

Leviticus 4:22-35

Aaron Eime, Christ Church Jerusalem, 2021

The procedure for the sacrifice of the sin offering for unintentional sins is the same for whoever sins, whether they be the anointed priest, the elders of the community, the leadership, or ordinary member of the community. Everyone is equal in the case of sin. This passage in Leviticus calls on us to re-evaluate our view of sin and our personal responsibility. We are responsible, even for the unintended consequences of our actions. God wants everyone to accept responsibility for their actions, from the least to the greatest amongst us. Offerings are also given in public, making the public confession of sin a difficult thing to do for some people. Unintentional sins are not meant to be hidden but actually to be dealt with. Something modern church leadership often fails to appreciate. Moses instructs the people of Israel not to put on masks, pretend they've done no wrong, make excuses for themselves, and generally refuse to deal with unintentional transgressions. The repeated affirmation 'They must bring' reminds us that this is not optional but a requirement of a healthy relationship with the living God.

We have previously discussed the priest-messiah, or the anointed priest, and the elders of the community, later called the Sanhedrin. Now we come to the next level of leadership, the *nāsi*. It's an interesting word in Hebrew and can be used to refer to high-level rulers as well as junior officials. For example, the President of the United States is called a *nāsi*, as can be the leader of a synagogue. Although in this context we are talking about family heads and military captains and such. Our passage begins by assuming that all leadership will sin in some way. Once the unintentional sin is discovered it needs to be dealt with. Sin cannot be dealt with until we are aware of it, however, despite our awareness or lack thereof, we also remain guilty. Ignorance is not bliss, sometimes quite the opposite, ignorance can be dangerous. Awareness is only one part of the journey, the next is acceptance of responsibility. The desire, which would come from the heart of the worshipper, is to restore the relationship with God. The leader must bring a male offering and the common person must bring a female. The difference is in value, with the male offerings being rarer and more expensive. Due to the sheer expense of the sin offering and its rarity, it is highly probable that this was not performed often by the worshipper. You simply would run out of animals in Israel. Why are there differences between offerings of males and females? The Hebrew Scriptures do make distinctions between the genders (unlike our current culture), for example, the 10th plague in Egypt only affected firstborn sons .. not firstborn daughters. Why not? Yet we do not see the feminist movements demanding that girls be placed before the Angel of Death. Interesting!

Unintentional sins can occur by trespassing against any of the Lord's commands. Both the greater and the lesser ones! All of God's Word is holy and we should be careful in thinking otherwise. God cares about the holiness of His people, whether they be a priest, a ruler, or a commoner. The holiness of the worshipper is a reflection of the holiness of the Lord. The sacrificial acts are public, confession is public as is also the assurance of forgiveness. The redemption of the Lord is something that can be seen. A relationship with the Lord is also something that can be seen. The Israelites who bring their offerings and sacrifices do so because they are in a relationship with God, otherwise, they would not bother to seek a restored relationship, seek forgiveness or act in holiness.