

Numbers Chapter 15

Verses 1-41: Even though the Israelites had rebelled against the Lord and were under His judgment, the Lord still planned to give the land of Canaan to them. These laws assumed Israel's entrance into the Land (15:2, 17).

Verses 1-16: For the Lord to say, "When ye be come into the land", demonstrates His ongoing grace to His erring people. Israel's future was there. And even though the adult generation had been sentenced to die before reaching the Promised Land (Heb. 3:17-18). The next generation would need to understand the covenant's requirements, including its system of offerings" (Exodus 23:14-19; Deut. 12:1-13).

The law of the grain offering recorded here differs from that given in (Lev. Chapter 2). The grain offerings in Leviticus were offered separately as a gift to the Lord. Here, for the first time, grain and drink offerings were allowed to be offered along with either a burnt or a peace offering.

Numbers 15:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

After the murmurings of the Israelites by reason of the spies (Num. 14:2). And their being threatened with a consumption of them in the wilderness on that account (Num. 14:12). And their defeat at Hormah (Num. 14:45). And lest their posterity should be discouraged, and despair of ever enjoying the good land.

"Saying": As follows.

This is a new message entirely.

Numbers 15:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you,"

God will still bring His people into the land in spite of the events (of chapter 14), and their tragic results. Note (verse 18 and relate it to Gen. 15:18-21), and the promises made to Abraham.

God has not changed His mind. The descendants of these Israelites will have the land that is their habitation. The commandments given here, are for the time of their habitation of the land.

Numbers 15:3 "And will make an offering by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savor unto the LORD, of the herd, or of the flock:"

The first of these respects such offerings by fire, which were not wholly burnt, but part of them were eaten by the priests (Deut. 18:1). And the latter such as were wholly burnt, unless the latter can be thought to be only an explanation of the former.

"Or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering": These were peace offerings, some of which were for thanksgiving, and others were either a vow or a freewill offering, as here (see Lev. 7:11).

"Or in your solemn feasts": As the Passover, Pentecost, etc. Of which, and the offerings in them (see Lev. 23:4).

"To make a sweet savor unto the Lord": For acceptance with him.

"Of the herd or of the flock": A bullock of the one, a lamb or kid of the goats of the other. Fowls are not mentioned, because burnt offerings of them required no drink offerings.

These laws of sacrifice were forever. Jesus fulfilled them for all who would believe, when He gave Himself on the cross. After Jesus, there is no more need to sacrifice. The burnt offering is when the sacrifice is burned up completely. Symbolically, the person's body who offers this is purged from sin with this fire. The freewill was not of obligation. All of the things above, were a way of man drawing himself into close fellowship with his God. The offerings and sacrifices were pleasant to God, when they were done with a willing heart. The "sweet savor" is speaking of sweet smell rising to God.

Numbers 15:4 "Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the LORD bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth [part] of an hin of oil."

Be it of either kind before mentioned.

"Bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. This was made of the tenth part of an ephah, or of an omer of fine wheaten flour, which was the quantity of about three quarts. And which was mixed and macerated with the fourth part of an hin, or with a quart and more than half a pint of oil (see Exodus 29:40). Rather this should be called a bread offering.

The meat offering contains the makings for bread. Jesus is the Bread. All of the sacrifices symbolize Jesus in some way.

Leviticus 2:1 "And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be [of] fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:"

Frankincense accompanied the meat offering.

Numbers 15:5 "And the fourth [part] of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb."

This is the first time it has been made clear that they must present a libation of wine with every burnt offering and peace offering, especially in light of the fact the spies had brought back a huge cluster of grapes (13:23).

The drink offering, like the meat offering, was a cleansing to fellowship with God. Wine, many times, symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The blood of an animal, in sacrifice, could not totally do away with sin.

It could cover the sin, but not abolish it. The blood of the perfect Lamb (Jesus Christ), abolished sin for all who will believe.

