

# Nature of the Chatat

## Introduction

**This topic has not yet undergone editorial review**

### What is the Common Denominator?

Vayikra 4 details the laws of the Chatat, one of the two obligatory sacrifices. The opening verses of the chapter mandate that anyone who unintentionally transgressed a commandment must bring the offering:<sup>1</sup>

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר נֶפֶשׁ כִּי תַחֲטָא בְשִׁגְגָה מִכָּל מִצְוֹת יְיָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְעָשָׂה מֵאַחַת  
מֵהֵנָּה.

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘If anyone sins unintentionally, in any of the things which Hashem has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them:

Vayikra 5:1-13 adds several other cases, all also involving those who have sinned,<sup>2</sup> suggesting that the sacrifice is a sin-offering.

Elsewhere, though, other individuals are obligated to bring a Chatat even though there is no indication of their having sinned. These include one who is undergoing purification after having given birth,<sup>3</sup> having *tzara'at*,<sup>4</sup> or having an emission,<sup>5</sup> a Nazirite who has finished the days of his oath of abstinence,<sup>6</sup> and the Levites upon their consecration<sup>7</sup>. A Chatat is also brought on the holidays and New Moon.<sup>8</sup> What is the common denominator between all these cases? Many of the procedures conclude by stating, "וְכָפַר עָלָיו", implying that this is the end goal of the process. What, though, does the root "כפר" mean and what does it suggest is the primary purpose of bringing a Chatat?

### Status Dependent

Vayikra 4 describes distinct sacrificial procedures for various potential offenders who are obligated to bring a Chatat, including the anointed priest, the community, a prince, or a layman, making the Chatat sacrificial protocol status-dependent. No other offering distinguishes based on one's position or rank. Why is this offering unique in this regard? Moreover, how are we to understand the specific differences in protocol?

- **Choice of animal** – Why must the priest and community bring a cow, while the prince brings a he-goat, and the layman either a she-goat or lamb?
- **Where the blood is sprinkled** – The blood of the offering of the priest and community is brought into the Outer Sanctum where it is sprinkled on the Incense Altar, while that of the offerings of the prince or layman are sprinkled only on the Outer Altar. Why?

- **Burning/eating of offering** – Why is the flesh of the sacrifice of the anointed priest and community burned outside of the camp, while that of the prince and layman is eaten by the priest?

## Comparison to Other Offerings

To understand the nature of the Chatat, it is helpful to compare it and its sacrificial procedures to other offerings:

- **Role of blood** – When directing that the blood of the Olah and Shelamim be placed on the altar, Torah employs the language of: "וְזָרְקוּ אֶת הַדָּם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב". By the Chatat, in contrast, the verse states, "וּמִן הַדָּם יִתֵּן עַל קֶרְנֵת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ". Is there a significance to this difference? In addition, there is much more of an emphasis on the blood rite by the Chatat (mentioning sprinkling,<sup>9</sup> placing and pouring) than by other offerings. What is the import and role of the blood in the Chatat offering?
- **"אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹם לִי"י** – While other sacrifices are said to be "אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹם לִי"י", the Chatat is never referred to as an "אִשָּׁה לִי"י", and only the offering of the individual layman is said to have a "pleasing fragrance". How are we to understand the omissions?
- **Laying of hands** – What is the purpose of the laying of hands on the offering? Does this play the same role in all sacrifices?
- **Comparison to the Asham** – What distinguishes the Chatat from the Asham? Why for certain sins does one bring a Chatat, but for others an Asham is obligated?
- **The "graduated" Chatat** (קרבן עולה ויורד) – What distinguishes the cases for which one may bring a graduated Chatat offering (where the individual offering differs based on the economic means of the offeror)? How is this similar to, yet different from, the regular Chatat?

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<sup>1</sup> Bavli Shabbat 69a, and most commentators in its wake, limit the cases to those where, had the individual transgressed intentionally, he would have been punishable with כרת (literally, to "be cut off"). In addition, they learn from the language of "וְעָשָׂה מֵאֲחַת מֵהֵנָּה" that the person must have actively performed an action (and not simply spoken or the like).

<sup>2</sup> These are known as a "קרבן עולה ויורד", a "graduated" Chatat, and differ from the regular Chatat in that the sinner is offered the choice of bringing an animal, bird, or grain as the offering, depending on the economic means of the sinner.

<sup>3</sup> See Vayikra 12:6-8.

