

### III. THE LAWS – Leviticus 11-27

#### A. The Purification of God’s People: Cleanness – 11:1-15:33

##### 1. From the Dietary Laws: Animals, Birds, Fish and Creepers – 11:1-47

###### a. Of Beasts on Land – 11:1-8

**Verse 1-3** – The beasts on land that Israel was allowed to eat must have these qualifications: “part the hoof, cloven footed, and chew the cud”. Some animals were cloven footed but not parted as they might have skin underneath it. The clean beasts that the Israelites were allowed to eat must also chew the cud. Cud refers to “half-digested food returned from the first stomach or ruminants to the mouth for further chewing [taken from **Reader’s Digest Oxford Complete Word Finder**].”

John Gill in his **Exposition of the Entire Bible** made this comment, “these creatures have more stomachs than one; the ventricles for rumination are four; the first is the paunch, which in oxen is so big as to hold food of fifty pound weight, the second the honeycomb, the third the tripe, the fourth the honey tripe, and to which are helpful the pectoral muscle, the abdomen, with the diaphragm<sup>2</sup>: all this might have a moral and spiritual meaning in it, and may be applied either to ministers of the word; who ought rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to everyone their part, and who should walk uprightly according to it, and who should give themselves up wholly to the meditation of it, and thoroughly digest it; and study to show themselves workmen, that need not to be ashamed; or to private Christians, who have a discerning spirit in spiritual things, and can distinguish not only morality from immorality, but spiritual things from carnal, heavenly things from earthly, the voice of Christ from the voice of a stranger, and the doctrines of Christ from the doctrines of men; and who also walk as they should do, by faith on Christ, in the ways of God, and according to the Gospel; these chew the cud, meditate on the word, feed upon it while delivered, recall it, and have it brought to their remembrance by the divine Spirit, and ponder it in their hearts [Swordsearcher 5.0].”

Any comment? Do you agree or disagree with Gill’s application?

**Verses 4-8** – All three qualifications must be found in the beasts to be considered clean and fit for Israel to consume. The following are examples of unclean beasts that Israel was not allowed to consume:

**Camel** – chews the cud but divides not the hoof;

**Coney** – chews the cud but divides not the hoof;

**Hare** – chews the cud but divides not the hoof;

**Swine** – Divides the hoof and cloven footed but does not chew the cud;

The law was that these animals were unclean and must not be eaten. Touching the unclean animals was NOT forbidden but touching their **CARCASSES** was forbidden as this would make the Israelite unclean.

Why does touching a dead unclean animal make them unclean but not when they touch living unclean animals?

b. Of Fish in the Sea – 11:9-12

**Verse 9** – The Israelites were allowed to consume fishes with fins and scales in the seas (salt water) and in the waters (fresh water).

**Verse 10** – All that had no fins or scales in the seas, rivers, and all that move in the waters including any living thing that was in the waters were an abomination to Israel. The first instruction given was the reason for not eating and not what they were forbidden to eat.

The word “abomination” appears in all the three verses, 10-12. The word is a reference to an idolatrous object. These unclean fishes and sea creatures without scales or fins were considered idolatrous.

Don’t you think that this is a rather strong emphasis and reference? Why such a strong reference? Does abomination mean unhygienic?

**Verse 11** – Since they were an abomination to Israel, therefore all Israelites were not allowed to eat their flesh. The carcasses of these sea fish and creatures were considered as abomination, which meant that they were not to be touched at all. An Israelite who touches them would therefore be rendered unclean.

**Verse 12** – Whatsoever had no fins or scales in the waters (still alive) were also considered an abomination to Israel. This means that the Israelite was to avoid these sea creatures and fish even if they were alive. They must be separated from the good clean fish if a fisherman was to catch them in his nets. This would be a reference to the Parable of the Draught Net in Matthew 13:47-50.

What is the possible significance of these strict dietary sea food laws?

c. Of Birds in the Sky – 11:13-19

**Verse 13** – In the case of fowls, the reason is stated first. These fowls were considered an abomination and were not to be eaten – eagle, ossifrage (claw-a kind of eagle) and ospray (sea-eagle).

**Verses 14 - 19** – The list of the fowls that were considered an abomination goes on all the way to verse 20. The common phrase that appears throughout these verses is “after his kind.” This means that the list of forbidden fowls is not exhaustive. All related birds of the list were included as an abomination. Therefore Israel could not eat them.

d. Of Insects that Fly and Creep – 11:20-23

**Verse 20** – Flying things that go on all fours and creep were an abomination to Israel.

**Verse 21- 22** -- Flying things that creep and go on all fours but have legs above their feet for leaping upon the earth may be eaten by Israel. Included in this list are: locusts, bald locusts, beetle, grasshoppers. All of them are said to be after their kind. This means that all the flying “cousins” with the same qualifications were considered clean for Israel’s consumption.

**Verse 23** – “But all *other* flying creeping things, which have four feet, *shall be* an abomination unto you.”

e. On Touching Carcasses of the Unclean – 11:24-28

**Verse 24** –The focus shifts to the Israelite who touches the carcasses of these unclean beasts, fishes and fowls. It does not matter how they die; the Israelite who touches the dead meat which includes cooked dead meat will be unclean for the rest of the day till evening. Remember that the Israelites counted one day from 6.00 pm today to 6.00 pm the next day. This means that the uncleanness would last only for the day.

**Verse 25** – The Israelite who carries the dead carcasses of these unclean animals, like removing them to another place would be considered unclean for the rest of the day, i.e. till evening. He was also required to wash his garments.

**Verses 26** – Every Israelite who touches the carcasses (in italics as added by KJV translators) of every beast which “*divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you.*”

**Verse 27** – All beasts that move on all fours on their paws were unclean to Israel. Anyone who touches their carcasses shall be unclean until the evening. The word for “paws” refers to open palm with fingers. The beasts that have such fingerlike paws like humans are the apes, monkeys, frogs, bears, etc.

**Verse 28** – The one who carries the carcasses for whatever reason would become unclean until the evening. He shall have to wash his garments as well.

What is the significance of washing the garments as a sign of cleanliness?

f. Of Creeping Things on Earth and Touching Their Carcasses – 11:29-33

**Verse 29-30** – The list of unclean creeping things comes next. They include: the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind, and the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole. The phrase “after his kind” is used after the tortoise.

**Verse 31** – Touching the dead carcasses of these creeping things would make the Israelite unclean until the evening.

**Verse 32** – Whatsoever the dead carcasses fall upon would also be rendered unclean. These vessels that could be made of wood, raiment, skin or sack or whatsoever kind of vessel or objects wherein any work was done must be put into water and would be clean by evening.

Water as an agent was able to make them clean.

**Verse 33** – Other vessels made of earth or clay shall be broken if they have been made unclean by the dead carcasses of unclean animals. Water could not be used to wash them.

**g.** On Contamination by the Unclean – 11:34-40

**Verse 34** – The water used for the cleansing of these unclean vessels was considered unclean. If this water touches any clean meat (food or simply things you eat including vegetables and flesh), that meat would become unclean. The water and the water vessels were also unclean.

**Verse 35** – Everything that an unclean carcass falls upon would be unclean. These include: the oven, the ranges for pots (a cooking range consisting of two parallel stones, across which the boiler is set) which shall be broken down. They are now unclean and are therefore unclean to Israel. They have to be destroyed and not salvaged.

**Verse 36** – But a fountain or pit with plenty of water shall remain clean even when such a dead carcass falls into it. These are probably waters which are self-cleansing. A fountain is living water which can do that. The large amount of water in a pit would also provide self-cleansing since water is an agent for cleansing. But anyone who touches the carcass, probably in the course of removing the carcass from the water pit or fountain, will be unclean.

**Verse 37** – If any part of the dead carcass of the unclean falls upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, that seed will not be affected at all. It will not become unclean. The probable explanation is that the seed is about to be sown. Once the seed is placed into the ground, it will die and bring forth new fruit. This process is self-cleansing as the new fruit would not be contaminated.

**Verse 38** – But if any water be put upon the seed, which means that the seed is now wet and will be dried first before sowing, and any part of the dead carcass of the unclean falls upon it, the seed will be unclean.

The probable explanation here is that there is a need to wait a while before sowing is resumed. This time lapse will cause the seed to be unclean whereas in the previous instance the seed is about to be sown. It is called sowing seed which is to be sown. The repetition is for emphasis.

**Verse 39** – If any clean beast dies on its own, is either killed by a wild beast or found dead by unknown hands or the blood remains in the carcass, any Israelite who touches the carcass shall be unclean until the evening.

**Verse 40** – The Israelite who eats the carcass of this animal which died in an unknowing manner will be considered unclean till the evening. He probably ate the meat inadvertently not knowing that the animal was not properly killed by an Israelite (see Deu 14:21). He has to wash his clothes. The one who carries that carcass to dispose of it will also be considered unclean and shall wash his clothes and be unclean till the evening.

**h. All Creepy Crawlies are Unclean – 11:41-43**

**Verse 41** – Every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth shall be an abomination to Israel. It shall not be eaten. This was not expressed before. The eight creeping things that Israel is to regard as unclean are in verses 29 and 30. They are to be detested and abhorred as food.

**Verse 42** – Whatsoever goes upon the belly (such as worms and snakes), and whatsoever that goes upon *all* four (such as toads, frogs, divers serpents), or whatsoever that has more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth (such as millipedes, centipedes, caterpillars), Israel shall not eat them. They are an abomination to Israel.

**Verse 43** – Israel must not make herself abominable, i.e. detestable with any creeping thing that creeps; neither shall she make herself unclean with them. Israel must not defile herself. This is a spiritual and ceremonial uncleanness, not physical.

**i. Reason for the Dietary Laws Stated – 11:44-47**

**Verse 44** – The reason for keeping such dietary laws was to keep Israel holy. It had a spiritual significance rather than a physical. The LORD is holy and Israel must be reminded of her holy status even in her dietary laws, and her special responsibility and duties to the whole world. In other words, her daily eating habits was a reminder of her spiritual status.

The LORD is Israel's God. This was for Israel's sanctification. Israel shall sanctify herself (use of hithpael) by keeping the dietary laws.

Israel must be holy because God says “I” (emphasized) “am holy!” Like people like God. God’s holiness is the basis for Israel’s holiness. Her relationship with her LORD is the bedrock for the strict uncompromising dietary laws. Israel must never defile herself by eating any of these creeping things.

**Verse 45** – For added emphasis, the LORD highlighted the manner in which He brought Israel out of Egypt. “*For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*” This was a current event that happened only a few months ago to this present generation. But to succeeding generations their exodus from Egypt was to be their memorial for keeping the strict dietary laws. Egypt was known as the land of bondage.

Israel had entered into a personal relationship with the LORD. This was not an option for Israel. These laws were not an option for Israel to accept or reject. She must accept and keep them at all costs, the reason being to keep Israel holy. It was for Israel’s spiritual protection. This could not be emphasized strongly enough, which was why the LORD mentioned it twice.

How did eating and not eating certain foods make Israel holy?

**Verse 46-47** – As a conclusion to the whole matter Moses declared that “*This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.*”

Israel had to be circumspect as to what she could or could not eat all through her existence. There was a marked difference between Israel and the rest of the world. Israel was God’s light to the world in darkness. Every part of her life, including her eating habits, was regulated by God based upon God’s holiness.

From the Commentary by Wenham he has recorded four views on the explanation for these dietary laws (page 166-71): --

i) The distinctions are **Arbitrary**. Their rationale is known only to God.

Critique – This is a negative view and has to be adopted as a last resort if there is no plausible view to explain the reasons.

ii.) **The Cultic View** holds that the unclean animals are either used in pagan worship or those associated with particular non-Israelite deities. As a mark of their fidelity to the covenant Israel must shun these animals entirely. The reasoning behind this view is that the covenant was designed to separate Israel from all the people and to create a holy nation (cf. Exo 19:5-6; cf. Lev 11:44-45). Also, Isaiah

65:4 speaks of the ungodly eating swine's flesh. This was probably part of some Canaanite ritual. Archaeologists have discovered some pig's bone which might imply that the pig was a sacred animal in some parts of Canaan in OT times.

Critique – If the sacrifice of an animal sacred to the Canaanites is the reason for Israel not to consume them, then it should also include the ox. The bull was an important cultic animal in both Egyptian and Canaanite worship. This view does not explain sufficiently for the varied range of birds, fowls and beast that were considered unclean by the Lord.

- iii.) **The Hygiene View** argues that the unclean animals are unfit to eat because they are carriers of diseases. The clean animals are relatively safe for consumption whereas the unclean animals are not. This view is adopted by many modern writers. Pork can be a source of trichinosis (a disease caused by the presence of trichinae - a worm whose larvae infest the intestines and voluntary muscles of man or pigs - in the intestines and muscle tissues and usually acquired by eating insufficiently cooked pork from infested pigs). The coney and hare are carriers of tularemia (an infectious disease of rodents esp. rabbits caused by a bacterium and transmitted to man in handling the flesh of infected animals or by bite of certain insects: it is characterized by an irregular fever, aching, inflammation of the lymph glands). Fish without fins and scales tend to burrow into the mud and become sources of dangerous bacteria as do the many birds of prey which feed on dead carcasses.

Critique – Twenty first century writers and readers obsessed with health care and medical science are attracted to this view. But is hygiene the only account for some of the prohibition? “Some of the clean animals are more questionable on hygienic grounds than some of the unclean animals. If ancient Israel had discovered the dangers of eating pork, they might also have discovered that thorough cooking averts it. In any event, trichinosis is rare in free-range pigs. Among the Arabs camel flesh is regarded as a luxury, though Leviticus brands it as unclean.”

Another argument against this view is that the OT does not say that eating these foods was dangerous to their health. “Motive causes justifying a particular rule are a very characteristic feature of OT law, yet there is never a hint that these animal foods must be avoided because they will damage health.” If hygiene was the reason, then why were poisonous plants not included in this list?

If hygiene was the reason, then why did the Lord pronounce them clean for eating in the NT (see Acts 10)? There is no evidence that advancement of cooking methods or medical science had occurred so much in the days of the apostles to have the Levitical dietary laws abolished.

- iv.) The Symbolic View argues that the behaviour and habits of the clean animals were living illustrations of how the righteous Israelite ought to behave, while the unclean represented sinful men. Some have suggested that the chewing of the cud represents the meditation of the law of God. Others have said that the sheep reminds the Israelites of the Lord and their Good Shepherd whereas pigs remind Israel of their dirty habits and sins, even the filth of their iniquity! Others supported their view by pointing out that these carrion birds are scavengers and are associated with sin and death.

Critique – This view seems very interesting but at best they explain only partially some of these unclean fowls, beasts and fishes.

My view – **The Bible is a spiritual Book.** Israel was a spiritual nation and not a political or economic one. It was a time of national witness and not an ecclesiastical one. Israel was that nation to shine forth God's light of salvation grace. Her testimony and witness had to be guarded at all costs. Israel had to be biblically separated from the rest of her surrounding nations. From her garments to her daily chores in the fields or at home including her dietary laws, Israel had to be reminded that she was a holy nation with a spiritual purpose. She needed to be protected from ever compromising this witness. But when the visible witness shifted to the local church in the NT, these dietary laws were lifted. The lifting of the laws was initiated by God as Peter was sent by the Holy Spirit to Cornelius' house to witness to him and his family. Cornelius was a Gentile. These laws would serve no spiritual purpose as a protection because the local churches are international in their culture and way of life. The strict dietary laws were lifted in Acts 10:1-16; 11:1-10 through the revelation of God to Peter.

**Cutting a Covenant** -- Another consideration is that in the OT times, covenants were made or completed by eating a meal together. If these foods were good for the heathen to eat but an abomination to Israel, then Israel could never cut any covenant with her neighbours. If the foods that Israel could eat were an abomination to the heathen nations around her, then the covenant could never be concluded. There could never be a marriage, business, political or military covenant because they could never finalize and complete it by eating a meal together especially when it was a parity covenant. If it was a suzerainty covenant, then the stronger party would simply dictate the terms and the weaker party had no choice but to accept it or face destruction. In Abraham's case, God did not force Abraham to accept His suzerainty covenant. The meal was also "eaten" but it depended entirely on God's faithfulness and not Abraham's (see Genesis 15).

The list of clean or unclean animals or fowl or fish or creeping things for Israel had nothing to do with worship because it is the LORD that they worship and not these creatures. But for the heathen nations around Israel, the reason for not eating certain animals or fowl or fish is because these were their gods. They had a multiple of gods. For example, what was considered as clean for consumption to Israel was considered as an abomination to the Egyptians (see Gen 46:34; Exo 8:25-27). The Gentiles who worshipped creatures would not eat their own gods. In the case of Israel it was very different. The list of clean and unclean was not based upon their worship of them. God determined it to be a spiritual protection for His people, to keep them holy as He is holy. It was a matter of biblical separation rather than worship. How do we as a local church fulfill what the LORD required Israel to do as a nation?

## 2. From Congenital Depravity: Birth --12:1-8

This chapter begins another perspective of uncleanness in Israel's society. Chapter 11 describes the uncleanness that is from without. It pertains to the food that Israel was and was not allowed to eat because these creatures were considered unclean by God.

Chapter 12 describes the uncleanness from within, in particular, a woman who has given birth.

a. **Conceiving a Male Child – 12:1-4**

**Verse 2a** -- If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male child, she shall be unclean for seven days.

**Verse 2b** – This period of uncleanness is according to the days of separation because of her infirmity. The word “infirmity” is a hapax legomena. It means to be sick as if in menstruation. She is not allowed to come into contact with anyone or else that person or thing will also become unclean because of her uncleanness. Hence this period is called “the days of her separation.”

**Verse 3** – On the eighth day the male child will be circumcised. What is the significance of circumcision? See Gen 17; Deu 10:12-22; 30:6; Jer 4:4).

**Verse 4** – The mother shall continue her purifying for the next 33 days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing or come into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying are fulfilled. The total period of her uncleanness is 40 days (7 + 33).

