MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism · Christianity · Islam

DOCUMENT 407

Many Days Without Sacrifice

A Covenant Deep Dive into Hosea 3:4 and the Sin and Guilt Offerings of Leviticus 4–5 — *sin offering (chattat), guilt offering (asham),* and the Witnesses That Need No Altar: *confession (hitvaddah), repayment (shillem),* and *a little sanctuary (mikdash me'at)*

כִּי יָמִים רַבִּים יֵשְׁבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין מֶלֶךְ וְאֵין שָׂר וְאֵין זֶבַח

When the Temple, the Altar, and the Priesthood Are Out of Reach — as Hosea Foresaw, and as It Has Been Since 70 CE — Which Parts of the Sin Offering and the Guilt Offering Still Stand, and on What Witnesses Do They Stand? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

November 2026
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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Since the Temple fell, rabbinic Judaism has taught that prayer stands where the offerings stood. The daily prayers were set to match the daily offerings (Talmud Berakhot 26b); **Hosea**'s ***"bulls of our lips"*** is read as prayer in place of the bulls; the synagogue and the house of study are called the ***"little sanctuary"*** of **Ezekiel 11:16** (Talmud Megillah 29a); and Maimonides wrote that with no Temple and no altar of atonement, nothing remains but repentance (Laws of Repentance 1:3).	Most churches teach that the death of Jesus ended the sin and guilt offerings: ***"where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin"*** (Hebrews 10:18). Christians are taught to confess (1 John 1:9; James 5:16) and to be reconciled with a brother before bringing a gift (Matthew 5:23–24). Catholic penance asks contrition, confession, and ***"satisfaction"*** (Catechism 1450–1460).	Islam places no altar and no priest between the sinner and Allah. Repentance (tawbah) asks the sinner to leave the sin, regret it, resolve not to return, and, where another person's right was taken, to restore it (an-Nawawi, Riyad as-Salihin, ch. 2). A broken oath is expiated by feeding or clothing ten needy persons, or by fasting three days (Q. 5:89).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written Tanakh to one question: when the Temple, the altar, and the priesthood are out of reach — as **Hosea 3:4** foretold, and as it has been since 70 CE — which parts of the ***sin offering (chattat)*** and the ***guilt offering (asham)*** of **Leviticus 4–5** still stand, and on what witnesses do they stand? It reads **Hosea 3:4–5** word by word, sets out every element of the two offerings, separates what needed the altar from what never did, and gathers the Tanakh's own witnesses for each principle that stands without it. **Yahweh** (**יהוה**) and **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew words are given with the English first and the Hebrew transliteration after it in parentheses, in ***bold italic***, at every occurrence. Hebrew letters are set in bold. Scripture references are bold. Where a verse is quoted in Hebrew, the English rendering under it is set in gold, and its reference stays black.

Verse numbers follow the English version. In a few chapters the Hebrew Bible divides the chapter at a different point, so the same verse carries a different number in the Hebrew text. Where that happens, the Hebrew number is given in brackets on first citation, for example

Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14]. (In this study the main cases are **Leviticus 6**, where English 6:1–7 is Hebrew 5:20–26 and English 6:26 is Hebrew 6:19; **Exodus 22**, where English 22:1 is Hebrew 21:37; **Numbers 30**; **Deuteronomy 23**; **Psalms 19, 34**, and 51, where the Hebrew counts the heading as a verse; **Ecclesiastes 5**; **Jeremiah 31**; **Hosea 14**; **Jonah 2**; and **Daniel 6**.)

The lexicons cited are: BDB — Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, ***A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), the classic English-language Hebrew dictionary, built on the work of Gesenius; and Gesenius — Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842), ***Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures***, translated by **Samuel** Prideaux Tregelles (London: Bagster, 1857), the foundational lexicon on which later dictionaries were built. Each lexicon is a witness, never the authority. The Tanakh's own usage of each word is gathered first, and the lexicons are heard after it.

Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew of the Leningrad Codex. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Dates and events after the close of the Tanakh — the burning of the Second Temple, the failed attempt to rebuild it — are history, not scripture; they are given so the reader knows what happened, and their sources are listed in the Comparative Texts table. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, church teaching, the Qur'an, and the historians are cited as historical and comparative reference in the tables and the Three-Religion Audit only — never as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The sin and guilt offerings, element by element; confession and repayment with a fifth; the silent witness and the rash oath; the book set beside the ark as a witness; the one place of offering; the sanctuaries made desolate; return ***"in the latter days"***
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 **Samuel**, 2 **Samuel**, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, **Ezekiel**, **Hosea**, **Amos**, **Jonah**, **Micah**, **Malachi**	Many days without sacrifice, then return; the altar built ***"not for burnt offering"*** but as a witness; Solomon's prayer for those far from the altar; the little sanctuary; restitution that lets the wicked ***"surely live"***; the intercessors and their limits; **Jonah**'s prayer from the deep

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, **Daniel**, Ezra, Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles	The word that makes sin known; the broken heart; the witness who will not tell; the vow and the word ***"error"*** spoken before the messenger; the fall of the altar mourned; confession in exile; Manasseh heard in Babylon; the altar set again on its base

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Historical record	Josephus, ***Jewish War*** 6 (the Temple burned on the tenth of Av, 70 CE); Tacitus, ***Histories*** 5, and Sulpicius Severus, ***Chronicle*** 2.30; Ammianus Marcellinus, ***Res Gestae*** 23.1.2–3 (Julian's attempt to rebuild, 363 CE)	When and how the altar was lost, and the one recorded attempt to restore it
Rabbinic literature	Talmud Berakhot 26b; Talmud Megillah 29a; Talmud Menachot 110a; Avot de-Rabbi Natan 4; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 1:3	Prayer set in place of the offerings; the synagogue as ***"little sanctuary"***; study counted as offering; kindness in place of the altar; ***"nothing remains but repentance"***
Samaritan practice	The Samaritan Passover offering on Mount Gerizim, still performed each year	The one community that still offers, and why its altar stands outside the place the Tanakh names
New Testament	Hebrews 10:18; Matthew 5:23–24; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9	The teaching that the offering for sin has ceased; confession, reconciliation, and prayer for one another
Church teaching	Catechism of the Catholic Church 1450–1460	Contrition, confession, and ***"satisfaction"*** in the sacrament of penance
Islamic sources	Q. 3:135; 5:89; 25:70–71; an-Nawawi, ***Riyad as-Salihin***, ch. 2	Repentance and its four conditions; the expiation of a broken oath

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — WHAT STANDS WHEN THE ALTAR IS GONE?

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

For more than nineteen centuries no altar has stood in Jerusalem. No priest of the house of Aaron has sprinkled blood before the veil, burned the fat of a sin offering, or valued a ram for a guilt offering by the shekel of the sanctuary. Yet the chapters that command these things — Leviticus 4 and Leviticus 5 — are still in every Bible, and every believer still sins in error, still breaks his word, still wrongs his neighbor.

The question put to this Institution is precise: if the altar, the priest, and the house are out of reach, as Hosea 3:4 foretold, then the core of the sin and guilt offerings must rest on witnesses that do not require an altar. What are they?

This study answers in five parts:

First: what did **Hosea 3:4–5** actually foresee, word by word, and does it say the absence is permanent?

Second: what happened in history — when was the altar lost, and has it ever been restored?

Third: which elements of the sin and guilt offerings belonged to the altar, and which never did?

Fourth: for each element that never needed the altar, what are the Tanakh's own witnesses — two or three at least?

Fifth: what must the believer far from the altar not do, and what does he wait for?

I-B. Where This Study Stands in the Library

The Library has met this subject in pieces. **Doc 239** (***Afflict Your Souls***) gave five witnesses to return where no altar stands, for the Day of Atonement. **Doc 344** (***In Error or With a High Hand***) set the line between sin in error and sin with a high hand. **Doc 404** (***Though He Did Not Know***) answered the unknown sin and gave eight things the believer does today. **Doc 405** (***I Will Confess My Transgressions to Yahweh***) showed to whom sin is confessed. **Doc 406** (***Shall I Give My Firstborn for My Transgression?***) tested the teaching that a man's death replaced the offerings. **Doc 251** (***The Place He Chooses***) and **Doc 288** (***A Covenant of Everlasting Priesthood***) treated the one place and the priesthood. This study does not repeat them. It does what none of them did as a whole: it takes

Leviticus 4–5 apart element by element and asks, for each one, ***"Did this need the altar?"*** — and where the answer is no, it finds the witnesses.

I-C. What *"Witness"* Means in This Study

The word is used here in two senses, and the Tanakh uses both. The first is the legal sense of **Deuteronomy 19:15**: no matter stands without ***two or three witnesses (edim)***, and every principle below is required to have them. The second is the Tanakh's own use of the word ***witness (ed)*** for things that stand in for what is absent. When **Moses** finished writing the Torah, he had it set beside the ark ***"that it may be there for a witness"*** (**Deuteronomy 31:26**), and he gave Israel a song to stand ***"as a witness"*** when they were far from the land (**Deuteronomy 31:19, 21**). When the tribes beyond the Jordan feared that distance would cut them off from the one altar, they built a copy of it ***"not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but it is a witness"*** (**Joshua 22:28**; Section VII). And the opening law of **Leviticus 5** is itself the law of a witness — the man who saw or knew and will not speak (**Leviticus 5:1**; Section V-K). The witnesses that need no altar are, in the Tanakh's own language, real witnesses.