Verses 6-16: There was a fixed tariff: the larger the animal, the larger the cereal offering and libation that had to accompany it.

Numbers 15:6 "Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare [for] a meat offering two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third [part] of an hin of oil."

Whether for a burnt offering or a peace offering; or rather and for a ram, as many versions.

"Thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third part of an hin of oil": Which was the quantity of six quarts of fine flour, and about three pints and a quarter of a pint of oil.

The ram offering was under the heading of the bloody offering. It was generally thought of as a cleansing from sin. The lamb, or the ram, was usually a male of around one year old. It must have no blemishes, because it symbolized the sinless Christ.

Numbers 15:7 "And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third [part] of an hin of wine, [for] a sweet savor unto the LORD."

The same quantity of wine was to be used in the drink offering as of oil in the meat offering (Num. 15:4).

"For a sweet savor unto the Lord": That it might be acceptable to him.

The drink offering was in proportion to the size of the animal sacrificed with it.

Numbers 15:8 "And when thou preparest a bullock [for] a burnt offering, or [for] a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the LORD:"

Which was a larger offering, and required a larger meat offering and drink offering (as Num. 15:9 shows).

"Or for a sacrifice in performing a vow or peace offerings unto the Lord": By which latter are meant freewill offerings. For though both sorts here mentioned were peace offerings, yet these were more particularly called so.

Numbers 15:9 "Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil."

Much larger than either for a lamb or ram, even one consisting of three tenth deals of flour; or nine quarts of it.

"Mingled with half an hin of oil": Two quarts and a pint, and somewhat more.

Numbers 15:10 "And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, [for] an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD."

The same quantity as of oil, and a little more.

"For an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto the Lord": This, according to Jarchi, refers only to the meat offering and the oil. For the wine was not a fire offering, not being put upon the fire.

I put these three together, so you could see the meat, bread, and wine were together.

Numbers 15:11 "Thus shall it be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a lamb, or a kid."

Such a quantity of flour and oil for the meat offering. And such a quantity of wine for the drink offering as before expressed. Making no difference between one young or old.

"Or for a ram": Which, Jarchi says, was thirteen months and one day old.

"Or for a lamb, or a kid": For a young one of the flock, whether of the sheep or goat, whether a lamb or a kid of the goats. Which, according to Jarchi, were within a year, not a year old.

Numbers 15:12 "According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number."

That is, in proportion to the number of the cattle. Be they of which sort they would, should be the quantity of the meat and drink offerings.

The portions of bread and wine mentioned, are for one animal. Of course, if there are two animals, the bread and wine were doubled.

Numbers 15:13 "All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD."

Meaning that all Israelites should with their sacrifices bring their meat and drink offerings of the quantity directed to as above.

"In offering an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto the Lord": When they offered any burnt offerings or peace offerings. The Jews say, that all sacrifices, whether of the congregation or of a private person, require drink offerings. Excepting the firstborn, the tithes, the Passover, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. But the sin offering of the leper, and his trespass offering, require them. The Targum of Jonathan is, "all that are born in Israel, and not among the people, shall make these drink offerings thus." For though an uncircumcised Gentile might bring burnt offerings and peace offerings, yet not meat offerings and drink offerings with them (See notes on Lev. 22:18). Only such as were proselytes of righteousness (as in Num. 15:14).

If you were Hebrew by birth, this pertained to you. These offerings would be accepted as a sweet smell to the LORD.

Verses 14-16: The "stranger" (resident alien), who lived among the people of Israel was permitted to bring "sweet savor" offerings in the same manner as the native-born (9:14). This was Old Testament evangelism at work.

Numbers 15:14 "And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever [be] among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD; as ye do, so he shall do."

A stranger, or proselyte. Not of the gate, but of righteousness, as Ben Gersom and the Jewish, writers in general interpret it.

"Or whatsoever be among you in your generations": Whether such a proselyte settled and continued among them, or only stayed with them for a while.

