

Levitical Offerings

	Burnt or Whole Offering	Grain or Cereal Offering	Peace or Well-Being Offering	Sin or Purification Offering	Guilt or Trespass Offering
Texts	Leviticus 1:1-17, 6:1-6	Leviticus 2:1-16	Leviticus 3:1-17, 7:11-34	Leviticus 4:1-35, 6:17-23	Leviticus 5:14-26, 7:1-7
Requirement	Voluntary (Gift) Animal , no blemish, brought to the tent of meeting.	Voluntary (Gift) Wheat or Barley , uncooked or cooked, finely ground with oil and salt, no yeast, or honey.	Voluntary (Gift) Animal , no blemish, brought to the tent of meeting.	Required Animal , no blemish, brought to the tent of meeting. <i>For unintentional sins (4:2), priestly sins (4:3), whole congregation (4:13-14), king (4:22), and common people (4:27).</i>	Required Animal , no blemish, brought to the tent of meeting. <i>For unintentional sins and violations of God's Holy things.</i>
Occasion	Atonement	Dedication and Consecration	Reconciliation and Fellowship	Cleansing and Purification	Repentance and Restitution
Function	Propitiation and expiation (for wrath, guilt, offence, and sin).	A dedication, a pledge offering to the Lord, showing commitment.	Provides meat for the table, a festive meal.	Ritual purification and cleansing for the altar and sanctuary.	Compensation payment for unintentional and specific intentional sins.
Animal Type	Young Bull (Male), Sheep and/or Goat (Male), Turtledove and/or Pigeon	N/A	Ox (Male or Female), Sheep and/or Goat (Male or Female)	Priest/Congregation: Bull King: Male Goat Individual: Female Goat or Lamb Poor: Turtledove or Pigeon Very Poor: One Tenth an Ephah of Flour	Ram
Blood	Applied to the altar, and the doorway of the tent of meeting.	N/A	Applied to the altar.	Applied to the horns and the base of the altar, the doorway of the tent of meeting, and the veil	Applied to the altar.
Offering	In smoke by fire on the altar.	In smoke by fire on the altar.	In smoke by fire on the altar.	In smoke by fire on the altar.	In smoke by fire on the altar.

John Whitcomb -- “...animal sacrifices could never remove spiritual guilt from the offerer or clear his conscience. The book of Hebrews is very clear about that (10:4, 11). But it is equally erroneous to say that the sacrifices were mere teaching symbols given by God to Israel to prepare them for Messiah and His infinite atonement. Such a view is contradicted by precise statements in Exodus and Leviticus. The Scriptures tell us that something really did happen to the Israelite offerer when he came to the right altar with the appropriate sacrifice; and he was expected to know what would happen to him. What happened was temporal, finite, external, and legal – not external, infinite, internal, and soteriological. Nevertheless, what happened was personally and immediately significant, not simply symbolic and / or prophetic. When an Israelite “unwittingly failed” to observe a particular ordinance of the Mosaic Law (in the weakness of his sin nature [Num. 15:22–29], not “defiantly,” in open rebellion against God Himself [Num. 15:30–36]), he was actually “forgiven” through an “atonement” (a ritual cleansing; cf. Heb. 9:10, 13) made by the priest (Num. 15:25–26).”¹

F.F. Bruce -- “...the blood of slaughtered animals under the old order did possess a certain efficacy, but it was an outward efficacy for the removal of ceremonial pollution. . . . They could restore [the worshipper] to formal communion with God and with his fellow-worshippers. . . . Just how the blood of sacrificed animals or the ashes of a red heifer effected a ceremonial cleansing our author does not explain; it was sufficient for him, and no doubt for his readers, that the Old Testament ascribed this efficacy to them.”²

Richard Averbeck – “Only Christ’s sacrifice was of the kind that could form the basis for eternal and spiritual salvation (Heb. 9:15). But this in no way refutes the . . . efficacy in the Old Testament atonement sacrifices. Those sacrifices had to do with the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Eternal or spiritual salvation was not the issue. Therefore, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament were effective at their own respective [and totally different] levels.”³