She no longer pollutes others who come into contact with her after the eighth day. The woman becomes unclean in herself in that she is to stay away from holy things and is not allowed to enter the sanctuary. For example, she is not allowed to eat the peace offering (see 7:20-21) in this state of uncleanness. If she is the wife of a priest, she is not allowed to eat the priestly portions during this period of her uncleanness (see 22:3ff).

b. **Conceiving a Maid Child – 12:5**

**Verse 5** – If she bears a maid child and gives birth to her, the mother's period of uncleanness is 2 weeks. This is the period of separation.

After the two weeks she shall continue her period of purifying for 66 days. Her period of purifying is twice as long as when she gives birth to a male child. The total period of her uncleanness is 80 days (14 + 66). Her period of uncleanness is doubled when she gives birth to a maid child.

What could be the reason for the period of uncleanness being doubled?

c. **The Offerings** – 12:6-8

**Verse 6** – After the days of the purifying she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering.

This is to be done unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. The priest on duty will receive the offerings of the woman. She is not allowed into the premises of the Tabernacle.

**Verse 7** – The priest will take the offerings and offer them on her behalf inside the Tabernacle. This is done to make an atonement for her so that she shall be cleansed from the issue of blood.

This is the law for every woman who has given birth. It is not the husband but the wife who will bring the offering. The reason is that she is the one who is unclean.

**Verse 8** – If the woman is too poor to bring a lamb of the first year then she shall bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons. One is for the burnt offering and the other is for the sin offering.

The priest shall make an atonement for her and she shall be clean.

**Questions:**

1. What could be the cause of the uncleanness?
  - a) It is not because of the child bearing or giving birth that makes her unclean. Was this not what God told women to do in Genesis 1:28?
  - b) If it is merely child bearing that makes a woman unclean and her life difficult, then it makes little sense for the Jewish woman to want to bear children. Each family is seen as a blessing from God (see Lev 26:9; Deu 28:11; Psalm 127:3-5).
  - c) In fact, childlessness was considered the height of misfortune in OT times (see Gen 15—Sarah and Hagar; and 1 Sam 1—Hannah and Penninah). In some instances, it was seen as a curse from God to be childless (see Lev 20:20; Deu 28:18).
  - d) The Bible text states that she shall be cleansed from “the issue of blood.” It is not the bearing of a child that makes her unclean but rather the issue of blood that makes her unclean. Read Leviticus 15: 19ff which says that a woman having her menstrual cycle is also considered unclean. Her period of uncleanness is seven days (15:28-30). If the blood does not stop and it exceeds seven days, then she shall be unclean for as long as the blood continues to flow (see 15:25).
  - e) Blood from giving birth far exceeds that of blood loss during the menstrual cycle. Hence the period of uncleanness was extended. The discharge of any bodily fluid makes a person unclean. Blood was meant to be the most sacred of all fluids and was used by God for the

cleansing of sin and purification but when discharged from the wrong places, it brings forth uncleanness to the woman. She has to make offerings for the atonement of her uncleanness.

2. Why was the period of uncleanness doubled when a maid child was born?

- a) View # 1 – The 13<sup>th</sup> Century Talmudic Ramban argues that the birth of a female causes the mother to have a longer period of bloody emissions. Doctors have found that it is true but not to the extent of doubling the period of uncleanness.

Critique – this physical data cannot be substantiated because it may be true of some women but not all. This was a law for all women who gave birth to a maid child.

- b) View # 2 – It is a reflection of the cultic inferiority of females in Hebrew society.

Critique -- This is arbitrary and unfounded as if this was a cultural issue concocted by man. This is the law of separation from God Himself and to reduce it to mere cultural stigma is faulty interpretation. This view is also rejected.

- c) View # 3 – It is suggested that a maid child was considered potentially more unclean than a male child because of her liability to the impurity of menstruation and childbirth in the future.

Critique – This seems to make sense at first glance but God does not punish or penalize a person based upon a potential sin which has not been committed yet. One cannot ask the maid child to bring offerings for potential future uncleanness. This view is also untenable.

- d) View # 4 – The answer might lie in the fact that a male child was circumcised on the eighth day. Also, it is important to note that prior to the formation of the nation of Israel and after circumcision was instituted, there was no record of any need for this process of cleansing and period of uncleanness. The woman was considered unclean when she had her menstrual cycle in Jacob's time (Gen 31:34-35).

After Joshua brought Israel into the Land of Promise, the LORD told him to circumcise all the males who were born in the wilderness because they were not circumcised yet (see Joshua 5). After circumcision the LORD said in **Joshua 5:9**, “*And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.*” It appears that the sign of circumcision has the idea of removal of reproach, i.e. shame or rebuke. This act of circumcision could be the reason why the period of uncleanness was halved for the birth of a male child.

3. Why were burnt and sin offerings required in order to turn the woman from a state of uncleanness to purity?
  - a) It is noted that when the uncleanness was for a day only or less than seven days, there was no need for any offering (see Lev 15). The number of seven seems to be the limit.
  - b) The sin offering was presented first to cleanse the sanctuary. Although she did not enter the sanctuary after the child was born, her presence in the camp could contaminate the sanctuary (see 15:31). The Tabernacle was in the Land of Israel and therefore any uncleanness in Israel would contaminate the sanctuary regardless of distance or contact. The offering had to be brought. Pigeons or turtle doves would suffice.
  - c) After that, the burnt offering was offered for the atonement of sins and as a thanksgiving for the gift of a child and her restored relationship with God. Somehow the large issue of blood for such a long period of time resulted in sin. The sin had to be cleansed and so a burnt offering was required. There is no way to circumvent this interpretation that sin was present in the issue of blood. The poor could bring a pigeon or turtle dove instead. There was no excuse for not bringing a burnt offering for the cleansing of sin.

### **Application for Today**

1. **The separation of holy and unholy** – The separation of holy and unholy extends to the personal. The issue of blood where life was involved such as giving birth or a woman going through her menstrual cycle makes the woman unclean. Her uncleanness could contaminate the sanctuary and death could ensue. **Leviticus 15:31**, *“Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.”* Christians must realize that their private and individual sins can contaminate the church that they are members of. There is no such thing as a private sin and so others are to mind their own business. The health of the church lies in the spiritual health of every member of that local church.
2. **Christ’s birth** – After the birth of Christ, His earthly parents went to the Temple for the purification process to be completed (see Luke 2:21-24). This was to fulfill all righteousness. Based upon verse 22, it is assumed that the period of 33 days was observed before they went to the Temple. A pair of young turtle doves was brought. This shows the humble state in which our Lord came into this world. Mary needed purification even though she gave birth to the Son of God and Son of Man.
3. **Forgiveness is available or else, consequences** – There are consequences for unconfessed sins. The sinners will bear the consequences. It is not something to be trifled with. There are severe consequences such as the record in 1 Corinthians 11 of those who abused

the Lord's Supper. Living a holy life is not an option but a command to be strictly obeyed by all born again Christians.

### 3. From Bodily Corruption: Leprosy – 13:1-14:57

Chapter 13 deals with infectious skin diseases including leprosy. Chapter 14 deals specifically with leprosy. The cleansing of these diseases is found in these two chapters. The priests were “doctors” to check and to ensure that the disease was not infectious. If it was, then the procedure stipulated in these two chapters was to be followed strictly in order for any uncleanness to be removed from the Land of Israel, i.e. from the presence of the LORD.

#### a. Initial tests for Infectious Skin Disease – 13:1-8

**Verse 1** -- Note that the instruction was given to the priesthood. They were the teachers of the law. The people would go to them for determination of their situation. The priests had to know the law through and through. They could not afford to make any errors in their instruction and evaluation. They had to evaluate whether the Israelite with a skin disease was fit for spiritual service. It was not for medical reasons as the priests were not medical doctors but spiritual doctors. An unclean person would be ostracized and forbidden from partaking in anything holy as they could contaminate the holy thing.

**Verse 2** – Anyone found to have in the skin of his flesh a rising, i.e. a swelling; OR a scab, i.e. a patch of skin where the hair has fallen off; OR a bright spot, i.e. a whitish shining spot like the scale of the fish which is the start of the leprosy, and it looks like the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought (he has no choice) to the high priest or any priest.

The plague of leprosy – The Greek word for leprosy is “*lepra*” which originates from the root word “*lepis*” which means “a scale”. The Hebrew word has the idea of scourging. It is translated in all its 35 occurrences as leprosy. What is the plague of leprosy like? <sup>1</sup>

“The account given by Mr. Maundrell of the appearance of several persons whom he saw infected with this disorder in Palestine, will serve

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<sup>1</sup>Modern medical definitions of some diseases:– ““*Psoriasis* is a chronic, non-infectious skin disease characterized by the presence of well-demarcated, slightly raised reddish patches of various sizes covered by dry grayish-white or silvery scales. The disease is usually localized, particularly to the scalp, elbows, knees, shins, outer aspects of the arms and the lower part of the back, but can sometimes become more widespread. The lesions are itchy and when scratched the scales come off in flakes and leave a moist shiny red surface.” The severity of the disease varies. In some cases the symptoms may disappear for months or years. It generally does not affect the general health of the sufferer. In temperate regions 1-2 percent of the population tends to suffer from psoriasis, but it is much rarer in warmer climates. “*Favus* is a much more severe and damaging infection in which the fungus invades both the hair and the full thickness of the skin. The disease appears chiefly on the scalp and only rarely elsewhere. Yellow cup-shaped crusts are formed round loose wiry hairs which are the colour of hay and a mouse-like odour is present. Scar tissue develops in the deeper parts of the skin which results in permanent loss of hair leaving a smooth, glossy, thin, white patch.” It is infectious. *Leucoderma* is a slightly disfiguring condition in which patches of otherwise normal skin lose their natural colouring and become completely white.” It differs from psoriasis and favus in affecting only the colour of the skin and not penetrating below the surface.” [The quotation is taken from Wenham pages 196-197.]

to show, in the clearest light, its horrible nature and tendency. "When I was in the Holy Land," says he, in his letter to the Rev. Mr. Osborn, Fellow of Exeter College, "I saw several that labored under Gehazi's distemper; particularly at Sicheim, (now Naplosu), there were no less than ten that came begging to us at one time. Their manner is to come with small buckets in their hands, to receive the alms of the charitable; their touch being still held infectious, or at least unclean. The distemper, as I saw it on them, was quite different from what I have seen it in England; for it not only defiles the whole surface of the body with a foul scurf, but also deforms the joints of the body, particularly those of the wrists and ankles, making them swell with a gouty scrofulous substance, very loathsome to look on. I thought their legs like those of old battered horses, such as are often seen in drays in England. The whole distemper, indeed, as it there appeared, was so noisome, that it might well pass for the utmost corruption of the human body on this side the grave. And certainly the inspired penman could not have found out a fitter emblem, whereby to express the uncleanness and odiousness of vice." - Maundrell's Travels. Letters at the end." [Adam Clarke's **Commentary on the Bible**, Swordsearcher 5.5.1].

Also . . . "Dr. Mead says, "I have seen a remarkable case of this in a countryman, whose whole body was so miserably seized with it, that his skin was shining as if covered with snow; and as the surfuraceous scales were daily rubbed off, the flesh appeared quick or raw underneath." The leprosy, at least among the Jews, was a most inveterate and contagious disorder, and deemed by them incurable. Among the heathens it was considered as inflicted by their gods, and it was supposed that they alone could remove it. It is certain that a similar belief prevailed among the Israelites; hence, when the king of Syria sent his general Naaman, to the king of Israel to cure him of his leprosy, he rent his clothes, saying, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? 2 Kings 5:7." [Adam Clarke, Commentary on Exodus 4:6].

The plague of leprosy was a deadly and infectious disease for which there was no cure as believed by Israel and her surrounding nations. The cure was from God just as the ailment came from God. This chapter and the next provide guidelines on how these people were to be regarded in relation to their spiritual walk with God.

**Verse 3** – The priest **shall look on** the plague in the skin of the flesh. He does not touch it or else he might become unclean if it is proven that it is the plague of leprosy. When the hair in the plague has turned white and the plague in sight be deeper, i.e. sunken in that area because the plague would consume the flesh of the person, then he has leprosy. The priest will look and confirm and then will pronounce him unclean, i.e. in the ceremonial sense.

**Verse 4-6** – If the bright spot is white on the skin of his flesh and by looking at it is not deeper than the skin and the hair has not turned white, then the priest shall quarantine him for 7 days for observation. On the

seventh day the priest shall look at the skin condition. If there is no change in the condition, then a further 7 days will be imposed on the Israelite.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day the priest will check on the skin condition again. If the skin condition is dark and there is no spreading of the plague, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is only a scab. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. There is no further quarantine.

**Verse 7-8** – But if the scab has spread much abroad the skin after he has been seen by the priest for his cleansing, then he shall be seen by the priest again. Honesty is the best policy for the wellbeing of all around them. If they are not honest, they cheat themselves and they lie to God. God knows and such betrayal will be most unconscionable. The priest also has to be honest to make the right diagnosis and pass the right judgement as his duties are crucial for the wellbeing of the families and the spiritual wellbeing of the nation.

If the scab has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy. The judgement is severe as this person will be ostracized from all family members and friends in order not to contaminate them and to pass on the same disease.

#### **b. Infectious Skin Disease Confirmed – 13:9-17**

**Verse 9-11** – The moment a person is confirmed to have leprosy, he will be brought either by friends or family members to the priest. This is not an option. Then the priest will ascertain and confirm it with his own eyes. The signs to look for include: the rising be white in the skin; the hair has turned white; and quick raw flesh in the rising, i.e. raw flesh that is exposed and swollen.

The conclusion is that it is an old leprosy. This means that it is a relapse of leprosy. The priest will immediately pronounce him unclean. There is no need for the 7 day quarantine for observation. It has already been confirmed that he is unclean.

**Verse 12-13** – If the leprosy breaks out and covers the entire body of the person from head to foot and wherever the priest looks, then the priest shall consider, i.e. discern carefully whether the leprosy has actually covered the whole body. If that is the case, then he shall be pronounced as clean. The reason is that it has all turned white. It seems a little strange that the person suffering from partial leprosy is deemed unclean but the one whose leprosy covers his entire body is declared clean.

The explanation from Adam Clarke's Commentary is helpful, "If the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean - Why is it that the partial leper was pronounced unclean, and the person totally

covered with the disease clean? This was probably owing to a different species or stage of the disease; the partial disease was contagious, the total not contagious. That there are two different species or degrees of the same disease described here, is sufficiently evident. In one, the body was all covered with a white enamelled scurf; in the other, there was a quick raw flesh in the risings. On this account the one might be deemed unclean, i. e., contagious, the other not; for contact with the quick raw flesh would be more likely to communicate the disease than the touch of the hard dry scurf. The ichor proceeding from the former, when brought into contact with the flesh of another, would soon be taken into the constitution by means of the absorbent vessels; but where the whole surface was perfectly dry, the absorbent vessels of another person coming in contact with the diseased man could imbibe nothing, and therefore there was comparatively no danger of infection. Hence that species or stage of the disease that exhibited the quick raw rising was capable of conveying the infection for the reasons already assigned, when the other was not. Dr. Mead thus accounts for the circumstance mentioned in the text.”

**Verse 14-15** – But the moment raw flesh appears, he is unclean even when his whole body is covered with leprosy. The priest has to confirm that the raw flesh is present on the person. Then he will declare him unclean.

**Verse 16-17** – However, if the raw flesh becomes white again, then he has to present himself before the priest again and the priest will have to ascertain him. If the plague turns white again, then he will be pronounced clean by the priest.

### **c. From Simple to Serious Infectious Skin Disease – 13:18-46**

**Verse 18-20** – The initial sickness was a simple boil on the skin and the person was healed from it but after some time the boil turns into something serious. The seriousness of it includes: a white rising, i.e. swelling; **or** a bright spot, white and somewhat reddish. He is shown to the priest. NOTE: OR is used here. This means that either one of the conditions would require that he be presented to the priest.

The priest will then look at his condition. If he finds that by sight it appears that the sore is lower than the surface of the skin; and the hair thereof is white in colour, then he shall pronounce him unclean. It is a plague of leprosy that has broken out of the boil. NOTE: AND is used here to ensure that the person who is sick fulfils all the conditions stipulated by God.

The boil is an ulcer or an inflammation.

**Verse 21-22** – But if the priest finds the following: - no white hair therein; and not lower than the skin but somewhat dark in colour, the priest will shut him in for 7 days. But if the condition spreads to other

parts of the skin, then the priest will pronounce him unclean. It is the plague.

**Verse 23** – But if the bright spot stays in the same place and does not spread, it is just a burning boil. The priest will pronounce him clean.

**Verse 24-25** – If there is a painful burning on the skin and the quick flesh, i.e. exposed flesh, has a white bright spot somewhat reddish or white, then the priest shall look upon it. If the hair in the bright spot is turned to white and it is a sight deeper than the skin area, it is leprosy broken out of the burning, i.e. the inflammation has turned into leprosy. The priest will pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy.

**Verse 26-27** – But if the priest looks at it and finds that there is no white hair in the bright spot and it is not lower than the surface of the skin but somewhat dark in colour, then the priest will shut him up for 7 days. On the seventh day the priest will look at him again. If the condition spreads abroad, then the priest will pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy.

**Verse 28** – But if the bright spot remains where it is and does not spread and is somewhat dark in colour, then the priest will pronounce him clean. It is just a rising, i.e. swelling caused by the burning. It is an inflammation and nothing more.

**Verse 29-30** – If a man or a woman has a plague upon the head or beard, then he must be brought to the priest for examination. The priest shall see the plague. If in his sight the area is deeper than the skin and there is yellow thin hair in it, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a dry scall, i.e. a scaly eruption of the skin. This is leprosy of the beard or head.

**Verse 31-34** – But if upon examination by the priest the scall is not deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall quarantine him for 7 days. On the seventh day the priest shall look on the plague to see if the scall spreads. If it does not spread and has no yellow hair in it and the scall is not deeper than the skin, he shall be shaven. The scall area will not be touched. The priest shall shut him up another 7 days.

On the seventh day the priest shall look at the person. If the scall did not spread in the skin or in sight is not deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean.

**Verse 35-37** – But if the scall spreads much in the skin after the cleansing, then the priest shall look on him again. If the scall spreads in the skin, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair and he shall pronounce him unclean. But if in his sight the scall stays and black hair has grown over it, the scall is healed and he is clean. The priest shall pronounce him clean.