<sup>4</sup> See Vayikra 14:10-20.

<sup>5</sup> See Vayikra 15:13-15. The red heifer which plays a role in purifying one from contact with the dead is also called a Chatat (Bemidbar 19:9).

<sup>6</sup> See Bemidbar 6:9-17. He is also obligated to bring a Chatat if he was defiled by a corpse before completing the period of his vow.

<sup>7</sup> See Bemidbar 8:7-8

<sup>8</sup> See Bemidbar chapters 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> This is mentioned only by the offerings of the priest and community.

# Nature of the Chatat

## Exegetical Approaches

**This topic has not yet undergone editorial review**

### Sin Offering

The Chatat is primarily a sin offering, serving to atone for sins and bring the transgressor back to Hashem.

**SOURCES:** Ibn Ezra, R. Yosef Bekhor Shor, Rambam, Ramban, Sefer HaChinukh, Ralbag, Abarbanel

**Meaning of Chatat** – In many verses in Tanakh the word "חַטָּאת" means "sin".<sup>1</sup> Ramban adds that the word takes the specific connotation of "miss the mark," pointing to Shofetim 20:16, "קָלַע בְּאֶבֶן אֶל הַשֵּׁעָרָה וְלֹא יָחֹטֵא" as evidence of this usage. As such, it refers to inadvertent sins rather than intentional ones. The sacrifice's name, thus, matches its function, to atone for sins, specifically unintentional ones.<sup>2</sup>

**Who must bring a Chatat: common denominator** – This position might take one of two approaches:

- **Sin** – These sources might suggest that all cases in which a Chatat is brought involve sin of some sort. Vayikra 4 speaks explicitly of those who inadvertently transgress a sin.<sup>3</sup> However the birthing mother, *metzora*, and Nazirite are similarly obligated for they, too, are understood to have sinned, despite the sin not being explicit in Torah.<sup>4</sup> Mishna Shevuot 1:4-5 adds that even the Chatat of holidays and the New Moon serves to atone for sins.
- **Change of status** – Alternatively, one might suggest that there really are two distinct groups who bring a Chatat, sinners and the impure, the unifying factor between them being that the one offering the sacrifice is undergoing a change in status.<sup>5</sup> The inadvertent transgressor transitions from sinner to innocent, from someone who deserved to be cut off to someone who is welcomed back into the community.<sup>6</sup> The physically impure similarly transition from impure to pure and from being distanced from the Mikdash to being close.<sup>7</sup>

**Why is atonement necessary for unintentional deeds?** Rambam explains that one who commits even an unintentional deed is still blameworthy since the action stemmed from negligence. Such carelessness needs correction and, hence, a Chatat is brought.<sup>8</sup> Ramban adds that *any* sin introduces a defect into the soul which needs to be corrected so that the individual can once again stand before his Creator.<sup>9</sup>

**How does the Chatat serve to atone?**

- **Replacement for the sinner** – Ibn Ezra and Ramban suggest that the sacrifice serves as a substitute or redemption (כּוֹפֵר נַפֶּשׁ) for the sinner,<sup>10</sup> as it is killed in the individual's stead.<sup>11</sup>
- **Enable repentance and change** – Others disagree, suggesting that it is the individual's personal repentance rather than the sacrifice which expiates for sin. The sacrificial process is necessary only to lead the sinner to this repentance and enable a fresh start.
  - Sefer HaChinukh asserts that the process of having to actively bring an offering (rather than simply confessing by mouth) leads one to recognize the gravity of his sin and regret and repent of his actions ("אחרי הפעולות נמשכות הלבבות").<sup>12</sup>
  - R. Yosef Bekhor Shor and Ralbag add that if there was no way of cleansing one's self from sin, people would be less likely to be wary of future sins, thinking that they would remain stained

regardless. The sacrificial process was instituted so that individuals can feel that their slate has been wiped clean, thereby providing an incentive to subsequently remain pure.<sup>13</sup>

**"וְכָפַר עָלָיו"** – These sources define the root "כפר" in various manners, reflecting two understandings of what is accomplished through the bringing of the sacrifice:

- **Removal of sin** – Rashi and Ralbag asserts that "כפר" means to wipe away or remove.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that the sacrificial procedure serves to wipe away the need for punishment or, perhaps, the sin itself.<sup>15</sup> Shadal, pointing to Bereshit 6:14, "וְכָפַרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ בְּכֹפֶר" similarly suggests that the word means to "cover". Via the offering, one's sin is covered, as if it has disappeared.
- **Personal redemption** – Ibn Ezra and Ramban, in contrast, suggest that the root "כפר" relates to the phrase "כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ", meaning ransom. The Chatat acts as a redemption for the sinner, being offered in his place.

**Role of blood** – Ramban asserts that the animal's blood is supposed to represent and substitute for the sinner's soul, being sprinkled on the altar in his stead. The unique language of "נְתִיבַת דָּם" (rather than זְרִיקַת דָּם) might imply that blood plays a more important function in this sacrifice than others due to its role in the atonement process.

**Status related** – Chatat offerings and their protocols are uniquely divided based on the status of the person who sinned, with those of higher stature bringing more expensive animals. This is logical according to this approach since the more important a person,<sup>16</sup> the more serious his transgression is deemed.<sup>17</sup> It is not as clear, however, why the blood of the various offerings is sprinkled in different places.

**Role of hand laying (סמיכה)** – These sources present two understandings of this procedure:

- **Transfer of sin** – Ralbag<sup>18</sup> asserts that the laying of hands is a symbolic act, representing the transfer of sin from the transgressor to the animal.<sup>19</sup> This is meant to allow the sinner to feel that his sins were in fact removed and that he is now clean.<sup>20</sup>
- **Appointing of substitute** – R. D"Z Hoffmann notes that throughout Torah, "סמיכה" represents the choosing of another as a substitute.<sup>21</sup> If so, perhaps here the point is to signify that the animal is taking the place of the human, being punished in his stead.

**Burning outside the camp** – Rambam asserts that the flesh of the Chatat of the priest and community are burned outside the camp because they carry grave sins, and are, thus, too contaminated to be brought on the altar of the Mishkan.<sup>22</sup>

**"רִיחַ גִּיחֹם לִי"?** Rambam asserts that the smoke of most Chatat offerings are not described as a "רִיחַ גִּיחֹם לִי" for the same reason. In contrast to a burnt offering (עולה) whose fragrance is pleasing, the smoke of these sin offerings, representing the guilt of the nation, is offensive.<sup>23</sup>

**"וְנִסְחָלָה לוֹ"** – As this position maintains that forgiveness is the end goal of the whole procedure, it is expected that after describing the various protocols the verse should state, "וְנִסְחָלָה לוֹ".

**Graduated Chatat (קרבת עולה ויורד)** – According to these sources the graduated offerings of Vayikra 5:1-13 function like a regular Chatat, also serving to atone for sin. They differ in their explanation of the leniency in the choice of animal/grain offering brought:

- According to R"Y Bekhor Shor<sup>24</sup> and Ramban,<sup>25</sup> it is only because the sins mentioned are less severe that one is offered the possibility of giving a less expensive offering. Sefer HaChinkuh alternatively suggests that the leniency stems from the fact that these specific sins are very common and easily transgressed.<sup>26</sup>
- Abarbanel, in contrast, claims that the ability to choose whether to offer an animal, bird, or meal offering due to financial concerns is not limited to the three cases mentioned in Vayikra 5, but is true for any Chatat.

**Comparison to Asham** – Many of these sources suggest that the difference between the Chatat and Asham is also only in the severity of the sin which obligates it. Ramban asserts that "אשם" refers to one who is deserving of harsh punishment including desolation or destruction,<sup>27</sup> concluding that the sins that require it must therefore be more egregious.<sup>28</sup>



## Purification Offering

The Chatat is primarily a purification offering, meant to purify not only the sinner but the Mikdash itself.

**SOURCES:** R. David Zvi Hoffmann, modern scholars<sup>29</sup>

**Meaning of Chatat** – According to these sources,<sup>30</sup> the root "חטא" means to purify, as proven by the many verses where it is clearly mentioned in the context of purification (sometimes being parallel to the root "טהר") including Vayikra 14:48-52, Bemidbar 8:7, Bemidbar 19:19 and Yechezkel 43:23-26.<sup>31</sup>

**Who must bring a Chatat: common denominator** – R. D"Z Hoffmann asserts that the common denominator between all cases in which one must bring a Chatat is that they involve contraction of impurity, be it spiritual or physical. Thus, both those individuals who have obtained and imparted spiritual impurity by unintentionally transgressing a prohibition and those who have contracted physical impurity (a birthing mother, one who has *tzara'at*, one who has an emission, and a Nazirite who has come in contact with a corpse) are obligated to bring a Chatat.<sup>32</sup>

**What does the Chatat purify?** R. D"Z Hoffmann explains that sin defiles<sup>33</sup> not just the person, but also the Mikdash,<sup>34</sup> and as such, the Chatat comes to purify also the Mikdash itself from impurity. As evidence that the Mikdash itself can be polluted not just via physical impurity but by sin as well, he points to Vayikra 16:16, "כי מזרעו נתן למלך למען טמא את", and Vayikra 20:3, "וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְשְׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל חַטָּאתָם". "מקדשי".