"And will offer an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto the Lord": Is desirous of offering a burnt offering or a peace offering to the Lord in an acceptable manner.

"As ye do, so shall he do": Bring the same meat offering and drink offering, according to the nature and number of the cattle he brings for sacrifice.

The stranger is speaking of someone who is not Hebrew. If they want to sacrifice, they are to be allowed to. They must follow the same regulations as the Hebrew.

Numbers 15:15 "One ordinance [shall be both] for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth [with you], an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye [are], so shall the stranger be before the LORD."

Or "O congregation", as Ben Melech. And so the Targum of Jonathan, "O whole congregation"; though Aben Ezra denies it to be vocative.

"And also for the stranger that sojourneth with you": The same ordinance, statute, or appointment, respecting the above things, were equally binding on one side as on the other. A home born Israelite and a proselyte of righteousness.

"An ordinance for ever in your generations": To be observed by them, one and the other, in all ages, until the Messiah came and abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

"As ye are so shall the stranger be before the Lord": Not in things civil, but religious, and particularly with respect to the above sacrifices and offerings. Ben Gersom and Aben Ezra say this respects the burnt offering only, which was before the Lord.

There is one law for all. If the stranger lives in the camp, he is like one of the congregation. There are no allowances made for one over the other. This is saying there is One God of Jew and Gentile.

Numbers 15:16 "One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you."

One law respecting these sacrifices, and one manner of offering them. One and the same precept to be observed, and one and the same judgment or punishment inflicted in case of non-observance.

"Shall be for you, and the stranger that sojourneth with you": For Israelites and proselytes. Which is said to invite and encourage the latter. And may have a distant view to the calling of the Gentiles in Gospel times. When there should be no difference between Jews and Gentiles called by grace in matters of religion, but would be one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

In these lessons, God is telling the Jew to forget about being exclusive with God. God is the Father of us all.

Leviticus 24:22 "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I [am] the LORD your God."

Verses 17-21: This regulation pertained to the offering of the firstfruits of the harvest. When the people entered the land of Canaan and began to enjoy its produce, they were to show their devotion to the Lord by presenting to Him a cake baked from the first cuttings of the grain.

"Cake of the first of your dough for a heave offering": Here the principle of firstfruits is emphasized, in that when a housewife made bread she had to set aside a portion for the Lord. The Old Testament insists that the firstfruits belong to God. Every firstborn child, firstborn animals, and the firstfruits of every crop must be given to God (Exodus 22:29-30; 23:19). Paul said, "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy" (Rom. 11:16).

Numbers 15:17 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Or continued to speak to him. For the following law was given at the same time as those before.

We see a break in God's instructions on sacrifices.

Numbers 15:18 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you,"

Who only were bound to observe the following law concerning the cake of the first dough (Num. 15:20). And not Gentiles; so the Jews say. The dough of a Gentile is free from the cake, though an Israelite kneads it.

"When ye come into the land whither I bring you": The land of Canaan. This is another assurance of their possession of the land of Canaan, notwithstanding what had been threatened (in Num. 15:2). It is only said, "which I give unto you", but here, "whither I bring you". Assuring them, that as he had given it unto them, he would certainly introduce them into it. The Jews from hence gather, that they are not bound to observe this precept concerning the cake by the law, but in the land of Israel only. And when all Israel are there; wherefore at this time, and even in the days of Ezra, it is separated only by the words of the Scribes. And the reason of it is, that this law might not be forgotten by the Israelites. There were three countries that were bound to bring the cake, according to the Misnah.

Again, these ordinances are for keeping in the land of promise. They will be obligated to keep them forever, after they receive their homeland.

Numbers 15:19 "Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up a heave offering unto the LORD."

