

## Leviticus Bible Study #7

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### Leviticus 5:14-6:7

**5:14** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **15** “If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. **16** He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

**17** “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. **18** He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. **19** It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD.”

**6:1** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor **3** or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— **4** if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found **5** or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. **6** And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. **7** And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.”

### Introduction

Thus far the Mosaic system of sacrifice has been concerned with matters of fellowship with God, proper offerings to Him, and the restoration of sacred space over unintentional sins. Now Moses addresses the topic of those sins which are best classified as a “breach of faith,” wherein the offender must offer up an act of true penance on account of the offense having a greater severity. Here we are witness to God's distinctions in moral culpability for different sins, something which demonstrates His mercy – and His understanding – upon all.

### Ch.5 Vs.14-19

**14** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **15** “If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. **16** He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

**17** “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. **18** He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. **19** It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD.”

The term “breach of faith” is an approximate translation. מעל<sup>12</sup> is a noun form of the verb מעל,<sup>34</sup> and both are used in sequence in the fourteenth verse. While it would be more poetic and in line with Moses' alliterative writing style to translate the verse as saying “if anyone sins a sin,” it would miss the deeper meaning. Both involve an active decision on the part of the offender to do something bad and violate trust with another person. These are not accidental sins, unlike the שגגה sin<sup>56</sup> that is mentioned in the same verse. God relates to Moses here that, whether intentional or unintentional, violation of the Tabernacles implements requires more than a mere guilt offering.

The fine imposed alongside the animal sacrifice goes to the priests, because a disservice has been done to them in addition to the violation of sacred space whether the offense was intentional or not. For example, if a man has a stomach illness and vomits on the altar, thereby ruining a sacrifice that was in progress, he must make the guilt offering and offer an additional one-fifth of the ram's value. After all, the priests would have to reconsecrate the altar, which means more sacrifices, and then they have to re-do the first interrupted offering! If a man decided in a fit of rage to knock over the lampstand by the showbread, the same penalty is incurred. The Law imposes the same correction upon both intentional and unintentional offenses because the result is the same. In the case of violating the holy things at the Tabernacle, space must be reconsecrated, rites re-performed, etc. The priests determining the additional fee to be paid by the “shekel of the sanctuary” is in line with their having been affected by the violation.

The penalties are the same. This is in keeping with the principle of *Shalom* in Leviticus. *Shalom*, often translated as “peace,” is when everything is as it ought to be: conflict is absent, space is uncorrupted, and the people treat each other with fairness and love. When this state of affairs is broken, then efforts must be made to bring it back to that place of well-being. *Shalom* is the term for these efforts, making things right by positive action: in the case of disturbing the holy things of the Lord, a guilt offering is made to God and restitution is made to the priests. In legal cases like theft, as the sixth chapter discusses, *Shalom* is shown by returning what was stolen and adding a fee for the costs the victim of theft experienced.

After discussing the “compensation offering” (as some exegetes have called it), Moses then restates the purpose, circumstances and cost for *most* guilt offerings, summarizing the commandments given in the fourth chapter of Leviticus. He does not go into detail regarding which animal is to be sacrificed for which person according to their station or wealth status, wrapping these requirements as the “equivalent” to a ram as discussed in previous chapters. In other words, he brings up the general standards for guilt offerings as a means of reminder. While unintentional sins committed regarding the holy things in the Tabernacle have the one-fifth extra cost added, in other cases only the standard guilt offering is required.

## Ch.6 Vs.1-7

1The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor 3 or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— 4 if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found 5 or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the

1 Transliterated “Maal,” Strong's 4604

2 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4604.htm>

3 Also transliterated “Maal,” Strong's #4603

4 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4603.htm>

5 Transliterated “shgagah,” Strong's 7684

6 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7684.htm>

day he realizes his guilt. **6** And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. **7** And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.”

The Tabernacle furnishings are not the only things to which “Maal” may be committed. Any intentional breach of the Second Greatest Commandment<sup>7</sup> also requires both sacrifice and restitution.<sup>8</sup> It is not coincidental. Whenever someone defrauds his neighbor, plunders him, or swears falsely, they are offending God (hence the necessity for a sacrifice) and harming their neighbor, adding the requirement of extra restitution. If someone has broken a single one of the Ten Commandments, then he or she has broken more commandments at the same time. Any sin we commit against our neighbors will displease our Lord, hence the need for both offering and restitution. Yet when a sin is more against God's standards for things like cleanliness, then only He requires restitution in the form of the offering; where our neighbors have not been made to suffer or materially damaged in some way, they remain between us and God (*without* easing the requirement of receiving absolution and doing our best not to re-offend).

Though the sin was intentional, the offender must still “realize his guilt.” This is to say, the restitution can only come from the penitent when they, by contrition, decide to make amends and perform penitential acts. The text presumes that these are situations when someone sins and effectively *gets away with it*; here is their chance to perform *Shalam* and make amends by the prescribed method as an act of voluntary piety. Otherwise, they are under the civic penalties as described in later portions of the Law, which are harsher.<sup>9</sup> This dynamic, wherein one receives more lenient treatment on account of their willingness to repent, has a deeper pattern in Scripture. If a man covets his sin, he is liable to strict and harsh punishment. Yet if he repents, then there is a spotless lamb who dies for him. So it is under the New Covenant as well; whoever covets their sin and resists the Holy Spirit only has Judgment to look forward to, while those who repent and believe have their sins covered by Christ's precious Blood.

Speaking of our Savior, He refers to this pious kind of *Shalam* act in the Sermon on the Mount. God speaks to Moses about a man repenting and making amends with the man he offended before making his guilt offering here, thus guaranteeing him a more lenient experience. Christ says:

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. **26** Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.<sup>10</sup>

The dynamic is the same, for Christ is the very same Divine One who spoke to Moses while he wrote Leviticus. Christians are to have the same attitude of active piety and making things right as the Old Covenant believers were, only now we have much greater freedom in our pursuit of it.

---

7 “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” Leviticus 19:9

8 Of course, there are also sins for which the punishment is a swift death, but we will address those when they are mentioned.

9 At times, poetically so. Exodus 22:1 states that a thief who sells or kills a livestock animal must return five-fold what he stole; here, if he “turns himself in” so to speak, he only pays one-fifth extra.

10 Matthew 5:23-26