**Where is the Chatat blood sprinkled?** In support of the assumption that the Chatat is meant to purify the Mikdash itself, R. D"Z Hoffmann notes that the blood of such offerings is sprinkled not on the person but in the Mikdash. He further suggests that the gravity of the sin determines the depths to which the Mikdash is polluted, and hence, where exactly the blood is sprinkled:

- Unintentional sins of an individual are the least defiling and affect only the courtyard. As such, the blood of these Chatat offerings is sprinkled on the outer altar.
- Inadvertent sins of the high priest (Vayikra 4:1-12) and community (Vayikra 4:13-21) affect even the Outer Sanctum and thus, the blood of their Chatat offerings is sprinkled on the Incense Altar.

- Brazen sins penetrate to even the Inner Sanctum, and this is purified through the blood of the Yom HaKippurim offerings, sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. [For further discussion of the role of the Chatat sacrifices of Yom HaKippurim see Purpose of the Service of Vayikra 16.]

**Role of the blood:** "וְנִתְּנָם... מִן הַדָּם" – According to this approach, the placing of the blood is the focal point of the sacrificial protocol as it is the blood which serves as the purifying agent. This might be supported by the unique language of "נְתִיבָה דָם" which is found only by the Chatat (rather than "זָרִיקָה דָם" found by other offerings). This language implies that the blood of the Chatat is not merely thrown, but actively placed on the defiled areas.<sup>35</sup>

**Status related** – In contrast to other offerings, the various Chatat sacrifices and their protocols are divided based on the status of the person who sinned. As mentioned above, this is due to the fact that the higher the status, the more defiling the sin, and hence both the bigger the offering required and the deeper into the Mikdash that the blood must be sprinkled.

**Not called an "אֲשָׁה לַיהוָה"** – R. D"Z Hoffmann suggests that while other sacrifices are referred to as an "אֲשָׁה לַיהוָה", by the Chatat this is not emphasized because the focal point of the sacrifice is not its consumption by fire, but its purifying of the altar.

**Role of laying of hands (סְמִיכָה)** – This position might suggest that the "hand laying" has no symbolic value and is not integral to the purification process (and, as such, is not unique to this offering). It might simply demonstrate ownership of the animal being sacrificed.

**"וְכִפֶּר עָלָיו"** – This approach suggests that the root "כפר" refers to the purging of defilement rather than to atonement. See, for example, Vayikra 12:7-8, Vayikra 14:18-20, Yechezkel 43:26 and Yechezkel 45:18-20 where the root is paired with the root "טהר".<sup>36</sup>

**"וְנִסְחָל לּוֹ"** – This phrase is somewhat difficult for J. Milgrom who maintains that the Chatat serves to purify only the Mikdash and not the individual at all, who having sinned unintentionally needs no pardon. He responds that though the sin itself requires no forgiving, the consequences of the sin, defilement of the Mikdash, do require forgiveness.

**Graduated offerings (קָרְבַּן עוֹלָה וְיֹרֵד)** – This position<sup>37</sup> might explain the leniency inherent in the graduated offerings by suggesting that these all refer to less severe cases of impurity, those which are caused by the omission of an act rather than an active deed.<sup>38</sup>

- **Delayed purification** – This reading understands Vayikra 5:2-4 to refer to a case in which someone contracted impurity by touching a defiled object or corpse and then forgot to purify one's self.<sup>39</sup> Since postponing one's purification might cause a build-up of impurity which can then contaminate the Mikdash, a Chatat is necessary. However, since the actual defilement was not prohibited and the delay in purification was an unintentional crime of omission, there is room for leniency.<sup>40</sup>
- **Abrogation of oaths** – Vayikra 5:1 is understood to refer to a case where one does not bear testimony despite hearing an oath/curse requiring it,<sup>41</sup> while Vayikra 5:4 refers to one who accidentally does not fulfill a vow made. This position assumes that abrogation of oaths normally causes Temple impurity, requiring a Chatat, but since both cases are crimes of omission rather than active performance of a prohibited action, the defilement is less and, thus, when economically necessary, a lower grade offering suffices.

