

Vayikra 5786

Rambam, Hilchot Shegagot, 1:3

With regard to all the transgressions punishable by *karet* in the Torah except for the three which were mentioned, if a private individual violated one of these prohibitions inadvertently, he must bring a fixed sin-offering with the exception of an impure person who partook of sacrificial meat and an impure person who entered the Temple. These two do not bring a fixed sin-offering, but rather an adjustable guilt-offering, as will be explained.

Abarbanel, Introduction to Leviticus

The question was: Why is it that among all the sin-offerings (חטאות) mentioned in the Torah, it is not stated, “if his means are insufficient for a sheep,” except in this last one—where it introduces the offering of the poor, that he should bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and if his means are insufficient even for those, that he should bring a tenth of an ephah (of flour)?

It would have been appropriate for this law to be general and apply equally to all sin-offerings.

Bechor Shor on Leviticus 5:11

“He shall not place oil upon it, nor put frankincense upon it—”

Because there is no enjoyment in it, and this is not a manner of honor, for הרי it is a sin-offering, and it is not fitting to treat it in a way of importance.

Ramban on Leviticus 5:7

It is possible that the reason for the leniency with regard to the offering in the case of oaths [i.e., the “oath of testimony” and the “oath of utterance”, as explained above] is because the punishment is not excision [were they to be done wilfully]. In the case of defilement of the Sanctuary and the holy food [He mitigated the obligation of the offering] because the person who did it erred whilst engaged in performing a religious duty, for the priest who eats the holy food or enters into the Sanctuary to prostrate himself or to bring an offering is engaged in performing a religious duty, and his intention

is towards Heaven. Therefore even though he sinned on account of having forgotten his state of uncleanness, Scripture gave him more ways of atonement.

Abarbanel, Introduction to Leviticus

However, regarding the sin-offerings of ordinary individuals (private persons), I say that it is not limited only to this particular type of sin-offering, but rather it includes all types of sin-offerings that were mentioned among them.

Bavli Yoma 35b

And if a wealthy man comes before the heavenly court, the members of the court say to him: Why did you not engage in Torah? If he says: I was wealthy and preoccupied with managing my possessions, they say to him: Were you any wealthier than Rabbi Elazar, who was exceedingly wealthy and nevertheless studied Torah? They said about Rabbi Elazar ben Harsum that his father left him an inheritance of one thousand villages on land, and corresponding to them, one thousand ships at sea. And each and every day he takes a leather jug of flour on his shoulder and walks from city to city and from state to state to study Torah from the Torah scholars in each of those places. One time as he passed through the villages in his estate and his servants found him, did not recognize him, and, thinking he was a resident of the town, they pressed him into service [*angarya*] for the master of the estate. He said to them: I beseech you; let me be and I will go study Torah. They said: We swear by the life of Rabbi Elazar ben Harsum that we will not let you be. The Gemara comments: And in all his days, he never went and saw all his possessions and his property; rather, he would sit and engage in the study of Torah all day and all night.