

Numbers 15

Verses 1 – 10

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land where you are going to live, which I am giving you, ³and you make an offering by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a voluntary offering or at your appointed times, to make a soothing aroma to the Lord from the herd or from the flock, ⁴then the one who presents his offering shall present to the Lord a grain offering of a tenth of *an ephah* of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil, ⁵and you shall prepare wine for the drink offering, a fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or for the sacrifice, for each lamb. ⁶Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of *an ephah* of fine flour mixed with a third of a hin of oil; ⁷and for the drink offering you shall offer a third of a hin of wine as a soothing aroma to the Lord. ⁸And when you prepare a bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a special vow, or for peace offerings to the Lord, ⁹then you shall offer with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of *an ephah* of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil; ¹⁰and you shall offer as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord.

²“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land where you are going to live, which I am giving you, ³and you make an offering by fire to the Lord.....

Right away God looks to the younger generation, those who were 19 years old and younger, who will enter Canaan. The information given here only pertains to them because all of the other people will never get the opportunity to offer a sacrifice in the land of Canaan because they will die in the wilderness.

Out of the 2.5 million people that currently make up Israel only 1/3 of them (825,000) will enter the Promised Land. However, during the next 38 years, many children will be born so the number of people entering Canaan will remain at about 2.5 million. We know this because the second census was taken in the 39th year of the wilderness experience, when nearly all of the older generation had passed away and the population was almost exactly the same as the first census which was taken in the 2nd year of their journey.

See chart 1505

1st and 2nd Census

	Numbers 1 2-1-02	Numbers 26 year 39	Plus	Minus
Tribe	1ST Census	2ND Census		
Reuben	46,500	43,730		2,770
Simeon	59,300	22,200		37,100
Gad	45,650	40,500		5,150
Judah	74,600	76,500	1900	
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900	
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100	
Ephraim	40,500	32,500		8,000
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500	
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200	
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700	
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900	
Naphtali	53,400	45,400		8,000
All tribes			59,200	61,020
Total	603,550	601,730		1,820

...a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a voluntary offering or at your appointed times, to make a soothing aroma to the Lord from the herd or from the flock, ⁴ then the one who presents his offering shall present to the Lord a grain offering of a tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil, ⁵ and you shall prepare wine for the drink offering, a fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or for the sacrifice, for each lamb.

God gives them the rules for making an offering by fire to the Lord from the herd or from the flock when they get to Canaan.

The offerings included the following kinds:

1. A burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow.
2. A voluntary offering.
3. An offering at their appointed times.

Anyone who presented the following offering was required to offer a grain and a drink offering with it.

For a lamb offering

1. **A 10th** of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with **a 4th** of a hin of oil.
2. And **a 4th** of a hin of wine.

For a ram offering

1. **2-10ths** of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with **a 3rd** of a hin of oil.
2. And **a 3rd** of a hin of wine.

For a bull offering

1. **3 10ths** of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with **1/2** a hin of oil.
2. And **1/2** of a hin of wine.

The grain and drink-offerings increased according to the size and value of the animals offered.

Does it seem odd that God would give them this law 38 years before it would take effect? Most of us have a hard time remembering what the title of last week's sermon was much less the details of what was said. However, the people of Israel did have the written law at that time and this younger generation proved themselves to be faithful during the time that Joshua was in command.

Verses 11 -16

¹¹ 'This is how it shall be done for each ox, or for each ram, or for each of the male lambs, or of the goats. ¹² According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do for each one according to their number. ¹³ Everyone who is a native shall do these things in this way, in presenting an offering by fire as a soothing aroma to the Lord. ¹⁴ Now if a stranger resides among you, or one who *may be* among you throughout your generations, and he *wants to* make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, just as you do so shall he do. ¹⁵ *As for* the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who resides *among you*, a permanent statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. ¹⁶ There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the stranger who resides with you.'"

¹⁴ **Now if a stranger resides among you, or one who *may be* among you throughout your generations, and he wants to make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, just as you do so shall he do.**

What is meant by the term stranger? This was a foreigner who was in Israel for a short or long period of time. The position of the Israelites as a distinct nation under divine protection attracted the neighboring peoples and the law provided for their participation in the sacrificial system. The stranger could offer a sacrifice but it had to be done according to the law.

There were other laws that governed the relationship between the Jews and foreigners. The following is a brief summary:

1. Strangers were not full citizens.

A stranger was not allowed to take part in the feast of Passover unless they became a convert to the Jewish faith.

See Ex 12:48

⁴⁸ **But if a stranger resides with you and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, all of his males are to be circumcised, and then he shall come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land.**

2. Strangers had rights under the law.

The stranger was not to be exploited or oppressed.

See Exodus 23:9

⁹ **“You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you *also* were strangers in the land of Egypt.**

God reminded Israel that they should not oppress strangers because they were treated poorly by the people of Egypt when they resided there as a stranger.

3. Foreigners were obligated to follow some of the law.

The stranger was not allowed to work on the Day of Atonement.

See Lev 16:29

²⁹ **“This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble yourselves and not do any work, whether the native, or the stranger who resides among you;**

4. Strangers were required to come every seven years to listen to the reading of the Law.

See Deut. 31:9 -13

¹⁰ Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of the release of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this Law before all Israel so that they hear it. ¹² Assemble the people, the men, the women, the children, and the stranger who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to follow all the words of this Law.

