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Unintentional Sin

15: 22-31

Unintentional sin DIG: Why is this topic brought up now? What did the Israelites fail to do? What is the difference between unintentional sin and intentional sin? Give some examples of each. Is a person guilty of sin even if what he or she did was not intentional? Why is there no mercy for the defiant sinner?

REFLECT: What do you see as the difference between intentional and unintentional sin in your life? Although sacrifice is not required of believers, how do you deal with each kind of sin? How does this help to mend your relationship with ADONAI? How do you know that your salvation in the Lord is secure (John 10:27-30)?

It is not only in our actions that sin is committed, but also in the absence of action, it is unintentional, doing nothing, when we should have done something.

Why is this topic brought up now? **The purification offering in Leviticus** (see the commentary on **Leviticus**, **to see link click [A1](#) - The Purification Offering: Purified by Blood**) covers much the same material; **it** describes the necessary offerings for **the anointed priest who sinned unintentionally, the leaders of Isra'el who sinned unintentionally, the common person who sinned unintentionally, a poor person who sinned unintentionally, and the poorest of the poor who sinned unintentionally**, but **Leviticus** does *not* mention **the whole community sinning unintentionally**. What has happened since **Leviticus**? **The whole community sinned unintentionally: they did nothing when they should have done something**. What should **they** have done? **They should have** conquered the Land that **ADONAI** had given **them** (see **[Bz](#) - Faith and Obedience**).



When the whole community committed an unintentional sin (15:22-26): And when you unintentionally (Hebrew: *shagah*, meaning *to go astray, to err*) fail to observe the mitzvah of the grain and drink offering (see [Ch](#) - **Grain and Drink Offerings**), and the Torah of the challah (see [Ci](#) - **Challah**) that ADONAI has spoken to Moshe, yes, everything that ADONAI has ordered you to do through Moshe, from the day ADONAI gave the order and onward through the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on [Exodus Da](#) - **The Dispensation of the Torah**), then, if it was done unintentionally by the community and was not known to them, the whole community (through the priesthood) is to offer one young bull for a burnt offering as a fragrant aroma to ADONAI, with its grain and drink offerings, in keeping with the mitzvah, and one male goat as a purification offering.

The priest is to make atonement for the whole community of the people of Isra'el; and they may be forgiven, if sincere, because it was done unintentionally.

Forgiveness, however, was not automatic. Just like individual atonement for sin, going through the motions without faith would make a mockery of the sacrifice. The priest was to bring their burnt offering, an offering made by fire (see [Leviticus Ai](#) - **The Burnt Offering: Accepted by God**), to ADONAI, and their purification offering before ADONAI for their mistake. The whole community of the people of Isra'el may be forgiven, likewise the foreigner staying with them; because for all the people it was done unintentionally (15:25-26).

When an individual committed an unintentional sin (15:27-29): If an individual sins by mistake, he is to offer a female goat in its first year as a purification offering. The priest will make atonement before God for the person who makes a mistake by sinning unintentionally; he will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven - no matter whether he is a citizen of Isra'el or a foreigner living with them. You are

to have one mitzvah for whoever it is that does something wrong by mistake. This is a summary of **the Purification Offering** in **Leviticus**, but adds that **the foreigner can be forgiven** as well as **the citizen of Isra'el**.

When an individual commits an intentional sin (30-31): These brief verses form the climax of the passage and, indeed, point back to **the sin of the ten spies in Chapter 14** and forward to **the sin of Korah in Chapter 16**.²⁷⁸ **But anyone who sins defiantly,** (Hebrew: *rum*, meaning *with an upraised hand*) **whether a citizen or a foreigner, is blaspheming ADONAI.** Unlike **the unintentional sinner**, for whom the Torah makes provisions for **God's** mercy, one who sets **sins** defiantly to despise the word of **God** and to **blaspheme His Name** must be punished.²⁷⁹ **That person will be cut off from his people.** Being **cut off from the people** meant no longer being a member of the covenant community of **Isra'el** or receiving any of the blessings associated with its membership. The person was simply denied fellowship or access to the Tabernacle or Temple in later times. Such a person must suffer the ultimate judgment.

In rabbinic literature the penalty is called *karet*, or "cutting off." In priestly literature, the penalty of *karet* was understood to include a series of related punishments at the hand of God, ranging from the immediate death of an offender, as in 20:17, to his premature death at a later time, and even to the death of his descendants. In Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6 and Mishnah Keritot 1:2, this penalty was characterized as *mitah biydei shamayim*, or "death at the hands of heaven." Since in 7:20-21 *karet* is mentioned in the context as childlessness, there is the implication that it took that course as well.²⁸⁰ **Because he has had contempt for the word of ADONAI and has disobeyed His mitzvah, that person will be cut off completely and will bear the consequences of his own guilt.** The B'rit Chadashah contains similar dire warnings about the impossibility of **forgiveness** in cases of deliberate apostasy (see **Hebrews Ci - If We Deliberately Keep On Sinning, No Sacrifice for Sins is Left**).²⁸¹ By way of illustration, we are immediately given an example of **intentional sin** in the story of **the man caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath** (see **Ck - The Sabbath-Breaker**).

This section reminds us that **God's** attitude toward **His** Torah is complex. Yes, **He** is serious about **His mitzvot**; **they** are not trivial, nor are they subject to the fickle attitudes of casual people. However, **He** is also gracious. Just as **mankind was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath made for mankind** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Cv - The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**), so we may also believe that mankind was not made for the Torah, but the Torah for mankind.²⁸²

Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are such a Wonderful, Holy, and Almighty Heavenly **Father**! Even when **Your people** tested **You in the wilderness**, **Your** love and wisdom knew that the only path to bringing **them** back to **You** was **discipline**. **My son, do not take lightly the discipline of Adonai or lose heart when you are corrected by Him, because ADONAI disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He accepts (Hebrews 12:6)**. Even in **Your discipline**, **You** are **slow to anger (Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18)** by immediately giving ways for **Your people** to offer a **“pleasing aroma”** to **You (Numbers 15:3, 10, 13, 14)** when they come into the Land. **You** also graciously gave instructions about how **the congregation** can be forgiven for **unintentional sins**. I love **You** and am amazed by **Your** gracious love. I desire to love **You** back with all my heart. **You** are our Holy, Almighty, All-Powerful, All-wise, Forgiving Savior and Loving **Father**. I delight in praising **You** at all times! **You** are the joy of my life! In **Messiah Yeshua’s** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen