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“Leviticus 4”

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With

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Leviticus 4

Leviticus 4 focuses on the instructions for, and meaning of, the so-called “sin offering” of the OT sacrificial system. In this episode, we talk about how the translation “sin offering” is misleading, due to how Christians naturally filter OT sacrificial talk through what happened on the cross. The episode discusses what the “sin offering” really meant and accomplished (or not).

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 66, Leviticus 4. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MSH: Very good, glad to be back. I was on vacation a little while ago and back in the swing of things in full here and just glad to be here.

TS: Well good. I hope your vacation, you got lots of rest.

MSH: No, not at all. It's taking me a couple of weeks to recover.

TS: You need a vacation from your vacation.

MSH: Yeah, well, maybe someday I'll get that but who knows. You move from the extra chaos in a different place to a normal chaos is about the way it works. Alright, we're going to do Leviticus 4 today, but as we begin, I want to say a little bit about chapters 4 and 5 just by way of introduction. Both of these chapters concern sacrificial laws governing sacrifices of expiation, so there's some cleansing going on here but we're going to be talking about what that exactly means and doesn't mean as we go through both of these chapters. These are sacrifices to secure atonement and forgiveness and some cleansing going on. But sort of our popular conception of that is going to be a little bit different than what we actually see in Leviticus 4 and 5 in the biblical text. So, in both cases in both of these chapters 4 and 5 just to preview what we're going to be talking about today and sort of setup the next time, these sacrifices in these chapters are only efficacious when it comes to unintentional offenses or unintentional sins, unintentional transgressions.

Whenever an individual Israelite from the lowest social class all the way up to the high priest is guilty of an inadvertent offense or failing to do what the law requires in some unintentional way, some sort of transgression by ignorance or inadvertence, then expiation through sacrifice is required. They do not apply to defiant acts or pre-meditated sins or premeditated offenses or crimes. The laws of the Torah contain no sacrificial expiation for intentional or pre-meditated sins. There's no vicarious remedy or some ritual that will absolve a person who intentionally defied God or committed some crime. Now as we'll see, both sacrifice and repayment were commanded and were effectual with respect to only unintentional wrongs and violations and that's whether they're committed against God or other people. But the things that are premeditated, that just isn't the case. That's kind of contrary to the way we think about sacrifice because when we think about Old Testament sacrifices, we tend to filter that material through the New Testament theology of atonement and forgiveness, and that covers everything.

That is not the case with the Old Testament. Now there's an illustration of this that we probably already know from the Old Testament and that is in Numbers 35:9-34. I'm not going to read that but that's the avenger of blood situation. There were certain cities of refuge set up when Israel moved into the land and that was specifically for the protection of a person who unintentionally took a human life. And again, they could go to these cities. They could flee there. They were safe from punishment, death penalty. They were safe there as long as they stayed in those cities during the term of the high priest of the time. If they rejected that provision and ventured outside the city of refuge to which they had fled, then they were fair game. But Numbers 35 sort of illustrates this idea, even with something as serious as taking human life. If

it was unintentional, there was some sort of provision made for you as opposed to if this was deliberate, there is no provision.

There's no way to sort of deal with this and get around it other than the death penalty. Well that's sort of a familiar case and it's the same principle. The same idea is true with the less familiar, that if you sin, I know the King James translates with a high hand, shaking your fist at God, that kind of thing. If you sinned defiantly or pre-meditatively, that is not what the sacrificial system was for. It was for the people who did unintentional things, inadvertent offenses. In that case, okay, we can deal with this. There's something that we can do to take care of this problem. But if it was in the other side, boy it sure stinks to be you. That's the kind of thing that you're dealing with Old Testament law. I want to quote Levine here a little bit We've mentioned Baruch Levine here before in his commentary on Leviticus. It's probably one of the two sort of premier go to references for Old Testament ritual, and he says this,

“In the case of premeditated sins, Old Testament law dealt directly with the offender imposing real punishments to prevent recurrences [**MSH: i.e. the death penalty, not going to recur if you take care of it that way**] or recurring restitution where loss or injury to another person had occurred. Ritual expiation was restricted to situations where a reasonable doubt existed as to the intentionality of the sin or the offense. The mistaken notion that ritual worship could atone for criminality or intentional religious desecration was persistently attacked by the prophets of Israel who considered it a major threat to the entire covenantal relationship between Israel and God.”

