It was a bloodless offering, but the priest placed the handful of fine flour upon a bloody offering already on the bronze altar. In that way, the priest made atonement for him and he was forgiven. The rest of the offering belonged to the priest, as was the case with the grain offering (5:11-13).

In these purification offering rituals, the blood of the animal acted as the ritual cleansing agent. The purification offering is at a higher level of holiness than the other sacrificial offerings because without it, none of the other offerings are even possible. The soul it represents is so pure and precious, it cannot be removed from within the Tabernacle. Even a few drops splattered on a garment must be washed out within the Tabernacle. When the worshiper identified himself with the animal through laying on of hands, he invested his identity into the purifying blood of the animal. When the animal's blood was applied to the bronze altar, YHVH recognized it as the worshiper's own blood. Therefore, the worshiper was then regarded as clean and pure in the presence of YHVH because he had identified his soul in the blood of the animal. It was a symbolic gesture of purification through identification. For the life of the animal is in his blood, and God had given it to the Israelites to make atonement for themselves on the bronze altar; it was the blood that made atonement for their lives (17:11).



The Messianic Implication: *The chatat* is brought as a purification from ritual uncleanness and the “stain” left behind by **sin**. **The blood of the purification offering** is brought before **YHVH** as a vicarious substitute for the offender. In that regard, it acts as a cleansing agent. **Ha’Shem** recognizes it as the offeror’s soul in a pure state. In the same way, when we identify ourselves in **Messiah**, **His** absolute purity compensates for our uncleanness. The precious **blood** of **Messiah** is so holy and pure that through it we are cleansed of our uncleanness. Hence the expression: **washed in the blood (First John 1:7 and 9)**.⁵²