I-D. How the Findings Are Graded

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. HOSEA 3:4–5 — MANY DAYS WITHOUT SACRIFICE

כִּי יָמִים רַבִּים יֵשְׁבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין מֶלֶךְ וְאֵין שָׂר וְאֵין זֶבַח וְאֵין מַצֵּבָה וְאֵין אֵפוֹד וּתְרָפִים

"For many days the children of Israel shall dwell without king and without prince, without sacrifice and without pillar, without ephod and teraphim" (**Hosea 3:4**)

אַחַר יָשֻׁבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִקְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֵת דָּוִד מַלְכָּם וּפָחֲדוּ אֶל־יְהוָה וְאֶל־טוּבוֹ בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים

"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their Elohim and David their king, and shall come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the latter days" (**Hosea 3:5**)

II-A. The Words of the Prophecy

ENGLISH (HEBREW)	HEBREW	STRONG'S	USE IN THE TANAKH	KEY TEXTS
many days (yamim rabbim)	יָמִים רַבִּים	H3117 / H7227	A long time, not a fixed count	**Hosea 3:3–4**; **Genesis 37:34**
shall dwell (yeshvu)	יֵשְׁבוּ	H3427	To sit, remain, wait; the same verb as the wife's waiting in 3:3	**Hosea 3:3–4**
without (ein)	אֵין	H369	Absence — said six times	**Hosea 3:4**
king (melekh)	מֶלֶךְ	H4428	The ruler of the nation	**Hosea 8:4**; **10:3**
prince (sar)	שַׂר	H8269	An officer or leader under the king	**Hosea 7:3**; **13:10**
sacrifice (zevach)	זֶבַח	H2077	The slaughtered offering at the altar	**Hosea 6:6**; **9:4**
pillar (matzevah)	מַצֵּבָה	H4676	A standing stone; forbidden as an object of worship	**Deuteronomy 16:22**; **Hosea 10:1–2**
ephod (ephod)	אֵפוֹד	H646	The high priest's garment of inquiry; also misused	**Exodus 28:6**; **Judges 8:27**
teraphim (teraphim)	תְּרָפִים	H8655	Household images; condemned	**Genesis 31:19**; **1 Samuel 15:23**; **2 Kings 23:24**
shall return (yashuvu)	יָשֻׁבוּ	H7725	To turn back — the word of repentance	**Deuteronomy 4:30**; **30:2**
and seek (u-viqshu)	וּבִקְשׁוּ	H1245	To seek out with purpose	**Deuteronomy 4:29**; **Hosea 5:15**
shall come trembling (u-fachadu)	וּפָחֲדוּ	H6342	To come in awe, trembling	**Hosea 3:5**; **Micah 7:17**
in the latter days (be-acharit ha-yamim)	בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים	H319 / H3117	The end of the period in view; the time of return	**Deuteronomy 4:30**; **Isaiah 2:2**

II-B. What Was Taken Away — Three Pairs

The six things Israel will be ***without (ein)*** fall into three pairs, and the pairing is the key to the verse. The first pair is rule: ***king (melekh)*** and ***prince (sar)***. The second is worship the Torah commanded: ***sacrifice (zevach)*** and the ***ephod (ephod)*** of the priest. The third is worship the Torah forbade: the ***pillar (matzevah)*** (**Deuteronomy 16:22**) and the ***teraphim (teraphim)*** (**1 Samuel 15:23**; **2 Kings 23:24**). Israel is stripped of both — of the true altar and of the false images. The people are not left free to worship wrongly in place of what they lost. They are left waiting.

That is exactly the picture of the chapter. **Hosea** buys back his unfaithful wife and tells her: ***"You shall dwell for me many days; you shall not play the harlot, and you shall not be with a man — and I also toward you"*** (**Hosea 3:3**). The same verb, ***to dwell (yashav)***, and the same words, ***many days (yamim rabbim)***, pass straight from the wife to the nation in **Hosea 3:4**. The absence is not a divorce. It is waiting under a promise.

II-C. The First Horizon and the Pattern

Hosea prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah and Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel (**Hosea 1:1**), and he spoke first to the northern kingdom. Its king was taken, its people carried to Assyria, and its sanctuaries ended (**2 Kings 17:6, 22–23**). Judah followed: the house of **Yahweh** was burned (**2 Kings 25:8–9**), and the altar lay in ruins until the exiles returned and ***"set the altar on its base"*** (**Ezra 3:3**). The Second Temple was burned in 70 CE, and since then no altar has stood (see Section III).

This is a pattern, and the reader must not make the verse say more than it says. **Hosea 3:4** does not name Rome or the year 70. It names a long period of absence and a return ***"in the latter days."*** That the present age fits the pattern is a reasonable reading; that the verse names this age is not written.

II-D. The Absence Foreseen — Three Witnesses More

Hosea is not alone. The Torah itself foresaw a time when the offerings would not be received: ***"I will bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the scent of your pleasing aromas"*** (**Leviticus 26:31**).

Hosea saw it again: ***"They shall not pour wine to Yahweh, and their sacrifices shall not please Him... What will you do on the day of the appointed feast?"*** (**Hosea 9:4–5**). And the one who watched it happen mourned it: ***"Yahweh has caused the appointed feast and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion... Yahweh has cast off His altar; He has abhorred His sanctuary"*** (**Lamentations 2:6–7**).

Finding — the absence foreseen: that Israel would live a long time without sacrifice is **Corroborated** (**Leviticus 26:31**; **Hosea 3:4**; **Hosea 9:4–5**; **Lamentations 2:6–7**). That **Hosea 3:4** names the year 70 CE or the present age is **Not in the text**; that the present age fits its pattern is a reasonable reading.

II-E. *"Afterward They Shall Return"* — the Absence Has an End

Hosea 3:5 opens with ***afterward (achar)***. The waiting ends in return, seeking, and trembling ***"to Yahweh and to His goodness."*** The Torah gave the same order in the same words: ***"When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you shall return to Yahweh your Elohim and obey His voice"*** (**Deuteronomy 4:30**; compare **Deuteronomy 30:1–3**). The absence of sacrifice in **Hosea 3:4** is never called a fulfillment or an abolition. It stands in the same list as the absence of a king — a loss that will be undone.

Finding — the end of the absence: the Tanakh pairs the time without sacrifice with a return ***"in the latter days"*** (**Hosea 3:5**; **Deuteronomy 4:30**; **Deuteronomy 30:1–3**). **Corroborated.** That the absence of the altar is permanent, or that it means **Yahweh** has ended the offerings, is **Not in the text** (see **Doc 406**, Section VII).

III. THE ALTAR'S ABSENCE IN HISTORY

III-A. Twice Lost, Once Restored

The Tanakh records the first loss and the first return. When the house of **Yahweh** was burned (**2 Kings 25:8–9**), the people were carried to Babylon without altar or priestly service. When the first exiles came back, before the foundation of the house was laid, ***"they set the altar on its base... and offered burnt offerings on it to Yahweh"*** (**Ezra 3:3–6**). The first time without an altar lasted about fifty years.

The second loss came after the Tanakh closed. In the spring of 70 CE the Roman general Titus besieged Jerusalem, and in the summer the Temple was burned; Josephus, an eyewitness, dates the fire to the tenth of the month Av, and Tacitus and Sulpicius Severus record the siege and the destruction from the Roman side (see the Comparative Texts table). Two independent lines of ancient witnesses agree that the Temple fell, and its altar with it. In 363 CE the emperor Julian began to rebuild the Temple; the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, no friend of the Jews, records that balls of fire burst out near the foundations and the work was abandoned. No altar has stood on the Temple Mount since.

III-B. The One Community That Still Offers

One community has never stopped: the Samaritans offer the Passover each year on Mount Gerizim. Their offering shows what the question is not. The issue is not whether a lamb can still be slaughtered somewhere; it is whether it can be offered ***"in the place which Yahweh chooses"*** (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**). The Tanakh names that place in Jerusalem, where **Yahweh** put His Name (**1 Kings 11:36**; **2 Kings 21:4, 7**; **2 Chronicles 6:6**; see **Doc 251**). An altar outside that place is not the altar of **Leviticus 4–5**.

Finding — the history: the Tanakh records the first loss of the altar and its restoration on its own base (**2 Kings 25:8–9**; **Ezra 3:3–6**). **Corroborated.** The second loss in 70 CE, and the failed attempt of 363 CE, are history attested by independent ancient writers, not scripture. That an altar outside the place **Yahweh** chose can carry the sin and guilt offerings is **Not in the text** (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Leviticus 17:3–9**).

