

**FOURTH MESSAGE:
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PEOPLE CONCERNING OFFENSE-OFFERINGS
FOR OFFENSES AGAINST OTHER PEOPLE
Leviticus 6:1-7**

Introduction

These verses are numbered Leviticus 5:20-26 in the Hebrew text. They are a separate message, as is indicated by the fact that they are introduced by the words that Moses customarily used to introduce a new message from Jehovah. However, the message continues to discuss the offense-offering, which began in MESSAGE 3. It is natural to wonder why the description of the offense-offering should have been divided in this manner. Any number of reasons can be suggested. It probably was something as simple as the amount of time available for receiving and recording the messages on the days that these messages were delivered. Moses was not interested in communicating details concerning the circumstances under which the messages were received, but he did clearly declare that Jehovah spoke them to him.

A logical division of thought does exist between the previous message and this one. The previous message dealt with offenses committed against Jehovah, whereas this message deals with offenses committed against other people. Offense-offerings were to be offered in both cases, and both required restitution before the offering was presented at the altar.

This message has no sub-topics.

Interpretation

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1. **And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying,**

This verse contains the now familiar words that Moses used to introduce each new message he received from Jehovah.

Verses 2-3. **2 When anyone sins, or betrays [with] an betrayal against Jehovah or deceives his associate concerning a deposit, or concerning a pledge, or by robbery, or he oppresses his associate,**

3 Or he finds something that was lost and deceives concerning it, and swears to a falsehood about any of all that men may do to sin by them,

When anyone sins, or betrays with a betrayal against Jehovah or deceives his associate. Three words for sin occur in this clause. The first is translated "sin" and is the word found in Leviticus 4:1 (see comments on that verse in MESSAGE 2 under the heading when someone sins). It means "to miss the mark." The second word is translated

"betrays" and occurs in both verb and noun forms. It is the word found in Leviticus 5:15 (see comments on that verse in MESSAGE 3 under the heading when a person betrays with a betrayal). It means "to be unfaithful." The third word is translated "deceives." It occurs here for the first time in Leviticus. It means "to deceive" or "to defraud." Any of these forms of sin might be an offense for which a person should offer an offense-offering.

against Jehovah. Though this message deals with offenses against other people, it begins by recognizing that when a person offends another person he betrays Jehovah. When a person deceives or defrauds his fellowman, his sin is not against the other person only. He also betrays God. In fact, first and foremost he sins against God, because God made the law that people should not offend each other. Sinning against other people is not a private matter between the two persons. It involves God, because God is the Creator and rightful Owner of all people; and He defends every one.

his associate. This word is translated as “neighbor” in most English translations; however, it is not the word that is usually translated in that way. NASB recognizes that this word is different by translating it “companion” instead of “neighbor.” The word strictly means “associate,” which is the appropriate word to use in this verse. For one person to deceive or defraud another, the two must be associated together in some manner. However, they do not necessarily have to be close companions.

Jehovah then listed six ways by which a person can deceive or defraud a person with whom he is associated.

concerning a deposit. The first example of fraud against an associate is to misuse a deposit. “Deposit” means an item or valuable left in a person’s care. A person who is trusted with another’s property and who fails to return the object that was entrusted to him when the owner requests it commits an offense against God. The offender betrays the person who trusted him, but even more seriously he betrays God..

or concerning a pledge. Literally, these words mean, “in a putting of a hand” or “in extending a hand.” They refer to giving a pledge or a promise by a handshake or by the uplifted hand. A person who holds up his or her hand and makes a promise and then fails to pay or give on time what he has promised has offended both the person and God.

or by robbery. A third example is taking the belongings of an associate by force or robbery.

or he oppresses his associate. A fourth example is the sin of using one’s authority to take advantage of another. The word translated “oppresses” is often used to refer to embezzlement, that is, to wrongfully steal a valuable from an associate, not by force but by deceit or trickery. Stealing by “fixing the books” is as much a sin as robbing with a knife or a club or in modern times with a gun.

or he finds something that was lost and deceives concerning it. A fifth example is for a person to find money or other valuable that belongs to another person and to try to keep it by denying that he knows anything about it..

or swears to a falsehood about any of all that men may do to sin by them. The sixth example is to give false information through any means that a person can use to mislead another person. The offender might swear to false information in a law court or in daily conversation. Either way, his deception does a grave injustice to the person he has lied about. Any method a person might devise to deceive another person or to defraud another person is an offense against both the person and God.