Of the land of Canaan. When they were about to eat of it, before they actually did. When they were preparing for it. Had ground their corn into flour, and had mixed it with water and kneaded it into dough, in order to bake it and make it fit for food. By bread is meant bread corn, such as was the old corn of the land the Israelites first ate of when they entered into it (Joshua 5:11). The Targum of Jonathan adds, "not of rice, or millet, or pulse," but what was made of corn used for bread. And the Jews say, there were five things only they were obliged to make the cake of, wheat, barley, "cumin" or rye, fox ear (barley), and oats. And this is to be understood only of dough made for men's bread, and not for dogs or any other beast.

"Ye shall offer up a heave offering unto the Lord": And what that is, is expressed in (Num. 15:20).

This is offering the bread first to God, before eating of it. Christians practice firstfruits of the resurrection, when we celebrate Sunday, instead of Saturday.

Numbers 15:20 "Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough [for] a heave offering: as [ye do] the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it."

Of the first dough made of the first corn that was threshed, winnowed and ground. They were to make a cake, and offer it a heave offering unto the Lord. The quantity of it is not expressed, but was left to the people's generosity.

"As ye do the heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall ye heave it": As the two wave loaves and firstfruits of their harvest (Lev. 23:16).

Even the dough, before it is cooked, should be offered first to God.

Ezekiel 44:30 "And the first of all the firstfruits of all [things], and every oblation of all, of every [sort] of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house."

Numbers 15:21 "Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD a heave offering in your generations."

As an acknowledgment of his being the sovereign Lord and possessor of heaven and earth, and of his being the owner and proprietor of the land of Canaan. And by way of thankfulness to him for the plenty of bread corn he had given them. And wherefore this cake was to be heaved or lifted up towards him in heaven, as follows.

"A heave offering in your generations": For this respected not only the first time of their entrance into the land of Canaan, but was to be observed every year when they made their first dough, and was to continue as long as the ceremonial law lasted. This cake was anciently given to the priest, which is meant by giving it to the Lord. But now the Jews take it and cast it into the fire and burn it. The apostle seems to allude to this cake of the first dough in (Rom. 11:16).

This offering was given, in addition to the first of the corn and wheat. It is also given in addition to the first of the finished bread. It seems at each step of preparation, the first of it was to be offered to the LORD.

Verses 22-29: Those who sinned "if ye have erred" unintentionally, had provision for forgiveness. These several "offerings" (grain, drink, sin), were to be made in "atonement" for omitting or unintentionally sinning against any of the Lord's commandments.

Numbers 15:22 "And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses,"

"Ye have erred": Sin offerings were prescribed whenever any of the Lord's commands were disobeyed accidentally, i.e., by unintentional neglect or omission. In verses (24-26), the offerings for the whole community were given. In verses (27-29), the offerings for the individual person who sinned unintentionally were stated.

These commandments are given to them 40 years before they enter the Promised Land. It would be easy to overlook this, after that length of time. "If" indicates that some of them will err in this.

Numbers 15:23 "[Even] all that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded [Moses], and henceforward among your generations;"

Recorded in this book and the two preceding, whether of a moral, ceremonial, or judicial kind. The whole body of laws given to the people of Israel from the Lord by Moses.

"From the day that the Lord commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations": All that he had commanded, or should hereafter command.

The commandments are brought down from generation to generation. Sometimes, we get careless after so long a time.

Numbers 15:24 "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 savor 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."

Of the law of God, not clearly understanding the meaning of it, or not knowing of the several precepts of it. And the circumstances of each, and the manner of performing obedience thereunto.

"Without the knowledge of the congregation": Or they being ignorant of the true intent of the law and form of obeying it. For this is to be understood not of the sin of a private person through ignorance, but of the body of the people. Or of a congregation of them in some particular place, ignorantly and unawares falling into idolatry. Or rather into a breach of any of the laws of God, moral or ceremonial.

"That all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor unto the Lord": As an acceptable sacrifice to him. By which it appears that this law is different from that in (Lev. 4:13). Since the bullock there was for a sin offering, this for a burnt offering. And besides another creature was to be for a sin offering, as after expressed.