IV. WHAT LEVITICUS 4–5 TEACHES — WHAT NEEDED THE ALTAR AND WHAT NEVER DID

IV-A. The Two Offerings in Brief

Leviticus 4:1–5:13 sets out the ***sin offering (chattat)***. It opens with the rule that governs everything after it:

נֶפֶשׁ כִּי־תֶחֱטָא בִשְׁגָגָה מִכֹּל מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֵעָשֶׂינָה וְעָשָׂה מֵאַחַת מֵהֵנָּה

"When a soul sins in error against any of the commandments of Yahweh which are not to be done, and does any one of them" (**Leviticus 4:2**)

The law then names four persons — the anointed priest (**Leviticus 4:3–12**), the whole congregation (**Leviticus 4:13–21**), a ruler (**Leviticus 4:22–26**), and one of the common people (**Leviticus 4:27–35**) — and three hidden cases: the silent witness, the touch of uncleanness, and the rash oath (**Leviticus 5:1–4**).

It closes with confession and an offering scaled to what the sinner can bring (**Leviticus 5:5–13**). **Leviticus 5:14–6:7** [Hebrew 5:14–26] sets out the ***guilt offering (asham)***: for a trespass in holy things, for a commandment broken unknowingly, and for wrongs against a neighbor — each with a ram valued by the sanctuary's standard, and, where something is owed, repayment with a fifth added.

IV-B. The Elements, One by One

The table takes every element of the two offerings and asks one question of each: did it need the altar? ***Yes*** means it could only be done at the altar by a priest. ***No*** means the text itself, or the Tanakh elsewhere, shows it standing without one. ***Partly*** means the rite needed the altar but the principle under it did not.

#	ELEMENT OF THE OFFERING	TEXT	NEEDED THE ALTAR?	SECTION
1	Blood sprinkled before the veil, put on the horns, poured at the base	**Leviticus 4:6–7, 17–18, 25, 30, 34**	**Yes**	IV-C
2	The fat burned on the altar	**Leviticus 4:8–10, 19, 26, 31, 35**	**Yes**	IV-C
3	The carcass burned outside the camp, or eaten by the priest	**Leviticus 4:11–12, 21**; **6:26** [Hebrew 6:19]	**Yes**	IV-C
4	The ram valued by the shekel of the sanctuary	**Leviticus 5:15, 18**	**Yes**	IV-C
5	Sin measured by ***"the commandments of Yahweh"***	**Leviticus 4:2, 13, 22, 27**	**No**	V-A
6	The sin ***"made known"*** to the sinner	**Leviticus 4:14, 23, 28**; **5:3–4**	**No**	V-B
7	Heavier weight for higher station	**Leviticus 4:3, 13, 22, 27**	**No**	V-C
8	The hand laid on the head: the sinner owns the sin	**Leviticus 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33**	**Partly**	V-D
9	Confession of the sin by name	**Leviticus 5:5**	**No**	V-E
10	Repayment in full with a fifth added	**Leviticus 5:16**; **6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24]	**No**	V-F
11	An offering scaled to the poor: birds, then flour	**Leviticus 5:7, 11–13**	**Partly**	V-G
12	The priest makes atonement ***"for him"***	**Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35**	**Partly**	V-H

#	ELEMENT OF THE OFFERING	TEXT	NEEDED THE ALTAR?	SECTION
13	***"And it shall be forgiven him"*** — by **Yahweh**	**Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18**	**No**	V-I
14	The line between error and the high hand	**Leviticus 4:2**; **Numbers 15:27–31**	**No**	V-J
15	The witness who will not speak	**Leviticus 5:1**	**No**	V-K
16	The rash oath of the lips	**Leviticus 5:4**	**No**	V-L
17	The touch of uncleanness	**Leviticus 5:2–3**	**Partly**	V-M
18	The cleansing of **Yahweh**'s dwelling among the people	**Leviticus 4:6–7, 17–18**; **16:16**	**Partly**	V-N

IV-C. What Belonged to the Altar Alone

Four elements could not be done anywhere but at the altar by a priest: the blood, the fat, the disposal of the carcass and the priest's portion, and the ram valued by the sanctuary's shekel (rows 1–4). These are not small things. The Torah says plainly that the blood was given ***"upon the altar to make atonement for your souls"*** (**Leviticus 17:11**). With no altar, they cannot be done, and nothing in the Tanakh allows them to be moved elsewhere (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Leviticus 17:3–9**). This study does not pretend otherwise. What it shows is that these four were never the whole of the offering. Fourteen of the eighteen elements stood on ground the altar did not create.

Finding — the shape of the offerings: the blood, the fat, the priest's portion, and the sanctuary's valuation belonged to the altar alone (**Leviticus 4:6–12**; **5:15**; **17:11**). **Corroborated.** The standard of the commandment, the sin made known, the weight of station, confession, repayment, the line of the high hand, the witness, the vow, and forgiveness by **Yahweh** never depended on the altar (Section V). **Corroborated.**

V. THE WITNESSES THAT NEED NO ALTAR — PRINCIPLE BY PRINCIPLE

Each principle below is first shown in **Leviticus 4–5**, then carried by two or more Tanakh witnesses that do not depend on an altar. Each ends with its grade.

V-A. The Commandment Is the Measure

The sin offering does not begin with the altar. It begins with the commandment: a soul sins ***"against any of the commandments of Yahweh"*** (**Leviticus 4:2**; **4:13, 22, 27**). The measure of sin was the written word before any blood was shed, and the written word was given its own witness-place apart from the altar.

Moses said: ***"Take this book of the Torah and put it beside the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your Elohim, that it may be there for a witness"*** (**Deuteronomy 31:26**).

Witness One — When Josiah heard the words of the book found in the house, he tore his clothes and said, ***"Great is the wrath of Yahweh... because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book"*** (**2 Kings 22:11–13**). The book, not the altar, showed the king his sin; and he read it aloud to all the people (**2 Kings 23:2–3**).

Witness Two — When Ezra read the Torah to the people who had come back from exile, ***"all the people wept when they heard the words of the Torah"*** (**Nehemiah 8:9**), and on the twenty-fourth day they read again and ***"confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers"*** (**Nehemiah 9:2–3**).

Witness Three — ***"The Torah of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul... Moreover by them Your servant is warned"*** (**Psalms 19:7, 11** [Hebrew 19:8, 12]).

Finding — the measure: the commandment of Yahweh, written and read, measures sin with or without an altar (**Leviticus 4:2**; **Deuteronomy 31:26**; **2 Kings 22:11–13**; **Nehemiah 8:9**; **9:2–3**; **Psalms 19:7–11** [Hebrew 19:8–12]). **Corroborated.**

V-B. The Sin Must Be Made Known

Again and again the sin offering waits until the sin ***"is made known"*** (**Leviticus 4:14, 23, 28**), or until a hidden thing is known (**Leviticus 5:3–4**). The altar received the sin; it did not reveal it. Something else did.

Witness One — Nathan made David's sin known with a parable and four words: ***"You are the man"*** (**2 Samuel 12:7**). David answered, ***"I have sinned against Yahweh"*** (**2 Samuel 12:13**). No offering was brought, because the Torah gave none for what he had done (**Psalms 51:16** [Hebrew 51:18]; **Doc 344**).

Witness Two — The reading of the Torah made the sin of the returned exiles known to them (**Nehemiah 8:9**; **9:2–3**; Section V-A).

Witness Three — For the sins no man reveals, the believer asks **Yahweh** Himself: ***"Who can discern errors? Clear me from hidden faults"*** (**Psalms 19:12** [Hebrew 19:13]); ***"Search me, O El, and know my heart"*** (**Psalms 139:23–24**). **Doc 404** sets this out in full.

Finding — the sin made known: the word, the prophet, and Yahweh's own searching make sin known apart from any altar (**Leviticus 4:14, 23, 28**; **2 Samuel 12:7, 13**; **Nehemiah 8:9**; **9:2–3**; **Psalms 19:12** [Hebrew 19:13]; **Psalms 139:23–24**). **Corroborated.**

V-C. The Higher the Office, the Heavier the Account

Leviticus 4 does not treat all sinners alike. The anointed priest who sins brings a bull, because his sin brings ***"guilt on the people"*** (**Leviticus 4:3**); the whole congregation brings a bull (**Leviticus 4:13–14**); a ruler brings a male goat (**Leviticus 4:22–23**); one of the common people brings a female goat or lamb (**Leviticus 4:27–28, 32**). The bull of the priest is the bull of the whole nation. The Torah weighs the sin of a leader as the sin of everyone who follows him. That weight never needed an altar to be true.

Witness One — ***"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from being priest to Me... And it shall be: like people, like priest"*** (**Hosea 4:6, 9**).

Witness Two — ***"The lips of the priest should keep knowledge... but you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble"*** (**Malachi 2:7–8**).

Witness Three — ***"Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!... I will require My flock at their hand"*** (**Ezekiel 34:2, 10**; compare **Ezekiel 3:17–18** and **Jeremiah 23:1–2**).

When the leaders of the exile confessed, they confessed first and for all: Ezra ***"fell on my knees and spread out my hands to Yahweh"*** and said ***"our iniquities have risen higher than our head"*** (**Ezra 9:5–6**);

Nehemiah confessed ***"the sins of the children of Israel... both I and my father's house have sinned"*** (**Nehemiah 1:6**);

Daniel confessed ***"my sin and the sin of my people Israel"*** (**Daniel 9:20**).