5. The Jews were required to love the stranger (foreigner).

God told his people to love the stranger in the same way as they love themselves.

See Lev 19:34

³⁴ The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.

God reminded the Jews numerous times that their suffering in Egypt as slaves should make them more compassionate toward others

Verses 17 – 21

¹⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land where I am bringing you, ¹⁹ then it shall be, that when you eat from the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord. ²⁰ Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a loaf as an offering; as an offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. ²¹ From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your generations.

¹⁸ “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land where I am bringing you, ¹⁹ then it shall be, that when you eat from the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord.

Again, this was spoken to the next generation which will not enter the Promised Land for another 38 years.

²⁰ Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a loaf as an offering; as an offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. ²¹ From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your generations.

This would begin when Israel had conquered Canaan and raised their first crop. This was to be a permanent statute for all of Israel

Verses 22 – 26

²² ‘But when you unintentionally do wrong and fail to comply with all these commandments which the Lord has spoken to Moses, ²³ *that is*, all that the Lord has commanded you through Moses from the day that the Lord gave commandments and onward, throughout your generations, ²⁴ then it shall be, if it is done unintentionally, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one bull as a burnt offering, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat as a sin offering. ²⁵ Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they will be forgiven; for it was an unintentional wrong, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their unintentional wrong. ²⁶ So all the congregation of the sons of Israel will be forgiven, as well as the stranger who resides among them, for *guilt was attributed* to all the people through an unintentional wrong.

²⁴ then it shall be, if it is done unintentionally, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one bull as a burnt offering, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat as a sin offering.

The instructions here deal with unintentional sins by the whole congregation. Even though the sin was unintentional it still required a sin offering.

The best way to explain how this could happen is best explained by an example that is found in 2 Kings 22.

In verse 8 of that chapter, Hilkiyah the High Priest finds the book of the Law in the Temple. When the book of the Law is read, the king realizes that nobody has kept God’s Word for generations.

See 2 Kings 22:11 - 13

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.

¹² Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, ¹³ "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for the wrath of the Lord that burns against us is great, because our fathers did not listen to the words of this book, to act in accordance with everything that is written regarding us."

The fact that the king repented as soon as he heard the words of the book tells us that he simply didn't know any better prior to that time. The whole nation was breaking the law out of ignorance (unintentionally).

²⁶ So all the congregation of the sons of Israel will be forgiven, as well as the stranger who resides among them, for guilt was attributed to all the people through an unintentional wrong.

Here the foreigners are seen as part of the community so they are also guilty of the sin and need forgiveness.

Verses 27 – 31

²⁷ Also, if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one-year-old female goat as a sin offering. ²⁸ And the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who goes astray by an unintentional sin, making atonement for him so that he may be forgiven. ²⁹ You shall have one law for the native among the sons of Israel and for the stranger who resides among them, for one who does *anything wrong* unintentionally. ³⁰ But the person who does *wrong* defiantly, whether he is a native or a stranger, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹ Since he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *will be* on him.

²⁷ If one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one-year-old female goat as a sin offering.

Just as the previous section, verses 22 thru 26, was a retelling of the Law in Leviticus 4:13 – 21. This is a retelling of the Law in Leviticus 4:27 - 35.

³⁰ But the person who does *wrong defiantly*, whether he is a native or a stranger, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

The word boldly in this verse means “with a high hand”. When God brought Israel out of Egypt with a “high hand,” this act was a challenge to the authority of the Egyptian king. When someone challenges God’s law with a high hand it constitutes a challenge of Divine authority, and is called blasphemy.

Verses 32 - 36

³² Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; ³⁴ and they placed him in custody, because it had not been decided what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man must be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” ³⁶ So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

³³ And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to the entire congregation; ³⁴ and they placed him in custody, because it had not been decided what should be done to him

The death penalty had already been assigned for breaking the Sabbath but the manner of death had not been specified.

See Exodus 31:15

¹⁵ For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

³⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man must be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.”

They find out here that it would be by stoning. Again those who stoned him represented the nation of Israel as a whole.

Verses 37 - 41

³⁷ The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁸ “Speak to the sons of Israel and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a violet thread. ³⁹ It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so that you will do them and not follow your own heart and your own eyes, which led you to prostitute yourselves, ⁴⁰ so that you will remember and do all My commandments and be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God.”

³⁸ Speak to the sons of Israel and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a violet thread.

Jesus observed this command.

See Matt 9:20-23

²⁰ And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind Him, and touched the border (*tassel*) of His cloak; ²¹ for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His cloak, I will get well.” ²² But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” And at once the woman was made well.

In some versions the tassels are only mentioned in a footnote.

³⁹ It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so that you will do them and not follow your own heart and your own eyes, which led you to prostitute yourselves, ⁴⁰ so that you will remember and do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

The Jews recognize 613 separate commandments in the Law but keeping all of them is another issue.

Sometimes a visual reminder can be helpful but for others it can become an accessory that has little to no meaning. A cross necklace or earrings can be meaningful reminder or just a piece of jewelry. The visual reminder is only meaningful if it helps a person to “remember” and “do” His commandments.

Jewish men often wear a prayer shawl that has these tassels

See Pic 1515



Some Jewish men of more recent times wear them on the belt.

See Pic 1520