"With his meat offering and his drink offering, according to the manner": A meat offering, consisting of such a quantity of flour and oil, and a drink offering of such a quantity of wine as directed to (Num. 15:9).

"And one kid of the goats for a sin offering": Which though mentioned last was offered first, as an expiatory sacrifice for sin. Typical of Christ, who was made an offering for sin. And then the burnt offering by way of thankfulness for the acceptance of the other.

This is a sin of ignorance, not on purpose. It is also, a sin of omission, rather than commission. All of the congregation must sacrifice the sacrifice for sin.

Numbers 15:25 "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:"

By offering a sin offering for them. A type of Christ, the propitiation not only for the sins of the people among the Jews, but throughout the whole world (1 John 2:2).

"And it shall be forgiven them": As the sins of the Lord's people are forgiven them through the blood of Christ. And on account of his atoning sacrifice and satisfaction made for them.

"For it is ignorance": A sin of ignorance, for which reason Christ pleads for pardon on the foot of his sacrifice, and his people receive it (Luke 23:34). For that this sin was forgiven on the score of a sacrifice appears by what follows.

"And they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord": The bullock for the burnt offering.

"And their sin offering before the Lord, for their ignorance": A kid of the goats.

Leviticus 1:4 "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."

The putting of his hands on the head of the offering transferred his guilt to the animal. This is the very thing Jesus did for all of us, when He took our sins upon His body. He was our atonement.

Luke 23:34 "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."

Numbers 15:26 "And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people [were] in ignorance."

Which is repeated for the certainty of it, and for the sake of what follows.

"And the stranger that sojourneth among them": The proselyte of righteousness. So the blessing of pardon, through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, comes upon believing Gentiles as well as Jews (Rom. 4:9).

"Seeing all the people were in ignorance": Both the congregation of Israel and the stranger (See note on Num. 15:25).

The stranger and the congregation were treated the same. They sinned in ignorance, and God is more forgiving than for a sin in full knowledge.

Numbers 15:27 "And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering."

Any private or particular person, by breaking any of the above commands, or any other. Not rightly understanding them, or not giving attention: to the circumstances required in the manner of performing them.

"Then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering": Which differed in this from the sin offering of a congregation that sinned through ignorance. That was a kid of the goats, whether male or female. But this was to be a female goat and of a year old.

The offering was less than for a sin committed in full knowledge. This is probably, a sin of omitting the commandments.

Numbers 15:28 "And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him."

By offering his sin offering for him.

"When he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord": To whom it is known to be such, before whom all things are naked, open, and well known.

"To make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him": Upon that atonement made by sacrifice. So the forgiveness of the sins of all the Lord's people proceeds upon an atonement made by the blood and sacrifice of Christ. Full atonement of sin and free forgiveness are not contrary to each other.

As in the lamb, the hands were placed on the animal's head to transfer guilt. The act of the sacrifice shows they repented, and sought forgiveness.

Colossians 2:13 "And you, being dead in Your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;"

Numbers 15:29 "Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, [both for] him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them."

Which enjoins a she goat for a sin offering for such.

"Both for him that is born amongst the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them": Both sinning through ignorance, the same sacrifice was offered for them, by which atonement was made. And through which their sin was forgiven; by whom are meant home born Israelites and proselytes of righteousness. Who were under the same laws, and enjoyed the same privileges, as do now believing Jews and Gentiles.

Exodus 12:49 "One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

Romans 3:29-30 "[Is he] the God of the Jews only? [is he] not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:" "Seeing [it is] one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."

Forgiveness and salvation are for whosoever will.

Romans 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Verses 30-31: "Presumptuously" literally means "with a high hand", such as a raised or clenched fist in defiance of God and His commands. This seems to be illustrated (in verses 32-36), by the gathering of sticks on the Sabbath. Note (Heb. 10:26-31), referring to (Deut. 17:2-6; compare Mark 3:29. 1 John 1:7; 5:16).