Finding — the weight of station: the sin of a leader carries the weight of those he leads, and the leader's confession comes first and is made for all (**Leviticus 4:3, 13–14, 22, 27**; **Hosea 4:6, 9**; **Malachi 2:7–8**; **Ezekiel 34:2–10**; **Ezra 9:5–6**; **Nehemiah 1:6**; **Daniel 9:20**). **Corroborated.**

V-D. The Hand on the Head — Owning the Sin

Before the sin offering was slain, the one who brought it ***laid his hand (samakh yado)*** on its head (**Leviticus 4:4, 24, 29, 33**); for the congregation, the elders laid their hands (**Leviticus 4:15**). The gesture belonged to the altar. What it said did not: ***this sin is mine.*** No one else could bring it for him, and he could not blame it on another.

Witness One — When the plague fell on Israel, David said: ***"I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be against me"*** (**2 Samuel 24:17**).

Witness Two — ***"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me"*** (**Psalms 51:3** [Hebrew 51:5]).

Witness Three — ***"The soul that sins, it shall die... the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"*** (**Ezekiel 18:20**; compare **Deuteronomy 24:16**; **Jeremiah 31:30** [Hebrew 31:29]).

Finding — owning the sin: the laying on of the hand needed the altar; the principle it carried — that each sinner owns his own sin and cannot pass it to another — stands without it (**Leviticus 4:4, 29**; **2 Samuel 24:17**; **Psalms 51:3** [Hebrew 51:5]; **Ezekiel 18:20**; **Deuteronomy 24:16**). **Corroborated.**

V-E. Confession

וְהָיָה כִּי־יֶאְשַׁם לְאַחַת מֵאֵלֶּה וְהִתְוַדָּה אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עָלֶיהָ

"And it shall be, when he is guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned" (**Leviticus 5:5**)

The ***confession (hitvaddah)*** of **Leviticus 5:5** comes before the offering, and it is spoken. It names the thing — ***"that in which he has sinned."*** Nothing in the verse ties the act of confessing to the altar; the offering follows it. **Doc 405** showed that the Tanakh directs confession to **Yahweh**. Here it is enough to show that confession stands on its own witnesses:

Witness One — ***"When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit... then they shall confess their sin which they have done"*** (**Numbers 5:6–7**).

Witness Two — In the land of their enemies, far from any altar: ***"If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers... then I will remember My covenant with Jacob"*** (**Leviticus 26:40–42**).

Witness Three — ***"I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin"*** **(Psalms 32:5)**; ***"Whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"*** **(Proverbs 28:13)**; ***"Now therefore make confession to Yahweh"*** **(Ezra 10:11)**; and **Daniel** in Babylon: ***"I prayed to Yahweh my Elohim and made confession"*** **(Daniel 9:4)**.

Finding — confession: confession by name was part of the sin offering and was never dependent on the altar; the Tanakh carries it in law, in exile, and in prayer (Leviticus 5:5; Numbers 5:6–7; Leviticus 26:40–42; Psalms 32:5; Proverbs 28:13; Ezra 10:11; Daniel 9:4). Corroborated.

V-F. Repayment with a Fifth Added

In the guilt offering, the debt to the person comes before the ram. For a trespass in holy things: ***"he shall repay (yeshallem) what he sinned against the holy thing, and add a fifth to it"*** **(Leviticus 5:16)**.

For a wrong against a neighbor: ***"he shall restore it in full and add a fifth to it, and give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day of his guilt"*** **(Leviticus 6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24]). Only then the ram **(Leviticus 6:6** [Hebrew 5:25]). **The altar could not do the repaying; the sinner had to. That part of the offering has never been out of reach.**

חֲבֹל יָשִׁיב רָשָׁע גְּזֵלָה יְשַׁלֵּם בְּחֻקּוֹת הַחַיִּים הָלַךְ לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת עָוֶל חָיוֹ יִחְיֶה לֹא יָמוּת

"If the wicked restores the pledge, repays what he took by robbery, walks in the statutes of life without doing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die" **(Ezekiel 33:15)**

Witness One — Ezekiel 33:14–16 is spoken to a people in exile. It names the same two acts as **Leviticus 6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24] — ***to restore (heshiv)*** and ***to repay (shillem)*** — and it names no offering. The promise is life.

Witness Two — ***"He shall confess his sin which he has done, and he shall repay his guilt in full, and add a fifth to it, and give it to the one he wronged"*** **(Numbers 5:7)**.

Witness Three — The civil laws of restitution — double, fourfold, fivefold — stand with no altar in them **(Exodus 22:1–15** [Hebrew 21:37–22:14]); David judged that the rich man of **Nathan**'s parable ***"shall restore the lamb fourfold"*** **(2 Samuel 12:6)**; and the thief who is caught ***"shall repay sevenfold"*** **(Proverbs 6:31)**.

Finding — repayment: repaying what was taken, with a fifth added, came before the guilt offering and never needed the altar; the Tanakh promises life to the wicked who restores and turns (Leviticus 5:16; 6:4–5 [Hebrew 5:23–24]; **Numbers 5:7; Ezekiel 33:14–16; Exodus**

22:1–15 [Hebrew 21:37–22:14]). **Corroborated.** That an unrepaid wrong to a neighbor is covered by prayer alone is **Not in the text**.

V-G. The Poor Are Not Priced Out

The sin offering of **Leviticus 5** comes down by steps: a female lamb or goat; and if he cannot afford a lamb, two turtledoves or two young pigeons; and if he cannot afford two birds, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour — ***"and it shall be forgiven him"*** (**Leviticus 5:6–7, 11–13**). **Yahweh** did not let poverty shut a man out of forgiveness. The flour needed the altar; the mercy behind the steps did not. When the altar is gone, the lowest step left is the one every person can bring:

Witness One — ***"The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Elohim, You will not despise"*** (**Psalms 51:17** [Hebrew 51:19]).

Witness Two — ***"Heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool. Where is the house that you would build for Me?... But to this one I will look: to the poor and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My word"*** (**Isaiah 66:1–2**).

Witness Three — ***"I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him who is contrite and lowly of spirit"*** (**Isaiah 57:15**); ***"Yahweh is near to the brokenhearted"*** (**Psalms 34:18** [Hebrew 34:19]).

Finding — the poor: the scaled sin offering shows that Yahweh never priced the poor out of forgiveness (**Leviticus 5:7, 11–13**); **with no altar, the contrite heart is the offering every person can bring, and Yahweh says He looks to it** (**Psalms 51:17** [Hebrew 51:19]; **Isaiah 66:1–2**; **Isaiah 57:15**; **Psalms 34:18** [Hebrew 34:19]). **Corroborated.**

V-H. Intercession — and Its Limit

In every case of the sin offering, ***"the priest shall make atonement for him"*** (**Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35**). The rite was the priest's alone (**Numbers 18:7**). But the Tanakh also shows righteous men standing between the sinner and judgment without an altar.

Witness One — After the golden calf, **Moses** went up to **Yahweh** saying, ***"perhaps I can make atonement for your sin"*** (**Exodus 32:30**), and Israel was spared destruction because ***"Moses His chosen stood in the breach before Him"*** (**Psalms 106:23**). At Kadesh he prayed, ***"Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people,"*** and **Yahweh** answered, ***"I have pardoned according to your word"*** (**Numbers 14:19–20**).

Witness Two — **Amos** saw the judgment coming and cried, ***"O Lord Yahweh, forgive, I pray!"*** — and ***"Yahweh relented concerning this"*** (**Amos 7:2–3**). Abraham prayed for Abimelech, and **Elohim** healed him (**Genesis 20:7, 17**). **Samuel** said, ***"Far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh in ceasing to pray for you"*** (**1 Samuel 12:23**).

Witness Three — the limit. Intercession never took the place of the sinner's own turning. ***"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only their own souls by their righteousness"*** (**Ezekiel 14:14**);

"Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My heart would not turn toward this people" (**Jeremiah 15:1**).

And **Yahweh** told **Moses**, ***"Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book"*** (**Exodus 32:33**).

Finding — intercession: the priest's atoning rite needed the altar (Leviticus 4:20; Numbers 18:7); prayer for the guilty by the righteous stands without it, and Yahweh has answered it (**Exodus 32:30**; **Numbers 14:19–20**; **Amos 7:2–3**; **Genesis 20:17**; **1 Samuel 12:23**). **Corroborated.** That anyone's prayer can take the place of the sinner's own confession and turning is **Not in the text** (**Ezekiel 14:14**; **Jeremiah 15:1**; **Exodus 32:33**).

V-I. Forgiveness Belongs to Yahweh

Every sin and guilt offering ends with the same words: ***"and it shall be forgiven him (ve-nislach lo)"*** (**Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35**; **5:10, 13, 16, 18**). The verb is passive. The priest makes atonement; **he never forgives**. In the Tanakh the verb ***to forgive (salach)*** has **Yahweh** as its subject every time it appears; no man is ever said to ***salach*** another, and BDB notes the same. The altar was where **Yahweh** appointed the atonement to be made; the forgiveness was always His, and it is His still.

Witness One — ***"Yahweh, Yahweh, El merciful and gracious... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"*** (**Exodus 34:6–7**).