Verse 4-5. **4 Then it shall be, when he has sinned and has offended, that he shall return the loot that he got by robbery, or the embezzled object that he embezzled or the deposit that was deposited with him, or the lost item that he found,**

5 Or anything about which he swore with a falsehood. And he shall restore the principal, and he must add to it a fifth of it. He must give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day of his offense-offering.

That it shall be, when he has sinned, and has offended. This statement uses the most common word for sinning that was used in verse 3, and then it adds a fourth word for sinning. It is the word discussed in Leviticus 5:6 and in Leviticus 5:15 (see comments in Lev. 5:6 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading “and he shall bring his offense to Jehovah” and in Lev. 5:15 in MESSAGE 3 under the heading “the he shall bring his offense to Jehovah.”) It is the same word used for the name of the fifth type of fire-offering—offense-offering. Here it refers not to the offering but to the offense itself. This statement certainly implies that the offender was expected to recognize his wrong-doing and repent. His repentance made him willing to take corrective action for his offense and to offer an offering for his offense.

that he shall return. Before offering an offense-offering for any of these offenses, the offender was to restore what he had taken. Until he showed his repentant spirit and restored what he had taken by fraud, no offering of any kind in any amount would have been effective in gaining his forgiveness. The act of restoring what was wrongfully taken is the primary distinctive between an offense-offering and a sin-offering. The offense-offering was to be offered for offenses for which restoration was possible. The offender was to return the goods he had gained wrongfully, regardless of the method he used to gain it. The six examples of fraud that were listed in verses 2 and 3 are listed again in verses 4 and 5, though not in the same order.

the loot that he got by robbery. The wording in the Hebrew for this offense uses a noun and a verb based on the same root and could be approximated in English as “the robbed goods that he robbed,” though we do not use the words in that manner in English.

or the embezzled objects that he embezzled. Again in Hebrew this expression uses a noun and a verb based on the same root. It refers to goods obtained by oppressing another, that is, by taking advantage of another by using one’s authority over him. The expression is often used to refer to embezzlement and probably has that meaning in these verses.

or the deposit that was deposited with him. Once more, the Hebrew uses a noun and a verb based on the same root. It refers to goods left in trust with another person. Based on the description of this offense in verse 2, it refers to goods that the trusted person failed to return the owner requested it.

or the lost item that he found. This offense is that the offender fails to tell about finding a lost item and seeks to keep it for himself.

Or everything about which he swore with a falsehood. Any other deception or falsehood was equally an offense against God and needed to be confessed and forgiven.

And he shall restore the principal. The verb in this clause is different from the verb translated “return” in verse 4. This verb means “to complete.” It was used by the Hebrews to mean “repay.” In this clause, it is in the intensive form of the verb, adding to the strength of God’s command that the offender was expected to correct his wrong-doing.

The word translated “principal” means “head.” It was used by the Hebrews to mean “chief,” “best,” or “first.” In this verse, it refers to the original amount that was taken wrongfully.

and he must add to it a fifth of it. As in the case of restoration made to Jehovah for an offense committed directly against Him (see comments on Lev. 5:16 under the heading “and he shall add a fifth of it to it”), in making restitution the offender was to a fifth more to what he took. This additional amount was to show his genuine sorrow for his sin and his desire to correct the harm, sadness, and pain he caused. The verb in this phrase is in the imperfect state, which should be understood to be a subjunctive and is properly translated “must give.” Returning a fifth more than was taken was not optional. I was a requirement