Sinning "with a high hand" is a sign of rebellion against the Lord, so no provisions were given for a person who defied Yahweh's grace in this way. Instead, they were to "utterly be cut off" (Deut. 17:12; Psalm 19:13; Heb. 10:26).

Numbers 15:30 "But the soul that doeth [ought] presumptuously, [whether he be] born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

"Doeth ought presumptuously": Literally "with a high hand". These sins, committed knowingly and deliberately were describe as blasphemous because they were an arrogant act of insubordination against the Lord. Anyone guilty of presumptuous sin was to be excommunicated from Israel and put to death.

This is speaking of those who knew the commandment, and the consequences of not keeping them. This is deliberate sin against God. We might even call it defying God. This is total rejection of God and His law.

Numbers 15:31 "Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity [shall be] upon him."

That is, has broken it through contempt of it, despising it as a command of God. Paying no regard to it as a law of his. Otherwise such who sin ignorantly break the commandment of God.

"That soul shall be utterly cut off": Or "in cutting off shall be cut off". most certainly cut off and entirely ruined and destroyed in this world and in that to come.

"His iniquity shall be upon him": The punishment of it, no atonement being made for it by sacrifice. It shall be upon him and him only. Or be "in him", not repented of and not forgiven.

This is total rejection of Jesus (Word of God). He deliberately breaks God's law. The sin against the Holy Ghost, in my opinion, is to die totally rejecting Jesus. There is no forgiveness for this.

Verses 32-36: An illustration of presumptuous sin concerns a man who violated "Sabbath". His condemnation was a death sentence, because God's requirements about observing this day of rest were well known in Israel. A violation was deemed deliberate. This was an act of defiant sin. When it was determined that there was a premeditated violation of the Sabbath law, death was required.

Numbers 15:32 "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day."

According to Aben Ezra, in the wilderness of Sinai. For it is a common notion of the Jews, that though this fact is recorded here, yet was committed the first year the Israelites came out of Egypt, soon after the giving the law of the Sabbath. Hence Jarchi remarks, that the Scripture speaks of this to the reproach of the Israelites, that they kept only the first Sabbath, and on the second this man came and profaned it. But it seems rather to be in the wilderness of Paran where this fact was committed, after the business of the spies and the discomfiture of Israel, and the above laws were given. And stands here in its proper place as an instance of a presumptuous sinner, cut off from his people, according to the above law, which it immediately follows.

"They found a man that gathered sticks on the sabbath day": Plucking them up by the roots, as the Targum of Jonathan, as stubble and the like. For the word signifies gathering straw or stubble, or such like light things, as Ben Melech observes. And binding them in bundles for fuel. And this was done on the Sabbath day, by which it appears that that was to be kept in the wilderness. Though the laws before mentioned concerning sacrifices, and the cake of the first dough, were not to be put in execution until Israel came into the land of Canaan.

This is a deliberate breaking of the law of Sabbath. This man has had no regard for God's law.

Numbers 15:33 "And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation."

Admonished him, as say the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi. But he would not desist. Wherefore they;

"Brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation": To Moses and Aaron, and to the seventy elders. Who might be at this time met together, to hear, try, and judge causes. For it cannot be thought that the whole body of the people are meant. And it is most likely that it was not on the Sabbath day, but the day following, that they brought the man to them. Who were then sitting in the court.

He was brought to the tabernacle, for judgement to be passed upon him.

Numbers 15:34 "And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him."

In a certain prison in the camp. Perhaps the same in which the blasphemer was put (Lev. 24:12); and for much the same reason.

"Because it was not declared what should be done to him": That is, what kind of death he should die, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra. It had been before declared that the Sabbath breaker should die, but not what death he should die (Exodus 31:15). Though some think it was a matter of doubt whether gathering of sticks was a breach of the Sabbath, or at least such a breach of it as required death. And the answer of the Lord seems to confirm this sense, as follows.