MSH: Now Levine gives examples like Isaiah 1 where God says essentially purify your hearts, do what's right instead of just bringing a sacrifice. This kind of language points to the problem of people committing deliberately sins and crimes and then bringing sacrifice, like this will take care of it, where the prophets are saying no, that really doesn't take care of it. What God wants is a new heart, a different heart, and this is not satisfactory. What Levine is saying is passages like that feed off of or sort of have their hooks into this idea that the sacrificial system is really about unintentional violations, not defiant sins. Levine adds, here he is again,

“The laws of chapters 4 and 5 do not specify all the offenses for which such sacrifices are mandated. We may assume as did the rabbis that there is a correspondence between those offenses requiring expiatory offerings and those punishable by the penalty known as *karath*, which the translation is cutting off of the offender from the community. The expiatory sacrifices were required for inadvertent transgressions. If someone committed a transgression defiantly, that would bring upon the offender the penalty of *karath*. [**MSH: Again, that's a Hebrew term for to cut off. You say, well, what does cut off mean? Levine says**] At some early-stage *karath* probably involved actual banishment from the community. *Karath* was often combined with more stringent punishments, even death, the death penalty. It is sometimes perceived as punishment meted out directly by God, in contrast to that imposed by the community and its leaders for offenses committed against God. *Karath* was inflicted for a variety of religious sins such as desecration of the Sabbath, eating leaven on Passover or committing adultery.”

MSH: So what Levine is getting at here is the sacrificial system was there so that a person wouldn't be caught off from the community either by death penalty or by banishment but for those who sinned defiantly. That was what happened to you. There was no sacrifice for that. We don't just kill an animal and it's all taken care of and forgotten. Some transgressions, there's going to be different things that happen. As we go through Leviticus, we'll describe them. But just as a general principle, sacrifice was for unintentional or inadvertent offenses. The stuff that was deliberate, you were cut off, either death penalty or you're banished. Sacrifice doesn't cut it there, pun intended.

Now as far as Leviticus 4 and 5, these cover two sacrifices. Chapter 4, which we're going to talk about today is the *chatat*, which is usually rendered sin offering. I'm going to offer a different translation for that and explain why. And then chapter 5 is the *asham*, which is usually translated guilt offering. Now we're going to obviously focus on *chatat*, the sin offering in this chapter because that's the whole of Leviticus 4. We need to realize as we jump into this, I'm going to read the first 20 or so verses, that there's actually two different *chatat* sacrifices in chapter 4 that actually spill into chapter 5. They're both called the sin offering, one is chapter 4 around verses 3-21, we're basically going to read this one in full. And that was the sin offering for when the chief priests or the collective community of Israel happen to commit an inadvertent offense.

There's a procedure for that. The second one that picks up around verse 22 in chapter 4 and spills of the chapter 5 was the sin offering procedure for an individual Israelite who was not a priest and not the collective community, but just a sole individual Israelite or tribal chief. There was a procedure for those. And there's a difference between the two. It really comes down to what was done with the blood that sort of illustrates a principal that we're going to get into in a few moments. Let's jump into Leviticus 4 and I'm going to read probably the first 20 or so verses here and mix in a few comments and this'll set up what we're going to do for the rest of the episode. So Leviticus 4 says,

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, ³ if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. ⁴ He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD and lay his hand on the head of the bull and kill the bull before the LORD. ⁵ And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting, ⁶ and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the veil of the sanctuary. ⁷ And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the LORD that is in the tent of meeting, and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁸ And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall remove from it, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails ⁹ and the two

kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys ¹⁰ (just as these are taken from the ox of the sacrifice of the peace offerings); and the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹ But the skin of the bull and all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its entrails, and its dung— ¹² all the rest of the bull—he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, to the ash heap, and shall burn it up on a fire of wood. On the ash heap it shall be burned up.

MSH: Now, we stopped here at verse 12, and I want to summarize a little bit of what we've done to this point, at least what we've read. You'll notice that only the blood and the fatty portions on the internal organs are used in this ritual. Now the fatty portions, the fat of the organs, are the same as what we saw in earlier episodes associated with the peace offering but the rest is just discarded. It's taken outside the camp, burned on the ash heap as we read there in the last verse, we read in verse 12. You'll also notice there's no community meal, nobody consumes, eats part of the offering here.