He must give it to him to whom it belongs. The verb in this clause is also an imperfect, which should be understood as a subjunctive. This command also was a firm requirement. The literal translation of the last part of this phrase is “which [is] to him.” The restitution was to be made, not to Jehovah, but to the person who was wronged. The offender was to face the person from whom he had stolen, express his regret, and restore what he had taken plus interest.

in the day of his trespass offering. Restoring what the offender had taken by fraud plus interest was a part of the offering. The restoration and the offense-offering were to be carried out on the same day. They were parts of one act of repentance. Both the restoration and the offering were deeds of worship and were obedience to God. Of great significance is the requirement that the restoration was to come first. Only when the offender had restored what he had taken wrongfully was he ready to approach God with his offense-offering. God

would not accept the offender's act of worship until he had corrected his wrongdoing.

Verses 6-7. **6 And he must bring his offense to Jehovah, [by means of] a pristine ram from the flock, [worth enough] by your evaluation for an offense-offering, to the priest.**

7 And the priest shall cover over him at Jehovah face, and it shall be forgiven him for any of all that one may do to offend by it.

These verses are a shortened statement of the instructions given in Leviticus 5:17-29 (see comments on those verse in MESSAGE 3). The animal to be used in offense-offering for an offense against another person was a ram, just as it was in the case of an offense against Jehovah (see

comments on Lev. 5:15 in MESSAGE 3 under the heading [with] a ram from the flock). It was to be worth enough to show true sorrow for the offense, which in the previous message was specified to be at least three shekels (see comments on Lev. 5:14 in MESSAGE 3 [worth] by your evaluation [at least three] silver shekels, in the shekel of The Holy [Place]). The offering was to be taken to a priest at the altar of The Tabernacle, and the priest would perform the required ceremony to symbolize that the offender had been covered over by forgiveness to protect him from the effects of his sin. Three days later, Jehovah described the procedures to be used by the priests in offering offense-offerings (see comments on Lev. 7:1-7 in MESSAGE 7).

Application.

The offense-offering reveals the nature of true repentance. If a child of God truly repents of a wrong that he has committed toward God or toward his fellowman, he will show it by sincere regret in his heart. But, he will also do more. If it is possible for him to make amends, he will do all he can to correct whatever wrong he did. In the case of fraud against another person, he will face the person he had defrauded, ask for forgiveness, and pay him back for the damage he caused. Furthermore, he will pay back more than he took. To demonstrate his sincerity, he will seek to make amends before he goes to God to ask for forgiveness. The effort to make amends is an integral part of true repentance. If the offender does not try to correct the harm he has caused, he is not truly sorry and he will not be forgiven.

The forgiveness referred to here is not the pardon that comes with salvation, because salvation does not depend on any work the sinner might perform. It comes only through faith in Jesus, who made the only amends possible by dying on the Cross and arising from the dead. Instead, the forgiveness pictured by the offense-offering is the forgiveness that comes to a believer who trusts God but fails through weakness in a time of temptation. When sin comes into the life of a believer, it does not take away his salvation, but it does interfere with his fellowship with God. It separates him from close fellowship with God whether he committed the offense directly against God or against his fellowman. When the believer seeks to make amends and then confesses his failure to God, the barriers are removed and he is restored to close companionship with God. However, if he refuses to make amends, his repentance is not genuine and the barriers to his fellowship with God remain (1 John 1:5-10). He is not lost, but he does lose his close fellowship with God. A true believer cannot remain in that condition for long. He will be so discontent by his separation from God's close presence that soon he will be sorry, show it by seeking to make amends, and ask God for forgiveness. Then God will freely restore him to close fellowship.

Jesus taught the same lessons when He said in Matthew 5:23-24, **“Therefore if you bring your offering to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave there your offering in front of the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come back and offer your offering,”** in Matthew 6:14-15, **“For truly, if you forgive men [for] their wrongdoings, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive to men their wrongdoings, neither will your Father**

forgive your wrongdoings,” and in Luke 11:4b, “And forgive us our sins, for we also ourselves forgive every one [who is] indebted to us.”