

SEND FORTH - NUMBERS 15

Now it's time to move on to chapter 15!

Shalach: Send Forth-Numbers 15

Read Numbers 15 as an overview.

The beginning of chapter 15 seems to be strangely placed. It's sandwiched between the Twelve spies incident and Korah's rebellion and is almost a transition between the two, trying to tell us, in a way, what should have happened and what was about to happen. Let me explain.



Verses 1-21 are all about what the Israelites are to do when they bring an offering to Yahweh. Look closely at verse 2. When do these instructions apply? "When you have come into the land you are to inhabit." Since these instructions are given after the pronounced judgment on Israel,

who are these instructions actually for? Only those that passed the test and actually had permission to cross the Jordan and enter the Land. The question then becomes, "Why did the Spirit choose to put these instructions right after the declaration of punishment over all those who were over the age of twenty?" (*Discuss.*)

Yahweh already told them that He was going to give them the land (Numbers 13:1). When someone gives you something, what do you normally say in return? **"Thank you."** Yahweh was about to give them the land, he was simply teaching them how to say **"Thank You."** When the Israelites entered the land and received their gift, He wanted them to take time out to thank Him with their offerings. He wanted their **"Thank You"** to cost them something; He didn't want it to be lip service. He wanted them to "feel" the thanks through the cost. If someone truly is thankful, it is a joy to give up something in return. What means more, someone saying "thank you" or getting a thank you card in the mail. The latter shows more love because of the sacrifice and time it took to find a card, write in it, and mail it off.

To apply this for today... How do you think you can give thanks to the Lord when He answers a prayer or blesses you? What are some responses you could make that would cost you something? (*Discuss.*)

The answer to this is no doubt personal and Spirit-led, but one could do many things to really say how thankful he is. He could pick a period of time and fast as a way to be thankful. He could give up something he enjoys during a certain time period and replace it with bible reading or prayer time. He could give an extra financial offering. You get the idea. You're dedicating something to Him for really coming through for you. All too often He comes through for us in big ways and all He gets is a mere verbal "Thanks." He is trying to teach His people here that actions speak louder than words.

Read Luke 11:33-36

The good eye and the bad eye is a Hebrew idiomatic expression that talks about generosity. When someone has a good eye, they are generous. When someone has a bad eye, they are stingy. The Father wants us to have a good eye that looks to be generous and knows how to say "thanks."

One of the major key elements that stand out to me in this offering section of chapter 15 is the "aroma" before Him. A sweet-smelling aroma carries all of the components He has commanded. All have to be there for it to be acceptable. The Father has the ability to smell the offering and He knows if every component is there or not. If a single part is missing, it is not acceptable.

Read Philippians 4:18, Ephesians 5:2, and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

In the same way, we are to be a living sacrifice and our lives are to be a sweet-smelling aroma before Him. We can't worship Him with sin in our lives, with aught against our brother, with pride in our hearts, etc...He wants our sacrifice of praise to be "sweet," not "sour." Let's take a look at the parts of the offering and see what it tells us.

1. Flour. Flour comes from wheat, which is the mature believer in Christ. So we know that one of the components that He is looking for is maturity.

2. Oil. In the scriptures, oil almost always represents anointing. The oil was to be mixed with the flour to make bread. This tells us that the mature believer is to be anointed and that one cannot be fully mature and useful to His Master without actually being anointed. Anointing is given straight from Yahweh for a specific mission or purpose. True maturity always carries with it a heavenly anointing to accomplish something for Him, whether small or large in nature. What part are you learning to play?

3. Wine. In scripture, good wine was expensive. It was never to be poured out. The Father wanted only the best. And He deserves it. The wine is also representative of the blood. And as you will see in a moment, it is surely the blood of Yeshua that is being hinted at here.

4. Lamb. The first animal mentioned here is the lamb. That is not by coincidence as what this passage is describing here is nothing less than dinner with the King. Yahweh wants the Israelites to bring their offering and dine with Him. The bread, the wine, and the lamb is all there. This is an incredible foreshadowing of the Last Supper with the Lamb of God who takes the bread and the wine and connects them to His body and blood. The first offering of the New Covenant was a free-will offering. He freely gave His life, poured out His blood as a drink offering, and told us that He was the Bread and the Wine and the Lamb all at the same time. He is the anointed Bread of Life, the Lamb of Yahweh. He says that unless we eat and drink of Him, we cannot enter eternal life. Why? Why does He say this in light of this passage in Numbers 15? (Discuss.)