The part that is used, the blood and the fatty portions, the fatty portions are put on the altar and they're given over to the Lord, and then the blood is applied only to the sanctuary or points of the sanctuary, parts of it, and the sancta, that is, the sacred objects. Scholars refer to this as the blood manipulation. By the way, you might hear me use that term, but essentially where the blood is applied. In this case it is only the sanctuary and different sacred objects. There's no meal here so what this tells us sort of right off the bat is that the real concern of the sin offering is to maintain the purity of the sanctuary or to cleanse it, to purge it from impurity, to protect it from infection would probably be a good idea, a good way to think of it, so the sacrifices about the purity the sanctuary against any sort of defilement or infection.

Now what you notice is that this particular part of Leviticus 4, the first 12 verses here relating to what happens when a priest inadvertently commits an offense or the entire congregation, which the priest sort of represents. In this case the blood is going to be put on certain things that it is not applied to later in the chapter when the second sin offering procedure is described, the one that's for the ordinary Israelite or for a tribal leader. There's going to be a bit of a difference and we'll talk about that when we come to it as to why there is this difference. So let's jump back into verse 13.

¹³“If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt, ¹⁴ when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. ¹⁵ And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be killed before the LORD. ¹⁶ Then the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, ¹⁷ and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil. ¹⁸ And he shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of

the tent of meeting. ¹⁹ And all its fat he shall take from it and burn on the altar. ²⁰ Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. ²¹ And he shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it up as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly.

MSH: So here you have by the time you get to verse 20, you've got two procedures really that are part of kind of one a concern. We've got the first part, it was a priest, second part is the congregation of Israel sinning unintentionally in verse 13. So when the congregation sins as a whole, and there are various circumstances where something like that could happen, then the procedure is basically the same for the priest because the priest represented the whole congregation. When a particular Israelite isn't known as the one who did something wrong, then the priest has to sort of represent everybody. It's just a sort of catch the offender if there's some sort of imprecise circumstance. You can't just point to one lay person or tribal leader or something like that.

So when the priest is involved, here's the point, when the priest is involved in some way needing the sin offering procedure, the blood is to be taken into the tent of meeting, it's taken onto holy ground here inside the tent, inside the Tabernacle as it were, the holy place to be more precise, and it's going to be sprinkled. You're going to have the blood applied to the horns of the altar of the incense that's in front of the veil. On the other side is the Ark of the Covenant, the blood sort of travels inside the holy place. It doesn't penetrate the holy of holies. That's only going to happen once a year in Leviticus 16 with the Day of Atonement. But it travels inside. When we get to Leviticus 4:22, which says when a tribal leader sins doing unintentionally this or that, and then verse 27, if anyone of the common people sins unintentionally, those procedures aren't going to be exactly the ones that we just read. You won't see the blood travel into the holy place because it's not specifically connected with a priest.

The priest didn't sin unintentionally and the priest didn't have to represent the whole populace in the case of sort of an unknown person, the congregation as a whole sinning. In those circumstances, since the priest is sort of involved in the violation in some way either himself or he has to represent the people who committed the violation, the whole congregation, when the priest is involved in some way in the violation, then the blood that's used for the sin offering will go into the holy place. But if it's somebody else, tribal leader, common person, you don't have that. We'll talk a little bit about that as we keep going. Now what I want to do here, I'm not going to read the rest of the chapter because there's a lot of repetition in it. But you have the two basic categories, priest/priest representing the congregation, and then you have tribal leader and common person.

Those are the two sort of categories of the sin offering and we've discussed that. So what I want to do from this point on is talk about certain terms and concepts that you'll read in this chapter and then talk about what they mean, what the point is. So let's talk about first this term unintentionally. Now the term here comes from the Hebrew verb *shegagah*, which means to err or to wander, something like that. It speaks of inadvertence. Maybe a better way to say it would be this term is used in contrast to other terms and other descriptions that make it clear that a violation, a deliberate violation, is in view. When you wanted to be clear that, no, we're not talking about a deliberate violation. We want to contrast what's happening with a deliberate, a

defiant offense. This is the verb that Leviticus uses, *shagagah*, to err, to make a mistake, sort of an honest mistake. So it speaks of inadvertence, in other words, an offender might be unaware of a particular law or some nuance of the law. They might be unaware that something they did was actually a violation of the law they did know.