**Verse 38-39** – If a man or a woman has in the skin of the flesh bright spots, even white bright spots, then the priest shall look at it. If the bright spots in the skin of the flesh are darkish white, it is a freckled spot, i.e. pale or scurf (dry scales of scaly coating), perhaps it is some kind of eczema growing in the skin, he/she is clean.

**Verse 40** – A bald man (back of the head) is not considered unclean.

**Verse 41** – A forehead bald man is also not considered unclean.

**Verse 42-44** – If there is on the bald head (front or back) a white reddish sore, then it is leprosy. The priest shall look upon it. And if the rising, i.e. swelling of the sore, is white reddish as leprosy appears in the skin of the flesh, he is a leprosy man. He is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean. The emphasis is most ardent His plague is in his head.

**Verse 45-46** – The sentence is carefully explained here and it is most severe. This is not a reference to only the man with leprosy on his head but to all who are afflicted with leprosy.

**Manner of defilement** -- The leper shall rent his clothes; his head made bare, i.e. no covering to hide it; he covers his upper lip and shall cry “unclean, unclean”; he shall dwell alone; and he shall live outside the camp, i.e. from the life of the living.

**Time of defilement** -- He shall be defiled for the time period that he has leprosy.

#### **d. Mouldy Issues – 13:47-59**

**Verse 47-52** – The garment that he wears shall be carefully examined to see if they are defiled. The garments include: a woollen garment, or a linen garment; whether *it be* in the warp (i.e. woven material referring to the lengthwise threads when the fabric is on the loom), or woof (i.e. transverse threads of cloth woven through the warp); of linen, or of woollen; whether in a skin, or in any thing made of skin.

If the plague has come into contact with any of the above listed materials or garments or containers and it is greenish or reddish, it is a plague of leprosy. The item has to be shown to the priest. The priest shall look upon the plague and shut up the item for 7 days. On the seventh day he shall look at the plague again. If the plague spreads on any item made of the materials mentioned above, it is a fretting, i.e. bitter which means corroding leprosy. It is unclean.

The item made from the above materials will be burned in the fire. It is a fretting leprosy.

**Verse 53-55** – If the priest looks at the item and finds that the plague has not spread on the material of the item, then he shall command that the

item be washed. After washing, the item will be shut up for 7 days. On the seventh day the priest shall look on the item again and if the plague has changed colour and the plague did not spread, it is unclean. The item has to be burned with fire. It is a fret inward, i.e. corroding and caused the material to be threadbare either inside or outside. The whole item has to be destroyed.

**Verse 56-58** – But if the priest looks and finds that the plague is somewhat dark after the washing, then the priest shall tear it out of the item. If the plague still appears in the garment or any item made of skin, it is a spreading plague. The portion of the item where the plague is will be burned with fire.

The garment of anything made of skin shall be washed. If the plague is departed, then the item is considered clean after the second washing.

**Verse 59 -- Leviticus 13:59** concludes, *“This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of woollen or linen, either in the warp, or woof, or anything of skins, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean.”*

Wenham observed, “This last observation perhaps gives the clue as to why certain diseases were regarded as unclean and others were not. Holiness in Leviticus is symbolized by wholeness. Animals must be perfect to be used in sacrifice. Priests must be without physical deformity. Mixtures are an abomination. Men must behave in a way that expresses wholeness and integrity in their actions. When a man shows visible signs of lack of wholeness as in a persistent patchy skin condition, he has to be excluded from the covenant community. Temporary deviations from the norm do not attract such treatment, but if the symptoms last for more than two weeks, he must go to live outside the true Israel. These laws on skin diseases are again eloquent testimony to the importance of purity and holiness in ancient Israel. Anyone might fall victim to these complaints and face the prospect of being cut off from his family and friends for the rest of his days. Yet it was considered so important to preserve the purity of the tabernacle and the holiness of the nation that individuals and families might be forced to suffer a good deal. Individual discomfort was not allowed to jeopardize the spiritual welfare of the nation, for God’s abiding presence with his people depended on uncleanness bring excluded from their midst (cf. Isa. 6:3-5).” [Wenham, page 203.]

**Observations** – The common phrases in this chapter are “the priest shall look” and “the priest shall pronounce.” It is apparent that the spiritual wellbeing of the life of Israel lay in the hands of the priesthood. They were given absolute powers by God. Their integrity and honesty in the evaluation of the persons were crucial for the spiritual health of God’s people. Their observations and decisions could sentence a person into exile where he could very well die of loneliness. Families could be broken up because of what they see and say.

Other people might look and evaluate. But their evaluation was always preliminary, whereas the observations and decisions of the priests were final. The sentencing by the priest was either terminal or restorative according to his fear of the LORD.

This means that when corrupt priests ruled, the spiritual health of the nation was in jeopardy. These priests could be bribed into making corrupt decisions and the nation would be ruined. Diseases could spread and the witness of the nation jeopardized. The nation could even be destroyed in the process if leprosy spread and destroyed them all. Their spiritual significance would be neutralized forever and the plan of God for man's salvation thwarted.

On the other hand, if the priests were honest and godly, the nation would be cleansed and spiritually healthy and well protected. Above all else they had to ensure that they were spiritually able to take on this task. They had to know God's Word well to make the right evaluation and pronouncement because the lives of many were at stake.

**Applications for Today** – Obviously, hygiene is of secondary importance here in that cleanliness is next to godliness. Every Christian ought to be clean, having good hygiene and neat. The primary significance for us is always spiritual. The role of the priests belongs to every believer who is a priest in the NT. The spiritual well-being and health of others is in his hands. In other words, he is to be his brother's keeper. The care and well-being of our brethren concerns us. We are to help and pray as we make observations and careful diagnosis of each other's spiritual well-being. To encourage and help spiritually is every believer's duty.

It is more so for the brethren who are pastors and elders as the appointed under-shepherds of Christ's flock. They cannot afford to be carnal and unspiritual like the priests of the OT. They must not succumb to bribery. They need to enforce discipline at all times, even if they cause pain and families will be hurt. It is sin that causes hurt and not the disciplinary decision made by the Board of Elders. The BOE must recognize that. They cannot make decisions that will refrain from hurting the sinner's family. If they fail to do so, the result would obviously be that no discipline will be enforced at all because most if not all of us belong to families. Then only those who are single and alone would be disciplined, which would make discipline by the church a travesty of justice. This chapter highlights the importance of the fact that justice is "blind". It must be meted out without partiality. The church leaders make decisions on God's behalf. They must reflect God's justice which is always fair and righteous.

All spiritual decisions must be based upon God's Word and nothing else. That is why every pastor and elder must be apt to teach. The knowledge of God's perfect Word is indispensable in the leader's life.

- e. **The Cleansing of Lepers (14:1-2)** – The attention is now shifted to people who are lepers and how are they to be cleansed before the LORD **after** they are healed. Physical healing returns them to society and family but not yet unto the LORD who requires a higher standard of cleansing. Offerings are required of the ex-leper.

**Verse 1** – The instruction is not arbitrarily given by Moses to Israel. It is from the LORD Himself to Israel through Moses.

**Verse 2** – The cleansing is specifically mentioned here to avoid future arbitration. To be present before the priest who is God’s representative is of utmost importance as was the case in the previous chapter.

This is called “the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing”. It is spiritual cleansing as he is considered healed physically of his leprosy. The leper will be brought to the priest for examination first and then the process of spiritual cleansing can begin.

- f. **Spiritual Cleansing Process for the Rich (14:3-20)** – Spiritual cleansing is often neglected in our understanding of sinning against one another and against God. We say “sorry” to one another and receive forgiveness from one another. But more often than not, we forget about God and what restitution we need to make before God. We only pray and ask for forgiveness and the matter rests there. Do we as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians need to do more than just pray and ask God to forgive us? This section of the chapter describes the cleansing process of a rich Israelite who has been healed of leprosy.

**Verse 3-4** – The priests will meet the alleged cleansed leper outside the camp. The leper is NOT allowed inside yet until he has been confirmed cleansed by the priest. Once the priest confirms that the leper is indeed cleansed and allowed to return to society, the leper has to bring the offerings and make right with God.

The offerings include – two live and clean birds (i.e. only turtle doves or pigeons), cedar wood and scarlet and hyssop.

Matthew Poole’s Commentary, “**Two birds;** the one to represent Christ as dying for his sins, the other to represent him as rising again for his purification or justification. **Clean;** allowed for food and for sacrifice. **Cedar wood;** a stick of cedar, to which the hyssop and one of the birds was tied by the scarlet thread. Cedar seems to be chosen, to note that the leper was now freed from that putrefaction or corruption which his leprosy had brought upon him, that kind of wood being in a manner incorruptible. **Scarlet;** a thread of wool of a scarlet colour, **Heb 9:19**, to represent both the leper’s sinfulness, **Isa 1:18**, and the blood of Christ, and the happy change of the leper’s colour and complexion, which before was wan and loathsome, now sprightly and beautiful. **Hyssop,** chosen partly for its fragrant smell, which signified the cure of the leper’s ill scent, and partly for conveniency in the use of sprinkling. See **Ex 12:22.**”

Agree or disagree?

**Verse 5** – One of the birds is killed. The bird is not killed by the priest who examines the leper but by someone else. Who that person is, is not

mentioned. It could be the leper himself or the leper's friend or relative. John Gill's comment, "That is, shall command another priest to kill one of them, or an Israelite, as Aben Ezra; and who also observes, that some say the leper, or the butcher, as the Targum of Jonathan; the killing of this bird, not being a sacrifice, might be done without the camp, as it was, and not at the altar, near to which sacrifices were slain, and where they were offered."

Do you agree or disagree?

The bird is to be killed in an earthen vessel over running water where the bloody water can be collected.

**Verse 6** – The living bird shall be taken by the priest, together with the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and shall dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed.

What probably happened was that the scarlet thread was used to tie the hyssop to the cedar wood.

**Verse 7** – The priest will sprinkle the blood onto the leper that to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times. Then he shall pronounce him cleansed. After that the living bird will be set free into the open field.

**Verse 8** – The cleansed leper will now wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and wash himself in water that he may be clean. After that he shall be allowed to come into the camp. He shall remain outside of his own tent seven days. This is to ensure that he is definitely healed from leprosy and will not contaminate his family and his home.

Does "all his hair" literally mean all? Please note that Jews are generally very hairy. This applies to both men and women. John Gill made this observation, "**and shave off all his hair**; what is here expressed in general is more particularly declared in [Le 14:9](#); the hair of his head, beard, and eyebrows; according to Gersom, this was done by the priest, and so Maimonides says, that none but a priest might shave him; and yet the text seems plainly to ascribe this, as well as the washing of his clothes and himself, to the leper that was to be cleansed; and the same writers say, that if two hairs were left it was no shaving; and so says the Misnah: the shaving of the leper's hairs signified the weakening of the strength of sin; the mortification of the deeds of the body, through the Spirit, and the laying aside all superfluity of naughtiness, and the excrescences of the flesh; a parting with everything that grows out of a man's self, sin or self-righteousness; a laying a man bare and open, that nothing may lie hid and covered, and escape cleansing:"

I believe that the shaving of all his hair is defined for us in verse 9, although verse 9 describes a second shaving. These areas would be included on top of the areas stricken with leprosy that had to be shaven.

**Verse 9** – It appears that on the seventh day he shall shave again his head and his beard and his eye brows. He shall wash his clothes again as well as his flesh in water and he shall be clean. After this laborious process he shall then be allowed to bring his trespass, sin and burnt offerings before the LORD.

The leper would have looked a sight to behold, especially his family and loved ones who had not seen him since his ostracism from society because of his leprosy.

**Verse 10-12** – On the eighth day the leper shall take for himself two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil and one log (about six egg shells full) of oil. This is a very expensive offering before the LORD. Spiritual cleansing does not come cheap, even for the poor as the next section details.

The priest who is helping the ex-leper will present him before the LORD with all his offerings. This will be done at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The priest shall take one of the he lambs and offer him as a trespass offering with the log of oil and wave it for a wave offering before the LORD.

What were the significances of the trespass and wave offerings? Was leprosy a sinful disease? If not, then why was there a need for a trespass offering?

**Verse 13** – The holy place where the sin and burnt offerings were killed was also where the trespass offering was killed. Just as the sin offering belonged to the priest, the trespass offering was also given to the priest. It was most holy.

**Verse 14-18** – The priest will take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it upon the tip of the right ear, right thumb and the right great toe of the man who is to be cleansed. This is similar to what Moses did for Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 8:23-24 at their consecration.

Is the significance for the two events the same?

The priest shall then take a log of oil and pour some of it onto his own left hand; he dips his right finger in the oil and sprinkles the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD (cf. verses 15-16). Then the rest of the oil that is in his left hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right

ear, the right thumb and the right great toe of the man who is to be cleansed (cf. vs 17).

What is the significance of the oil and blood applied to the same parts of the ex-leper's body?

The final step is that the balance of the oil in the priest's left hand is poured on the head of the ex-leper. After this entire process the priest will then make atonement for the ex-leper before the LORD with the sin and burnt offerings.

What is the significance of the oil being poured on his head?

**Verse 19-20** – The sin-offering is offered first followed by the burnt offering. The last offering is the meat offering, i.e. the fine flour. Then the ex-leper is finally cleansed and allowed to return to his family and to participate in all religious activities like before. It is as though he had not been stricken with leprosy.

- g. Spiritual Cleansing for the Poor (14:21-32)** – Verses 3 to 9 are for all lepers regardless of wealth. But if the leper cannot afford to bring two he lambs then he is allowed to bring something less costly.

**Verse 21-22** – No one was excused from offering, even those who could not afford it. This was a salvation from a very devastating deadly illness. It was like being brought back to the land of the living.

The poor will bring – one he lamb for his trespass offering to be waved, one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering and a log of oil. In the place of the two ewe lambs of one year old and without blemish, the poor can substitute them with two turtle doves<sup>2</sup> or young

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<sup>2</sup>Its peculiar peaceful and gentle habit its often referred to in Scripture. A pair was offered in sacrifice by Mary at her purification (**Lu 2:24**). The pigeon and the turtle-dove were the only birds permitted to be offered in sacrifice (**Le 1:14; 5:7; 14:22 15:14, 29**, etc.). The Latin name of this bird, *turtur*, is derived from its note, and is a repetition of the Hebrew name *tor*. Three species are found in Palestine, (1) the turtle-dove (*Turtur auritus*), (2) the collared turtle (*T. risorius*), and (3) the palm turtle (*T. Senegalensis*). But it is to the first of these species which the various passages of Scripture refer. It is a migratory bird (**Jer 8:7; Song 2:11-12**). "Search the glades and valleys, even by sultry Jordan, at the end of March, and not a turtle-dove is to be seen. Return in the second week of April, and clouds of doves are feeding on the clovers of the plain. They overspread the whole face of the land." "Immediately on its arrival it pours forth from every garden, grove, and wooded hill its melancholy yet soothing ditty unceasingly from early dawn till sunset. It is from its plaintive and continuous note, doubtless, that David, pouring forth his heart's sorrow to God, compares himself to a turtle-dove" (**Ps 74:19**).” [**Easton's Bible Dictionary**] “duv (tor, yonah; peristera; Latin *Zenaedura carolinensis*): A bird of the family Columbidae. Doves and pigeons are so closely related as to be spoken and written of as synonymous, yet there is a distinction recognized from the beginning of time. It was especially marked in Palestine, because doves migrated, but pigeons remained in their chosen haunts all the year. Yet doves were the wild birds and were only confined singly or in pairs as caged pets, or in order to be available for sacrifice. Pigeons, without question, were the first domesticated birds, the record of their conquest by man extending if anything further back than ducks, geese and swans. These two were the

pigeons such as he is able to get. This means that the turtle doves were the first choice. If they were not in season then young pigeons would be the substitutes. One of them is for the sin offering and the other for the burnt offering.

**Verse 23-32** – Everything else is the same from the eighth day onwards. The blood of the trespass offering including oil on the left hand and the sin and burnt offerings and the meat offering are all done exactly as

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best known and the most loved of all the myriads of birds of Palestine. Doves were given preference because they remained wild and were more elusive. The thing that escapes us is usually a little more attractive than the thing we have. Their loving natures had been noted, their sleek beautiful plumage, their plump bodies. They were the most precious of anything offered for sacrifice. Their use is always specified in preference to pigeons if only one bird was used; if both, the dove is frequently mentioned first. Because of their docility when caged, their use in sacrifice, and the religious superstition concerning them, they were allowed to nest unmolested and, according to species, flocked all over Palestine. The turtle-dove nested in gardens and vineyards, and was almost as tame as the pigeons. The palm turtle-dove took its name from its love of homing in palm trees, and sought these afield, and in cities, even building near the temple in Jerusalem. It also selected thorn and other trees. It has a small body, about ten inches in length, covered with bright chestnut-colored feathers, the neck dappled with dark, lustrous feathers. The rock dove swarmed over, through, and among the cliffs of mountains and the fissures of caves and ravines. The collared turtle-dove was the largest of the species. It remained permanently and homed in the forests of Tabor and Gilead, around the Dead Sea, and along the Jordan valley. This bird was darker than the others and took its name from a clearly outlined collar of dark feathers encircling the neck, and was especially sought for caged pets on account of its size and beauty.

