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The Sin Offering

Leviticus 4:1 to 5:13 and 6:24-30; Numbers 15:22-31

The sin offering DIG: What difference is made between intentional (Numbers 15:30-31) and unintentional sin (Numbers 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 do you think God makes 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?

The sin offering was a mandatory atonement for specific 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 worshiper. It averted God's wrath on the sinner, and ultimately directed that wrath to Christ where He became sin for us on the cross (Second Corinthians 5:21; First Peter 2:24).

In the Hebrew text the same word is used for **sin** and **sin offering**. Thus, the two were indistinguishable; and in this startling fact we realize the love of **Christ** for us. In that **He** became our **sin offering**, although **He Himself** was **without sin (Hebrews 4:15)**. **He** suffered, **the righteous for the unrighteous**, that He might **bring us to God (First Peter 3:18)**. **Becoming a curse for us**, **He** removed the **curse of sin** by paying the penalty **Himself (Galatians 3:13)**. **Despised and rejected by men**, **He** was our **sin offering (Isaiah 53:3; Romans 8:3)**.⁵³⁴

Then **ADONAI** said to **Moses**, speak to the **Israelites** and say to them: **When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of My commands, he** must bring a **sin offering** to Me (**Leviticus 4:1-2**). The first thing we note as we read this passage is that ignorance did not excuse the sinner. The word for *unintentional sin* comes

from a Hebrew root meaning *to wander, to make a mistake, or to commit error*. The Hebrew word for **sin** is *chata*, which means, *to miss the mark*. There is no calculated defiance or premeditation in this **sin**, it merely pointed to the **sin** nature.

The Holy Spirit presents **the sin offering** in a descending order, from **the high priest**, to **the Sanhedrin**, to **a tribal leader**, to **a common person**, to **the poor**, and then to **the poorest of the poor**. **The sin** 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 high priest sinned unintentionally, he needed to **bring to God a young bull without defect as a sin 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 mercy seat, which was actually hidden behind **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**. **But the hide of the bull and all its flesh** were taken **outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean (Leviticus 4:3-12)**. **And so Yeshua suffered outside the city gate of Jerusalem to make the people holy through His own blood (Hebrews 13:12)**. Normally, **the high priest** could eat a portion of **the sin offering**, but in this case, because **the blood** was sprinkled towards the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, nothing could be eaten. Everything needed to be burned **outside the camp**.

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**, to see link click [Lg - The Great Sanhedrin](#)). If the Torah had been neglected to the point that **the leaders of Israel** became **aware of the sin** that **they had committed**, they needed to **bring a young bull as a sin 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 **sin 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 **sin 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 sin 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 sin 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 **Israel**. When this procedure was followed in faith, the leader's sin was atoned for **and he was forgiven**.⁵³⁵ 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 sin 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 law 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 sin offering which, when brought in faith, resulted in atonement and forgiveness.⁵³⁶

Then the Holy Spirit gives four examples of sin that would require an offering. **First, if a person sinned because he withheld evidence when called upon to testify** as a witness regarding something he had seen or learned about, he was held responsible. **Secondly, if a person touched anything ceremonially unclean - whether a dead body,**

the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that moved along the ground. **Thirdly, if he touched human uncleanness - anything that made him unclean** like touching a person who had touched a dead body, or touching a woman on her period, or touching a leper. **Fourthly, if a person thoughtlessly took an oath to do good or evil they sinned.** All four examples involved sin resulting from negligence or perhaps even forgetfulness, and fell into the general category of unpremeditated, **unintentional** sins. Ignorance was no excuse, when they discovered it, they had **sinned (Leviticus 5:1-6).**

But anyone who sinned defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blaspheming ADONAI was killed. Because he despised God's word and broke His commands, that person surely must die. The defiant one's **guilt remained on him (Numbers 15:30-31).**



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 sin 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 (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple](#)), which proves that **she** considered **herself** a **sinner**. The fact that she brought a **sin 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 sin offering. He wrung its head from its neck, not severing it completely, and then sprinkled some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the bronze altar; the rest of the blood was drained out at its base. It was a sin 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 (Leviticus 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 sin 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 my commentary on **Leviticus - The Day of Atonement or 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 sin 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 (Leviticus 5:11-13).

The rich and the poor, the powerful and the helpless, the self-righteous, the moral man and the flagrant sinner - all possessed the old, sinful nature inherited from Adam. And for all, a Substitute had to die.

If I asked you if you were a sinner, what would you say? **Romans 3:23** says: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**. That includes you and me, doesn't it? Most people feel that being good gets you into heaven and being bad keeps you out. That simply is not true; we **all have sinned**. What would you say **sin** is? I think we can agree that we are both sinners; now let's define **sin**. Some have said, "I'm not perfect," or "I have made some mistakes." But what do you think the Bible means by **sin**? Well, the Scriptures say that **everyone who keeps on sinning is violating the Torah - indeed, sin is violation of the Torah (First John 3:4)**. Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever misused the name of **God**? Have you ever told a lie? This is what **sin** is. It's **violating the Torah**. And any time you break a law there is a penalty. If you run a stop sign, the penalty is a fine. If you rob a bank, the penalty is jail. What was the penalty for **violating the Torah**? We will find out in the next section.⁵³⁷