Averbeck’s statement leads us to understand the “two realities” of atonement. The OT sacrifices (i.e., the burnt, purification, and guilt) had a particular function, which could be deemed as *efficacious*. This efficacious nature is seen in the outward ceremonial cleansing of the altar, and the sanctuary. The atoning sacrifice would cleanse the one making the sacrifice and would bring them back into communion with the Lord. The author of Hebrews calls this, “cleansing of the flesh” (Heb 9:13). However, none of these sacrifices ever cleansed the conscience (internal). Hebrews 9:14 says that the Lord’s sacrifice was the only one efficacious to cleanse the conscience (Heb 9:14).⁴

¹ John C. Whitcomb, *Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel*, 9–10.

² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 201, 204. Taken from John C. Whitcomb, *Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel*.

³ Richard E. Averbeck, “*An Exegetical Study of Leviticus 1:4 With a Discussion of the Nature of Old Testament Atonement*,” (unpublished M.Div. Thesis; Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1977) 68. Taken from John C. Whitcomb, *Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel*.

⁴ See Jerry Hullinger, Two Atonement Realms: Reconciling Sacrifice in Ezekiel and Hebrews, <https://tyndale.edu/wp-content/uploads/JODT-Vol11-No32-Mar07.pdf>

Function of Burnt or Whole Offering?

“Moreover, **the function of the burnt offering as exemplified by the Hittite sources, cited above, is clearly propitiatory and expiatory** (for "wrath," "guilt," "offense," "sin"), a fact that accords with the purpose assigned to the burnt offering in this chapter: lekappēr 'to expiate (v 4). Rabbi Akiba maintains that the burnt offering expiates, in the main, for neglected performative commandments (t. Menah. 10:2; Sipra, Nedaba 4:8). Other rabbinic sources add (on the basis of Job 1:5) the expiation of sinful thoughts (Midr. Tanh. B 3:9a, Midr. Lev. Rab. 7:3, 11). Some medieval commentators suggest the entire range of unwitting sins (Bekhor Shor; cf. Shadal) and even brazen sins, if their punishment is not specified (Ramban).

In truth, the rabbis applied the burnt offering to the wide range of sins that fall outside the scope of the purification offering (see at chap. 4). The Qumran sectaries also mentioned that **the burnt offering served an expiatory function**, for they assign such a role to the additional (mûsap) ram required on Yom Kippur (Num 29:8), **which implies that all the festival burnt offerings (Num 28-29) are for expiation** (11QT 27:4). But does the biblical evidence warrant assigning an expiatory function to the burnt offering? **Three cultic texts explicitly record such a function, twice on behalf of Israel (9:7 [with the hatta't]; 16:24) and once for the mēšora (14:20 [with the minha]). Ezekiel too seems to attribute expiation to the burnt offering-again, for Israel (Ezek 45:15, 17 (with other sacrifices)).** But when the cultic texts (outside of P) actually specify a motive for the burnt offering, it is an occasion of joy, such as the fulfillment of a vow or a freewill offering (22:17-19; Num 15:3).

The narrative texts prove more enlightening. In one instance, the purpose of the burnt offering is plainly specified. Saul explains to Samuel why he officiated at the sacrifice: ûpēnē YHWH lo hilliti waet'appaq waa aleh hāōla 'I had not entreated the Lord, so I force myself to sacrifice the burnt offering' (1 Sam 13:12). Entreaty, then, is the manifest purpose of the burnt offering. But entreaty covers a wide range of motives: homage, thanksgiving, appeasement, expiation (Thompson 1963). Appeasement was certainly the goal of Samuel's sacrifice at Mizpah, for the text dutifully records, "And the Lord answered him" (1 Sam 7:9); whereas Israel's entreaties during Jeremiah's time were rejected: "When they sacrifice burnt offering and cereal offering, I will not accept them" (Jer 14:12). Other examples are as follows: David offers up an old to stop the plague (2 Sam 24.21-25), the Israelites offer up an old after their defeat at the hands of Benjamin at the end of a day-long fast (Judg 20:26). "The Tanna, R. Simeon, asks: why does the purification offering precede the burnt offering (in the sacrificial order)? It is comparable to an attorney who comes to appease Having made his (plea of) appeasement, the gift (of appeasement) follows (t. Para 1:1; b. Zebah 7b [Bar.]). **The burnt offering then is a gift, with any number of goals in mind, one of which the one singled out in this chapter-s expiation.**