“In all, the dove is mentioned about fifty times in the Bible. Many of these references are concerning its use in sacrifice and need not all be mentioned. The others are quoted and explained from a scientific standpoint and in accordance with the characteristics and habits of the birds. The first reference to the dove occurs in **Ge 8:8-12**, in the history of the flood; then follows its specified use in sacrifice; note of its migratory habits is made, and then in poetry, prophecy, comparison, simile and song, it appears over and over throughout the Bible. In **Ge 8:8-12**, we read, "And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated." Noah first sent out a raven, because it was a strong, aggressive bird and would return to its mate. But the raven only flew over the water and returned to perch on the ark. This was not satisfactory, so Noah in looking for a bird better suited to his purpose, bethought him of the most loving and tender bird he knew--the dove. It not only would return to the ark, but would enter and go to the cage of its mate, and if it found green food it would regurgitate a portion for her or its young, or if not nesting he could tell by its droppings if greenery had been eaten and so decide if the waters were going down. And this is precisely what happened. The dove came back, and the watching Noah saw it feed its mate little green olive leaves, for the dove never carries food in the beak, but swallows and then regurgitates it to mate and young. This first reference to birds was made on account of the loving, tender characteristics of the species; the next, because they were the most loved by the people, and therefore chosen as most suitable to offer as sacrifice (**Ge 15:9**). In **Le 1:14** f, doves are mentioned as sacrifice: "And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be drained out on the side of the altar." In **Le 5:7** the proper preparation of the sacrifice is prescribed. For method of handling sacrifice see **Le 5:8-9,10**. In **Le 12:6** the law for a sacrifice for a mother is given, and **Le 12:8** of same chapter provides that if she be too poor to offer a lamb, doves or pigeons will suffice. In **Le 14:4-8** the reference for the sacrifice of a leper is merely to "birds," because it is understood that they are pigeons and doves, and it contains the specification that if the victim is too poor to afford so elaborate a sacrifice, a smaller one will suffice. The birds are named in **Le 14:22**: "Two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin-offering, and the other a burnt-offering" (compare **Le 15:14,29**; **Nu 6:10**). When David prayed for the destruction of the treacherous, he used the dove in comparison, and because he says he would "lodge in the wilderness" he indicates that he was thinking of the palm turtle." [ISBE]

before. The only difference is that the two ewe lambs are replaced by two young pigeons or turtle doves. The trespass offering of a he lamb cannot be substituted by turtle doves or young pigeons.

- h. Spiritual Cleansing of the House (14:33-53)** – The next division in this chapter relates to houses in the Promised Land that are leprous. How can the Promised Land have houses that are leprous?

**Verse 33-34** – These were clearly stated to be instructions from the LORD to ward off future bickering. Great inconveniences and large sums of money for homes and belongings could be lost in this law. This law was applied when they entered the Promised Land.

The LORD emphasized the fact that the Promised Land was given to them by Him. It was a gift! Then the LORD said something that is quite strange. He said, “I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession.” It was not to be seen as an accident but that the LORD put the leprosy in an Israelite’s house.

How do you explain the verb used to describe this action of the LORD? Explain also **Isaiah 45:7**, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.”

**Verse 35** – The owner of the house has to willingly inform the priest that his house is leprous. It is his civic duty to have his house examined if he thinks that there is leprosy in his house.

**Verse 36** – The priest shall examine the house to see if this is true. But before he does so he shall command the owner to empty the entire house. This is for the purpose of a thorough examination whereby every nook and corner of the house can be examined. But the more important reason is that “all that is in the house be not made unclean.”

**Verse 37-38** – The priest shall not touch but only look, as when he examines a person suspected of leprosy. If he finds **in** the walls, not **on** the walls, hollow strakes, greenish or reddish and they appear lower than the wall, then he shall shut the house for seven days.

John Gill made this observation, “**with hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall**: these signs agree with the other signs before given of leprosy in men and garments; the first, the hollow strakes, which are explained by being lower in appearance than the wall, a sort of corrosion or eating into it, which made cavities in it, answer to the plague being deeper than the skin of the flesh in men; and the colours greenish or reddish, or exceeding green or red, as Gersom, are the same with those of the leprosy in clothes; and some such like appearances are in saltpetre walls, or in walls eaten by saline and nitrous particles; and also by sulphureous, oily, and arsenical ones, as

Scheuchzer observes, and are not only tending to ruin, but unhealthful, as if they had rather been eaten by a canker or spreading ulcer; who also speaks of a fossil, called in the German language "steingalla", that is, the gall of stones, by which they are easily eaten into, because of the vitriolic salt of the fire stone, which for the most part goes along with that mineral, which is dissolved by the moist air. Though this leprosy, in the walls of a house, seems not to have risen from any natural causes, but was from the immediate hand of God; and there have been strange diseases, which have produced uncommon effects on houses, and other things: in the times of Narses is said to be a great plague, especially in the province of Liguria, and on a sudden appeared certain marks and prints on houses, doors, vessels, and clothes, which, if they attempted to wash off, appeared more and more."

**Verse 39** – On the seventh day, the priest will enter the house again to see if the plague has spread in the walls of the house.

**Verse 40-42** – The priest shall then command that the stones with the plague be taken away and cast into an unclean place outside the city. He shall cause the house to be scraped within roundabout and the content of the scrapping will be disposed in the same unclean place located outside the city.

Other stones will now replace the stones with the plague that were removed. New mortar shall be plastered onto the newly placed stones to match the existing portion of the wall where the plague was found.

**Verse 43-45** – If the plague breaks out in the house after the treatment (note that there was no time frame given), then the priest has no choice but to check again to see if the plague has returned.

If it is a fretting, i.e. a consuming and destructive plague, then the house is pronounced unclean. This declaration means that the house would have to be destroyed one stone at a time. This would include the timber and all the mortar of the house and all of these have to be carried outside the city to an unclean place.

**Verse 46-48** – The one who enters the house while it was shut up will be unclean until the evening. The one who lies or eats in the house will be considered unclean and will have to wash his clothes. He will then be considered cleansed.

But if the priest comes in and looks upon it and finds that the plague has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then he shall pronounce the house clean because the plague has been healed.

**Verse 49-53** –The steps for the cleansing of the house are the same as those for the person who has leprosy, at least the part done on him by the priest (14:4-7). Why? **Deuteronomy 20:5** (KJV), “*And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.*” Apparently the houses in Israel were dedicated to the LORD. Therefore they cannot be unclean. The uncleanness has to be dealt with according to the ceremonial laws.

- i. **Final Comments on the Law of Leprosy (14:54-57)** – This is the law for all manner of plagues of leprosy and scall. The leprosy called scall is described in chapter 13 especially verse 30 onwards. The law also applies for leprosy in a garment, a house, and a rising (i.e. swelling leprosy) and a scab (i.e. a leprosy that makes the hair fall off) and a bright spot (i.e. a whitish spot on the skin).

The law of leprosy was given to teach “when it is unclean, and when it is clean.”

**Observations** – External cleansing is intricately and intimately tied together with spiritual cleansing. One cannot be separated from the other. The external disease can cause the spiritual life of the person to be negated and render him unfit to stand before the LORD or to do anything that is of a spiritual nature. Worse still is the fact that he or it could infect others and render other persons or things unclean. **Haggai 2:10-14** (KJV), “*In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, **11** Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, **12** If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. **13** Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. **14** Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.*” (see Numbers 19:13).

#### 4. From Sexuality Pollution: Secretions – 15:1-33

- a. **Sexual Disease Brings Uncleanness (15:1-15)** –

**Verses 1-3** – Anyone in Israel suffering from a “running issue” is considered unclean by God. What is this running issue? The Hebrew root word is “zub.” According to some commentators it refers to the sexual disease called gonorrhea<sup>3</sup>. Other commentators like Kiel and Delitsch

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<sup>3</sup>“Gonorrhea is caused by the *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* bacteria. The infection is transmitted from one person to another through vaginal, oral, or anal sexual relations, though transmission occurs rarely with safe sex practices of condom usage with lubrication. The incubation period is 2 to 30 days with most symptoms occurring between 4–6 days after being infected. A small number of people may be asymptomatic for a lifetime. Between 30% and 60% of people with gonorrhea are asymptomatic or have subclinical disease.

argue that the text includes the disease gonorrhea but does not exclude other sexual diseases where there is a continuous discharge. The Hebrew word simply means “flowing freely or continuously.” This same word is also used to describe the phrase “Land flowing with Milk and Honey.” Kiel and Delitsch are right to make this observation. Those who subscribe to the former view would also say that the word for “flesh” here is a euphemism for the sexual organ. But there is no basis to suggest this, as the same word is also used when it refers to the cleansing section of this passage (see 15:13). The flesh there refers to the entire body. If it is leprosy the previous two chapters have already covered that. This has to concern a sexual sin where the control of the running flow is very difficult if not impossible to stop. Kiel and Delitsch further supports this argument by saying that the disease of gonorrhea was not a common disease until much later. However, this passage in the Bible argues against this assumption. With their ancient idolatrous worship which in many cases involved temple prostitutes as well as sodomy, it should not be surprising that the disease of gonorrhea existed in those days.

The man is considered unclean. Please also note that this is a man’s disease. If “zub” is a reference to all forms of skin diseases like what

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In males, symptoms include a yellowish discharge from the penis, associated with painful, and sometimes frequent, urination. Symptoms can develop from two to thirty days after infection. A few percent of infected men have no symptoms. The infection may move into the prostate, seminal vesicles, and epididymis, causing pain and fever. Untreated, gonorrhea can lead to sterility. It is not unusual for men to have asymptomatic gonorrhea. Men may complain of pain on urinating and thick, copious, urethral pus discharge (also known as *gleet*) is the most common presentation. Examination may show a reddened external urethral meatus. Ascending infection may involve the epididymis, testicles or prostate gland causing symptoms such as scrotal pain or swelling.

Fewer than half the women with gonorrhea show any symptoms, or symptoms mild enough to be ignored. Women may complain of vaginal discharge, difficulty urinating (dysuria), projectile urination, off-cycle menstrual bleeding, or bleeding after sexual intercourse. The cervix may appear anywhere from normal to the extreme of marked cervical inflammation with pus. Early symptoms may include a discharge from the vagina, discomfort in the lower abdomen, irritation of the genitals, pain or burning during urination and abnormal bleeding. Less advanced symptoms, which may indicate development of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), include cramps and pain, bleeding between menstrual periods, vomiting, or fever. Women who leave these symptoms untreated may develop severe complications. The infection will usually spread to the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, causing Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID).

Possibility of increased production of male hormones is common. Infection of the urethra (urethritis) causes little dysuria or pus. The combination of urethritis and cervicitis on examination strongly supports a gonorrhea diagnosis, as both sites are infected in most gonorrhea patients. Gonorrhea infection can also be present as septic arthritis. Instances of blurred vision in one eye may occur in adults.

Men have a 20% risk of getting the infection from a single act of vaginal intercourse with a woman infected with gonorrhea. Women have a 60-80% risk of getting the infection from a single act of vaginal intercourse with a man infected with gonorrhea.<sup>[6]</sup> An infected mother may transmit gonorrhea to her newborn during childbirth, a condition known as ophthalmia neonatorum.” [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonorrhea>]

Kiel and Diletsch suggested, then the use of man (male person) only would not be right. It is a man's disease. The woman's uncleanness is mentioned from verses 19-30.

If the flow has stopped but the disease remains, the man is still considered unclean. This highlights the fact that it is not a matter of physical but spiritual uncleanness that is emphasized by the LORD.

**Verses 4-12** – Not only will the man be considered unclean, everything and everyone he comes into contact with or who come into contact with him will also be rendered unclean. He becomes a walking contaminant!

These unclean places and people include –

- **Every place that he sits and lies -- 4** *Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean. 5* *And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone that sits on the unclean places -- 6** *And he that sitteth on any thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone who touches his skin -- 7** *And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone that he spits on -- 8** *And if he that hath the issue spit upon him that is clean; then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Every saddle that he sits on and anyone who touches or carry anything he sits on -- 9** *And what saddle soever he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean. 10* *And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth any of those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone touched by the unclean man -- 11** *And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. – Literal translation – “And all whom the one who has the issue touches (against) him and his hands he did not wash in water, then he shall wash his clothes and shall bathe himself in water and shall be unclean until the evening.”*
- **Every unclean vessel shall be broken or washed -- 12** *And the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken: and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.*

NOTE – The uncleanness simply means that the person is barred from religious activities such as handling offerings or eating sacred foods if he is a priest. If he is just an ordinary Israelite, he will be barred from all religious feasts such as the Passover and will not be allowed to bring any offerings until the period of cleansing is over if he is healed.

To be barred from all religious services and activities means that he is in a state of sin (imputed or willful) and constantly under the wrath of God. This implies that the judgement of God is upon him especially in OT times when the people of God were bound to their Land and the location of worship was critical and must be fixed by God. Job was the exception in OT times and furthermore, Job was not an Israelite. He was punished because God wanted him to grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

The period of contamination by the unclean man is till the end of the day (the Israelites count their day from 6 pm to 6 pm the following day). That is why the phrase “until the even” is used.

**Verses 13-15** – The cleansing of the unclean man is more than the “till evening” clause stipulated for the secondary kind of uncleanness. His cleansing involves the period of seven days which is for observation to make sure that the healing is complete, like the man stricken with leprosy in chapter 13. This must be a continuous period of seven days without interruption. If during this period the uncleanness returns, then he shall start the seven days all over again. He shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in running water and then he shall be considered clean.

On day eight after the cleansing, he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. He shall bring them before the LORD to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation and give them to the priest. The priest shall offer them as sin offering first, followed by the burnt offering. The reason is that the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD because of the issue he had.

NOTE – There is no distinction here between the rich and the poor. All who have been healed of the issue were to bring the same two birds. It would be turtledoves first. If they were not available, then they would bring the young pigeons since turtle doves were seasonal birds in Israel.

The requirement of both the sin and burnt offering implies that sin was present. The disease was not in itself sinful but it had the element of sin in that it was more likely occasioned by sin. Sin offering was for purification and burnt offering for atonement of sin. Israel was constantly reminded by the LORD of their sinful state and the sinful world that they were living in. How important it was for Israel to walk in holiness and that they were made aware of the Holy God that they approached. This ceremonial uncleanness could have barred the unclean one for life if he was not healed. This was a serious state of uncleanness that he had to be aware of.

The seven days of water cleansing returned him to society. The two offerings returned him back to God in terms of fellowship rather than relationship.

- b. **Sexual Thoughts at Night Brings Uncleanness (15:16-18)** -- Uncleanness is also a result of an unconscious sin. In this instance it is

caused by sexual dreams and the man wets his bed. Lawful cohabitation is not unclean. Unlawful cohabitation is not only unclean but also sinful and very often punishable by death (see Deu 22). The phrase “seed of copulation” refers to “seed from the sexual act or semen.” This means that any sexual act outside of lawful marriage between a man and a woman is considered unclean or sinful. The man shall wash himself and will be unclean until the evening. Every garment and skin where the seed of copulation touches shall be washed with water and be unclean till evening. The woman, including his wife, is considered unclean since she was lying in bed with him at that time. She shall also bathe herself with water like the man and will be unclean till evening. **Deuteronomy 23:10** (KJV) points us to an uncleanness that man might commit in the night, *“If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:”*

c. **Menstruation Brings Uncleanness (15:19-30) –**

**Verse 19a** -- This is an uncleanness committed by women. The word “issue” here is the same Hebrew word “zub”. In this case it is a reference to the flowing of blood. She shall be unclean for seven days after the period is over.

**Verse 19b-27** -- The things or persons that will be made unclean include

- **Everyone who touches her shall be unclean -- 19b . . .** and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.
- **Every place she lies and sits -- 20** *And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.*
- **Everyone who touches where she lies -- 21** *And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone who touches where she sits -- 22** *And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone or anything that was on the bed and she touches it -- 23** *And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even.*
- **Everyone in contact with the flow -- 24** *And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.*
- **Period during the issue of blood -- 25** *And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean.*
- **Everyone who touches where she lies and sits on -- 26** *Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the*

*bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. 27 And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*

**Verse 28-29** – The period for cleansing is the same as for the man above. It is seven days. On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation. The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. The meaning is the same as above. From this passage we see that the women were allowed to enter the courtyard to bring their offerings.

**NOTE** – Why was a person who has her menstrual period considered unclean? The reason is one of blood flowing out of her. This emphasis highlights the importance of blood and why believers and all Jews were forbidden to eat blood by itself. Pagan worship always involved the shedding of blood in many forms (see 1Kings 18:28). Blood is sacred in that it represents life and that which is most precious. Without it there is no life, albeit in the glorified state there is no need for blood running through our glorified bodies (see Luke 24:39). Furthermore, the teaching from God’s Word is that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Christ’s blood is the most precious of all blood and it is of infinite value. It has the power to cleanse all sinners of all their sins.

Therefore, when a woman has her discharge due to the monthly menstrual cycle, she was considered unclean during the entire period of her issue and the period of her separation. The offerings she brought were the same as for the man who had the sexual disease. The offerings brought were sin and burnt offerings.

- d. **Summary by Reiteration (15:31-33)** – The last three verses of this chapter summarize the seriousness of uncleanness. If these instructions on uncleanness were not followed strictly and they participated in any form of offerings, they would be charged by God as defiling His tabernacle. They would die for their transgression.

This was the law given to all Israelites to follow that they might not die. The LORD is a holy God and sinners have no right to approach Him in their state of sin. They were not only unclean themselves but they had the potential to make others unclean. All things that they touched (be it lying down or seated) were considered unclean by the LORD. Anyone who touched the things that these people have touched would also become unclean, but only for the rest of the day till evening. To some of us it is of no great significance but not so to the people in Israel’s time. Their lives were surrounded by many feasts and celebrations and special seasons with spiritual significance. Any form of uncleanness would bar them from participating in these activities. The loss would be considered as great because some of these feasts occurred only annually. They would have had to wait an entire year before they could participate in such activities again.

## B. The Accomplishment of Reconciliation: Day of Atonement – 16:1-34

### 1. The Way to Approach the LORD (16:1-4) –

- a. **V 1 -- The occasion** is very difficult to determine with certainty. Chapter 16 should be placed after chapter 10 if “after” is to be understood to mean immediately after the death of Aaron’s two sons Nadab and Abihu. Or, if “after” means after the deaths of the two sons and after the casuistic guidelines of chapters 11 to 15, then this is exactly where it should be. The exact timing is not as important as the main thrust of what follows next BECAUSE of the deaths of the two sons of Aaron.

They died while they were offering to the LORD during the inaugural sacrificial service. The sin was so grave that the LORD had to kill them immediately. This set the standard of holiness for the rest of the priesthood to emulate. The ministry must never be trifled with.

In later years when priests sinned like Eli’s sons in 1 Samuel, the LORD was merciful in that He did not strike them dead instantaneously as was His sovereign right. He was showing mercy. This is also true of the local church which is made up of priests, i.e. all true believers.