Witness Two — ***"But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared"*** (**Psalms 130:4**); ***"To the Lord our Elohim belong compassions and forgivenesses"*** (**Daniel 9:9**); ***"You are an Eloah of forgivenesses, gracious and merciful"*** (**Nehemiah 9:17**).

Witness Three — ***"Let the wicked forsake his way... and let him return to Yahweh, and He will have mercy on him; and to our Elohim, for He will abundantly pardon"*** (**Isaiah 55:7**); ***"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake"*** (**Isaiah 43:25**); ***"Who is an El like You, bearing iniquity?"*** (**Micah 7:18**).

Finding — forgiveness: in the sin and guilt offerings the forgiver is Yahweh and never the priest, and Yahweh forgives the one who returns, with or without an altar (**Leviticus 4:20**; **5:10, 13**; **Exodus 34:6–7**; **Psalms 130:4**; **Daniel 9:9**; **Nehemiah 9:17**; **Isaiah 55:7**; **Isaiah 43:25**; **Micah 7:18**). **Corroborated.** That any man or institution can forgive a sin against **Yahweh** is **Not in the text** (see **Doc 405**).

V-I-1. An Honest Caution — Return Is Not a Formula

The Tanakh does not let the reader treat return as a lever that works every time. The exiles of Lamentations prayed, ***"Let us search and try our ways, and turn back to Yahweh... We have transgressed and rebelled"*** — and then said, ***"You have not pardoned"*** (**Lamentations 3:40–42**). The same book holds on to hope: ***"The kindnesses of Yahweh never cease... great is Your faithfulness"*** (**Lamentations 3:22–23**); ***"The Lord will not cast off forever"*** (**Lamentations 3:31**); ***"Turn us back to You, O Yahweh, and we shall be turned back"*** (**Lamentations 5:21**).

Forgiveness is Yahweh's to give, in His time. The believer returns because Yahweh commands it and is merciful — not because return obliges Him.

V-J. The Line Between Error and the High Hand

The sin offering is for sin ***"in error (bishgagah)"*** (**Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27**). For the sin done ***"with a high hand,"*** the Torah gives none (**Numbers 15:27–31**). That line was never drawn by the altar; it was drawn by the heart of the sinner, and it stands where no altar stands. **Doc 344** sets it out in full. Two altar-free witnesses keep it before the believer today. David prays: ***"Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me"*** (**Psalms 19:13** [Hebrew 19:14]). And Ecclesiastes uses the very word of **Leviticus 4** to forbid a man from hiding a willful act behind it:

אַל־תִּתֵּן אֶת־פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיא אֶת־בְּשָׂרֶךָ וְאַל־תֹּאמַר לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ כִּי שְׁגָגָה הִיא

"Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was an error" (**Ecclesiastes 5:6 [Hebrew 5:5]**)

Finding — the line: the distinction between sin in error and sin with a high hand stands without the altar, and the word *error (shegagah)* may not be claimed for what was done knowingly (**Leviticus 4:2**; **Numbers 15:27–31**; **Psalms 19:13** [Hebrew 19:14]; **Ecclesiastes 5:6** [Hebrew 5:5]). **Corroborated.**

V-K. The Witness Who Must Speak

וְנֶפֶשׁ כִּי־תֶחֱטָא וְשָׁמְעָה קוֹל אָלָה וְהוּא עֵד אוֹ רָאָה אוֹ יָדָע אִם־לוֹא יַגִּיד וְנָשָׂא עֲוֹנוֹ

"And if a soul sins, in that he hears the voice of an oath, and he is a witness, whether he has seen or known — if he does not tell, he shall bear his iniquity" **(Leviticus 5:1)**

Leviticus 5 opens with a ***witness (ed)***. A man who has seen or known the truth hears the public charge under oath and keeps silent. His silence is a sin that needs a sin offering. The cure for that sin was never at the altar; **it was in his mouth**. The duty to testify stands today exactly as it did.

Witness One — ***"Whoever is partner with a thief hates his own soul; he hears the oath (alah) and does not tell"*** **(Proverbs 29:24)** — the same ***oath (alah)*** and the same ***tell (higgid)*** as **Leviticus 5:1**.

Witness Two — ***"You shall not stand against the blood of your neighbor"*** **(Leviticus 19:16)**; ***"A true witness delivers souls"*** **(Proverbs 14:25)**.

Witness Three — ***"If you say, Behold, we did not know it — does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?"*** **(Proverbs 24:11–12)**; and the whole law of witnesses stands on two or three who will speak the truth **(Deuteronomy 19:15–19)**.

Finding — the silent witness: the sin of withholding testimony, and the duty to speak, never depended on the altar (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24; Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 14:25; Proverbs 24:11–12; Deuteronomy 19:15–19). Corroborated.

V-L. The Word of the Lips

The third hidden case is the rash oath: ***"if a soul swears, speaking rashly with his lips, to do evil or to do good"*** **(Leviticus 5:4)**. The offering followed the confession; but the sin lay in the word, and the covenant governs words without any altar.

Witness One — ***"If a man vows a vow to Yahweh... he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth"*** **(Numbers 30:2** [Hebrew 30:3]).

Witness Two — ***"That which has gone out of your lips you shall keep and do"*** **(Deuteronomy 23:21–23** [Hebrew 23:22–24]; **Doc 252)**.

Witness Three — ***"When you vow a vow to Elohim, do not delay to pay it... Better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay"*** **(Ecclesiastes 5:4–5** [Hebrew 5:3–4]); the one who may dwell on **Yahweh**'s holy hill ***"swears to his own hurt and does not change"*** **(Psalms 15:4)**.

Finding — the word of the lips: the rash oath is answered by confession and by keeping or rightly confessing one's word, and the covenant governs speech with or without an altar (**Leviticus 5:4–5**; **Numbers 30:2** [Hebrew 30:3]; **Deuteronomy 23:21–23** [Hebrew 23:22–24]; **Ecclesiastes 5:4–6** [Hebrew 5:3–5]; **Psalms 15:4**). **Corroborated.**

V-M. The Touch of Uncleanness

Leviticus 5:2–3 speaks of the person who touches an unclean thing and it is hidden from him, then he knows. Honesty requires a divided answer. Many uncleannesses of the Torah end with washing and the evening, and need no altar at all (**Leviticus 11:24–25, 28, 40**; **15:5–11**); those still stand, and the believer keeps them. But the cleansing of the uncleanness of the dead required the water made with the ashes of the red heifer (**Numbers 19:9, 17–19**), and that cannot be made today. This study does not invent a substitute for it.

Finding — uncleanness: the uncleannesses that end with washing and the evening stand without an altar (**Leviticus 11:24–25**; **15:5–11**). **Corroborated.** A substitute for the water of **Numbers 19** is **Not in the text**.

V-N. The Dwelling Place — a Little Sanctuary

The sin offering did more than clear the sinner. Its blood was sprinkled before the veil and on the horns of the altar of incense (**Leviticus 4:6–7, 17–18**), because sin defiled the place where **Yahweh** dwelt among His people (**Leviticus 15:31**; **16:16**). If the house is gone, has **Yahweh** left His people without a dwelling? To the very exiles who had lost it, He answered:

וָאֱהִי לָהֶם לְמִקְדָּשׁ מְעַט בָּאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם

"Yet I have been to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they have gone" (**Ezekiel 11:16**)

Witness One — The words are ***a sanctuary (mikdash)*** and ***little (me'at)***. The Hebrew ***me'at*** can mean little in measure or for a little while in time, and translations divide; the Hebrew allows both, and this study holds both open. Either way, the subject of the sentence is **Yahweh**: He Himself is the sanctuary of the scattered. And the next verses promise the return and a new heart (**Ezekiel 11:17–20**). The same truth stands in other witnesses:

Witness Two — At the very dedication of the house, Solomon said: ***"Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house"*** (**1 Kings 8:27**), and he asked **Yahweh** to hear those carried far away who ***"pray to You toward their land... and the house"*** (**1 Kings 8:46–50**).

Witness Three — *"From there you will seek Yahweh your Elohim, and you will find Him, if you search for Him with all your heart"* (Deuteronomy 4:29); ***"You will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you... I will be found by you"* (Jeremiah 29:12–14)**; and the One who dwells on high dwells ***"with him who is contrite"* (Isaiah 57:15)**.

Finding — the dwelling place: with the house gone, Yahweh Himself is a sanctuary to His scattered people and is found by those who seek Him with all their heart (Ezekiel 11:16; 1 Kings 8:27, 46–50; Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:12–14; Isaiah 57:15). Corroborated. Whether ***me'at*** means ***"little"*** or ***"for a little while"*** the text does not settle, and no doctrine here rests on either reading. That a synagogue, a church, or any building is itself the ***"little sanctuary"*** is **Not in the text**.

VI. THOSE WHO LIVED WITHOUT AN ALTAR AND WERE HEARD

The question of this study is not new. The Tanakh records men and women who had no altar within reach, or who had sinned beyond what any offering covered, and who were heard. The table gathers them.

