

LEVITICUS

Chapter 5

“If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; 2 or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt; 3 or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt; 4 or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these; 5 when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, 6 he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin. 7 “But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. 8 He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering. He shall wring its head from its neck but shall not sever it completely, 9 and he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. 10 Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven. 11 “But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. 12 And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful of it as its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, on the LORD’s food offerings; it is a sin offering. 13 Thus the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in any one of these things, and he shall be forgiven. And the remainder shall be for the priest, as in the grain offering.”

5:1–13 These offerings fit into a category known as a graded sin offering. Sacrificial offerings were made to cleanse the offerer of his sin in four categories: failure to respond to a public oath to testify (v 1); touching an unclean thing (v 2); touching human uncleanness (v 3); or uttering a careless oath (v 4). (TLSB)

5:1–4 Four examples of the unintentional sins (see 4:2–3, 13, 22, 27) the sin offering covers. (CSB)

5:1 It is sinful not to testify when called to do so. (TLSB)

adjuration. A placing under oath. (TLSB)

5:2 *guilt.* Ritually unclean people were unfit for God’s presence. (TLSB)

5:3 *human uncleanness.* See chs. 11–15. (CSB)

Any person with a skin disease (14:2, 19) or a bodily discharge (15:2, 16, 19), or anyone who had handled a corpse (Nu 19:14–16). (TLSB)

5:4 *rash oath*. Oath made in haste that may include bargaining with God (e.g., “Lord, if You do this, I will be more faithful in worship attendance”). (TLSB)

5:5 *confesses*. The offerer had to acknowledge his sin to God in order to receive forgiveness. (CSB)

Sins were confessed publicly at the altar before God and His priest. We are called to confess our sins as well (1Jn 1:8–10). (TLSB)

5:11 *fine flour*. See note on 4:23. Although no blood was used with a flour offering, it was offered “on top of the offerings made to the LORD by fire” (v. 12). Heb 9:22 may refer to such a situation. (CSB)

frankincense. Too expensive for the poor. In this case, God wanted the unsavoriness of this sacrifice to remind the sinner not to relish sin. (TLSB)

4:1–5:13 God, who abhors all sin, distinguishes sins of error from those of intent. Because of sin, God could no longer dwell with the Israelites as He desired. To this end, God gave the sin offering for the deliverance of those who inadvertently sinned against Him (cf 4:20, 26, 31, 35). Just as God’s OT people publicly confessed their sins during divine worship, God’s people today confess, “We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone” (LSB, p 151). Jesus Christ is the sin offering for all sins, for all time (1Jn 2:2; 4:10). • How wonderful it is to hear the words of Absolution: “Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins.” Amen. (LSB, p 151) (TLSB)

Laws for Guilt Offerings

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.”

5:15 *shekel of the sanctuary*. Weight of this shekel was set by the priests and may have varied in weight from the common shekel. (TLSB)

guilt offering. See further priestly regulations in 7:1–6 (see also Isa 53:10). Traditionally called the “trespass offering,” it was very similar to the sin offering (cf. 7:7), and the Hebrew words for the two were apparently sometimes interchanged. The major difference between the guilt and sin offerings was that the guilt offering was brought in cases where restitution for the sin was possible and therefore required (v. 16). Thus in cases of theft and cheating (6:2–5) the stolen property had to be returned along with 20 percent indemnity. By contrast, the sin offering was prescribed in cases of sin where no restitution was possible. The animal sacrificed as a guilt offering was always a ram. (CSB)

An individual was required to present a sacrifice to compensate God for his or her sacrilege. The guilt offering, also called a reparation offering, required a ram of acceptable value. Precious metals valued at one-fifth of the animal’s value were weighed and given to the priest (cf 6:5). (TLSB)

5:19 *incurred guilt before the LORD.* Offenders suffered divine retribution for instances of unrepented sin.
(TLSB)