

Leviticus Chapter 5

[Actually 5:14 – 6:7]

The Guilt Offering



The guilt offering is sometimes called the trespass offering because it trespasses against someone or the reparation offering because it attempts to repair the damage caused by the sinner. The Hebrew word אֲשָׁם (*asham*) is defined by Strong's as *offense* or *guilt*. Here is how it is translated in the NASV guilt (2), guilt offering (38), guilt offerings (1), guilty deeds (1), sin(s) (1), wrong (3). So we shall refer to it as the guilt offering.

Guilt is universal. We have all felt guilt, and we have all been guilty. Many of the philosophies of the world do not recognize the biblical concept of sin, but they invariably recognize the concept of guilt and try to deal with it in some way (Romans 2:14-15).

Guilt is inevitable. Unlike animals, all humans have a sense of right and wrong. Since we all have moral notions, and our moral notions are inescapable, we either accept some moral code or create our own. Either way, we will accept a code of conduct for ourselves which we cannot keep. Guilt is inevitable because we will always break whatever code we believe in (Roman 7:14-25).

In general, religious groups stir up guilt as a means of control. Religious laws create guilt and the need to deal with it. Conversely, humanist philosophies try to narrow the scope of guilt. Usually, they do not affirm the validity of guilt except in regard to violating some one else's space, privacy, or short-term welfare.

Legal and emotional guilt can be paired in four ways:

1. No legal guilt with no guilt feelings. I have neither broken a law nor do I have any sense of conviction.
2. No legal guilt with guilt feelings. This can come about by a misunderstanding of the intent of a law or a sign of an overly sensitive conscience.
3. Legal guilt without guilt feelings. This could be from actual innocence (as with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7), or it could be a bad feeling for getting caught for law breaking, but with no sense of wrongdoing.
4. Legal guilt with guilt feelings. This is a confession that the law is right and results in repentance.

The violations requiring a guilt offering all seem to involve loss of property by defrauding someone. The offenders may have had to confess voluntarily to being "guilty" because the crimes might not otherwise have come to light or been settled. The major difference in the guilt offering is that a restitution had to be paid.

Although there are others in Leviticus, this section lists three circumstances which required a guilt offering:

- 5:14-16 Sinning unintentionally by acting unfaithfully against *the Lord's holy things*.
- 5:17-19 Sinning unintentionally by being unaware of breaking the negative commands.

- 6:1-7 Sinning by unfaithfully committing robbery or extortion.

Leviticus 5: 14-16 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against the LORD’S holy things, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD: a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. He shall make restitution for that which he has sinned against the holy thing, and shall add to it a fifth part of it and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it will be forgiven him.”*

The most glaring fact here is, as with the sin offerings, unintentional sin renders one guilty and requires an offering as an atonement for sin. In this case, someone *sins unintentionally against the LORD’S holy things*. The Lord’s **holy** things are those things **set apart** unto God. Examples include:

- The Lord’s name is holy. We are commanded not to misuse it, such as swearing falsely by His name or taking it in vain. As the Lord’s Prayer says, *Hallowed be Thy name*.
- The Sabbath was to be kept holy. And Sabbath days were not just weekly but connected with the sacred festivals.
- The tithe was holy (set apart from one’s income) to God. Neglecting to pay the tithe would violate the Lord’s holy things.
- The firstborn was holy (set apart) for God and must be redeemed. Failure to redeem the firstborn would be a sin concerning a holy thing of God.
- The offerings at the Temple were holy. Much of the Temple ceremony dealt with maintaining its holy character. For example, Leviticus 19 describes an offering which must be burned on the third day. After that *anyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the Lord* (verses 7-8).



When the offense was determined and confessed, the priest would determine the monetary value of the loss. That was done *according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary*. The sanctuary shekel had a specifically prescribed value (Leviticus 27:25 – The sanctuary shekel was four tenths of an ounce of silver, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 162). Once the value of the loss was determined by the priest, the guilty Israelite would pay 120% of that value to the priest. Apparently, he would do that by presenting a ram from the flock of that (120%) value. The priest would then offer that ram as an atonement for him.

Leviticus 5:17-19 *Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know it, and it will be forgiven him. It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the LORD.*

This guilt offering is for breaking any negative command of the Law when the sinner was unaware of it. The sacrifice procedure is the same as 5:14-16, except there is no mention of adding 20%.

Leviticus 6:1-7 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security*

entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering. Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt.”

This offering is for the guilt for deceiving someone about money entrusted to him, robbery, extortion, or keeping what someone lost by lying about it. All this is sin against some other person, but God said such a person *sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD*. All sin is sin against God (by definition) since He has a holy character, and sin is anything contrary to that character. It is wrong to steal from others because it offends God.

As with the first guilt offering, restitution was to be made at 120% of the stolen value. The sinner must also present a guilt offering to the priest. The 120% restitution was to be paid to the one wronged on the day the sinner presented a ram without defect to the priest.

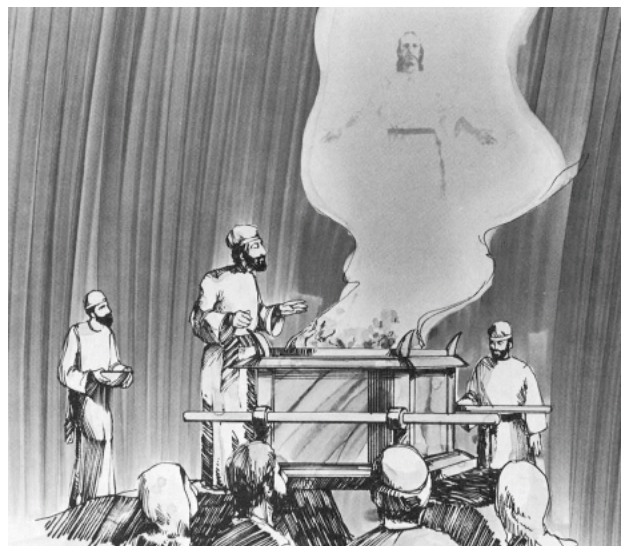
THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- Sin is not law-breaking because laws change. Even God’s laws change (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23–4:11). Sin is not selfishness. We can sin unselfishly (stealing to feed the poor, etc.). Sin not just malevolence, desiring to do evil to others. Sin is a violation of the character of God. So not all sin can be identified with a law or a social principle. Sometimes sin must be recognized because the offender understands himself to be guilty.
- Guilt comes from various sources – conscience, clergy, officials, etc. But when a person recognizes that he has in some way taken something away from someone else, he should restore what has been taken to that person. The idea of crime against society, for which we put people in prison, is not found in the Bible.

APPLICATION TO CHRIST

Christ was our guilt offering – Isaiah 53:10:

*But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,*



[Picture here and by the chapter title from www.ldscs.org.]