WHO	WHERE	WHAT THEY BROUGHT	WHAT FOLLOWED	TEXT
Jonah	In the belly of the fish	Prayer toward **Yahweh**'s holy temple; a vow; the ***"voice of thanksgiving"***	***"Salvation is of Yahweh"***; the fish cast him out	**Jonah 2:1–10** [Hebrew 2:2–11]
Manasseh	In chains in Babylon	He humbled himself greatly and prayed	**Yahweh** heard him and brought him back; then he repaired the altar	**2 Chronicles 33:11–16**
Daniel	In Babylon and Persia	Prayer three times a day toward Jerusalem; fasting and confession	His words were heard; the answer came ***"at the time of the evening offering"***	**Daniel 6:10** [Aramaic 6:11]; **9:3–23**
The exiles of **Ezekiel**	By the river Chebar	Their scattered lives	**Yahweh**: ***"I have been to them a little sanctuary"***	**Ezekiel 11:16**

WHO	WHERE	WHAT THEY BROUGHT	WHAT FOLLOWED	TEXT
Nehemiah	In Susa	Weeping, fasting, confession for himself and his father's house	Favor with the king; the walls rebuilt	**Nehemiah 1:4–11**; **2:1–8**
Esther and the Jews of Persia	In Shushan	Three days of fasting	Deliverance; fasts and their cry made a lasting custom	**Esther 4:16**; **9:31**
Nineveh	A city of the nations	Fasting, sackcloth, and turning from violence	**Elohim** saw their works and relented	**Jonah 3:5–10**
David	At home, with an altar standing	Confession; no offering existed for his sin	***"Yahweh also has put away your sin"***	**2 Samuel 12:13**; **Psalms 51:16–17** [Hebrew 51:18–19]

וַאֲנִי בְּקוֹל תּוֹדָה אֶזְבְּחָה־לָּךְ אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתִּי אֲשַׁלֵּמָה יְשׁוּעָתָה לַיהוָה

"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is of Yahweh" **(Jonah 2:9 [Hebrew 2:10])**

Two things in the record must be held together.

First, <u>every one of these was heard without bringing a sin or guilt offering</u>.

Second, <u>not one of them treated the altar as worthless</u>.

Jonah looked ***"toward Your holy temple"*** **(Jonah 2:4** [Hebrew 2:5]);

Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem (**Daniel 6:10** [Aramaic 6:11]);

Manasseh, once restored, ***"repaired the altar of Yahweh and offered on it"*** (**2 Chronicles 33:16**); the exiles set the altar on its base as soon as they came home (**Ezra 3:3**). The witnesses that need no altar carried them while they waited; they did not replace the altar in their hearts.

Finding — the precedents: the Tanakh records the prayer, confession, fasting, and turning of people far from the altar, and Yahweh heard them (**Jonah 2:1–10** [Hebrew 2:2–11]; **2 Chronicles 33:11–13**; **Daniel 9:3–23**; **Nehemiah 1:4–11**; **Esther 4:16**; **Jonah 3:5–10**). **Corroborated.** <u>That those who were heard without an altar ceased to honor or hope for it is **Not in the text**</u> (**Jonah 2:4** [Hebrew 2:5]; **Daniel 6:10** [Aramaic 6:11]; **2 Chronicles 33:16**; **Ezra 3:3**).

VII. AN ALTAR NOT FOR OFFERING — JOSHUA 22

The Tanakh contains one account that speaks to this question almost directly. When the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh went home across the Jordan, far from the altar at the tabernacle, they built ***"a great altar to look at"*** by the Jordan (**Joshua 22:10**). The rest of Israel gathered for war, believing they had built a rival altar (**Joshua 22:11–20**). The eastern tribes answered:

לֹא לְעוֹלָה וְלֹא לְזָבַח כִּי־עֵד הוּא בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם

"Not for burnt offering and not for sacrifice, but it is a witness between us and you" (**Joshua 22:28**)

They called it a copy, a ***pattern (tavnit)*** of the altar of **Yahweh**, and they swore: ***"Far be it from us that we should rebel against Yahweh... to build an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering, or for sacrifice, besides the altar of Yahweh our Elohim that is before His tabernacle"*** (**Joshua 22:29**).

Phinehas the priest and the leaders accepted it (**Joshua 22:30–33**). The last verse names its meaning: ***"for it is a witness between us that Yahweh is Elohim"*** (**Joshua 22:34**). (The Hebrew of 22:34 does not spell out a name for the altar; many translations supply ***"Witness"*** from the words that follow.)

Here, inside the Tanakh, is the very answer this study has been building. People living far from the one altar did not build a second one, did not offer on it, and did not invent a new rite. They set up a ***witness (ed)*** that bound them to the one altar and to **Yahweh**. The opposite is Jeroboam, who, to keep his people from going up to Jerusalem, built his own altars and a feast ***"which he devised of his own heart"*** (**1 Kings 12:26–33**).

The Torah had already ruled: ***"Take heed that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see, but in the place which Yahweh chooses"*** (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**).

Finding — the altar of witness: those far from the altar may set up witnesses that bind them to it, but may not build an altar of their own or offer on it (**Joshua 22:26–29**; **Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Leviticus 17:3–9**; **1 Kings 12:26–33**). **Corroborated.** That a private or community altar today can receive the sin and guilt offerings of **Leviticus 4–5** is **Not in the text**.

VIII. HOW THE WITNESSES CARRY THE SIN AND GUILT OFFERING TODAY

The table follows the order of a sin or guilt offering as the Torah gives it and sets beside each step what the covenant believer does now. Where the step belonged to the altar alone, the table says so honestly. **Doc 404** (Section VII-D) gives the believer's daily practice in full; this table shows how that practice lines up with **Leviticus 4–5** itself.

#	THE TORAH'S ORDER	WHAT THE BELIEVER DOES NOW	WITNESSES
1	The commandment broken (**Leviticus 4:2**)	Read and hear the covenant, so that the commandment is known	**Deuteronomy 31:26**; **Nehemiah 8:8–9**
2	The sin made known (**Leviticus 4:23, 28**)	Let the word, a faithful rebuke, and **Yahweh**'s searching make it known	**2 Samuel 12:7**; **Psalms 139:23–24**
3	The hand on the head (**Leviticus 4:29**)	Own it as your own; blame no one	**2 Samuel 24:17**; **Psalms 51:3** [Hebrew 51:5]
4	Confession (**Leviticus 5:5**)	Confess it by name, aloud, to **Yahweh**	**Numbers 5:7**; **Psalms 32:5**; **Proverbs 28:13**
5	Repayment and a fifth (**Leviticus 6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24])	Restore in full, add a fifth, the same day if you can	**Numbers 5:7**; **Ezekiel 33:15**
6	Blood and fat on the altar (**Leviticus 4:7–10**)	**Cannot be done.** Bring a broken heart and the words of your lips, and wait for the return	**Psalms 51:17** [Hebrew 51:19]; **Hosea 14:2** [Hebrew 14:3]; **Hosea 3:5**
7	The priest makes atonement (**Leviticus 4:31**)	Ask the righteous to pray for you — never in place of your own turning	**Numbers 14:19–20**; **Ezekiel 14:14**
8	The leader's heavier offering (**Leviticus 4:3**)	Leaders confess first, openly, and for those they lead	**Ezra 9:5–6**; **Nehemiah 1:6**; **Daniel 9:20**
9	***"It shall be forgiven him"*** (**Leviticus 4:31**)	Trust **Yahweh** to forgive, who alone forgives	**Isaiah 55:7**; **Psalms 130:4**

VIII-A. What Does Not Carry the Offering

Some answers to the loss of the altar are offered that the Tanakh does not give:

First: an altar of one's own, a backyard lamb, or a ***"practice"*** offering (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Joshua 22:29**; Section VII). **Not in the text.**

Second: a payment of money to a teacher, a church, or a ministry in place of the ram (**Micah 3:11**; **Doc 404**). **Not in the text.**

Third: a confession to a priest as the condition of **Yahweh**'s forgiveness (**Doc 405**). **Not in the text.**

Fourth: the death of a man as the offering that ends all offerings (**Doc 406**). **Not in the text.**

Fifth: the teaching that study, prayer, or kindness ***is*** the offering, so that the altar is no longer hoped for. The Tanakh gives words, prayer, and kindness to a people waiting for the altar's return (**Hosea 14:2** [Hebrew 14:3]; **Hosea 3:5**; **Psalms 51:18–19** [Hebrew 51:20–21]); it does not say they make the altar unnecessary. **Not in the text.**

Finding — the believer today: with no altar, the covenant believer keeps every part of the sin and guilt offering that never depended on the altar — the commandment, the sin made known, ownership, confession, repayment with a fifth, the weight of leadership, honest testimony, kept words, and trust in **Yahweh**'s forgiveness — and brings a contrite heart in place of what cannot be brought (Section VIII table). **Corroborated.** That any rite, payment, man, or building now carries the blood and fat of **Leviticus 4–5** is **Not in the text**.