**Comparison to Asham** – R. D"Z Hoffmann suggests that though both the Chatat and Asham are obligatory sacrifices, offered in the wake of sin, they serve different functions. While the Chatat is mainly a purification offering, the Asham is primarily a reparations offering, meant to compensate for benefiting from the Sanctuary. [See Nature of the Asham for elaboration on this understanding of the role of the Asham.]

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bereshit 4:7, 18:20, 50:17, Shemot 10:17, 32:20 or Vayikra 26:21.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Milgrom, "The Cultic Asham: A Philological Analysis", Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies 6:1 (1973): 299-300, that there are several words in Biblical Hebrew, such as עון or רעה, which refer both to bad behavior and to that behavior's repercussions or punishment. Here, too, then "חטאת" can refer to both sin and the measures needed to be taken to atone for the sin.

<sup>3</sup> These sources, however, follow Bavli Shabbat 69a in limiting the obligation to those who transgress prohibitions for which one would have been culpable of "כרת", being "cut off", had it been intentional. [Ibn Ezra is somewhat ambiguous and might also include any transgression which would obligate one to get lashes had it been intentional.]

<sup>4</sup> Bavli Niddah 31b suggests that in the pain of childbirth, the mother sins in swearing not to ever have relations again, an oath she is not to keep. Vayikra Rabbah 17:3 brings a whole host of possible sins transgressed by one inflicted by tzara'at, including gossip, pride, theft and desecration of Hashem's name. [See Tzara'at for details.] Finally, Sifre Bemidbar states that the Nazirite sins in separating himself from wine, while Ramban claims that his sin lies in ending the period of his Nazirite oath.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the Levites brought a Chatat during their consecration (Bemidbar 8:8) for the same reason, to mark their elevation in status.

<sup>6</sup> The Nazirite, too, moves from a place of separation back into society.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 524-530: "חטאת ואשם", צבי ויינברג, who raises a different but related possibility, that all Chatat offerings are meant to re-establish a positive relationship with Hashem. As evidence that the word "חטאת" might be used in this manner, he points to the Mishnaic language of "כבן המתחטא אל אביו" in Mishna Taanit 3:8.

<sup>8</sup> Abarbanel focuses, instead, on the fact that the sacrifice is necessary to motivate the individual to be more careful in the future.

<sup>9</sup> For Ramban, then, the issue is less one of personal responsibility and more the need to deal with the natural detrimental effects of sin.

<sup>10</sup> See Ibn Ezra on Shemot 12:7 who views the role played by the blood in the Pesach offering in a similar light. For elaboration, see Purpose of the Pesach.

<sup>11</sup> Ramban adds that in watching the animal slaughtered, the person is forced to recognize that it should have been his blood which was spilled had it not been for Hashem's mercy. As the individual watches each part of the animal be sacrificed, he thinks of his parallel limbs and how they aided him in sin. The guts and kidneys are the seat of thought and desire which led him to err, while the thigh represents his legs and hands which did the action. The animal's blood represents the sinner's soul. As such, watching the animal burn is a powerful symbol of the sinner's own potential fate and should prevent him from sinning further.

<sup>12</sup> One could add that the necessity of having to slaughter of one's own flock causes the sinner pain, leading him to further distance himself from sin in the future.

<sup>13</sup> R"Y Bekhor Shor makes an analogy to a person who is wearing pure white clothing and therefore is very careful lest he get them dirty. Once he blackens them, however, he is not nearly as cautious.



Asham as it is a grave sin referred to in the verses as "מעילה" or treachery. Ramban suggests that the case of *אשם תלוי*, when one is unsure if he has sinned, is exceptional. It is treated severely only because the individual might think that he deserves no punishment at all.

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of this position, see J. Milgrom, "תפקיד קרבן החטאת", *Tarbitz* 40 (1971):1-8 and *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus* (New York, 1991): 226-307. See also מ. ברזלי, "מה בין חטאת לאשם? על 31-50 (תשל"א):", משלב מ' ויקרא, and R"Y Grossman, "קרבן חטאת".

