

Leviticus 5:1-6

Aaron Eime, Christ Church Jerusalem, 2021

The following verses deal with issues that fall under the category of the sin of omission. It's not enough simply not to tell lies. God also requires us to make the truth known if we know it. The judiciary responsibly lay with the priests and Levites in ancient Israel. Thus the court scenes we are talking about all occur in the presence of the religious figures of the day. It was the obligation of someone who was a witness to come forward to testify of what they had seen or heard. To fail in faithfully representing and presenting the truth was to bear guilt and sin. We must never let our silence be an affirmation of something that is indeed wrong. We see something similar in the New Testament. Should we be ashamed of Jesus on earth then He will also be ashamed of us before His Father in heaven. Interestingly, the word used for the 'person' who sins is *nefesh*, which is the word for soul. It implies something deep and serious. It is the soul that sins.

Next, there was the issue of ceremonial uncleanness and the lack of awareness of being in a state of impurity. Becoming unclean, even though unaware of where or how one became unclean, is still a state of uncleanness. Ignorance is not bliss. The guilt here is ceremonial guilt and not moral guilt. Touching dead things transmits impurity, just as holiness can be transferred so can impurity. God is holy and His people who have His presence with them are also holy by extension. Coming into contact with death leaves the stain of death on you, which you must never bring into the presence of God, who is the antithesis of death -- He is life itself. Once the uncleanness is realized, then the person has a responsibility to address the issue. In our context today, we must deal with sin once we realize it. We still suffer from sin whether we know it or not, but once it has become known then we have the responsibility to deal with it through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Moses then turns to oaths, which were serious business, for failure to keep an oath offended the Lord. A careless promise was still a promise before the Lord. The idea that words are of importance might come from the belief that the Universe came into being through a spoken word. The issue here is the power of the tongue, a concept that is explored in the Gospels and particularly in the Epistle of James. Jesus would have our 'yes' be yes and our 'no' be no. He would like us to say what we mean and to mean what we say. Words pass through the lips but their origin comes from the heart.

Moses then summarizes that when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty -- either the sin of omission, ritual uncleanness, and misspoken oaths -- the first thing to do was confession. It doesn't say to whom you should confess but it is assumed that somewhere in the chain of confession, the priests and Levites are involved. Confession implies that you would agree with the Lord that you had indeed sinned. It is also public. This also reflects the status of your heart before the Lord. The New Testament likewise calls upon the faithful to confess sins before God (1 John 1:9) and to each other (James 5:16). Only after awareness of one's wrongdoing could an offering be made. Offerings and sacrifices without confession and repentance were null and void. The offering was an animal sacrifice from among the sheep or the goats; no distinction is made between them. However, the animal had to be female. I could not find a satisfactory answer to why females and what was wrong with male offerings?