

Types of Sacrifices in Leviticus (E.G.C.)

Probably the greatest expert on Leviticus is Rabbi Jacob Milgrom, who taught at Berkeley. He has a three-volume commentary on Lev in the Anchor Bible series as well as a Fortress Press one-volume version¹. Under *ašam* in the index to the three volumes are numerous references to many pages in these volumes. The whole subject of the types of sacrificial offerings is extremely complex.

As indicated in the attached excerpt from the one-volume commentary, the sacrifices treated in Lev are:

1. *olah* [literally, what “goes up”], translated via the Greek “holocaust,” = “whole-burnt-offering.” Lev 1
2. *minḥah* [meaning “gift”], usually translated “cereal offering, meal offering, oblation.” Lev 2; see Mal 3:4. This can be tied to the concepts of tribute for the Land and ransom.
3. *zebah šelamim* [“peace slaughter/sacrifice”], translated by Milgrom “well-being offering” [*šelamim* is from the same root as *šalom*, “peace, well-being”]. At times translated “sacrifice of communion.” Lev 3. The LXX translated “sacrifice of salvation.”
4. *ašam* [“reparation, reparation offering”]. According to Milgrom, “related to the Hebrew verb translated ‘feel guilt’, which predominates in this offering ([Lev] 5:17, 23, 26) and in the purification offering as well (4:13, 22, 25; 5:4, 5). [The “purification offering” is the *ḥaṭṭat*, see below.] The *ašam* encompasses the remorse or guilty-feeling of the offender plus the reparation he must make for his wrong. On page 46 of his one-volume *Leviticus*, he states that

The verb *ašam* describes the syndrome of sin, guilt, and punishment. It has a psychological dimension. Wrongdoing creates guilt and fear of punishment, and conversely suffering reinforces feelings of guilt. Thus we find one word bridging all expiatory offerings: *ašam*.

Ašam is not mentioned in Lev 16 (Yom Kippur). It is treated in Lev 5:14-26, and is important in Lev 14:12, 18, 21, 24 (expiation of the leper). It is also mentioned in Num 6:12 in the Nazirite ritual, and in other places in the OT: most important for us is Isa 53:10. The LXX usually translates *ašam* as “mistake,” *plēmmélēsis*. However, for some reason, the LXX in Isa 53:10 translated *ašam* as *peri hamartias*, which it usually uses for the last kind of sin-offering, the *ḥaṭṭat*. Paul uses *peri hamartias* in Rom 8:3.

5. *ḥaṭṭat* [meaning ‘to miss the mark’, like the Greek word for sin *hamartia*], “purification offering” (Milgrom), usually translated “sin-offering,” treated in Lev 4:1-5:13. This is the offering used in Lev 16, along with the holocaust (a bullock for the *ḥaṭṭat* and a ram for the *olah*, 16:3). The scapegoat is also a “purification-offering,” 16:9, like the bullock, 16:27; both are to be taken outside the camp (see Heb 13:11-14). The *ḥaṭṭat* is translated *peri tēs hamartias* in Lev 16 (without the genitive article *tēs* [= “of the”] in 16:3, 5, 9, that is, exactly as in Isa 53:10 and Rom 8:3).

¹ *Leviticus. A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).