The fact that the burnt offering answers every conceivable emotional and psychological need leads to the inference that it may originally have been the only sacrifice offered except for the selāmîn, which provided meat for the table (see the COMMENT on chap. 3). This would account for the widespread attestation in the early sources of the old (see above) and the tandem ōld wāzebah ūšēlāmim (Exod 10:25; 18:12; 24:5; 32:6; Num 10:10; 15:8; Deut 27:6-7; Ezek 46:12; etc.). With the advent of a tabernacle/temple, however, it became imperative to devise specific sacrifices to purge the sacred house and its sancta of their contamination and desecration. Thus the purification and reparation offerings, respectively, were devised. **These two sacrifices, once introduced into the sacrificial system, became the expiatory sacrifices par excellence** and ultimately usurped the expiatory function of the burnt

offering for the individual. That these two sacrifices are later than the burnt, cereal, and well-being offerings is shown by the fact that the latter offerings are provided with no cases. The motivations for bringing them are taken for granted. Not so for the purification and reparation offerings their cases are spelled out in detail precisely because knowledge of them is not widespread (Dillmann and Ryssel 1897). Thus the reference to expiation in the exposition of the burnt-offering procedure (1:4) may reflect as much an early stage in the history of this offering as its mention in the Job story (Job 1:5; 42:8).

Furthermore, evidence for the early provenience of the expiatory burnt offering is detectable in the requirement that all public animal sacrifices must be male. The only reasonable explanation of this fact is that the all-male old was at first the only expiatory sacrifice. When the purification and reparation offerings were incorporated into the public cult, the male requirement was still retained. Else how can one explain that the commoner will always bring a female of the flock for his individual purification offering (4:27-35, 14:10, Num 6:14, etc.), whereas the public purification offering is always a male (4:13-21, 9:3, 16:15; Num 28:15; etc.)? The exclusive maleness of all public sacrifices can only be attributed to the priority of the burnt offering, which then imposed its male requirement on the other sacrifices, which were incorporated later. Strikingly, rabbinic tradition affirms that on the bama, the open altar, "all (sacrifices) were burnt offerings" (t. Zebah. 13:1).⁵

Function of the Sin or Purification Offering?

"To my knowledge, all versions and translations, old and new, render the hatta't sacrifice as "sin offering." This translation is inaccurate on all grounds: contextually, morphologically, and etymologically.

The very range of the hatta't in the cult gainsays the notion of sin. For example, this offering is enjoined upon recovery from childbirth (chap. 12), the completion of the Nazirite vow (Num 6), and the dedication of the newly constructed altar (8:15; see Exod 29:36-37). In other words, the hatta't is prescribed for persons and objects who cannot have sinned.

Grammatical considerations buttress these contextual observations. Morphologically, it appears as a piel derivative. More importantly, its corresponding verbal form is not the qal "to sin, do wrong" but always the piel (e.g., 8:15), **which carries no other meaning than "to cleanse, expurgate, decontaminate"** (eg., Ezek 43:22, 26; Ps 51:9). Finally, the "waters of hatta't" (Num 8:7) serve exclusively a purifying function (Num 19:19; see Ezek 26:25). "Purification offering" is certainly the more accurate translation. Indeed, the terse comment of Rashi (on Num 19:19) is all that needs to be said hatta't is literally the language of purification" (cf. also Barr 1963: 874).

It is not my intention to investigate the origin of this mistranslation. It can be traced as far back as the LXX, which consistently renders ἀμαρτία, followed by Philo (Laws 1. 226) and Josephus (Ant. 3.230). It is, however, important to note that if the rabbinic sources had been carefully read, the subsequent

⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: The Anchor Bible*, (Doubleday, New York, NY, 1991), 175-176.

translations could have avoided this mistake. True, the sage Rabbi Eliezer states unequivocally that "the hatta't is brought on account of sin" (m. Zebah. 1:1), but his generalization is directed only to chap. 4 (and its parallel, Num 15:22-31), where the qal, meaning "to sin, do wrong," indeed is found. All other hatta't sacrifices are prescribed for specific physical impurities, such as the new mother, the mēšord, the contaminated Nazirite, and the like, and in these cases, not one sage claims that the afflicted brings this sacrifice because of his sins. Indeed, this idea is vigorously denied (b. Sebu 8a, Ker. 26a).