They just weren't sure it was a violation or not. And then the priest says, yup, that's a violation, and you say, well, I didn't know that. Okay, well now we'll need to bring a sin offering because inadvertence, unintentionality is acceptable. So Levine put it this way. "Inadvertence with respect to the nature of the act itself would occur by way of example if a person, let's say ate forbidden fat, *khaylev*, thinking it was ordinary fat, *shuman*, from an offering, because there were only certain fatty portions due for the Lord, and you say, I ate something that was for the Lord. I couldn't visually tell what was sacred fat and what was common fat. Priest says okay we get that. We understand that. We know you didn't do it on purpose. You're not stealing from God defiantly or on purpose. You're okay. We can take care of that with a sin offering, no problem. So I hope you're catching that the prevailing assumption of the whole system, a system that allows atonement, allows the taking care of, the cleansing of inadvertent or unintentional violation, the prevailing assumption is that an Israelite, a good Israelite, would seek to obey God's laws.

They wouldn't be seeking to disobey. They wouldn't be rebels. They wouldn't be defiant. Everybody would be trying to keep in line, to obey the law. And when you slipped up, it's okay. What's not okay is when you're defiant and you pre-meditatively do something that is contrary to God's law. Unwitting offenses could be taken care of. The other ones, different story, so that's unintentionally, *shagagah*, to err, make a mistake. Now let's talk about sin offering. This one is a little more complicated and as I telegraphed early in the episode, I'm going to suggest a different translation for *chatat*, which is the Hebrew term typically rendered sin offering because I think it's confusing because when the average Christian reads this, sin offering, and they read terms like atonement and shall be forgiven, they're filtering that content through the New Testament work of Jesus. Folks, the New Testament work of Jesus is better than this. It's better than the Old Testament system.

The Old Testament system didn't have sacrifices for defiant deliberate sin. New Testament, the work of Jesus covers everything. But to understand like the book of Hebrews, why Jesus is better, that's a big theme of Hebrews. Jesus is better than this aspect of the Old Testament, that aspect. He's a better priest. He's a better sacrifice. He's a better this, a better that. To understand the part of the book of Hebrews that talks about the sacrifices, how Jesus' sacrifice is better, you have to understand the Old Testament system and you'll see that it's better. We often don't get that. We think it's better because it is not icky. There's no blood. We don't have to kill an animal. Well, okay that's true but there's a lot more to it than that. So let's go back here and talk about the term *chatat* in Hebrew. Now just all by itself, you take it out of context, you're just looking it up in a lexicon. *Chatat* can either mean sin offering, that's usually how it's translated anyway, or sin. So you got the same word for sin and the same word for the offering that's supposed to take care of the sin.

That's a little confusing. It's one of the reasons why sin offering probably isn't the best way to handle this. Second, in view of what's done with the blood in this chapter, the point of the ritual being to maintain the purity of the sanctuary, to protect it from infection by people who have become infected by sinning unintentionally, that become unfit to occupying sacred space. In view of that what's actually done with the blood. Some have opted for purification offering.

Now I actually like that and I'm not alone here. But I think there's actually rather than just saying, I really like the sound of that better, there's actually an exegetical reason why that is the best way to translate this. And to understand this, you have to know a little bit of Hebrew and we'll get to that point. I want to throw in a third complication here that I think will help justify the idea of translating *chatat* as purification offering or something like that. Here's the other complicating factor, factor number three here is that sometimes in Leviticus and other passages, the "sin" offering, the *chatat*, is required for people who've committed no moral offense at all. In fact, it's required for simple ritual impurity.

For instance, in Leviticus 5, the "sin" offering is used for those who have been defiled by touching a corpse. That happens. You didn't commit a moral offense. You didn't sin against God, that kind of thing. But you came into contact unintentionally. It's not like you're going out looking for a dead body so you can poke it, So I can poke God in the eye and sin defiantly. No, it's just in the course of daily life. Let's say you're grandpa's living with you there in the tent and he dies. You catch him and try to revive him. Well, you touched a dead body. Now you're unclean. You need a sin offering. I didn't sin. That's the point. The sin offering isn't about deliberate moral offenses. It's about unintentional defilement, and in this case something that's just sort of happening in the natural course of life. Leviticus 12 prescribes the "sin" offering for a woman after she gives birth. What could be more natural than that? But there's no moral offense here. By the way, this is what Luke 2:22-24 is referring to when Mary has to bring an offering after giving birth. I realize a lot of evangelicals use this to say hey you Catholics, Mary had a sin nature. Look at this. She brings a sin offering. That's to misunderstand both the Mary situation and also with the sin offering. It had nothing to do with I've offended, I'm guilty before God in some moral sense.