IX. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION ANSWERS THE LOSS OF THE ALTAR

The table sets the three traditions against the findings of this study. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Teaching today	Prayer set to match the daily offerings (Berakhot 26b); the synagogue as the ***"little sanctuary"*** (Megillah 29a); one who studies the law of the guilt offering is as one who offered it (Menachot 110a); kindness atones as the altar did (Avot de-Rabbi Natan 4); with no altar, ***"nothing remains but repentance"*** (Maimonides, Repentance 1:3).	The offering for sin has ceased because forgiveness came through the death of Jesus (Hebrews 10:18). Confession (1 John 1:9), prayer for one another (James 5:16), and reconciliation before the gift (Matthew 5:23–24). Catholic penance adds priestly absolution and ***"satisfaction"*** (Catechism 1450–1460).	No altar or priest is needed at all. Tawbah: leave the sin, regret it, resolve not to return, and restore what was taken (an-Nawawi, ch. 2; Q. 3:135; 25:70–71). A broken oath: feed or clothe ten needy, or fast three days (Q. 5:89).

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant strength	Its answer is largely the Tanakh's own: confession and return far from the altar (**1 Kings 8:46–50**), ***"the bulls of our lips"*** (**Hosea 14:2** [Hebrew 14:3]), **Yahweh** as sanctuary to the exiles (**Ezekiel 11:16**). It refuses to build a substitute altar and keeps the hope of restoration.	Matthew 5:23–24 puts reconciliation before the gift, as **Leviticus 6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24] puts repayment before the ram. Prayer for one another matches the Tanakh's intercessors (**Numbers 14:19–20**; **Amos 7:2–3**).	The fourth condition — restore what was taken — is **Ezekiel 33:15** and **Numbers 5:7** in principle. The oath expiation scales to the poor, as **Leviticus 5:7, 11** does.
Covenant departure	***"Repentance atones for all"*** reads the Tanakh more boldly than **Lamentations 3:42** allows, where return is made and pardon is not yet given. Counting study or prayer as the offering itself goes beyond **Hosea 14:2** [Hebrew 14:3], which gives words to a people still waiting for the altar (**Hosea 3:5**). The ***"little sanctuary"*** in **Ezekiel 11:16** is **Yahweh** Himself, not a building.	To say the offering for sin has ceased stands against **Hosea 3:4–5**, which calls the absence a loss that ends in return, and against **Jeremiah 33:18** (see **Doc 406**). A priest's absolution and assigned ***"satisfaction"*** have no ground in **Leviticus 4–5**, where the forgiver is **Yahweh** and the repayment goes to the one wronged.	The Tanakh says **Yahweh** gave the altar ***"to make atonement for your souls"*** (**Leviticus 17:11**) and expects its return (**Hosea 3:5**); Islam holds it was never needed. Fasting as a substitute for an oath's expiation is not in **Leviticus 5:4–6**.
Covenant witness	Rabban Yohanan's answer is **Hosea**'s: ***"I desired kindness, and not sacrifice"*** (**Hosea 6:6**).	James 5:16 joins confession and prayer as **Leviticus 5:5** and **Numbers 14:19** do.	The call to restore rights before asking forgiveness is the order of **Leviticus 6:4–7** [Hebrew 5:23–26].

IX-A. A Note on the Samaritans

The Samaritans still offer the Passover each year on Mount Gerizim (see the Comparative Texts table). Their faithfulness to the act is real. But the Tanakh records that **Yahweh** chose Jerusalem as the place where He put His Name (**1 Kings 11:36**; **2 Kings 21:4, 7**; **2 Chronicles 6:6**), and the sin and guilt offerings belong to that altar alone (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Doc 251**). An offering at another place answers a different question from the one this study asks.

X. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Three corrections were found while preparing this study. Each has been made in its Google Doc so that the website copy can be replaced.

Correction 1 — Doc 406 (*Shall I Give My Firstborn for My Transgression?*), Section VII-B. The document said, ***"Hosea foresaw the present age plainly."*** **Hosea 3:4** spoke first to the northern kingdom and does not name the present age (Section II-C above). **Corrected to: *"Hosea foresaw a long age without sacrifice — first for the northern kingdom carried away, and by the same pattern for the age since the Temple fell."*** The finding of that section is unchanged. **Made** in the Google Doc.

Correction 2 — Doc 404 (*Though He Did Not Know*), Section VII-A. The document said, ***"Hosea foresaw the present state."*** The same overstatement. **Corrected to: *"Hosea foresaw such a state — first for the northern kingdom carried away, and by the same pattern for the age since the Temple fell."*** **Made** in the Google Doc.

Correction 3 — Doc 239 (*Afflict Your Souls*, revised October 2026), Section VIII-A. The document gave ***mikdash me'at*** only as ***"a little sanctuary."*** The Hebrew ***me'at*** can also mean ***"for a little while,"*** and translations divide (Section V-N above). **Corrected** by adding that the word means little in measure or for a little while in time, since the Hebrew allows both. The finding that **Yahweh** Himself is the sanctuary of the exiles is unchanged. **Made** in the Google Doc.

XI. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE WITNESSES THAT NEED NO ALTAR

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Tanakh foresaw a long time without sacrifice for Israel and called it a loss that ends in return, not an abolition of the offerings.	**Hosea 3:4–5**; **Hosea 9:4–5**; **Leviticus 26:31**; **Lamentations 2:6–7**; **Deuteronomy 4:30**
II	The altar carried the blood, the fat, and the priest's portion of the sin and guilt offerings. Nothing else in **Leviticus 4–5** depended on it.	**Leviticus 4:6–12**; **5:5**; **5:16**; **6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24]; **17:11**

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
III	The commandment still measures sin, the word still makes it known, and the higher the office, the heavier the account.	**Leviticus 4:2–3**; **Deuteronomy 31:26**; **Nehemiah 8:9**; **Malachi 2:7–8**; **Ezekiel 34:2–10**
IV	Confession and repayment with a fifth never needed an altar; the one who restores what he took and turns shall surely live.	**Leviticus 5:5**; **Numbers 5:6–7**; **Ezekiel 33:14–16**; **Proverbs 28:13**
V	Forgiveness belongs to **Yahweh** alone. The righteous may pray for the guilty, but no one can turn in another's place.	**Numbers 14:19–20**; **Amos 7:2–3**; **Ezekiel 14:14**; **Isaiah 55:7**; **Daniel 9:9**
VI	Far from the altar, **Yahweh** Himself is a sanctuary to His people, and He dwells with the contrite.	**Ezekiel 11:16**; **Isaiah 57:15**; **Isaiah 66:1–2**; **1 Kings 8:27, 46–50**
VII	The believer far from the altar builds no altar of his own. He keeps the witnesses — the book, the confession, the repaid wrong, the kept word, the contrite heart — and waits for the return.	**Joshua 22:26–29**; **Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; **Deuteronomy 31:26**; **Psalms 51:17** [Hebrew 51:19]; **Hosea 3:5**

XII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

First: to the one who mourns that there is no altar. Your mourning is right; Lamentations mourns with you (**Lamentations 2:6–7**). But you have not been left without witnesses. The commandment, the confession, the repaid wrong, the kept word, and the broken heart were always part of the offering, and they are in your hands today (Section V). And **Yahweh** has said He is a sanctuary to the scattered (**Ezekiel 11:16**).

Second: to the one who says the sin and guilt offerings no longer matter. Read **Leviticus 4–5** again. Fourteen of its eighteen elements rest, wholly or in their principle, on ground the altar did not create, and they still bind you: know the commandment, own your sin, confess it by name, repay what you took and add a fifth, speak when you are a witness, and keep your word (Section IV).

Third: to every leader, teacher, and elder. The anointed priest brought the bull of the whole nation (**Leviticus 4:3**). The weight of your sin is the weight of all who follow you. Confess first, openly, and for them, as Ezra, Nehemiah, and **Daniel** did (**Ezra 9:5–6**; **Nehemiah 1:6**; **Daniel 9:20**).

Fourth: to the one who has wronged a neighbor. No prayer, fast, or sermon covers a debt you have not paid. Restore it in full and add a fifth (**Leviticus 6:4–5** [Hebrew 5:23–24]); then ***"he shall surely live"*** (**Ezekiel 33:15**).

Fifth: to every covenant believer. Build no altar of your own. Keep the witnesses, as the tribes beyond the Jordan kept theirs (**Joshua 22:28**). Pray toward the place **Yahweh** chose, as **Daniel** did (**Daniel 6:10** [Aramaic 6:11]). And wait in hope, for ***"afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their Elohim"*** (**Hosea 3:5**).