Because the lamb is the first sacrifice when you "cross over" the Jordan into the Promised Land. Yeshua is the first One you meet when you cross over. Without taking part in His meal and dining with Him, you cannot stay in the Land. Read Revelation 3:20. There can be no doubt that He desires to have dinner with His people and to partner with us in all that we do!

One last thing before moving to the second half of this chapter. There is one other component in the offerings, in all offerings, that is required for the offering to be acceptable. What is it? Fire. Read 1 Peter 4:12-13 and James 1:2-4. When the priest offered all the components on the altar, it started off in one state, where all the components were clearly and visibly separate from one another. But when the fire was added, it TRANSFORMED the offering into a completely different state where they were no longer visible to the naked eye even though they were still there. They were just present in a completely different form.

In the same way, when we are almost ready to be offered to the Lord, the Spirit will bring a fiery trial to take the offering and transform it into what is "acceptable" before Him. It is the fire that transforms us into what we are supposed to be. It is the trial that creates in us a clean heart, free from the debris of this world. The Great Tribulation is not to prepare the world, for the world is an unclean and unholy offering. The Great Tribulation's purpose is for Yahweh to take His Bride and transform her into what she is really supposed to be. Fire burns up what is not of Him and elevates all that is of Him. When we are going through a trial, we need to look at it from His eyes. From His eyes, He is dining with us. Only fire can truly prepare the sacrifice for the full

transformation into what is acceptable before Him...and that is exactly why we are supposed to *"consider it all joy."*

Numbers 15: 22-27 - The Unintentional Sin

This section deals with the laws of what to do when there is unintentional sin in the camp and the Israelites finally realize that what they did was wrong. The Father gives much grace for unintentional sin. When someone sins and has no idea that they have sinned, there is forgiveness. But what is the key component of forgiveness? Immediate repentance and making an offering. Oftentimes, we believers do not carry out this pattern in our lives like we should. When we sin against someone and don't realize it, we are quick to apologize many times but we are not so quick to make restitution for the damage we've done. Somehow, in American Christian culture, we have equated "feeling sorry" with "being sorry" and "being sorry" with deserving forgiveness. I have counseled many a couple where the husband apologizes to his wife for some accidental offense and then gets mad at his wife for not immediately letting it go and forgiving him. This man has failed to realize that forgiveness is a process and giving an offering is critical to the process. Whether you call it "love is an action" or "putting your money where your mouth is" or something else, for there to ever be real restitution, there has to be a sacrifice made, an offering that cost you something. Have you ever accidentally sinned against someone or them against you and this last step got skipped? How did it make you feel?

THE SIN OF PRESUMPTION

Read Numbers 11: 30-31

This commandment comes directly on the heels of the commandments to bring offerings before the Lord. The placement of this commandment right before the story of Korah is by no accident. God is setting us up to tell us what Korah's real sin was. We will go into that in the next Torah portion. For now, let's break down the word "presumptuously." When you think of this word, what do you think of or how do you define it? (Discuss.) You probably mentioned the word "assume" just like I did. And you would be right. The two words are intimately connected. Webster's says that the word "presumptuous" is an adjective that describes someone who is "...arrogant or...overbold." But in order to truly understand what that means, you have to go back to the root, which is "presume" or "assume," both of which are virtually identical in meaning. Presume means to "take for granted; assume," or to "take upon oneself; dare." To assume is to "take for granted without proof" or to "take for oneself." In the case of the upcoming Korah story, even though he was appointed to be ahead of his clan and was a Levite, that was not enough. He took it upon himself and assumed that he could take more authority than he was given. Korah tried to take the position that Yahweh reserved for Moses without proof that Yahweh was actually transferring the full authority of Moses to himself. He "assumed" that because of the circumstances that prevented the Israelites from going into the Promised Land, the defeat from the Amalekites, and the pending 40-year Wilderness "prison" sentence, Moses was no longer fit to lead. Korah assumed he could and deserved to take the role of Moses without anything other than "situation" to back him up. This presumption was an act of "arrogance" and "overboldness" at the highest level...and this act of treason and rebellion would cost him and everyone with him their lives.