This is saying, they kept him locked up, until they sentenced him.

Moses was waiting on the LORD to tell him how to punish the man.

Numbers 15:35 "And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp."

Who consulted the Lord upon this affair, in the tabernacle. Even at the most Holy Place, from above the mercy seat, where he promised to meet him, and commune with him about whatsoever he should consult him (Exodus 25:22).

"The man shall surely be put to death": For as no fire was to be made throughout their habitations on a Sabbath day, gathering sticks for such a purpose was a work that was a violation of the Sabbath, punishable with death (Exodus 35:2). And the kind of death follows;

"All the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp": As afterwards without the city: of the place and manner of stoning (see notes on Acts 7:58).

The reason it was important for everyone to be in on the stoning, was to show their approval of the punishment. He was to be taken outside the camp, and stoned to death, so as not to defile the camp.

Numbers 15:36 "And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses."

What was done by the order of Moses and the seventy elders is said to be done by the whole congregation. Though it was by a few persons only the man was actually brought out, who were the proper officers to do such business.

"And stoned him with stones, and he died": Stoned him to death.

"As the Lord commanded Moses": At the time he consulted him in the sanctuary, which he acquainted the court with. And they immediately ordered the execution, which was accordingly done.

This is just saying, they carried out the punishment. This should also be a sign to anyone else who thought about committing this sin. Some people believe capital punishment to be a deterrent to crime.

Verses 37-41: The special identity of the people of Israel was to be fully woven into their everyday life, including what they wore. The “fringes in the borders of their garments” were not for fashion but to cause them to “remember all the commandments of the Lord” and help them “be holy”. This commandment is the basis for the prayer shawl worn by Jewish men to this day. See (Deut. 6:4-9), for other daily reminders of their status as the people of the Lord.

Verses 37-38: “Fringes” These blue tassels were in the form of a flower or petal and were attached to the garments of the Israelites to remind them of their need to trust and obey God’s commands.

Numbers 15:37 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

After the giving of the above laws, and the order for stoning the Sabbath breaker. And the things what follows is connected with them, because it was to put them in mind of these and all other commands. And of so much importance is the precept directed to, that the Jews say, and Jarchi particularly, that it is equivalent to all the commands. And which he makes to be the reason of its being placed here.

We see another break in the message here. God speaks again to Moses.

Numbers 15:38 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:"

Whom it only concerned, and all of them, except women and children. For priests, Levites, Israelites, proselytes, and freed servants, were bound to wear the fringes, but not Gentiles. Nor might the Gentiles make them, what were made by them were not to be used, since it follows.

"And bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations": The garments on which these fringes were put were such that were made either of linen or of woollen. No other were obliged to them by the law. And these were to be wore by them throughout their generations until the Messiah came. And they seem to have been worn by him (Matt. 9:20). However, it is certain they were worn by the Pharisees in his time (Matt. 23:5). At present this four cornered garment is not anywhere in common use among the Jews, instead of which they wear, under their other garments.

"And that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue": Or a blue lace, a piece of blue tape, which bound and kept the fringe tight and close. And being of a different color, the fringe being white, made it the more conspicuous. The reason why this color was used, the Jews say, was because it was like the sea, and the like the sky, and the sky like the throne of glory.

This blue, hyacinth, or purple color, as the Jews generally take it to be, was of a peculiar dye. The manner of making which is now unknown to them, and therefore they use only the white.

The fringes, on a ribband of blue, at the hem of their garment, was to remind them of the heavenly. Blue means heavenly. Every time they took a step, they could see the ribband of blue. The blue reminded them they were to walk in a heavenly manner. I say that after a person has been saved, they must walk in their salvation. This is exactly what this is saying. We must walk, every day, pleasing unto God.

Numbers 15:39 "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:"

The blue ribbon or lace shall be in or upon the fringe to fasten it.