I had a baby. Well, because of the loss of blood, loss of bodily life fluid that we talked about in earlier episodes, you've become ritually impure and so the *chatat* is the prescribed procedure. So this alone should tell you that a translation in English like sin offering is a little misleading because it makes us think that there's something wrong with the person in a moral sense and that is not the point of the sin offering. For all these reasons, some have opted for purification offering but there's actually an actual textual exegetical reason why purification offering is better, and for this you have to know little bit of Hebrew like I alluded to a few minutes ago. Now if you're looking at this in a commentary or maybe you're hearing a sermon, you might read or hear somebody say hey the word *chatat*, sin offering, comes from the verb *chata*, which means to sin or miss the mark or to offend. And *chata* spelled with three Hebrew letters, *Heth, Teth, and Aleph*.

Okay well, if it comes from that verb, to miss the mark, to sin, to offend, well, surely the offering has something to do with moral offense. No it doesn't because a lot of your preachers and even some of your commentators, at least the ones that are sort of oriented to the English Bible, will miss the fact that the noun, *chatat* here doubles the middle consonants. You say, well, what are you talking about? I suggest you have to know a little Hebrew to understand this. For those of you who have had some Hebrew, the middle consonant has a little dot in it. It's doubled. It's *Keth, Teth, Teth, Aleph* and then the ending, *chatat*, the T ending. You say, well, who cares. It's like spelling trivia. It's actually important because what the doubled consonant tells us is that the noun translated "sin" offering is not just formed merely from this verb that means to miss the mark. It's formed from a specific form of that verb. One form in Hebrew grammar terminology it's a stem. It's formed the noun *chatat*, sin offering, is formed from the PL stem of

this verb *llama*, one that doubles the stem constant. That's significant because in the PL stem and stems, they're not tenses. You might be thinking that's like tenses in Hebrew. It's not, it's something different.

But it has to do with meanings and patterns, things that happen to Hebrew verbs as they are used in writing or speaking. The PL stem of this verb means not to miss the mark. It doesn't mean to offend. What it means is to cleanse. It means to purify. I think a nice way of putting it means to decontaminate. And so if you recognize because you know a little Hebrew that *chatat* is formed on the basis of the PL stem of the root verb, then you will know that sin offering is not a good translation of *chatat*. The better translation would be purification offering or I would even suggest decontamination offering. That captures the point of what is happening and it's something that is exegetically true. It's exegetically verifiable so the "sin" offering, I would say, hey, if you're taking notes, if you're putting notes in the margin your Bible, I'm not saying cross out words in your Bible but you might put above the word sin offering, if you can, decontamination offering because that's the point. It's the point of the verb in the PL stem, and since the noun here is formed from that stem verb, that's what it means, and that's why the blood is applied to the sanctuary and to sacred objects. It is shielding them. It is protecting them from infection.

It is ensuring decontamination. It's like creating a clean room for those of you in engineering or maybe that work in computers. That's the idea, you just cleanse and decontaminate, you protect, you insulate the specific area, in this case, sacred space, from this person bringing the offering, this person who has inadvertently committed an offense. God accepts the offering because he's the one who laid out the system. He accepts the offering and says okay, now that we performed the offering, you are taken care of. The priest has, here's our next couple terms we need to discuss, made atonement for you and you shall be forgiven. Well if you remember from a previous episode, we talked about the atonement verb, *kaphar* in Hebrew. It comes from the Acadian *kuppuru*, which means to wipe off or to wipe clean, to cleanse. It refers to the act of cleansing or wiping away impurity, wiping away contamination. Now that differs a lot from what you will often read in more popular sources, popular meaning sort of commentaries that are oriented only to the English Bible or something you might hear a pastor say or something that is "for the masses" that kind of thing, if anybody ever does that for Leviticus.