<sup>30</sup> See also R. Saadia Gaon who translates "חטאת" as "ד'כוח", meaning purification, and see *Shadal Vayikra* 4:3, "קרא חטאת כשעושין בו חטוי על קרנות המזבח, ומפני שקוראים להזהה חטוי כד"א {=כמה דהוא אומר} תחטאני באזוב", {תהלים נ"א:ט'}. על כן נקרא הקרבן הזה חטאת, לא מפני שבא על חטא

<sup>31</sup> See also *Shemot* 29:36, *Vayikra* 8:15, and *Yechezkel* 45:18.

<sup>32</sup> The red heifer whose ashes come to purify one who has come into contact with a dead body is also referred to as a Chatat. In addition, during the Days of Consecration, a Chatat was brought to purify the Altar. Why a Nazirite must bring a Chatat upon completion of his oath or why the offering is brought on holidays and New Moons is less clear.

<sup>33</sup> He suggests that this impurity takes the form of the distancing of the Shekhinah, while purification via sprinkling of blood allows the Shekhinah to return.

<sup>34</sup> While R. Hoffmann asserts that the sacrifice serves to purify both the sinner's soul and the Mikdash, J. Milgrom goes a step further to suggest that the Chatat comes to purify only the Mikdash. According to both, impurity can be contracted from a distance; the sinner need not actively enter the Mikdash in order for it to be defiled. To explain the process of sin's defilement, J. Milgrom uses Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" as an analogy. In the work, the corrupt and hedonistic Dorian Gray remains handsome and unblemished, while his portrait progressively reveals his corruption. So, too, J. Milgrom suggests that according to *Sefer Vayikra*, sinful actions might not always be revealed in the figure of the sinner, but every sin will progressively contaminate the Mikdash.

<sup>35</sup> This language is what leads Chazal to suggest that the Chatat requires four "gifts" of blood, while other sacrifices require only two.

<sup>36</sup> J. Milgrom, who maintains that only the Mikdash is purified rather than the sinner himself, notes that in the context of people, the verb "כפר" never takes a direct object (כפר את) because they themselves are not being purified. The text rather employs the phrase "כפר על", meaning that the purification (of the Mikdash) is being done on the individual's behalf.

<sup>37</sup> The discussion below draws heavily on Prof. Milgrom's understanding of the verses (see reference above) but follows A. Bazak, "קרבן עולה ויורד" in emphasizing the role of the "crime of omission" rather than "active transgression." A. Bazak, however, does not set his discussion in the context of the purifying role of the Chatat.

<sup>38</sup> R. D"Z Hoffmann does not read the verses in this manner, instead viewing these cases as constituting an in-between category of sins which resemble both a Chatat and an Asham, as each requires both purification and the repayment of a debt (which, in his opinion, is the wholemark of the Asham). He understands "שבועת העדות" (*Vayikra* 5:1) to refer to a case in which one who swore that he had no testimony to share when he in fact could have testified and saved another economic loss. The case of *שבועת הביטוי* (*Vayikra* 5:4) is one in which someone does not fulfill a vow. In both, one has incurred a "debt" and are thus similar to "אשם גזלות" for which one must bring an Asham. R. D"Z Hoffmann understands the case of impurity by contact (*Vayikra* 5:2-3) to refer to someone who not only forgot to purify himself but who then went into the Mikdash or ate of

consecrated foods while he was impure. As such, it is similar to the case of "מעילה בקודש," when one desecrates and benefits from the Kodesh and is obligated to bring an Asham.

<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, even if one does not subsequently enter the Mikdash or eat of consecrated food while impure, one must still bring an offering.

<sup>40</sup> J. Milgrom suggests that in other cases of physical impurity, such as a birthing mother or a *metzora*, the sacrifice is similarly economically graduated as one can bring either a lamb or a bird. [In the cases of emissions or a defiled Nazirite, none is necessary as to begin with one is only required to bring a bird.] In these cases as well, there is no sin in being defiled, just a necessity to purify, and thus there is more leniency in what is brought.

J. Milgrom suggests that, nonetheless, the option of a meal offering is not open to these individuals for there is no excuse for accidental postponement of purification in cases of actual bodily impurity. [It is difficult to "forget" about physical impurity that is affecting one's body such as *tzara'at*.] Moreover, as these cases involve clear cut cases of Mikdash defilement (rather than the potential defilement of the Mikdash in cases of delayed purification), blood (and hence an animal) is necessary as it is the preferred purifying agent.

<sup>41</sup> The individual, though, did not himself swear that he had no testimony to share, nor even answer "amen" to one who made the oath.