

The previous chapter outlined the grave punishment for the transgression of the nation in rejecting the report and advice of the faithful spies. They were to wander for 40 years and die in the wilderness, unable to enter the promised land!

V1-16 One Law for Jew & gentile, those born in the land and the stranger.

The Law of Moses made it clear that there was not to be a difference in requirements between those born in the land and those who were strangers to the land. At the time of writing, all of Jewry were strangers, as the entire population had either been born in Egypt or had been born during the wilderness journey. The same offerings for the same issues were to be required from all. See Galatians 3v28. *"As ye are so shall the stranger be before the LORD"*. A true statement relevant to that day and generation but also perhaps a prophesy?

V17-21 Heave offering.

In certain circumstances an offering would be heaved up above the congregation and held aloft, exposed not just to the gaze of the Eternal but to the gaze of the onlookers who were witnesses to the sacrifices. In this context the heave offering was bloodless. Death of a sacrifice was not to be glorified. This makes me think of the vaunting of Christ's sacrifice by other churches to their shame. It is not a matter of prominence but appreciation, of long-term understanding not temporary contrition. God willing, more on the Heave offering in Chapter 18.

V22-26 Sin of ignorance.

When a sin was done by the congregation in ignorance of the offence, when it was recognised and realised then there was a responsibility to get the matter sorted out in the prescribed way. Under English law ignorance of the law is no defence but under divine law, someone innocent of knowledge is treated differently from those who knowingly err.

There were three parts to offering for ignorance. The burnt sacrifice meant the wholehearted participation in the endeavour to make amends. The meat offering meant the need to offer something in addition to what had already been prescribed by God being the bare minimum, like going the extra mile! The sin offering meant that there was a recognition of the sin filled nature which we all bear that we are warned against later in the chapter *"seek not after your own heart and your own eyes"*.

Under the Law of Moses forgiveness was only granted for sins of ignorance.

V27-29 Individual offeror

The same constraint was placed on an individual who likewise transgressed. He too was required to make a sin offering. Indeed, no sin offering was made for wilful sin as there is no offering specified by God for this under the Law of Moses. Only under Christ is such a sacrifice possible, and it is the one great sacrifice for all time. The animal required was a female goat, representing not the Sin atonement of Christ the Son of God, but the sinful constitution of the Ecclesia, the female element.

V30,31 Sin of Presumption

A presumptuous sin was not able to be forgiven under the law of Moses. The margin has = with a high hand! The Hebrew is *zud* = to act proudly. Instead, the sinner was to be "*cut off from among his people*", "*that soul shall be utterly cut off*" "*his iniquity shall be upon him*". There was to be a public acknowledgement of the nature of the transgression "*the same reproacheth the LORD*". This was to be enacted publicly whereas private presumptions were left on the conscience of the offender, such were between the individual and their God.

A sin is still a sin even if it is not known by others, but the public nature of certain sins provoked a public response under the Law of Moses. The law was to maintain society in as godly a framework as was possible.

The trespass offering is not mentioned here, as this chapter does not deal with sins where other people are involved. These are dealt with under the spotlight not only of an offence against God as all sin is, but also in how it affects other people, especially the household of God.

We all sin presumptuously and without the mercy of God would have no hope. We all deserve to be "cut off" as we have reproached God in our iniquity, but He provided a way of escape out of the path of our own chosen foolishness.

V32-36 Sabbath breaking.

The man who broke the sabbath requirement is an illustration of a sin of presumption. He "was found" by certain others. It appears he was brazen in his transgression, and not sufficiently furtive to escape exposure. It was not a case of someone who was incapable of understanding the requirements because of any deficiency but was presumptuous in his sin. The law establishing the prohibition was not new. It had been instigated earlier as Exodus 20v8 has a general emphasis on the holiness of that day, as well as the need to abstain from any work as this should be done in the other six days, and 35v3 is even more specific "*Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day*". No member of the congregation

Literally speaking, the man had yet to kindle a fire, but the implication enacted by the judges under the Law of Moses was that gathering wood was work that should have been done on the other days of the week, and was of sufficient weight to come under condemnation, he did not just pick up a twig!

When the disciples of Jesus plucked ears of corn whilst walking in the field there was no cooking, no fire. They grazed as they moved. Eating a meal was not prohibited but the additional effort of cooking was to be avoided on the sabbath, as no fires could be kindled, however a fire could be maintained over the sabbath, no one had to freeze in colder climes, if the wood had been put by and the lighting of the fire had already been started. This was too much for the Pharisees who had added to the law layers of extra restrictions which were a burden on sincere and genuine followers of Moses who struggled to stay with these unnecessary additions.

The sinner was stoned to death. It was the LORD who said, "*The man shall surely be put to death*". Today in our godless world, this is often regarded as an extreme and unloving

action, but it was enacted under divine commandment by the whole congregation or at least elements from the entire nation demonstrating their collective responsibility to uphold the law and the collective participation in its effects. There were to be no dissenting murmurers decrying the exacting of divine justice behind the scenes, but rather a complicit endorsement by such a comprehensive action of stoning. The dismissal of such a group sentence today as crowd titillation is obscene and disrespectful to God who knows what He is doing by encouraging this involvement. It is the lack of involvement by so many which distances them from the seriousness and the necessity of maintaining righteousness and order that is so often the problem. Neither of which will be possible to maintain without effort and application by the wider population not just a select few in the judiciary.

V37-41 Fringes & commandments

The riband of blue on the fringes of their garments is widely known. Jews today still practise this commandment. Jesus would also have kept the law in this way, see Matthew 9v20 where the woman with the issue of blood touches the hem of his garment. Blue symbolises the healing power of the Word. Combining blue together with red (sacrifice for sin) makes purple (royalty), and it is certainly true that no acceptable King or other ruler can be blessed by God without first combining the Word with sacrifice. Either kept apart are limited. The idea must be realised, the concept brought to fruition!

This is contrary to nature. Naturally we stand naked before God, but we need a covering to hide our shame and embarrassment. That covering needs to be effective but also direct our attention towards God, and when we dress, we should do so in the understanding that He sees our approach. Do we just put on designer clothes made by man for his own elevation? Or do we dress soberly and in keeping with standards agreed within the Brotherhood? Every day when we dress do we reflect upon God or do we just do it without any thought. The riband of blue gives opportunity to focus the mind differently to the rest of society, we should not be of this world but only in it!

If our minds are exercised by such things, we can be a more holy people, not because we make extra rules but because we engage our minds more often and more profitably.