

# Numbers 15:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance:

## Analysis

**And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation**—the verb "make atonement" (kipper, קָפַר) literally means "to cover" or "to wipe away." The priest's mediatorial action covered the congregation's sin, restoring right relationship with God. The assured result—**and it shall be forgiven them**—demonstrates that God graciously accepted the prescribed atonement. The reason given—**for it is ignorance**—shows God distinguished between inadvertent and willful transgression.

The required offerings—**a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance**—combined fire offerings (isheh, הִשְׁעָה, offerings consumed by fire) with the chattat (sin offering). The repetition of "unto the LORD" and "before the LORD" emphasizes these offerings' God-ward direction. The priest represented the people before God, and represented God to the people—mediating reconciliation. This typologically points to Christ our great High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" (Hebrews 7:25).

## Historical Context

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The Aaronic priesthood functioned from Sinai (approximately 1445 BC) through the first temple period (586 BC), resumed after the exile, and continued until AD 70 when Rome destroyed Herod's temple. After AD 70, Judaism had to reconceptualize atonement without temple or priesthood, leading to emphasis on prayer, repentance, and good works. Christianity understood Christ's death as the ultimate fulfillment rendering the levitical system obsolete (Hebrews 8-10). The Dead Sea Scrolls show Second Temple Jews deeply concerned with proper atonement rituals.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does the priest's mediatorial role illuminate Christ's superior high priesthood?
2. What does God's provision of atonement for inadvertent sin reveal about His character?
3. How should the assurance "it shall be forgiven" shape your confidence in Christ's atonement?

## Interlinear Text

עַד תִּכְפֹּה | הַפְּנֵי כָּל עַל יְכֹפֵר  
shall make an atonement And the priest H5921 H3605 for all the congregation H5712

פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִתְּשָׁאַל כִּי תִּשְׁאַל  
of the children of Israel and it shall be forgiven H0 H3588  
H1121 H3478 H5545

קָרְבָּן מ אַת שְׁגַגְתָּם הִיא וְהַמִּלְחָמָה יְהוָה יְאֹו וְהַבְּרָאָה שְׁגַגְתָּם  
for their ignorance H1931 and they shall bring H1992 their offering H853  
H7684 H935 H7133

שְׁגַנְתָּם:  
for their ignorance

## Additional Cross-References

**Leviticus 4:20** (Sin): And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

**Hebrews 2:17** (Creation): Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

**Romans 3:25** (Sin): Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;