Moreover, not only is the hatta't unrelated to sin in rabbinic thought, but most authorities deny emphatically that the impurity itself was caused by sin. Even the minority who see a causal connection between sin and affliction argue that the affliction in itself suffices to expiate the sin (Arak 16a, b Nazir 19a, Nid. 31b), and they concur with the majority that the purpose of the hatta't is for ritual purification.

The discussion on the parturient is decisive: "But according to R. Simeon son of Yahai who holds that a woman in confinement is a sinner, what can be said (concerning the purpose of her hatta't)? The sacrifice she brings is, nevertheless, for the purpose of permitting her to partake of consecrated food and is not expiatory" (Ker. 26a). Finally, the categorical statement of the talmudic commentators, the tosafists (on 12:8), leaves no doubt concerning the rabbinic view: "According to the literal meaning of the text her (the parturient's) sacrifice is not brought for sin."

The advantage of freeing the hatta't from the theologically foreign notion of sin and restoring to it its pristine meaning of purification is that now it is possible to see this sacrifice in its true ancient Near Eastern setting. Israel was part of a cultic continuum which abounded in purifications both of persons and of buildings, especially sanctuaries. The hatta't, I aver, is the key that opens the door to this world (for details see Milgrom 1971a).

B. The Function

The rendering of hatta't as a purification offering leads automatically to the question. Whom or what does it purge? Herein lies the first surprise, it is not the offerer of the sacrifice. It must be remembered that the hatta't is brought by an individual under two circumstances: severe physical impurity, such as that of the parturient, mēšord or zab (chaps 12-15), or because of the commission of certain inadvertent sins (eg., chap. 4). Clearly, physical impurity is removed by ablution "he shall launder his clothes [and] bathe in water" (15:8 inter alia). **Spiritual impurity, conversely, which is caused by inadvertent violation of prohibitive commandments (4.2), requires no purificatory rite.** The fact that his sin is inadvertent (bilēgāgā) and that he feels guilt (we'ašem) means that he has undergone inner purification.

The contention that the hatta't never purifies its offerer is supported by the use of its blood: "Moses took the hatta't blood and with his finger put (some) on the horns around the altar, decontaminating (wayehatte) the altar" (Lev 8:15). The hatta't blood, then, is the purging element, the ritual detergent. Blood as a purgative is attested in Hittite ritual: "They smear with blood the golden god, the wall, the utensils of the entirely new god. The new god and the temple become clean" (Ulippi 4.38-40, cited in Wright 1987: 36 n. 67). Still, the rationale for blood in Israel is sui generis (see chap. 11, COMMENT C). Moreover, its use is confined to the sanctuary, but it is never applied to a person (Milgrom 1970c). For example, the rites for the healed mēšōra and the priests' consecration call for both the hatta't and the blood daubing, but the latter ritual stems from other sacrificial animals and not from the hatta't (14:14, 25; 8:22-24, Exod 29:20). Recently, Rodriguez has taken issue with this view. Conceding that the hatta't purges the sanctuary on Yom Kippur because the text says so explicitly (16:16-20), he therefore concludes that the absence of such a statement from all other attestations of this

sacrifice means that in these cases it purifies not the sanctuary but the persons offering it (1979: 128–30). The only evidence he can muster is indirect: when the altar is purged, the hatta't blood is put on the altar's horns sabib 'all around' (8:15, 16:18); whenever this latter term is missing, the blood is simply put on the horns and something else must be intended (1979: 136–38). If the designation sabīb were critically significant, however, it would not be missing from the prescriptive directive concerning the daubing of the altar in Exod 29:12. Furthermore, the latter chapter does not hesitate to use sābib in describing the blood manipulation of the old (Exod 29:16) and millu'īm (Exod 29:20), which clearly demonstrates that its absence in the hatta't pericope is of no consequence. Finally, the occurrence of sabib in the procedures for the 'ōla (1:5, 11), šēlāmīm (3:2, 8, 13), and 'ašām (7:2) is meant simply to specify the four sides of the altar, and this is its meaning for the hattat as well. The conclusion is inescapable that, just as the hatta't blood acts as a purgative on Yom Kippur, it acts likewise every time it is brought into contact with the sanctuary sancta.