But anyway, that's a lot different than what you read in those sorts of sources where they'll say, well, *kaphar* means to cover or to conceal, like you're hiding the sin from God's view. That is not what it means. There are those ideas found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible with other terms but *kaphar* used in Leviticus expresses the idea that through the ritual, the offerer and the sanctuary, the offer is dealt with. He sinned inadvertently, committed an inadvertent offense and bringing an offering now to make sure to decontaminate sacred space to protect or insulate sacred space from his offense, trying to avoid infection, and if the offerer does that, we call it good. So the purification comes from God. God says okay, you've taken care of my sanctuary and God looks at the person bringing the *chatat*, the purification offering, the decontamination offering and says you're good. You've done what I asked you to do when you have this inadvertent problem and you did it in good faith. You obeyed; you did it with the right spirit. You did this in good faith so to speak. We're okay now. Atonement it has been made, cleansing has occurred. You will no longer be infecting sacred space. You're no longer at risk. The sanctuary is protected.

That's the idea. You say well what about the following phrase, you shall be forgiven or he shall be forgiven? The meaning of that, *salach* is the verb, is you will be cleansed from impurity. In other words, God considers the inadvertent violation taken care of. You don't have to worry anymore. It's not so much a release from guilt since we're dealing with an inadvertent offense anyway. It's not so much a release from guilt as being cleansed from the result of an inadvertent act. Remember, the "sin" offering, the *chatat*, was used for things like childbirth. We're not remedying a moral problem with the sin offering. You don't accidentally commit adultery. If you commit a serious moral transgression deliberately premeditatively, it's no accident. Your will was involved. You intended to do it. You did it voluntarily. That's a moral offense and the *chatat* offering is not going to take care of that in the Old Testament system. You're going to be cut off from the people.

In that case, it's the death penalty in Old Testament law. So we need to adjust the way we think about what the system was designed to do versus what it was not designed to do. I hope you're getting the impression it was really serious to sin deliberately, especially one of these moral areas like adultery or something like that. There were some very, very serious consequences. You couldn't do this and say oh, God will forgive me when I bring the bull. No He won't. That's not what the sacrifice is for. You're going to be cut off. That's what the law says. It's quite different from what the New Testament and through the work of Christ what we talk about there. I want to talk about one more thing, and that is we'll go back to the blood manipulation thing. I'm going to read a little bit from Averbeck that I think he puts this really nicely, summarizes it nicely. The place where the blood was applied or sprinkled or poured out or whatever, for the sin offering for the priest and the whole congregation is different from that of the tribal leader and the commoner. I mentioned this a few minutes ago but here's what Averbeck says.

He says, 'for the priest or the whole congregation, the priest sprinkled the blood of his finger seven times in front of the veil of the sanctuary. In other words, the veil that separated the holy place inside the tent of meeting from the most holy Place, the holy of holies where the Ark of the Covenant was located, but some of the blood he put on the horns of the incense altar within the holy place but right there in front of the veil on the other side, which is the Ark of the Covenant. So he sprinkled it at the veil, put some on the horns of the incense altar right there in front of the veil, shielding them from the Ark of the Covenant and then the rest he poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering located near the gate of the tabernacle complex. On the other hand, Averbeck says, the priest applied the blood of the leader, the tribe leader and the commoner, to the horns of the altar of burnt offering and that was outside the holy place. If you remember the layout of the tabernacle, a lot of people have seen in the Study Bibles. So for the tribe leader and the commoner, the blood never penetrates into the holy place. The point is, Averbeck says, that the blood penetrated into the tabernacle complex as far as the contamination would have or did.

The priest could enter the holy place and the priest represented the congregation so the blood of the sin offering for the priest or the whole congregation was administered inside the holy place because that's where priests could go since the non-Levitical, the non-priestly, non-Levitical, and I realize there's a difference there but we'll just go with the broader category, non-Levitical leader, the tribal leader of Israel or the common person, could only go into the tabernacle court outside the holy place to the courtyard area and not beyond the altar of burnt offering. The atoning blood ritual of their sin offering, their *chatat*, was performed at that altar,

at the altar of burnt offering. In both cases, the blood went as far as the particular person or the collective group of persons being represented by the priest could proceed into the tabernacle complex and therefore the blood purified or cleansed the tabernacle up to that point. That was the main purpose of the sin offering, to purify or one might say decontaminate the tabernacle itself. One more observation from Averbeck before we finish up. He also says in some instances, the result of bringing a sin offering was that the worshiper could “be forgiven” for their sin by dealing with the contamination of the tabernacle that had cost. Once the tabernacle was protected, you were okay. It is quite contrary to what we're thinking because we tend to filter our reading of Leviticus by virtue of the New Testament.

