

Numbers 15:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.

Analysis

If ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation—corporate inadvertent sin required corporate atonement. The phrase "without the knowledge" (me'eyney, מֵעַיְנֵי—literally "from the eyes of") means sin committed when the congregation was unaware, either of the act itself or its sinfulness. The prescribed offering—**one young bullock for a burnt offering... and one kid of the goats for a sin offering**—combined the olah (עֹלָה, burnt offering, wholly consumed) expressing total dedication, with the chattat (חַטָּאת, sin offering) providing atonement.

This dual offering reveals atonement theology: sin required blood purification (chattat) AND renewed consecration to God (olah). The burnt offering's **sweet savour unto the LORD** (reach nichoach, רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ—literally "aroma of appeasement") indicates God's acceptance, not literal divine smell-pleasure. God graciously accepted symbolic substitution—an animal's life for the sinner's deserved death. This prefigures Christ who offered Himself "for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

Historical Context

Corporate guilt was real in Israel's covenant structure—the whole nation could suffer for communal sin (Achan's sin in Joshua 7). This corporate dimension contrasts with modern individualism. Ancient Near Eastern cultures generally understood collective responsibility more readily than modern Western societies. The sacrificial system's elaborate regulations (detailed in Leviticus 1-7) governed Israel's worship from Sinai through the first temple's destruction (586 BC) and again after the return until AD 70.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the concept of corporate guilt challenge individualistic modern Christianity?
2. What does the combination of burnt offering and sin offering teach about comprehensive atonement?
3. How do these typological sacrifices deepen appreciation for Christ's singular, sufficient sacrifice?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה H1961	אִם H518	מֵעֵינַי י	הָעֵד ה
		without the knowledge	of the congregation
		H5869	H5712
וְעָשָׂה		לְשִׁגְגָה	
Then it shall be if ought be committed		by ignorance	
H6213		H7684	
וְעָשָׂה		כָּל	הָעֵד ה
Then it shall be if ought be committed		H3605	of the congregation
H6213		H5712	
		פָּר	בֶּן
		bullock	young
		H6499	H1121
וְאֶחָד	דָּ	לְעֹלָה	לִיהוָה ה
H1241	and one	for a burnt offering	savour
H259		H5930	H7381
			for a sweet
			H5207
			unto the LORD
			H3068
וּמִנְחָתוֹ		וּנְסֹכָה	בְּמִשְׁפָּט ט
with his meat offering		and his drink offering	according to the manner
H4503		H5262	H4941
			kid
			H8163
עֲזֵי ים	וְאֶחָד	לְחַטָּאת:	
of the goats	and one	for a sin offering	
H5795	H259	H2403	

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 4:23 (Sin): Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:

Leviticus 5:15 (Sin): If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering:

Numbers 28:15 (Sin): And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the LORD shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