Finally, a study of the kipper prepositions is decisive (Milgrom 1970b). **In the context of the hatta't, kipper means "purge" and nothing else, as indicated by its synonyms hitte and tihar** (e.g., 14:51; cf. chap. 16, COMMENT F, Ezek 43:20, 26). **When the object is nonhuman, kipper takes the preposition 'al or b or a direct object.** For example, all three usages are attested in the purging of the adytum on the Day of Purgation (16:16, 20), and they must be understood literally, for the kipper rite takes place on (a) the kappōret and on the floor before it, in (b) the adytum, or it can be said that the entire room (et) is purged (kipper; cf. also 6:23, 16:10, 33; Exod 30:10), (Janowski 1982: 185 n. 5, who claims that kipper 'al always means "expiate for," must entertain the absurd idea that sancta (and the scapegoat, 16:10) are capable of sinning [see Milgrom 1985d: 302–4].) When the object of kipper is a person, however, it is never expressed as a direct object but requires the prepositions al or be'ad. Both signify "on behalf of" (16:6, 24, 30, 33; Num 8:12, 21), but they are not entirely synonymous. The difference is that 'al can only refer to persons other than the subject, but when the subject wishes to refer to himself he must use be'ad (e.g., 9:7; 16:6, 11, 24, Ezek 45:22). This distinction is confirmed by Job 42:8: "Offer a burnt offering for yourselves (be'adkem) and Job, my servant, will intercede on your behalf (alčkem)" (Milgrom 1970b). **This means the purgation rite of the hatta't is not carried out on the offerer but only on his behalf.**

If not the offerer, what then is the object of the hatta't purgation? The about considerations lead to only one answer that which receives the purgative blood the sanctuary and its sancta. By daubing the altar with the hatta't led or by bringing it inside the sanctuary (e.g., 16:14–19), the priest purges the most sacred objects and areas of the sanctuary on behalf of the person who caused their contamination by his physical impurity or inadvertent offense.

This conclusion enables us to understand the distinction between the hatta't for impurities and that for inadvertencies. The inadvertent offender is never called "impure and hence requires no ablutions. In his case the concluding formula reads, wēkipper hakkōhēn wenislah lô 'the priest shall perform the purgation rite that he may be forgiven' (4:20, 26, 31, 35) whereas for the impure person the formula reads, wēkipper hakkōhēn wetāher(ah) the priest shall perform the purgation rite and he (she) shall be clean' (12:6, 8 14:9, 20). Thus the impure person needs purification and the sinner needs forgiveness. Ostensibly, this distinction breaks down in the case of the corpse contaminated Nazirite who brings a purification offering because hata 'al-han nāpel 'he erred in regard to the corpse' (Num 6:11). This leads a recent scholar to declare that "ritual impurity could be considered a sin" (Rodríguez 1979 104); but

he has overlooked the exceptional nature of the Nazirite. He is "holy (Num 6:5, 8), and the contamination of holiness is a serious sin. Note the wording of the warning to priests in this regard: "Lest they incur het and die thereby" (Lev 22:9, cf. Kiuchi 1987: 72 and for details, see chap. 15, CoMMENT E).