- b. **V 2-3 – The Limitation** of entrance into the most holy place is the result. Not that Aaron was allowed to enter into the most holy place any time he wanted in the past, for this was just after the inauguration of the priesthood. But the LORD had to put a limit to the number of times Aaron could enter. This was given to Moses to warn Aaron and future high priests that they would not be struck dead.

The reason is that before the mercy seat was the very presence of the LORD. The mercy seat was the cover for the Ark which was an open wooden box overlaid with gold, inside and out. The LORD said that He would appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. This was the very heart of the entire Tabernacle, the innermost sanctum of the house of the LORD on the whole planet. No sinner, not even the high priest who was the holiest of all the sinners on earth, was allowed to enter this innermost sanctum of the LORD

On the day he was allowed to do so, the blood of animals had to be shed first in order to sanctify him so that he would not die. These animals included – a young bullock for sin-offering and a ram for burnt offering. NOTE - the word “place” in this verse is in italics which means it was added by the KJV translators for ease of reading. The word “place” refers to the most holy place because of the context and the use of the word “holy”. Literally, this verse is translated as, “By this, shall Aaron come into the holy with a young bull, a son of an ox, as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering.”

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This is very true. Could the blood of animals provide real spiritual cleansing?

**Hebrews 4:14-16** (KJV), “*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” This is the NT model for the frequency of entering into the most holy place, the innermost sanctum of the LORD!

If this is true (1<sup>st</sup> class condition) then why are we so reluctant to enter in?

- c. **V 4 – The Dressing** of the high priest is highlighted. On that very day when he was allowed to enter, after the appropriate sacrifices had been offered, the high priest was only to wear his priestly garments from top to toe as designed by the LORD Himself. No ordinary garment was allowed even if he was the legitimate high priest. His apparel had to be approved by the LORD.

They were called holy garments! He had to wash himself with water, i.e. after he had taken a shower or bath before putting on his holy garments to prepare himself to meet with the LORD in the innermost sanctum. This was the elaborate manner in which the high priest was to observe strictly before he could enter.

He could not choose NOT to enter. When the appointed day to enter arrived, he had to be ready to enter. He represented the entire nation of Israel and the world as the legitimate high priest and mediator appointed by Almighty God to atone for the sins of the people. His role as the high priest was a type of Christ (see Hebrews 4 and 5).

Q. Can I say that the high priest was also the representative for the sins of the world?

## 2. **The Way into the Holy of Holies on behalf of the priesthood (16:5-14) --**

- a. **V 5** – This verse records the animals Aaron had to take from the people for their sins. These animals included two kids of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. This was done first before Aaron began the offerings for himself and the priesthood. The reason is that immediately after Aaron completed the offerings for himself and the priesthood, it was followed by the offerings for the people. There must not be a break. The two offerings are inter-twined.

After this was done, the focus shifts back to Aaron. He would now begin his offering.

- b. **V 6** – The first offering is the bullock for the sin offering for himself and for the priesthood. Now that he and his priesthood are cleansed by the blood of the sin offering, which is for purification, Aaron is now fit and ready to do the offering. The actual sin offering will not be done yet until after the scapegoat and the LORD's goat of the people have been completed in the next four verses.
- c. **V 7-10** – Aaron takes the offerings of the people and presents them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, which are the offerings of the two goats. One is called the LORD's and the other is called the scapegoat. By the casting of lots and whichever the lot fell on, one will be the LORD's and the other will be the scapegoat.

The LORD's goat will be offered as a sin offering. The scapegoat will be presented alive before the LORD to make an atonement with him and then to be let go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

These were all done by Aaron outside the tabernacle.

**V 11-14** – Now that the LORD's goat has been selected Aaron can now actually kill his own sin offering for himself and the priesthood. After this is done, he shall take a censer full of the burning coals of fire from off the altar of burnt offering (which had just received Aaron's sin offering), and both his hands full of sweet incense (see Exo 30:34-38 for the formula and usage) beaten small, and shall bring them within the veil. **This is the first time** on the Day of Atonement that Aaron enters the most holy place.

Whether it is to be beaten again it is hard to tell because the mixture as described in Exodus 30 is already beaten small. The phrase "beaten small" is perhaps attached to the words "sweet incense" as adjectives. It is not meant to be beaten again. These were the beaten small mixture of sweet incense as described in Exodus.

While Aaron is inside the most holy place, he is to put the incense upon the fire before the LORD. In other words, he sprinkles the sweet incense which he holds in his hands onto the coals of fire which are in the censer. The cloud of the incense will then cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony so that Aaron does not die while he ministers before the LORD inside the most holy place.

While Aaron is inside the most holy place, the blood of the sin offering is placed inside a basin held by a priest. Tradition has it that he would be stirring it while waiting for Aaron to come out to take the basin of blood from him. The continuous stirring of the blood is to ensure that it does not thicken and congeal which would make sprinkling difficult if not impossible. The continuous stirring would keep the blood thin and liquid. In order to do this Aaron has to come out from the most holy place to collect the basin with the blood and enter into the most holy

place again. This means that verse 14 describes **the second time** the high priest enters the most holy place.

Inside the most holy place, he sprinkles the blood with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward, which would be the front of the mercy seat facing the veil that separates the most holy place from the holy place (where the entrance of the tabernacle will always face when it is set up) and the mercy seat itself. This he must do seven times. According to Jewish tradition the first sprinkle is once only and upwards, followed by downwards onto the ground in front of the mercy seat seven times.

Q. What did the sweet incense represent? (see Psalm 141)

Q. What did the sprinkling of the blood signify?

### 3. **The Way into the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people (16:15-19) –**

- a. **V 15** – Aaron comes out again and enters the most holy place the third time. He now has to take the sin offering of the people which would be the LORD's goat that was chosen by lot earlier. This sin offering will be killed on the altar of burnt offering. This is for the people. Aaron will then bring the blood into the veil. This means that Aaron came out and now enters **the third time** into the most holy place.

The manner for sprinkling is exactly the same as described in verse 14 for the priesthood. The meaning and significance are the same.

- b. **V 16** – The reason for the sin offering of the people is explained here. The offering is to make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel. The word "uncleanness" refers to all sorts of filthiness that defile. This includes sexual uncleanness.

The second reason is because of the people's transgressions in all their sins. The word "transgression" refers to rebellion and trespasses. These include the sins that they knowingly or ignorantly commit such as the sin of ignorance with reference to the laws of God.

These two words cover all the sins that Israel commit. Their sins pollute the tabernacle of God.

Aaron had to do this for the tabernacle of the congregation that remained in the midst of their uncleanness. That is why the phrase used here is "for" the tabernacle of the congregation. Although the people of Israel did not enter the tabernacle, their sins would. The sense is that the LORD of Israel is holy. His tabernacle is holy. For the tabernacle to be in the midst of the sins of the people of Israel means the stain of sin is present.

This is an awesome revelation from the LORD! Why would an all holy and righteous God want to make His home in the midst of filthy

“slums”? We would not do it physically if we can help it and yet this was what God did when He made the tabernacle His home in the midst of Israel.

- c. **V 17** – While Aaron is inside the most holy place, no man is allowed to bring any offerings to the priest.

The Atonement was for all Israel. There was to be no interruption, not even for the offering of sacrifices for personal sins. All these had to wait. The nation stood still and observed as Aaron represented them before the LORD on this Day of Atonement. The Sabbath of rest was instituted on this same day. No work was allowed to be done. The sins of the people of Israel were to be atoned for on this blessed Day. It was the highest honour bestowed upon the nation of Israel to have the house of the LORD located in her midst. But with it involved all the duties and responsibilities to be a holy witness and live like the LORD according to His character and holiness and to reflect Him and not self. Israel was forbidden to carve out her own identity like other nations. Her identity was already agreed upon when Israel entered into a covenantal relationship with the LORD. She surrendered her right when the covenant was sealed. Her identity was described for us in the Bible!

- d. **V 18-19** – After the third time, Aaron will now complete the rest of the service of the Day of Atonement outside the Tabernacle. With the remaining blood of both the animals, the bullock for the sins of the priesthood, and the goat for the sins of the people, he placed the blood on the horns of the altar.

Then he shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar with his finger seven times and cleanse it. This will make it holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. The number seven is seen as the number for perfection. This is symbolic of the perfect cleansing provided for by the entire sacrificial system which was a type of Christ’s atoning work on Calvary some one thousand and five hundred years later.

#### 4. **Sins removed from the midst of Israel (16:20-28)** –

- a. **V 20-22** – **The release of the scapegoat was next.** After the work of the reconciliation of the holy place (Holy of holies) and the tabernacle of the congregation (courtyard outside the tabernacle where the laver and altar of burnt offering were located) and altar is concluded, the scapegoat is to be released. Before the release of the scapegoat, Aaron shall bring the live goat before the altar.

Aaron shall lay BOTH his hands upon the head of the live goat. The verb for “laying upon” is the same as in earlier verses. It means to lean on heavily. This act is one of total identification with the live goat. The sins of the nation (priests and people) were upon this scapegoat, hence the use

of BOTH hands. In other instances, only one hand was used (see Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 24, 29, 33). With both hands on the scapegoat, Aaron will confess all the iniquities of the children of Israel, including all their transgressions in all their sins. This putting on of hands means that all the sins of the children of Israel are upon this scapegoat. A fit man (timely) refers to one who is familiar with the wilderness and who knows where the best place to release the scapegoat is. He must also be dependable to get the job done properly. The word “fit” is not a reference to being healthy and strong like one who goes to the gymnasium regularly.

The scapegoat shall carry all the iniquities of the children of Israel to a land not inhabited. It will be released into the wilderness. The following are some key verses that reflect this same teaching that their sins are removed forever from the midst of Israel.

**Hebrews 8:12** (KJV), “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*”

**Hebrews 10:17** (KJV), “*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*” And

**Psalms 103:8-12** (KJV), “*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*”

- b. **V 23-28** –Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation. What had transpired before this that required Aaron to come into the tabernacle of the congregation (which refers to the courtyard where the laver and altar of burning offering were located)?

John Gill made this observation based upon Jewish tradition, “Having been into the most holy place a fourth time, as the Jews say, to fetch out the censer and the incense cup; wherefore the Jewish writers observe, that this verse is not in its proper place; so Jarchi from the Rabbins says, the whole section is in its order, excepting this, which was after the sacrifice of his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people; and the burning the inwards of the bullock and the goat, which were done without in the golden garments; and then he dipped himself, and washed his hands and feet, and stripped and put on the white garments, and went in to fetch the incense cup and the censer, with which he offered in the inmost place (the holy of holies):” [Swordsearcher, 5.5]

If the above is true, then the fourth time that the high priest entered the Holy of holies is not found in Leviticus 16. We know from Hebrews that there was the golden censer inside the Holy of holies.

If Gill is correct, based upon the Jewish tradition, then the follow-up explanation of the next part of verse 23 would be something like this, “the holy of holies, that is, as Jarchi interprets it, after he had brought it (the censer) out, then he clothed himself with the golden garments for the daily evening sacrifice; and this was the order of the services (on the day of atonement); the daily morning sacrifice (was performed) in the golden garments; the service of the bullock and of the goat, and the incense of the censer, in the white garments; and his ram, and the ram of the people, and some of the additions, in the golden garments; and the bringing out of the incense cup and the censer in the white garments; and the rest of the additions, and the daily evening sacrifice, and the incense of the temple, on the inward altar, in golden garments; and the order of the Scripture, according to the services, so it was:”

Q. What do you think of Gill’s commentary?

On the other hand, if we take what is recorded here as sequential, then Aaron would have just finished ensuring that the fit man did his task properly so that he could complete the remaining part of the Day of Atonement sacrifices. After he went back to the tabernacle of the congregation (the outer courtyard), he took off the linen garments that he had put on at the start of this chapter. He left them somewhere within the tabernacle of the congregation and outside the holy place. He then put on the proper high priestly garments as he offered the burnt offerings and completed the rest of the worship service.

Before he put them on, he had to wash himself first. He would have done this inside the holy place where the table of showbread and lamp stand and altar of incense were located. Water was brought into the holy place for this washing. After the washing, he would put on his high priestly garments and “come forth”, i.e he went outside to the courtyard to do the burnt offering sacrifice. He offered his own as well as the burnt offerings of the children of Israel. He did this to make atonement for himself and his people.

NOTE—the sequence is sin offering followed by burnt offering -- purification before atonement of sins.

The fat of the sin-offering was burnt upon the altar. This was according to the revealed Word of God. The fit man who let go the scapegoat had to wash himself and his clothes before he was allowed back into the camp. While he was away, the high priest would do his work. The bullock for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering whose blood were used earlier to make atonement in the holy of holies would be taken outside the camp to be burned. All the parts of the skin, flesh and dung were burned outside the camp. The one who burned them had to wash his clothes and body before he could return to the camp.

This concludes the worship service on the day of the Atonement.

5. **Day of Atonement announced (16:29-34) –**

- a. **V 29** – The Day of Atonement is the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. Every year on that day, all Israel including the strangers in the Land of Israel, shall do no work. They shall afflict their soul. The word “afflict” means self chastisement or abasement.
- b. **V 30-34** – The explanation of the Day of Atonement is given here. The high priest would make an atonement for Israel. This was for general sin rather than individual personal sins. It was a national exercise. The result – that Israel might be cleansed from all her sins before the LORD.

This was a Sabbath day of rest where no work was to be done. All Israel was to afflict her soul.

Q. What does it mean to afflict one’s soul? How is this to be applied today? Do we have a Day of Atonement?

The high priest whom the LORD appointed and consecrated would minister in the priest’s office. Only the LORD has the power to make someone holy, not the church or any institution or any man.

Q. What is the meaning of “laying of hands” today during ordination or installation of pastors and missionaries?

The high priest shall put on his holy garments for the first part which were the inner linen garments but not the entire priestly garments as described for us in Exodus 28.

His duty was to make atonement for (verse 33) –

- The holy sanctuary;
- The tabernacle of the congregation;
- The altar;
- The priests; and
- All the people of the congregation.

This was to be an everlasting statute (i.e. ordinance, custom, practice) for Israel, to make atonement for Israel once a year for all their sins.

Q. Is there a difference between the manner in which the items for worship were atoned and the people were atoned? How can things be atoned? Are there religious objects that require atonement in the local church today? Are there people to be atoned today? Is the significance of the Day of Atonement one of salvation or witness?

**C. The Ceremonial Standard: Reverence for the Blood – 17:1-16**

Blood has always fascinated man. It is said that America’s first President, George Washington, bled to death as a result of the treatment he received from his physicians. They practised blood-letting at that time, sincerely believing that letting the blood flow out of the patient could cure him. One quart (just under 1 liter) of

Washington's blood was let out when he died (an average person has about 5 to 6 quarts of blood) [see [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1370/is\\_v19/ai\\_3664128/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1370/is_v19/ai_3664128/)].

Blood has been shed and drunk by men during some animalistic or cannibalistic rituals. They believed that it would give them power. Practitioners of these demonic rituals have performed human sacrifices throughout the ages including our modern age. They truly believe that blood has some kind of power in it. It is dark red in colour. Perhaps the colour fascinates the worshippers. The Balaam prophets had cut themselves and blood flowed with the hope that their gods would hear their cries which they made from morning till evening. **1 Kings 18:27-29 (KJV)** *“And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”* [Emphasis added]

There was no superstition involved here when the LORD gave Israel very clear instructions regarding the total abstinence of eating or drinking blood. A lot of blood was involved in the Levitical system of worship. Israel was surrounded by nations that were pantheistic and drinking blood was part of their way of worship. Israel came out of Egypt that practised blood sacrifices and drinking blood was part of their worship culture. [see <http://www.realitywalker.com/uncategorized/egyptian-goddess-great-pyramid-past-life/>] The LORD had to ensure that this transgression was not committed by Israel. An entire chapter is devoted to teach total abstinence from drinking or eating blood.

## **1. Safeguard against abuse of shedding of Blood – 17:1-9**

- a. Must Bring Before the LORD (17:1-4)** – The commandments in this chapter were for Aaron, his sons, and all the children of Israel. Unlike the previous chapter which had instructions for Aaron and the succession of high priests that followed, this chapter on eating or drinking blood was for all and sundry (Israelites and Gentiles), regardless of one's status in the economy of God's national witness.

Whoever (an Israelite only) kills a clean animal (ox, sheep or goat) inside or outside the camp must first present it before the LORD as a peace offering. Blood shall be imputed against him. He has shed blood and will be cut off from among his people. This law is only for Israel to keep while they wander in the wilderness. The mixed multitude that accompanied Israel out of Egypt is not included here.

Why were only clean animals involved? Why were Gentiles not included here?

The children of Israel do not need to keep this law AFTER they enter the Promised Land. [See Deu 12:15-16; 20-24]. After they enter the

Promised Land, a different commandment will be required due to the distance from the Tabernacle, their only place of worship. However, blood was still forbidden to be eaten.

The Israelite who refuses to do this will be punished. Blood will be imputed upon that man. He has shed blood and will be cut off from his people.

What does “cut off” mean? – To be cut off means a few things. It depends on the sin committed. The list is not exhaustive:

- Sin of Breaking the Sabbath – The punishment is by stoning to death. **Exodus 31:14** (KJV) *“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.”*
- Sin of Not Circumcising one’s son – The punishment is death. **Genesis 17:14** (KJV), *“And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”* **Exodus 4:24-26** (KJV) *“And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. 26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.”*
- Sin during the Global Flood – It is death by drowning. **Genesis 9:11** (KJV) *“And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”*
- Sin of Idolatry – To be stoned to death. **Leviticus 20:2-3** (KJV) *“Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.”* [see also verses 4-9]
- Disease such as Leprosy – Ostracism. **2 Chronicles 26:21** (KJV) *“And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land.”*

The exact meaning of “cut off” here in v 4 is difficult to determine. It could be ostracism or death. This was a serious sin as seen by the punishment imposed. Either way death was the outcome. Ostracism in the wilderness outside the camp would result in death.

He has to bring it before the tabernacle of the LORD as an offering. Could this be as an expression of thanksgiving? It is definitely one of ensuring that there is no worship of God done behind His back in another place. There must only be one place of worship and no copycat or abuse of any form of worship. The worship of the LORD has always been an extremely serious consideration in the eyes of God. Worship must be done only in accordance to Holy Scriptures or else the LORD will reject it. Man cannot worship God liberally in any manner he likes. God will not accept the Christianization of a carnal form of worship. God guards jealously against false worship and for true worship. It must never be abused in any way.