They're dramatically different. By way of application, just think about a Jew who heard the message of the Gospel, who heard about what Jesus did on the cross, a Jew hears that what Jesus did covers every possible sin, intentional or unintentional, everything is “under the blood.” You can be cleansed and purified and made fit for sacred space no matter what because even if you sinned defiantly in your past, now you're repentant. You have sorrow for your sin. You want to embrace the Messiah. You can be made new. You can be a new creature, a new creation. Concepts like that were totally foreign to that Jew who knew and understood the Levitical system, the Old Testament law. It was something so far beyond what they had in the Old Testament that it probably would have had a shocking effect. And I'm sure for someone who really cared came to that place of repentance where they don't want to defy God and they do want forgiveness whether the death penalty was carried out in second Temple times, New Testament times, we don't know. We have episodes in the Gospels like the woman taken in adultery and the whole stoning thing. So we know that they were aware of it. They may have carried it out.

Stephen was stoned because they thought they were studying for blasphemy. These things did happen. We have scant record of them but there's indication that they did. Well, if you're a Jew living in Judea and you've in your past committed these kinds of deliberate sins without short of what these crazy Christians are saying now about the Messiah and you know there's something to it because you heard about Jesus, or you might have seen a miracle he performed or whatever, and you can see the apostles perform these miracles to validate the message, this is something that you want to hear and it is just revelatory. You mean to tell me that I can actually be forgiven? God looks at me as though I'm pure now, looks at me as though I'd never done it, for even these deliberate sins that I've committed in my life at some point. Is that what you saying? And the apostles would go, yup, that's what we're saying. That was the point of what happened on the cross. There's just nothing like that sort of thinking in the Old Testament.

For us, for them, for us, there's no restriction in forgiveness to just unintentional sins and not only that but the New Testament is focused on moral absolution, even for deliberate rebellion. It's not just decontamination. It's being made right with God. It's being put in Christ so that when God looks at you he sees the perfection of Jesus the Messiah. These concepts are so far beyond what you would've had in the Old Testament, and so the writer of the book of Hebrews is like, you people who are lapsing back into unbelief, you're insane. Don't you realize how much better Jesus is> He goes through the book of Hebrews, goes through this whole litany of how Jesus is better. One of those is the sacrifice. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Think about that statement. The blood of bulls and goats is applied to the sanctuary. It's about decontaminating the place. It's not about taking away your guilt. It's not about moral

absolution. The blood of bulls and goats could not do this but the blood of Christ can. This is a dramatic difference so I'm hoping as we go through Leviticus, you not only learn a little bit more about how the Israelite would've thought about what we're reading in Leviticus, how they would have processed it, would've meant, but also how much better the whole fully developed biblical theology mediated through the Messiah, the whole doctrine of salvation and forgiveness that were present in the New Testament, how much superior that really is compared to what had gone before.

TS: Mike, is there any significance as to why a female goat or lamb for the common people and a male bull or goat for the others?

MSH: A lot figure that the female, the livestock was of lesser value in the herd than the male because the male could produce, the male could impregnate multiple females and they could obviously give birth. So the male was more valued because of the way it could reproduce. If you lose a female, you lose one who could give birth. If you lose a male it's like we just lost an animal that could've reproduced 100 times. So if you look at these passages, it's probably too much to say this is the way it works every time but I'm pretty sure I'm safe in saying this is the way it works most times.

I'd have to look to be completely sure hundred percent of the time this is what's going on but the female is used either for a person of lesser status or a person whose poor as opposed to the other and it might be a reflection of what you can afford to lose, that sort of thing. What you can sacrifice so that your livelihood is not decimated as opposed to what some other person could give. Or it's a reflection of the status within the community of the offerer, but again, this is an agrarian society. It's not totally subsistence living but it's settled agriculture and whatnot, so it's a little bit above subsistence living but it really mattered based upon that the value placed on the animal that some of these choices are made and things are laid out the way they are.

TS: That concept of decontamination offering, I think it really drives it home. It's a completely different comprehension of it.

MSH: It's kind of interesting because you're beginning to see in the Old Testament that the ritual was really about the sanctity of God and his living space where in the New Testament the emphasis of forgiveness and the blood of Christ is really about the sinner. It's just quite a different way of looking at things.