The inadvertent offender needs forgiveness not because of his act per se-as indicated above, his act is forgiven because of the offender's inadvertence and remorse-but because of the consequence of his act. His inadvertence has contaminated the sanctuary, and it is his responsibility to purge it with a hatta't. Confirmation of this thesis is provided by the Tannaïtes: "All of the (hatta't goats purge the pollution of the Temple and its sancta" (m. Sebu. 1:4-5; cf 1. Sebu. 13) **This rabbinic tradition has preserved the postulate that the hatta't blood is the ritual detergent employed by the priest to purge the sanctuary of the impurities inflicted upon it by the offerer of the sacrifice.**

The hatta't as the authorized purgative of the sanctuary echoes with a familiar ring for students of ancient Near Eastern cults in which temple purifications play so dominant a role. Impurity was feared because it was considered demonic. It was an unending threat to the gods themselves and especially to their temples, as exemplified by the images of protector gods set before temple entrances (eg, the sêdu and lamassu in Mesopotamia and the lion-gargoyles in Egypt) and, above all, by the elaborate cathartic and apotropaic rites to rid buildings of demons and prevent their return. Let examples from ANET suffice: Egypt, 325, 329-30, Hattia, 346, 351-53, 357, 358, Mesopotamia, 331-34, 334-38, 338-39. Thus for both Israel and her neighbors impurity was a physical substance, an aerial miasma that possessed magnetic attraction for the realm of the sacred. As will be shown below, Israel thoroughly overhauled this concept of impurity in adapting it to its monotheistic system, but the notion of its dynamic and malefic power, especially in regard to the sancta, was not completely expunged from P. Thus Molech worship is forbidden because it contaminates "my sanctuary" (20:3). Whoever is contaminated by a corpse and fails to purify himself "has contaminated the Lord's sanctuary" (Num 19:20, 13). Those afflicted with pelvic discharges also need purification "lest they die through their impurity by contaminating my Tabernacle which is among them" (15:31). The two latter offenders are banished with the mēšōrā "that they do not contaminate the camp in whose midst I dwell" (Num 5:2b). True, the rabbis interpreted each of these passages on the assumption that impurity came into direct contact with the holy, specifically that the offender while in an impure state entered the sanctuary or ate of sacred food (t. Sebu. 1:8; Sipra, Hobah 13:10). It is patently clear, however, that these texts are grounded in the axiom, common to all ancient Near Eastern culture, that impurity is the implacable foe of holiness wherever it exists, it assaults the sacred realm even from afar.

The dynamic, aerial quality of biblical impurity is best attested by its graded power. Impurity pollutes the sanctuary in three stages: (1) The individual's inadvertent misdemeanor or severe physical impurity pollutes the courtyard al- tar, which is purged by daubing its horns with the hattā't blood (4:25, 30, 9:9). (2) The inadvertent misdemeanor of the high priest or the entire community pollutes the shrine, which is purged by the high priest by placing the hatta't blood on the inner altar and before the paroket (4:5-7, 16-18). (3) The wanton unrepented sin not only pollutes the outer altar and penetrates into the shrine but it pierces the veil and enters the adytum, housing the holy Ark and kappōret, the very throne of God (cf. Isa 37:16). Because the wanton sinner is barred from bringing his hattā't (Num 15:27-31), the pollution wrought by his offense must await the annual purgation of the sanctuary on the Day of Purgation, and it consists of two steps: the purging of the adytum of the wanton sins and the purging of the shrine and outer altar of the inadvertent sins (16:16-19). Thus the entire sacred area or, more precisely, all that is most sacred (Milgrom 1970a: n. 211) is purged on Purgation Day (yôm hakkippūrim) with the hatta't blood. In this way the graded purgations of the sanctuary lead to the conclusion that the severity of the sin or impurity

varies in direct relation to the depth of its penetration into the sanctuary. This mathematical relationship between sin and sanctuary is best understood by the diagram in fig. 6. Moreover, this diagram provides graphic confirmation that P propounds a notion of impurity as a dynamic force, magnetic and malefic to the sphere of the sacred, attacking it not just by direct contact but from a distance. The outer altar is polluted though the wrongdoer is outside the sacred compound, the shrine is polluted though he, a nonpriest, may not even enter it and, finally, the adytum is polluted though no man, not even the priest, may enter (Milgrom 1970a: 38-43). Despite the fact that Israelites have had no access, the sancta must be purged "of the impurities of the Israelites" (16:16).⁶

⁶ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: The Anchor Bible*, (Doubleday, New York, NY, 1991), 253-258.