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 20:7, 17	Abraham prays, and **Elohim** heals Abimelech	V-H
Genesis 31:19	The teraphim	II-A
Genesis 37:34	***"Many days"*** of mourning	II-A
Exodus 22:1–15 [Hebrew 21:37–22:14]	Restitution with no altar in it	Opening; V-F
Exodus 28:6	The ephod of the high priest	II-A
Exodus 32:30, 33	**Moses** seeks to make atonement; the sinner blotted out	V-H
Exodus 34:6–7	**Yahweh** forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin	V-I
Leviticus 4	The sin offering: the commandment, the four persons, the sin made known, the hand, the blood and fat, forgiven	Opening; I-A; I-B; III-B; IV-A; IV-B; IV-C; V; V-A; V-B; V-C; V-D; V-H; V-I; V-J; V-N; VII; VIII; VIII-A; IX; XI; XII
Leviticus 5	The silent witness, uncleanness, the rash oath; confession; the scaled offering; the guilt offering and repayment	Opening; I-A; I-B; I-C; III-B; IV-A; IV-B; IV-C; V; V-B; V-E; V-F; V-G; V-I; V-K; V-L; V-M; VII; VIII; VIII-A; IX; XI; XII
Leviticus 6:1–7, 26 [Hebrew 5:20–26; 6:19]	Repayment with a fifth before the ram; the priest's portion	Opening; IV-A; IV-B; V-F; VIII; IX; XI; XII
Leviticus 11:24–25, 28, 40	Uncleanness ended by washing and the evening	V-M

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Leviticus 15:5–11, 31	Washing; sin defiles **Yahweh**'s dwelling	V-M; V-N
Leviticus 16:16	The sanctuary cleansed of uncleanness	IV-B; V-N
Leviticus 17:3–9, 11	Offerings only at the place; blood given on the altar	III-B; IV-C; VII; IX; XI
Leviticus 19:16	Do not stand against your neighbor's blood	V-K
Leviticus 26:31, 40–42	Sanctuaries desolate; confession in the land of the enemies	II-D; V-E; XI
Numbers 5:6–7	Confess and repay with a fifth	V-E; V-F; VIII; IX; XI
Numbers 14:19–20	***"I have pardoned according to your word"***	V-H; VIII; IX; XI
Numbers 15:27–31	Error and the high hand	IV-B; V-J
Numbers 18:7	The priesthood guards the altar	V-H
Numbers 19:9, 17–19	The water of the red heifer	V-M
Numbers 30:2, 13 [Hebrew 30:3, 14]	He shall not break his word	Opening; V-L
Deuteronomy 4:29–30	Seek Him from there; return in the latter days	II-A; II-E; V-N; XI
Deuteronomy 12:13–14	Offer only in the place **Yahweh** chooses	III-B; IV-C; VII; VIII-A; IX-A; XI
Deuteronomy 16:22	The forbidden pillar	II-A; II-B
Deuteronomy 19:15–19	Two or three witnesses	Opening; I-C; I-D; V-K; XI
Deuteronomy 23:21–23 [Hebrew 23:22–24]	What has gone out of your lips	Opening; V-L
Deuteronomy 24:16	Each for his own sin	V-D
Deuteronomy 30:1–3	Return from the nations	II-A; II-E
Deuteronomy 31:19, 21, 26	The song and the book as witnesses	I-C; V-A; VIII; XI
Joshua 22:10–34	The altar of witness, not for offering	I-C; VII; VIII-A; XI; XII
Judges 8:27	Gideon's ephod a snare	II-A

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
1 Samuel 12:23	**Samuel** will not cease to pray	V-H
1 Samuel 15:23	Rebellion and teraphim	II-A; II-B
2 Samuel 12:6–7, 13	Fourfold repayment; ***"You are the man"***; David forgiven	V-B; V-F; VI; VIII
2 Samuel 24:17	David owns his sin	V-D; VIII
1 Kings 8:27, 46–50	Heaven cannot contain You; prayer from captivity	V-N; IX; XI
1 Kings 11:36	Jerusalem, where **Yahweh** put His Name	III-B; IX-A
1 Kings 12:26–33	Jeroboam's altars and devised feast	VII
2 Kings 17:6, 22–23	The northern kingdom carried away	II-C
2 Kings 21:4, 7	In Jerusalem I will put My Name	III-B; IX-A
2 Kings 22:11–13	Josiah hears the book	V-A
2 Kings 23:2–3, 24	The book read; teraphim removed	II-A; II-B; V-A
2 Kings 25:8–9	The house of **Yahweh** burned	II-C; III-A; III-B
Isaiah 2:2	In the latter days	II-A
Isaiah 43:25	He blots out transgressions	V-I
Isaiah 55:7	He will abundantly pardon	V-I; VIII; XI
Isaiah 57:15	He dwells with the contrite	V-G; V-N; XI
Isaiah 66:1–2	Where is the house? To the contrite I look	V-G; XI
Jeremiah 15:1	Though **Moses** and **Samuel** stood	V-H
Jeremiah 23:1–2	Woe to the shepherds	V-C
Jeremiah 29:12–14	I will be found by you	V-N
Jeremiah 31:30 [Hebrew 31:29]	Each dies for his own iniquity	Opening; V-D
Jeremiah 33:18	The Levites shall not lack a man	IX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Ezekiel 3:17–18	The watchman	V-C
Ezekiel 11:16–20	A little sanctuary; a new heart	Opening; V-N; VI; IX; XI; XII
Ezekiel 14:14	Noah, **Daniel**, and Job deliver only themselves	V-H; VIII; XI
Ezekiel 18:20	The soul that sins shall die	V-D
Ezekiel 33:14–16	Restore and repay — he shall surely live	V-F; VIII; IX; XI; XII
Ezekiel 34:2–10	I will require My flock at their hand	V-C; XI
Hosea 1:1	The days of **Hosea**	II-C
Hosea 3:3–5	Many days without sacrifice; afterward they return	Opening; I-A; II; II-A; II-B; II-C; II-D; II-E; VIII; VIII-A; IX; X; XI; XII
Hosea 4:6, 9	Lack of knowledge; like people, like priest	V-C
Hosea 5:15	They shall seek My face	II-A
Hosea 6:6	Kindness, not sacrifice	II-A; IX
Hosea 7:3	Princes	II-A
Hosea 8:4	Kings not from Me	II-A
Hosea 9:4–5	Sacrifices that will not please	II-A; II-D; XI
Hosea 10:1–3	Pillars; no king	II-A
Hosea 13:10	Where is your king?	II-A
Hosea 14:2 [Hebrew 14:3]	The bulls of our lips	Opening; VIII; VIII-A; IX
Amos 7:2–3	***"Forgive, I pray"*** — **Yahweh** relented	V-H; IX; XI
Jonah 2:1–10 [Hebrew 2:2–11]	Prayer from the deep; the voice of thanksgiving	Opening; VI
Jonah 3:5–10	Nineveh turns	VI
Micah 3:11	Teaching for hire	VIII-A

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Micah 7:17–18	Coming trembling; who is an El like You	II-A; V-I
Malachi 2:7–8	The lips of the priest	V-C; XI
Malachi 3:6	**Yahweh** does not change	Opening
Psalms 15:4	Swears to his own hurt	V-L
Psalms 19:7–13 [Hebrew 19:8–14]	The perfect Torah; hidden faults; presumptuous sins	Opening; V-A; V-B; V-J
Psalms 32:5	I will confess my transgressions	V-E; VIII
Psalms 34:18 [Hebrew 34:19]	Near to the brokenhearted	V-G
Psalms 51:3, 16–19 [Hebrew 51:5, 18–21]	My sin before me; the broken heart; offerings restored	V-B; V-D; V-G; VI; VIII; VIII-A; XI
Psalms 106:23	**Moses** stood in the breach	V-H
Psalms 119:89	Your word is settled	Opening
Psalms 130:4	With You there is forgiveness	V-I; VIII
Psalms 139:23–24	Search me, O El	V-B; VIII
Proverbs 6:31	The thief repays sevenfold	V-F
Proverbs 14:25	A true witness delivers souls	V-K
Proverbs 24:11–12	***"We did not know it"***	V-K
Proverbs 28:13	Confess and forsake	V-E; VIII; XI
Proverbs 29:24	He hears the oath and does not tell	V-K
Lamentations 2:6–7	**Yahweh** has cast off His altar	II-D; XI; XII
Lamentations 3:22–23, 31, 40–42	Search our ways; ***"You have not pardoned"***; His faithfulness	V-I-1; IX
Lamentations 5:21	Turn us back to You	V-I-1
Ecclesiastes 5:4–6 [Hebrew 5:3–5]	Pay your vow; do not say ***"it was an error"***	Opening; V-J; V-L

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Esther 4:16	Three days of fasting	VI
Esther 9:31	Fasts and their cry	VI
Daniel 6:10 [Aramaic 6:11]	Prayer toward Jerusalem	Opening; VI; XII
Daniel 9:3–23	Confession in exile; forgivenesses belong to **Yahweh**	V-C; V-E; V-I; VI; VIII; XI; XII
Ezra 3:3–6	The altar set on its base	II-C; III-A; III-B; VI
Ezra 9:5–6	Ezra confesses for the people	V-C; VIII; XII
Ezra 10:11	Make confession to **Yahweh**	V-E
Nehemiah 1:4–11	Nehemiah confesses in Susa	V-C; VI; VIII; XII
Nehemiah 2:1–8	Favor with the king	VI
Nehemiah 8:8–9	The Torah read; the people weep	V-A; V-B; VIII; XI
Nehemiah 9:2–3, 17	Confession; an Eloah of forgivenesses	V-A; V-B; V-I
2 Chronicles 6:6	Jerusalem chosen	III-B; IX-A
2 Chronicles 33:11–16	Manasseh heard in Babylon; the altar repaired	VI

"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their Elohim and David their king, and shall come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the latter days."

Hosea 3:5 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh