

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, מֵעֵינֵי—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, נִיחָח—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

בְּאַדְךָ הַמִּיעֵן אֵם וְבַיִת הַ
without the knowledge of the congregation

H1961

H518

H5869

H5712

לְשַׁגְגָה
Then it shall be if ought be committed by ignorance

H6213

H7684

בְּאַדְךָ הַמִּיעֵן כָּל
Then it shall be if ought be committed of the congregation

bullock

בָּן פִּרְעֹם
young

H6213

H3605

H5712

H6499

H1121

לִיהְיוֹת הַנִּיחָה כְּלֵי יְמִינָה
and one for a burnt offering savour for a sweet unto the LORD

H1241

H259

H5930

H7381

H5207

H3068

וְשָׂעֵיר כְּמַשְׁפֵּט וְיִנְסֶכֶת
with his meat offering and his drink offering according to the manner

H4503

H5262

H4941

kid

H8163

לְמַטְתָּה אֶת יְמִינָה
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.