"That ye may look upon it": The blue lace making the whole the more conspicuous. From hence the Jews gather, that the night is not the time for wearing fringe, which lessens the sight, and it is not so easily seen. And that night garments are not obliged to have the fringe on them. And yet, they say, a blind man is bound to wear it, because, though he cannot see it, others can.

"And remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them": This is the general use, end, and design of the fringes. That upon sight of them they might be put in mind of the commandments and put upon the practice of them. These being at the four corners of their vestments, let them look which way they would downwards, before or behind, or on either side, they could not but see them. And the many threads in them might put them in mind of the many precepts they were to observe. And the white color, the purity and holiness of them. And the blue or sky-colored lace might lead them to observe the heavenly original of them. Or being of a purple color rather, might direct them to the blood of Christ, for the remission of the transgressions of them. The Jews have many fanciful things about the use and virtue of these fringes, not worthy of notice. And they say, that such who are careful to observe this law of the fringe, are worthy to see the face of the divine Majesty, and will be preserved from evil spirits.

"And that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes": To have and enjoy, and do those things, in matters of worship. Which were of their own devising, and pleasing in their sight, as well as in moral things, what were agreeable to their carnal hearts, and make for the gratification of their senses.

"After which ye use to go a whoring": Which seems to restrain the sense pretty much to idolatry, to false and superstitious worship. Which are often in Scripture expressed by fornication and whoredom. Though other sins and lusts also are sometimes signified by the same words.

Every time the walker took a step, it reminded him of the heavenly commandments. They must keep the lust of their eyes, and the lust of their flesh, under control. They must live and walk for God.

Numbers 15:40 "That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God."

Which is repeated, that the end and use of these fringes might be particularly taken notice of, and attended to. That so they might not satisfy themselves with and rest in this ceremony of wearing the fringes. But be found in the observance of every moral precept, and of every religious ordinance and duty.

"And be holy unto your God": As in his presence, according to his will, and for his honor and glory. By keeping his holy commands, and living a holy life and conversation, well pleasing in his sight.

To be sons of God is an everyday following of the LORD. They had to keep the commandments all the time. We must walk pleasing to God Sunday through Saturday, not just one day a week. Christianity is a way of life.

Numbers 15:41 "I [am] the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I [am] the LORD your God."

"The LORD": This reminder harkens back to Moses' first encounter with the Lord in the desert (Exodus 3:13-22).

Christianity is based on the fact that Jesus Christ is our Lord, as well as Savior. The Hebrew religion was based on The LORD being their God. God will not force Himself upon them, or us. For Him to be our God, we must want Him to be our God. He wants to be our God.

Numbers Chapter 15 Questions

1. The commandments of God, given to Moses, here, are for when?
2. The laws of sacrifice were _____.
3. Who fulfilled all of them?
4. What does the burnt offering do symbolically, for the person who offers?
5. All of the sacrifices and offerings were for what purpose?
6. What is the "sweet savor" speaking of?
7. What does the meat offering contain?
8. What does wine, many times, symbolize?
9. What was all the blood of an animal could do for sin?

10. The ram for the offering was about _____ year old.
11. Why must it be without blemish?
12. The meat, bread, and wine were offered _____.
13. If you had more than one animal to sacrifice, how did that affect the bread and wine?
14. Was there any difference for the offering of a stranger?
15. What does the heave offering show?
16. Even the _____, before it was cooked, should be offered up to God.
17. These ordinances were given _____ years before they would be carried out.
18. The sin of ignorance is also a sin of _____.
19. What did they bring to be sacrificed for the sin of ignorance?
20. Why were the hands of the sinner placed on the animal's head?
21. What is verse 30 speaking of?
22. Why shall that soul be cut off?
23. What was the man doing that broke Sabbath?
24. Who pronounced his sentence?
25. How was he punished?
26. Why was it important for everyone to participate in his punishment?
27. Why were they to wear fringes on the bottom of their garments?
28. What color was the ribbon the fringe was sewed to?
29. What does that say to the Christian?