In Hebrew, the word even takes on more meaning. The word "*presumptuously*" in English is really two words in Hebrew: "**Ruhm**" and "**Yad**," which literally mean a "*high hand*." It carries the idea of "lifting up" or "exalting" your hand over another. The hand is what is used in the anointing. So in the situation in the upcoming Korah story, Korah is lifting up his hand to anoint himself over the hand of Yahweh that anointed Moses. He assumes that he has the right to take Moses' anointing and role because of the circumstances and negative judgment they just received. In doing so, he does not realize that he has just "raised his hand" against Yahweh Himself, and it will cost him his life.

Can you think of a time in your life when you or someone else has assumed a role or position that did not belong to them, but they truly believed that it did? This can happen in any category of our lives. From marriage to a work environment to individual churches or ministries. We will deal with this subject more thoroughly in the next portion. Assuming, no matter how you define it, never turns out good for the one assuming. If we are going to assume a position in anything, we better make 100% sure that we are right and have Yahweh's endorsement to do so as the results could be disastrous and even fatal, as in Korah's case.



VIOLATING THE SABBATH

This section is certainly not saying that if there are children picking up sticks to play with on the Sabbath that they should be stoned. This person was purposely violating the Sabbath by picking up sticks with the intent to start a fire for the purpose of work. Yahweh was judging the heart behind the action and not necessarily the action itself. We really don't know exactly what kind of fire he was going to make. All we know is that Yahweh judged that work was in his motive and heart and that was a flagrant violation of His word.

An entire book could be written on this topic alone, but suffice it to say that He has approved making food on Shabbat, worshipping, enjoying one's family, prayer, coming together in a holy

convocation, Levites working, etc. What He does not approve of is working for money, abandoning your family, selfish activities, not dedicating time with Him and the congregation (if available), exchanging money, having someone work for you, etc. Although going into the details of how to apply those instructions for today is not within the scope of this study, it is important to ask the question, "What was His original intent?" What is He trying to do with the Sabbath? What is its point? Asking these questions will reveal the "heart" of the issue, and the heart's intent is exactly what He is looking at. The heart and the action together give away the motive.

THE TASSELS Numbers 15: 37-41

I have done extensive teachings on this in the past (called "The Color Blue"), so I will not re-teach that here. But the Father tells us that we are to be reminded because, quite frankly, we forget very easily. He wanted the men of the congregation, as the heads of their families, to wear "tzit tzit" (pronounced "zeet zeet") on the four corners of their garments to help remind them that they were in covenant with the Most High God. To them, it was no different from today's wedding rings. It was a reminder to them and a sign to others that they were "married" to Yahweh and were in covenant with Him.

Blue is the divine color of God and was the color of the fabric that covered the Ark of the Covenant when in travel. The blue thread that was to be a part of the fringes was symbolic that they were literally carrying with them the very thread of and connection to the Ark of God. Today, the tassels take on much more profound meaning as they are not only a reminder that we are to stay in the covenant by keeping His commandments, but we are the very temple of Yahweh Himself. With the Spirit residing in our innermost parts, **WE** are the Ark of the Covenant and the tassels on the four corners of the waist are the modern way of saying, **"I am a traveling Ark of God!"**

In closing, take a moment and think up or write down the theme of this chapter using all the elements that were within the chapter itself. We have the thanksgiving offerings, unintentional sin, presumptuous sins, the Sabbath, and the tassels. Take a minute and come up with a sentence or two that combines all of these and compresses the entire chapter into a single thought.

Here's mine:

When you believe Me and I do great things for you, take time out to thank Me and dine with Me. If you mess up, don't worry, I will give you grace if you repent. Don't presume to take on something you have not been appointed by Me to do, but stay in your lane. Keep my Sabbath so you can be properly rested and remember you are a walking Ark of the Covenant.

In short, give Me thanks and I'll give you grace. Don't presume anything. Rest on the Sabbath. And remember that you are a walking Ark of the Covenant.

Shalom!
Jim Staley