It is not as arbitrary as man would like today. Worship has to be reverential and awe inspiring. God must be the only focus. Man comes before Him as sinners saved by grace. He leaves behind his “cloud” as he enters the sanctuary for worship. The focus in his mind is God alone and no one else. He sings from his heart meaning every word of it. He reads Scripture as if he is hearing the very voice of God. Prayer has to be for His glory and in accordance with His Holy Word. Any presentation is to honour God and never for entertainment. He hears the preaching of God’s Word solely to receive the Word of God and not the words of man. He allows his heart and life to be transformed by the Word of God. True worship has all these elements which each worshipper must experience.

- b. **Purpose for Bringing Explained** (17:5-7) – The purpose of this command for Israel is that the children of Israel might bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field and offer them before the LORD as a peace offering.

Why was it called a peace offering? This was not for sins committed. It was a precautionary command. Common was the worship of the Egyptians and heathens in the past to worship in the open fields. Israel was to refrain from such a temptation. Therefore they had to bring the clean animals which were to be killed for their own consumption before the LORD to abstain even from the appearance of impropriety. This was for Israel’s own protection and the testimony of the LORD.

The procedure for the peace offering was followed according to Scriptures as found in chapter 3. Hence, **Leviticus 17:6** (KJV), “*And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD.*” It was a sweet savour unto the LORD because of the obedience of the Israelites in this matter.

They must not offer sacrifices to devils as they did in the past, probably when they were in Egypt as slaves. This shall be a statute forever unto Israel throughout their generations.

What is the difference between statute and commandment? A statute refers to a manner or custom whereas a commandment refers to a law or an order. Since both were from the LORD, both were important in the life of Israel for her spiritual wellbeing.

- c. **Punishment for Disobedience** (17:8-9) – Moses was commanded by the LORD to say to Aaron, the priests and all Israel that anyone including strangers who sojourned among Israel, and who offered a burnt offering or sacrifice and did not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to offer it unto the LORD, he shall be cut off from among Israel.

The stranger who sojourned among God's people who were to bring burnt offerings cannot refer to unbelieving Gentiles. They had to be proselytes. It was of greatest importance that all of God's people partook in worship services. Stringent instructions were clearly given to safeguard Israel from apostasy or spiritual decay. This safeguard had to be kept by God's people. The policing was to be done by God's own people as their brothers' keepers. The abuse must not be allowed to spread and must be stopped at all costs by God's people.

This portion of the instruction was to be kept even after they have entered the Promised Land.

## 2. **Warning against Eating Blood – 17:10-16**

- a. **Blood Never to be Eaten** (17:10) – God's people, all Israel and proselytes, are forbidden to eat the blood of all the animals and birds that Israel was allowed to eat. Fish, locusts, etc. were not included here. It is not just blood within the flesh that is forbidden but blood on its own. If the dentist is treating your teeth, you might swallow your own blood. This is not included in this prohibition.

Is the Christian allowed to go for blood transfusion?

The LORD said that he would personally set His face against that man and would cut him off from Israel. The manner in which this was to be done is not explained. There is no recorded incident whereby this was carried out by the LORD.

If the phrase "strangers that dwell among Israel" is referring to proselytes, then this injunction in verse 10 would also refer to Israel and proselytes only. This law did not apply to unbelievers.

There is a clear distinction between God's people and Gentiles. God's people are not to impose Christian principles on unbelievers and expect them to behave like Christians.

**Deuteronomy 14:21** (KJV), "*Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may*

*eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother's milk."*

Should we impose the Ten Commandments on unbelievers today and can we condemn them for not keeping them? What about the Sabbath Day law?

- b. **Reason for not Eating Explained** (17:11) – The life of the flesh is in the blood. Take away the blood, man dies. God gave blood to Israel to be offered upon the altar to make an atonement for their souls. Blood has the efficacy to cleanse man of his sins. [Heb 9:12-14]

Blood represents life. To eat something that represents life is wrong. Christ's blood was represented in the blood of the animals that were offered to God. This spiritual significance was given efficacious power by God Himself. Man could not offer any kind of blood he liked. God determined the entire manner in which it was done and only those whom He appointed as His priests were allowed to offer them. God alone also determined the animals that were accepted, with details such as without blemish. Man had no right or power to make his own rules for the cleansing of his sins.

**Hebrews 9:22** (KJV), "*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*" Blood as it is could not take away sins. It represents life but that is all. The LORD deemed it efficacious to take away sins.

- c. **Blood must be Drained** (17:12-14) – God's people could never eat blood at all. This rule still applies today for all Christians (see Acts 15).

Any of the clean animals that an Israelite or a proselyte caught had to be killed and the blood drained before it could be eaten. The blood was poured onto the ground and covered with dust.

The reason is the same as mentioned above. Life is in the blood. Anyone who eats blood will be cut off.

- d. **Eating Animals that Died by Itself** (17:15-16) – For whatever reasons, whether inadvertently or not, if an Israelite or a proselyte ate an animal that died by itself or torn by beasts, he shall be unclean. He had to wash his body and garments and was considered unclean for the rest of the day, i.e. till evening. After that he was considered clean.

If he refused to clean himself spiritually, then he would bear his iniquity. This meant that an unclean state would be turned into a state of sin. Offerings would have to be offered for the cleansing of his sin. If he refused then the wrath of God would continually hang over his head. He

would be at the mercies of God and God could punish him any time He liked because of his refusal to deal with his uncleanness and later his sins.

APPLICATION – The application from this chapter is clear. All believers throughout the ages, when instructed from God’s Word, must refrain from eating blood. It is forbidden by God’s command. Blood is of efficacious importance because God deems it such. Otherwise it is just blood. Why did God use blood? It is because blood represents life. In eternity, we will be made of flesh and bones and not flesh and blood (Luke 24:39).

The worship of God is of utmost importance and must never be done any way we like. It must be in strict accordance with God’s revealed will.

#### **D. The Moral Standard: Ethical Conduct – 18:1-22:33**

##### **1. Purity in the Family: Sexual Morals – 18:1-30**

###### **a. The Biblical Basis for Sexual Purity – 18:1-5**

**18:1-2 (A Personal Relationship)** – No further explanation is needed. This is not for discussion but to be obeyed unconditionally. Do not question the rationale behind it. The following are similar to the Ten Commandments in the strength of their prohibition (negative “lo” plus imperfect). WE know this because the basis for the following commands is, “I am the LORD your God.” The covenantal Name is emphasized which points to the believer’s personal relationship. “If I am the LORD to you, then obey me” is basically what the LORD is saying. The word “God” is used to highlight the power of God. He will also punish Israel if Israel will not listen to the following commands. This is stressed in the last few verses on the chapter.

**18:3 (Thou Shall not Do)** – Israel was still in the wilderness. They had not yet entered the Promised Land. However, the LORD already knew the sins that were in the Land of Canaan. Israel was expressly warned not to commit the sexual sins of Egypt that they just came out of. The LORD warned them NOT to do so. The strength of prohibition is the same as that of the Decalogue. Past experiences can be deadly if not repented of constantly. They hide in the innermost recesses of our minds. Psychologists use these past experiences as a basis for not accepting responsibilities for one’s own actions. This is not what the Bible teaches. The past is one thing and the present is another. Man cannot blame their past for their present sins and behaviour, especially for the believer.

Q. Since unbelievers do not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them, can they blame their past for the sinful present?

The LORD also warned Israel against patterning their sexual lives after the Canaanites. The sins of the Canaanites are listed in this chapter as a warning to Israel and us. Now we understand why the LORD had to destroy the Canaanites for their sins were full (cf. Genesis 15). Their sins were heinous and evil to the core. Israel was further warned not to walk,

i.e. live, in the ordinances of the Canaanites. These ordinances include their manners and customs. Many would call them their precious culture! In the name of culture and preserving our culture many sins have been committed and superstitions perpetuated. Sons and daughters have been ensnared by these “cultures and customs.” All customs and cultures must be subject to the Word of God. No matter how precious or how old these “cultures”, they must be cast aside and rejected as wrong and even sinful in some cases. We are Christians with many different cultures. However, all cultures originate from non-Christian and often idolatrous beginnings. We have to evaluate every cultural practice to see if it is biblical and acceptable.

Q. Can we say that certain cultural practices that originated from heathenistic backgrounds must therefore be rejected and should not be observed by believers? Would they include Christmas, Easter and the Moon Cake festival?

**18:4-5 (Thou Shalt Do)** – Israel was commanded to do the judgements of the LORD. Judgements are like ordinances but with a difference. All of us make many judgements which are based upon our own thinking and evaluation. When the LORD called them judgements, they were His conclusions after HE had evaluated the circumstances. The following are examples of God’s judgements. The word “ordinances” is the same as in verse 3. Therefore, the ordinances here refer to the customs and manners that the LORD had given to Israel such as the many feasts they were commanded to keep and observe after they entered the Land of Promise.

Their response must not be verbal or mental ascent but a life lived in light of God’s judgments and ordinances. The reason is: “I am the LORD.” God began this section with His Name and ended it with His Name. The relationship of the believer with his LORD is the basis for this high and biblical sexual relationship.

Verses 4 and 5 are very similar. The LORD deliberately mentioned it twice to stress the great importance of living a right and biblical sexually moral life. Christians are to have the highest sexual standards. Pastors and elders must maintain this high standard.

Q. Do you think a pastor who commits/committed adultery while in office should be allowed back into the same ministry, i.e. be pastor again, even after he has gone through all the necessary counselling and has repented? What if he commits the sin of homosexuality? What if he is a pedophile?

**b. Who believers are NOT allowed to marry – 18:6-18**

The phrase “shalt thou not uncover” appears 12 times in 13 verses. The phrase “neither to uncover” in verse 18 has the same strength of prohibition although it is not translated the same as the other verses. In reality then, it is a total of 13 times.

**18:6 (Setting the biblical Tone)** – No Israelite is allowed “to approach to any to uncover their nakedness”, i.e. marry their next of kin. The only uncovering of nakedness that is not sinful in the eyes of God is between husband and wife. Again the phrase “I am the LORD” is used. The following judgements are non-negotiable. These did not come from Moses or from any church or nation or man. They came from the LORD and are to be applied throughout the ages as long as there are sinful people on this earth. These are not cultural practices but compulsory for the people who are called by God’s Name.

The following are the next of kin that Israel was forbidden to marry.

**18:7 (marrying parents)** – Such a sin is unthinkable and yet the LORD had to command that it be not committed. Is this sin committed today?

**“Man married his mother** -- An Iraqi refugee with residence permission in Norway married his own mother, in a desperate attempt to bring the rest of his family to the country. It worked, initially, but now both he and his mother face two years in prison.” [<http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article1082292.ece>]

**“Marrying your son!!! ‘I wanna marry my son’ – Who says wonders will cease? By KLN & Agencies**

“A Zimbabwean woman and her son have done the unthinkable – they have fallen in love with one another. And now they want to marry since the mom, Betty Mbereko from Mwenezi in Masvingo, is six months pregnant and expecting her son’s child. Mbereko (40), who was widowed 12 years ago, has been cohabiting with her first child, Farai Mbereko (23). She confirms that she is six months pregnant and that she has decided it is better to “marry” her son because she does not want to marry her late husband’s young brothers, whom she says are coveting her. Betty stunned a village court last week when she said the affair with her son had begun three years earlier. She said after spending a lot of money sending Farai to school following the death of her husband, she felt she had a right to his money and no other woman was entitled to it. “Look, I strove alone to send my son to school and no one helped me. Now you see that my son is working and you accuse me of doing something wrong. “Let me enjoy the products of my sweat,” she told the village court. Farai said he was more than prepared to marry his mother and would pay off the ilobola balance his father had left unpaid to his grandparents. “I know my father died before he finished paying the bride price and I am prepared to pay it off,” he said. “It is better to publicise what is happening because people should know that I am the one who made my mother pregnant. Otherwise they will accuse her of promiscuity.” But local headman Nathan Muputirwa says: “We cannot allow this to happen in our village, mashura chaiwo aya, (This is a bad omen indeed). In the past they would have to be killed but today we cannot do it because we are afraid of the police.” He warned them to break off their marriage or leave his village. They chose the latter and

have left the village for an unknown destination. – (Source - The Weekend Tribune.) Courtesy of: <http://kenyalondonnews.co.uk>”

Now we understand the command from the LORD to all believers. The depravity of sinful man knows no bounds when it comes to sexual sins.

**18:8 (marrying step mother)** – This was the sin committed by the believers in the church in Corinth (cf. 1Cor 5:1-13). It was the nakedness of the father that was sinned against. This means that it was compared with the sin of Ham in the days of Noah in Genesis 9. Children must never violate the nakedness of parents. This was and is a serious sin.

**18:9 (marrying sister)** – This command forbids the marrying of one’s own sister. It was not so in the days of Cain and Abel. Why did God not allow it now when He allowed it then? The following dialogue is taken from the internet –

[<http://app.reach.gov.sg/reach/YourSay/YourDiscussionCorner/tabid/117/ptid/414/page/31/totrecs/309/threadid/3381/forumtype/posts/Default.aspx>]

“Historia (I am a Guest) said:

Who was Cain's wife?

According to Genesis, Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters apart from Cain, Abel and Seth.

>>>>> Which verse??

This is why Cain was worried that he might be killed by others after he killed Abel.

>>>>> There are OTHER people, but it did not say that it is Adam and Eve children.

Cain probably married his own sister, although it was not unlawful to marry his mother then.

>>>>> Marry own sister (how convenient) which verse of genesis or Torah say that cain and abel has other sister?? Dont add to the scripture. You know the punishment.

>>>>> Anyway, that is still incest, do you marry your own sister ?? Is it very noble too, to marry your own siblings???

The law to forbid sexual relationships among close relatives came many many years later at the time of Moses.

>>>>> So, god changes his mind... intially, incest is good, is ok, later it is not ok ??? If so, then this argument "God created adam and eve, not

adam and steve" will no longer hold water, because god can also change his mind."

**18:10 (marrying granddaughter)** – Age gap aside, this was probably a common sin in the days of Moses and Joshua. It is not an improbable sin today!

**18:11 (marrying step sister)** – As long as there is a sister relationship, even though there is no blood relationship, the Israelite is forbidden to marry her.

**18:12 (marrying paternal aunt)** – An Israelite is not allowed to marry his father's next of kin such as his father's sister. **Exodus 6:20 (KJV)**, "And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram *were* an hundred and thirty and seven years."

**18:13 (marrying maternal aunt)** – The argument is the same as for the paternal aunt. The difference is that in this instance, it is the nakedness of the father's wife that is stated.

**18:14 (marrying uncle and uncle's wife)** – The relationship of uncle and parent seems to be the same as far as the marriage law is concerned.

**18:15 (marrying daughter-in-law)** – This is a serious sin. The family relationship would be shattered.

**18:16 (marrying sister-in-law)** – No marriage between an Israelite and his brother's wife is allowed when she has already given birth to the brother's children. If the brother dies before there were any children, then the rule is that she is to be married to the next of kin including the husband's brother. **Deuteronomy 25:5 (KJV)**, "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her." This was for the purpose of continuing the family line. This forms the basis for the kinsman redeemer concept.

**18:17 (marrying step daughter and step granddaughter)** – If an Israelite man marries a woman and she has a daughter, he is not allowed to marry the daughter even after the woman has died. The reason is she is the woman's near kinsman. This is also true for the woman's grandchildren. This is a wicked sin.

**18:18 (marrying sister of the wife when wife is still alive)** – The rule is that when the wife is still alive, an Israelite is forbidden to marry the wife's sister. This will vex her and uncover the wife's nakedness. If the wife dies, it seems that then he is allowed to marry the wife's sister. The family relationship would also be jeopardized.

c. Sexual Sins Listed – 18:19-23 --

**18:19 (no sexual relationship with a ceremonially unclean woman)** – The command here is clear. This has to refer only to a husband and wife relationship and not to any other such as fornication or adultery. Under such circumstances as when the woman is having her menstrual cycle, she is considered unclean. The husband is not to come near her until she is clean again. **Leviticus 15:19** (KJV), “And if a woman have an issue, *and* her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.”

**18:20 (no sexual relationship with neighbour’s wife)** – This is part of the tenth Commandment. The neighbour’s wife must be honoured and respected. This includes the wives of all friends and acquaintances.

**18:21 (Spiritual fornication and adultery warned)** – This verse, if not seen from the perspective of sexual sin, would seem out of place. This is spiritual adultery when God’s children would turn to embrace other gods. In this instance, it is the chief god of the Ammonites that is referred to. Molech was a heinous god of the Ammonites.

“Molech, or Moloch, which signifies "king," was the idol of the Ammonites. His statue was of brass, and rested on a pedestal or throne of the same metal. His head, resembling that of a calf, was adorned with a crown, and his arms were extended in the attitude of embracing those who approached him. His devotees dedicated their children to him; and when this was to be done, they heated the statue to a high pitch of intensity by a fire within, and then the infants were either shaken over the flames, or passed through the ignited arms, by way of lustration to ensure the favor of the pretended deity. The fire-worshippers asserted that all children who did not undergo this purifying process would die in infancy; and the influence of this Zabian superstition was still so extensively prevalent in the days of Moses, that the divine lawgiver judged it necessary to prohibit it by an express statute.” [JFB Commentary, Swordsearcher 5.5]

**18:22 (Homosexuality condemned)** – This is a clear condemnation against the sin of sodomy. Homosexuality is categorically condemned in the BIBLE throughout the ages. There is no difference between then and now. It is neither a medical problem nor a genetic disposition. It is a sin. There is no getting around this condemnation from the LORD. The literal translation of this verse, “With male, thou (masculine gender) shalt not lie as lying down with a woman, condemnation it is.” The emphasis is on condemnation.

Strong prohibition is used here as in the Ten Commandments. The New Testament passage that condemns homosexuality is Romans 1. Homosexuals have no part in the kingdom of God (cf. 1Cor 6:9-11).

**18:23 (Bestiality condemned)** – Similar to the sin of homosexuality, the sin of bestiality is categorically condemned by the LORD. The use of the word “neither” points to a continuation of the condemnation. It is a most disgusting sin. The word “confusion” literally means “a violation of nature or divine order.”

d. The Biblical Consequences of Sexual Sins – 18:24-30

**18:24-25 (Defile Not yourselves)** – it is a sin that one bears alone. The Canaanites committed such sins in the days of Moses and Joshua. There is no excuse when the sins are committed by God’s people. They have been warned of the consequences. These sins are fruits of idolatry as the book of Romans reveals. The Canaanites were deep in gross sins. That was the reason for their total annihilation because their sins were full (cf. Gen 15:16). It was also to provide for Israel a land without idolatry. However, Israel failed the LORD and allowed some of the Canaanites to remain as their slaves. For this act of gross disobedience, the Canaanites became a thorn on Israel’s side for their entire stay in the Promised Land.

In the course of time, Israel compromised and sinned the same sins as the Canaanites whom they failed to destroy. The sins committed by Israel and Judah were worse than the sins committed by the Canaanites [cf. 2 Kings 17:6-23 (Israel’s destruction); 21:1-16 (Judah’s destruction)]. The land was defiled by the sins of her inhabitants. The LORD visited their iniquities upon the land and cast them out of their land. The people and the land could not be separated. The land could not sin but the people who lived in the land could.

Q. Can I say that the church today can be defiled by the sins of the congregation?

**18:26-30 (That the Land will not spew Israel out)** – Israel was categorically warned by the LORD to keep, i.e. obey, God’s judgements and statutes. The word “statutes” is the same as “ordinance” as in verses 3, 4, and 5 above. Even as they obey God’s judgements and ordinances, they must stay away from all the sins mentioned in this chapter, including the Bible. The strangers who sojourn in Israel must also not commit these sins. They are an abomination to the LORD. All who dwell in Israel must be holy even if this holiness is external. This is the law of the land that must be observed!

Q. Does this mean that Christians should be involved to ensure that the law of the land keeps sexual purity?

The LORD repeated the warning that the sins recorded here in this chapter were all committed by the Canaanites. The LORD is no respecter of persons. If Israel sin these sins, she will be punished and removed from the Land just as the LORD of Israel removed the

Canaanites. The verb used is “spew”. The land spewed out the Canaanites and will also spew Israel out if she sins these same sins. Anyone who commits these sins will be cut off from among his people.

The final warning is that Israel must keep God’s ordinance. The word for ordinance is different from the earlier word. Here the word literally means “charge.” The root word is the word for “keep or guard.” The first part of verse 30 reads something like this . . . “Therefore ye (pl) shalt keep mine charge . . .” This refers to all the above judgments or charges. If Israel will not, then she will defile herself and the LORD would have no choice but to punish her and finally remove her from the land.

The reason: “I am the LORD your God.” The LORD began and ended this chapter with the same emphasis.

APPLICATION – For some statutes the LORD gives the explanation and for others He gives without explanation. Whether we know the reason behind the commands or not, we must obey without question. This chapter contains commands without explanation. These are non-negotiable commands that must be strictly adhered to by God’s people. To break them would imperil the world just as Israel was destroyed when she broke these commands.

## **2. Conduct Pleasing to God: General Ethics – 19:1-37**

### **a. The Law of Holiness – 19:1-2**

After a list on the different kinds of sexual sins to avoid, it is timely that the LORD emphasized the positive aspects of holiness. To avoid sinning against God is NOT holiness. There must be positive actions to back up the avoidance of sins. The coin of holiness is made up of two sides – one side is of fleeing away from sin and the other is to run toward God. Every child of God must do both. Keeping only the side of obedience to God is grossly insufficient.. He who keeps away from sin but is not living a life pleasing to God is a sincerely lost soul also bound for Hell, possessing a religious life with Christ. He is a hypocrite masquerading as a child of God when in fact he is a child of the Devil

The children of Israel must not only bear the name of God but must live a life reflecting the character and attributes of God. This means that Israel must be holy because the LORD their God is holy! The NT saints are required to be holy like the OT saints. (1Pet 1:15-16)

The use of the covenantal Name YHWH highlights the covenantal relationship God has with Israel which is the basis for holiness. This was an injunction demanded of believers only. A sinner cannot be holy outside of Christ. God was not calling sinners in general to be holy outside of His perfect and holy revelation. This was addressed to Israel in the OT and the local churches in the NT. God’s people are visibly identified by their gathering together in Christ’s Name. Just as the Israel of the OT was made up of both believers and unbelievers, the NT church

is also made up of both believers and unbelievers. God calls this church and nation to be holy! You say that you know God - then be holy as God is holy!

The immediate attachment of the words “your God” (Elo-hiym) after the name YHWH is significant. All the other nations have their gods but Israel has YHWH as her God. This means that Israel must reflect the character of her God just as the other nations reflect the character of their idolatrous gods. This is an unbreakable law. AGREE?

The one we worship and call God is also the One whose character we possess. Israel as the visible representative of God on earth must reflect the character of God as a nation. The local churches today who say that they follow God and worship Christ must also reflect the character of Christ!

- Q. When did the local church begin? Is there a difference between the visible church and invisible church? When did the invisible church begin, or has it? Do you think your church reflects the character of Christ?
- Q. Is it wrong to say that genuine Christians are little gods? Is being a little god the same as “like God”? (Psa 82:6-7; John 10:34-38) Does the phrase “sons of God” mean that Christians are little gods? (1 John 3:1-3)

b. Holiness in Practical Terms – 19:3-37

**19:3 – Sabbath Law** – It is interesting to note that the emphasis is on the object of our fear and keep. We are to fear our mothers and fathers. To fear is to obey and show reverence. Obedience and showing reverence to our mothers and fathers is part of keeping the Sabbaths. The Sabbaths include the day of the week, the seventh year, and the Jubilee year.

These are all acts of faith and trust in the LORD to provide when the rests are kept. This is not an option but a command. The LORD who is the God of Israel commands it and therefore it must be kept.

The instruction therefore must come from the parents to teach their children to keep the Sabbaths of the LORD. The children are to obey willingly. The parents must teach and enforce this rule. The Lord’s Day has replaced the keeping of the Sabbath day. The Lord’s Day must be kept holy unto the Lord.

- Q. How ought we to keep the Lord’s Day holy unto the Lord? The guideline is that the Lord’s Day reminds us that this world is not our home, that the LORD is our Provider and our walk with the LORD must be kept maintained and improved with every passing day.

In the case of the Sabbath year and Jubilee year, the church applies it as a means of thanksgiving and rejoicing. The Sabbath year is a year of rest and provision by the LORD which is a reminder of our eternal dwelling

place in heaven. Resting one day out of seven, one year out of seven years and the 50<sup>th</sup> year are reminders that this world is NOT our home. We are bound for heaven.

- Q. Do parents teach their children to keep or break the Lord's Day? What did the Israelites do on the day of rest? Can being absent from the Lord's Day worship service be considered a sign of backsliding?

**19:4 – No Idols** – The prohibition is to not turn to idols (a wish). However, the next phrase is a strong prohibition likened to the Decalogue. Never make for yourselves molten gods!

Idolatry includes the intangibles like ambition or self. Turning to idols means to go after them and to serve them.

The same injunction from the LORD is that He is Israel's God. Israel must serve only the LORD and no one else. Anything short of this is a sin.

- Q. If we love our children more than God, are they our idols? If we prevent our children from going to church (morning service), is it a form of idolatry in the practical sense? Is it a form of idolatry if we tell them not to attend the evening service on Sunday but do something else instead? Is studying for exams on Sunday considered as idolatry whereby studies become our god? Is working on Sunday a form of idolatry whereby our ambition is our god?

**19:5-8 – Eating Peace Offerings** – Peace offerings were offered as thanksgiving, vow, or voluntary offerings (see Lev 7). These were to be voluntarily offered by the worshipper. It was not to be compulsory like the sin-offering or the burnt offering. The peace offering was to be offered and eaten on the same day. However, the peace offerings for vow and voluntary offerings were allowed to be eaten on the second day but must be burnt in the fire on the third day. The priest who did the offering on behalf of the worshipper was to eat them (see Lev 7: 14).

If it was eaten on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the offering was deemed an abomination. The LORD would not accept it. The worshipper would not be rejected; the fault lay with the priest. The priest or any of his sons who was allowed to eat them would be penalized. **Leviticus 7:18** (KJV), “And if *any* of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.” That soul shall be cut off from his people.

Why was it that anyone who ate on the third day would be cut off? If the peace offering represented the Lord Jesus Christ who offered Himself as our peace offering, and who was resurrected on the third day after His death, then perhaps eating on the third day would profane the hallowed thing of the LORD!

- Q. How could such a serious charge be leveled against someone who offered something out of good will?

**19:9-10 – Harvest with Care** –This passage explains the LORD provision for the poor, the orphans and widows.

Israelites who owned farmland or vineyards were forbidden to reap their harvest completely or cleanly. They were to leave something behind. The corners of their fields were not to be reaped. The gleanings were to be left on the ground. Israel was forbidden to glean their vineyards or gather every grape. They were to leave some behind for the poor and the strangers who lived in the Land of Promise because they might have embraced the LORD of Israel but were not able to own land. The basis is that the LORD is Israel's God.

They were commanded to do so. Maximizing profit or efficiency are not the issues. It was spiritual and Israel was to reflect God's character in providing for the poor and the stranger.

- Q. Should we help the poor today as a church and as a Christian? Should the church be involved in social work? Can the Christian be a social worker to help the poor? Should Christians give to the poor who are of different faiths?

**19:11 – Steal Not** – Three strong prohibitions are strung together in this verse to emphasize the importance of not stealing. To deal falsely is to act deceptively and to lie is to deal falsely. In all these three instances, the sin is stealing. The manner of stealing is highlighted in the second and third verbs.

A person who is holy is mindful to not steal. If we are not careful, we may be stealing without realizing it because of the frequency of it. Another reason is that the sin committed has been accepted as a norm and our senses have been dulled to sin.

- Q. What are some sins that are committed by believers but are not considered sinful because they are also committed by many people? Is the practice of situational ethics a sin? When God's people break the Sabbath day, is it considered as stealing from God?

**19:12 – Swear Not** – To swear falsely is to make an oath in the Name of the LORD and not keep them it. However, it is not limited to this definition. If we call ourselves Christians and do not keep our word, we have sworn falsely. The name of Christ has been profaned by our broken promises, by not keeping the vows that we make, and by simply not keeping our word. The basis again is that the LORD is Israel's God.

God always keeps His holy and perfect Word. There are no promises or prophecies that He does not or has not kept!

- Q. Do you think that not being punctual is a form of profaning God's name?

**19:13 – Rob Not** – Stealing and robbing are similar but not the same. A thief steals stealthily from homes in the darkness of night when everyone is asleep. A robber robs by confronting the victim face to face. To defraud is to cheat and by force if necessary. The believer is NEVER to defraud anyone.

For example, the wages of the one who has completed his daily hard work must not be held back till the next day. Very often, the daily wage is needed to keep soul and body together. To keep back what is due to others is to defraud and to rob from them.

- Q. If you received goods from a provision shop that gives you 30 days to pay them, and you have the funds with you to pay them immediately, would you still hold back payment till the 30<sup>th</sup> day? If you do that, would you be guilty of defrauding them? If you owe the church money that you borrowed to further your studies, and somehow you are able to pay back the whole amount, and even though the church gives you time to make payment on a monthly basis, would you be guilty of defrauding if you do not settle the debt in one payment? If you are a debtor because of bad business sense, would you try your best to pay all that you owe or would you wait until you are declared a bankrupt and your debt is automatically cleared?

**19:14 – Taking Advantage** – When you curse the deaf, they cannot defend themselves. To put a stumbling block in front of the blind who cannot see the object of stumbling is unconscionable.

The thrust of this verse is: do not take advantage of the totally helpless. Israel must fear God and must not sin this grievous sin against the helpless. The command comes from the LORD! The LORD will protect these helpless ones. They cannot fight or defend themselves but the LORD will come to their aid.

- Q. Have you taken advantage of the helpless before? Is taking advantage of the weak in business a sin? Should the Christian be motivated by the fall of others? In the banking business, can a Christian charge interest when dealing with Christians?

**19:15 – Righteous Judgement** – We make judgements every day. Those in positions of leadership make very important judgements. All judgements must be made according to righteousness. Truth must always prevail when making judgements.

The LORD condemns unrighteous judgement. Do not favour the poor and make unrighteous judgements just because they are poor. Do not favour anyone because he is rich. The status of the person should have no influence when making judgements.

- Q. Is it ever possible for believers to make judgements that are NOT based upon personality? How do you hire or fire a person? How do you

welcome or not welcome a person? How do you discipline a sinner in the church who has done you a good deed or who has three young children? How would you discipline a pastor or elder who has committed adultery but his wife has been a faithful and devoted Sunday School Teacher for the past 25 years and their children are serving the LORD in the young people's ministries?

**19:16 – False Testimony Forbidden** – this is a strong prohibition against giving false testimony or slandering. Do you not know that these are your own people that you are slandering against? Do not testify against your neighbour as a false witness to get him killed. The believer is also not to keep silent if he is a witness to a crime and if he does not testify against him to stop him, is also wrong!

Holiness includes telling the truth all the time. To help a neighbour by telling the truth requires courage.

- Q. Is exaggeration an acceptable form of stretching the truth? Is surmising, guessing, speculating, or extrapolating to form a conclusion about someone a sin?

**19:17-18 – Love thy Neighbour** – These two verses have a most unfamiliar way to define "hate". The command is that we are NOT to hate our brother in our heart. This shows that the hatred is invisible to the naked eyes. To NOT rebuke a neighbour in order to stop him from sinning any further is to hate him. One who sees a person sinning and does nothing about it will be charged for hating him by God. This is a very serious offense against God.

Two persons could be friends and one might be charged by God for hating his brother if he keeps his mouth shut. This is the sin of omission.

- Q. What if he gets angry after being told to stop sinning and he refuses to speak to you again? If the one who has sinned is a pastor or an elder or one who is older in age, should we tell him to stop sinning? Should we tell our parents that they have sinned?

Vengeance is forbidden against our own people. Bearing a grudge is also forbidden. To bear a grudge means to hold in one's heart bitterness or a vengeful spirit and wishing ill on someone. This means that we must forgive even when the other person refuses to repent and make restitution toward reconciliation. We must seek the good for that person.

On the other hand, we are to love our neighbour. A loving heart replaces the vengeful and grudging heart! This is only possible for one who is born again, and the Holy Ghost has shed the love of God abroad in his heart. The injunction is affirmed by invoking the name of the LORD! It is non-negotiable.

- Q. Is it possible for unbelievers to love unconditionally and sacrificially? What is the consequence to the believer's spiritual life if he refuses to let

go of his vengeful and grudging heart? Does that mean that the love is gone from his heart?

**19:19 – Biblical Separation** – The statutes of the LORD include certain injunctions without explanation. They are to be obeyed without question! They include: no cross breeding of the Israelite cattle, no sowing with mingled seeds, and not wearing any garment that is mingled with linen and woolen. They must wear garments made of pure wool or linen.

This is a constant reminder to the Israelites that they are separate from the rest of the nations around them. Their way of farming and dressing keeps them separate and from making any business ventures with Gentiles.

Q. Can NT believers do something similar to remind them of their life of separation from unbelievers around them?

**19:20-22 – Lieth Carnally** – The injunction concerns lying carnally with a woman who is a slave. In Exodus 21:1-11, God dealt specifically with both male and female Jewish slaves. Marriage or freedom was to be given to a female Jewish slave. In this passage of Leviticus 19, there is no mention of whether the female slave was Jewish or not. The punishment upon the slave girl who was neither betrothed to a man by her master, nor redeemed, i.e. set free, nor given her freedom, was that she shall be scourged. The phrase, “she shall be scourged” literally means, “punished, she shall be.” The implication is that both of them would be brought before the court or the elders to be judged. If they were found guilty, then she would be scourged. The assumption was that she was a willing partner in this sin. They would not be killed because she was not free. Apparently the man would NOT be scourged, only the/his slave girl. If the sexual sin was committed by a married man, or committed with one party who was already betrothed, then the penalty would be applied (Deu 22:22-32). In the case of two single Israelites who have committed fornication, they would have to get married, or the man would pay the girl’s father some restitution if he does want his daughter to marry the man (see Exod 22:16-17).

However, this man has committed a sin against the LORD. He shall bring a trespass offering unto the LORD before the door of the tabernacle. Public humiliation would be his punishment including the cost of a ram to be offered as a trespass offering. The priests shall make an atonement for him before the LORD and his sin shall be forgiven him.

Q. Do you think that this is fair to the slave? Is it right to have different laws for the Jews and for the Gentiles?

**19:23-25 – Uncircumcised Fruits** – There was a procedure that was to be followed when Israel entered the Promised Land. This pertained to the fruits grown in the Promised Land. When Israel entered the Land of Promise and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, Israel shall consider the fruit as uncircumcised, i.e. unclean, for three years. They

were not to be eaten. In the fourth year, they were given to the LORD as holy and to praise the LORD. In the fifth year shall Israel eat the fruit of the Land. Obedience to this injunction from the LORD would yield unto Israel future increase.

This instruction was concluded with the common phrase, “I am the LORD your God.” The command was given without need for explanation and was to be kept because God said so! Three years of cleansing before offering to the LORD first and then Israel was allowed to eat. In the meantime, they would eat off the Land whatever they could find.

The principle is that there is a spiritual cleansing to be done before anything that is given by man can be accepted by the LORD. Man cannot give whatever they want to the LORD whenever they like. God is NOT man. Man’s standard is never good enough for God. This is again another lesson on faith for the people of Israel to observe. They trusted the LORD to provide when they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years without food and water. They did not lift one finger to obtain them and yet they did not lack. Having arrived in the Promised Land this period of hard labour without eating any fruit of the ground until after four years is again a matter of faith and trust in the LORD to provide. **THE FOOD ON OUR TABLE IS NOT DUE TO OUR HARD WORK BUT THE LORD’S GRACIOUS PROVISION.** The sooner we realize this the better it is for us to walk by faith and to please God rather than man.

- Q. Should we do the same and not collect any salary for three years, and give the fourth year’s salary entirely to the church? When do we put God to the test and when is it a matter of faith?

**19:26 -- No Eating of Blood** – That eating or drinking blood is closely associated with witchcraft and black magic is seen in this verse. The LORD forbade the eating of anything with blood, which includes strangled animals, or blood on its own.

Enchantment, i.e. whisper a magic spell, and superstitions were forbidden to be practised by God’s people. These were probably performed with blood and the consumption of it.

- Q. Should a believer say things like lucky, or touch wood? Are you superstitious?

**19:27-28 – No Tattooing or Defacement** – The Israelite men were to have beards and facial hair. They were not allowed to round the corners of their heads, i.e. to trim their side burns or the hair at the temple. Jewish commentators have surmised that the pagan gods of the Middle East nations did that to please their gods. The Israelites were to distinguish themselves from such idolatrous association. They were forbidden to mar or trim the corners of their beards as well. They were to grow their beards

naturally without trimming them. Again, the possible reason according to the Jewish commentators was that these were practised by the heathens to gain favours from the gods. Israel was to practise biblical separation in their grooming.

God expressly forbade remembering the dead by means of cutting or printing marks such as tattooing. Such acts were practised by the heathens to get the attention of their gods, as in the battle between the Baal priests and Elijah on Mount Carmel. When their gods did not hear their prayers, these idolatrous priests cut themselves to get their attention. Such bodily harm was like spiritual blackmail to get what they want. This was not what God wanted from His people. The LORD made this a non-negotiable prohibition by invoking His Name.

Q. How important is personal grooming for the believer today? What guidelines should determine personal grooming and dressing?

**19:29 – No Prostitution** – This seems to be a no brainer; and yet the LORD had to include it for Israel to comply as if He knew there were wicked men who would subject their own daughters to such a devilish sin. One of the main reasons for this warning was the fact that in idolatrous worship, prostitution was part of their worship ritual. However, the people of God must be like the LORD and not like the idols of the heathens. The sin of prostitution would soon lead to a family of other sins. The Bible describes the impact of prostitution as turning Israel into a land “full of wickedness.”

Every woman was a baby and a child before she grew up to commit such a heinous sin. The fault would lie with the adults and parents who failed their own children by not bringing them up according to godliness and the fear of God. Israel had the priesthood to teach her and the Word of God to guide.

If Israel chose to replace God’s perfect and holy Word and to ignore the teachings of the Levitical priesthood, she would have no one to blame but herself. On the other hand, if the failure was on the part of the priesthood in not teaching the Word of God faithfully and in abusing the system of worship, then the greater sin would be committed by the priests and Levites. This was a sin that could be dealt with in the nation of Israel but not in the world because the world does not have any capacity or ability to deal with it. The church today must deal with this sin. The local churches have taken over the role of the nation of Israel as the visible manifestation of God’s grace and mercies through Jesus Christ.

Q. Is there a difference between prostitution and marrying many husbands, albeit one after the other? What about those who have multiple sleeping partners? Are the sins of prostitution similar to the sins of fornication and adultery?

**19:30 – Sabbath and the Sanctuary** – It is interesting to note that the Sabbath and the Sanctuary are linked together in this verse. It is also noted that the word “Sabbath” is in the plural, which means that it refers to all the Sabbaths – day, year, and jubilee. These were periods of rest whereby no work was to be done. They were tests of Israel’s faith and trust in the LORD to provide. The Sabbaths were meant to keep Israel on her toes and never to forget her LORD. The easiest Sabbath to observe was the Sabbath day because it involved only one day of rest. The most difficult Sabbath to keep was the jubilee because Israel would have to trust the LORD to provide for her needs for more than three continuous years. This was a continuous command from the LORD that Israel had to observe. Israel had to “keep”, which means to guard the Sabbaths.

Q. Would you guard something that is not precious? How would you guard something that is precious to you? Would you protect something that you love with all your heart?

Israel was also told to reverence the LORD’s sanctuary. The sanctuary had to refer to the tabernacle (see Exo 25:8). This was the dwelling place of the LORD in the midst of His people Israel. To reverence the sanctuary means to stand in awe and fear the place where the LORD dwells! The significance was the presence of the LORD in the midst of Israel. He knew and saw everything that Israel did and whatever happened to Israel was always within His control because He was with Israel! Israel would always be safe and provided for. A NT parallel passage is Mark 4:35-41.

When the LORD linked the two teachings on Sabbaths and sanctuary, the lesson is that the enemy of keeping the Sabbaths is FEAR. The fear of not being provided for when they do not work! Is God able to supply our every need if we do not work? To reverence the sanctuary is to acknowledge the presence of the LORD in the midst of God’s people. Will He allow something untoward to happen to His people when He is in the midst of them? God forbid!

Q. What keeps us alive . . . is it the food and drink that we consume or is it the LORD?

**19:31 – Black Magic Forbidden** – literally, it means “Do not give face to . . .” necromancers and “do not search out for the purpose of worship” wizards, i.e. conjurers, from the root word “to know.” These fortune tellers were supposed to know the future. Israel was prohibited very strongly by the LORD to have anything to do with these evil men who consulted the dead and meddled with the future. Israel would be defiled if she consulted them or had fellowship with them. Israel was to stay far away from them and have no dealings with these people.

The reason for this prohibition is that the One who gave this prohibition is the LORD! The covenantal relationship is the basis for Israel’s obedience. Israel had made a covenant with the LORD and was forbidden to commit spiritual adultery with these enemies of God.

- Q. Is it acceptable for professing believers to read the horoscope in the newspapers or on the internet just for fun? Is it acceptable for believers to talk about the Chinese zodiac signs?

**19:32 – Honour the Elderly** – Standing up when an elderly person comes into your presence is an expression of respect that must be obeyed by believers today as well. The reason is that they are aged.

Why should respect be shown to the aged? The answer from the LORD is not because that they are old or deserve any respect but rather a demonstration of our fear of God. The basis is the covenantal relationship Israel had with her God. Life and death are in God's sovereign hand alone. No man lives beyond what the LORD has determined! It appears that those who lived long were accorded honour by the LORD. The LORD kept them alive to teach the younger ones about life and what life has done to them, for better or for worse. The younger learn by observing the lives of the older ones who are ahead all the time. They would make the right choices or the mistakes first.

- Q. The question is: HOW do we show honour and respect? Does it mean that we cannot or should not tell them that they have sinned or done wrong? Can we raise our voices in anger or show impatience at our elders?

**19:33-34 – Caring for Strangers** – If a Gentile visits or lives in the Land of Israel, he shall be accorded the care and love as if he was an Israelite. The Israelites were forbidden to vex, i.e. maltreat him. The basis for this teaching was Israel's past. Israel was a stranger once in Egypt and treated as slaves. She would therefore understand the feelings of victimization and must not do it to others.

Israel was to love them; not only was Israel NOT to vex them, she was to do good to them as well. If they are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them a drink. If they are without a home, invite them into your home. Remember all the Land of Promise was owned by Israelites only. Gentiles could not own any parcel of land in Israel. If they come into Israel as a stranger, there is no way they could "build" a home and own it in the Land. Gentiles would be "stranded" like a visitor in a foreign land, without friend or money! They must not be ill-treated but be looked after as if they were Israel's neighbours or even family! Once again, the covenantal relationship is the basis for this instruction. However, this verse has the additional phrase, "your God." This is an emphasis on the power and authority of God as the God of all the earth. He is the LORD not only of Israel but also of all people!

- Q. Would you invite a stranger into your home and even to stay with you? If not, then will you be charged with breaking God's instruction? Or is this for the OT homes only? Does Hebrews 13:2 apply here?

**19:35-36 – Honest Business** – All the types of businesses are covered here in these two verses. “Meteyard” includes tailoring and other vocations that use the metering; “in weight” involves scales to weigh all kinds of transactions and “measure” includes all transactions that involve liquids. Balances and weights were used to conduct business. An ephah was a unit for dry measure such as corn, wheat and things similar. An hin is a liquid measure for oil and grape juice. These must be just and not be tampered with to cheat the customer.

This injunction of honest dealing with all men reflects the basic characteristic of the people of God. The reason given by the LORD for this injunction was that the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt. Other nations would take advantage and cheat whenever they could. However, Israel was to be a nation of honest people who will deal with all alike, i.e. justly and fairly. Note that the phrase “your God” is also used here. The absolute sovereignty of God who is all-powerful was significantly highlighted for Israel’s consideration! The LORD made Israel out of nothing! The nation of Israel belonged to the LORD. She had to reflect the characteristics of God. She had no right to live any way she liked!

- Q. What is the difference between charging interest and a usury? If a believer lives in a village where he is the only one who sells a particular item that is indispensable to the villagers, is it right for him to mark up his price exorbitantly? Is it right to do business in the church?

**19:37 – Observe all the Statutes and Judgements** – All these statutes, i.e. ordinances or customs, and judgements, i.e. judicial instructions or laws, must be obeyed. The LORD was not asking for permission, neither was He giving Israel an option. He sealed it here in the last verse of the chapter with the authoritative call, “I am the LORD!”

The word “observe” is the same word for “keep” in verse 30. This word means to guard and to obey.

### **3. Punishment for Violations: Sanctions – 20:1-27**

- a. **20:1-6** – The Punishment for the Sin of Idolatry – Certain penalties have been pronounced by the LORD for this list of sins. In the previous two chapters (18 and 19), the list pertained to the kind of actions that the LORD would consider as sinful. Penalties were not mentioned. However, in chapter 20, the penalties were rather grievous, which are death, being cut off and childlessness. Each one of these punishments involved termination of life or preventing life from beginning. The issue is: could they bring an offering or offerings for the atonement of their sins and hence prevent the judgement from coming to pass? Was it just for the LORD to impose this law on non-Israelites? Can we impose Christian principles on non-Christians at our work place? Can we impose Christian expectations about proper dressing in church on our visitors?

Q. Is there a sin such as “the unpardonable sin”?

The first on the list of sins is the sin of idolatry. This applies to both the Israelite and the stranger who dwelt in the Land of Promise. The sin was that of giving his seed (masculine gender) to Molech. According to **1 Kings 11:7** (KJV), “Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.” Molech was the god of the Ammonites. Some commentators interpreted this verse as not actually burning their seed with fire but a kind of purification and fire was used to dedicate their seed to their god Molech. However, the literal meaning of the words cannot be denied. Idolatry will lead any man to perform such rites. Do not underestimate the carnality of sinful man is the warning to all, even to the people of Israel who had been endowed with much spiritual blessings, revelations and responsibilities.

In later years Israel did cross the line and offered their children to be burned by fire because of their idolatry that consumed them. See **2 Kings 17:17** (KJV), “And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.” **2 Kings 21:6** (KJV), “And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *him* to anger.” **Jeremiah 19:5** (KJV), “They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind:” and **Ezekiel 16:20-21** (KJV), “Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter, **21** That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them?” The people of God sarcastically taunted the LORD in **Micah 6:7** (KJV), “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?”

The penalty was certain death. The strength of the certainty is also in the penalty given by God to Adam in the Garden of Eden. This is the strongest form of certainty whereby the same verb (to die) is used together with the infinitive preceding the imperfect. The manner of death was by stoning. The “people of the land” refers to the Israelites only. The death penalty was the highest form of honouring life.

Q. Why did God impose the death penalty on idolatry? It is so common in our age and there is no penalty at all, not to mention the death penalty.

The LORD Himself would set His face against that man who gave his seed to Molech. The LORD said that He would cut him off. The meaning of “cut off” was to stone him with stones by the people of the land as in verse 2. The reason for such a severe punishment by the LORD was that

this sin defiles, i.e. pollutes ceremoniously or religiously the sanctuary of the LORD. The Israelites had been set apart for the LORD's use. They were to serve only the LORD and no one else. Such jealousy from the LORD is biblical and good, like a man who is to be devoted to his spouse only and he is to do so jealously. This is a good kind of jealousy that is based upon righteousness. When there is love, jealousy is present. When there is no love, jealousy is absent. The LORD's people had been sanctified to serve the LORD and worship Him in His holy temple only. For the people of God to give their seed to Molech was to commit spiritual adultery.

The second reason is that they would profane the holy Name of the LORD. The word "profane" has the idea of "making common or violating the honour." In defiling the sanctuary, the consequences were physical; whereas the word "profane" involved intangible results. Israel bore the name of the LORD. By showing such a grand devotion to Molech in offering their seed, they would bring shame and defilement to the name of the LORD.

Q. How does a believer today defile the sanctuary of the LORD? In what ways can he profane the name of the LORD?

Regarding those who refuse to punish and stone these evil men to death by stoning, the LORD would turn His wrath against them and their families as well (vv 4-5). The LORD would cut them off together with all those who went a whoring to commit the whoredom with Molech.

This is a serious warning to anyone who sees a brother in sin and does nothing about it. He becomes a partaker of the sin and will receive the punishment as well. Being our brother's keeper is serious business. There is no going around this sin. When a brother falls into sin we must help him to stop sinning. If the sin is serious and involves the death penalty, then we have to report him to the elders and the judgement has to be meted out accordingly.

In this case it was the death penalty. If the sin was covered up and not exposed but allowed to continue, it would permeate throughout the entire village or city. Then the entire city or village would have to be destroyed. If this was not done, then the entire tribe would be affected and the people of the land would have to destroy the whole tribe for the sin of idolatry. The lesson to learn is to nip the sin in the bud before the sin "blossoms" and the stench of that sin destroys many. The sin of idolatry is not a lonely sin. It captures hearts and minds whereby lives of loved ones would be ruined in the process, including the lives of infants and young ones.

The LORD described this sin of offering one's seed to Molech as whoredom. This was spiritual adultery. The penalty was death to all.

Q. Do believers commit this sin today? If so, in what way could he commit such a sin today? If you know of one who is committing this sin today, how would you handle it?

The LORD will set His face against anyone who turns after familiar spirits, i.e. necromancers, and after wizards, i.e. soothsayers or fortune tellers, and goes a whoring after them, i.e. committing spiritual adultery. There is a play on verbs here. The sinner is said to have “set his face” to go a whoring after the necromancers and soothsayers, and the LORD will “set His face” against these idolatrous men. He would cut them off from among his people, i.e. the people of Israel. The meaning of “cut off” has to refer to stoning or at least death by the hand of the LORD. It was not ostracism from the society but to be taken away from among the people by death.

Q. Did these laws apply to the Gentile nations? Did these laws apply to the Gentiles who lived in the Land of Promise? What is the rationale for your answers? Why did God have such a high and holy standard against the sin of idolatry?

- b. **20:7-8** – The Call for Holiness – Sandwiched between the first sin of idolatry and the rest of the sins is the standard that the LORD demanded and expected from His people. The LORD demanded sanctification from His people. The word “sanctify” is in the reflexive stem, which means that it is like the middle voice. The individual had to sanctify himself. No one could do it for him. It was to be a personal effort and application to make himself pure and clean spiritually. After fleeing from sins, turn toward God and obey all that is expected of the believer. Sanctification is to turn from sins and to be holy is to turn toward God. Another way of putting it is: obey the “thou shalt not” doctrines, which is sanctification, followed by obeying the “thou shalt” doctrines, which is to be holy.

The basis for this command is “I am the LORD your God.” The covenantal relationship is significant here. The Name of the LORD was used only with reference to Israel and no one else. The LORD might PUNISH Gentile nations in the Name of the LORD but there was never an appeal to them to repent and come back to Him. The use of the covenantal Name implies a prior established relationship. This prior covenantal relationship means that the expectation of the LORD was justified. The people of God who entered into a covenant with Him must bear the image of the God that they believed in. This is a non-negotiable demand made by the LORD to all who call upon His Name. When Israel commits sins that deviate and mar this nature of holiness the LORD has to punish. That is why this standard is sandwiched between the previous sin and the following sins. This is to drive home the importance of bearing the Name of the LORD and reflecting it in a life of holy living.

Q. Can an unbeliever sanctify himself without Christ? Can an unbeliever be holy before God apart from Christ?

The manner in which this holiness is to be kept is to obey God's statutes. Obedience to the Word of God is the objective measure of whether one is holy or not. The LORD will use the Word of God to sanctify the believer. He is actually made holy by the Word of God by the LORD Himself! This is the power that lies in the Word of God. The preaching and teaching and study of the Word of God are paramount and keys to spiritual growth. There is no growth outside of the Word of God. Which is more important - prayer or love or fasting or the Word of God in the believer's life?

Q. Is there an alternative way of sanctification other than the Word of God? If so, how is it done and who does it?

- c. **20:9-16 – The Sins with the Death Penalty** – The imposition of the death penalty is the highest form of honouring life. Those who reject and abolish the death penalty have a low view of life. They are the barbarians and not the proponents of the death penalty. The reason is that the death penalty is viewed from the perspective of the victim rather than the culprit. If a life has been taken by murder, then the only equitable form of just payment is with one's own life. There is no other way! Any other substitution is a travesty of justice.

In this section of the Book of Leviticus, we shall find the list of sins for which God had invoked the death penalty. This is the view and standard of God on holiness and justice. The list includes –

Verse 9 – curseth his father or his mother—the word “curseth” has the idea of showing contempt to one's parents and to bring them down by speaking ill of them in the presence of others;

Verse 10 – the adulterer and adulteress who commit adultery;

Verse 11 – the man who lieth with his father's wife;

Verse 12 – the man who lieth with his daughter-in-law;

Verse 13 – the man who lieth with mankind, i.e. sin of homosexuality;

Verse 14 – the man who marries his wife and his wife's mother, i.e. his mother-in-law;

Verse 15 – the man who lieth with a beast;

Verse 16 -- the woman who lieth with a beast;

The list is definitely not exhaustive. But it is interesting to note that the sins that demand the death penalty are primarily sexual sins. Sexual sin is THE sin that is not frowned upon nowadays. As long as it is consensual, the world will not even bother to call it a crime. Christ has prophesied that in the last days of man's existence and before His return to this world to judge it, the sins of homosexuality and fornication will cover the face of the earth. **Luke 17:28-29** (KJV), “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; **29** But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.” The acts of eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building emphasize the acceptance of the world of the sins of Sodom. Life will go on as usual when the

world turns into Sodom and her sins permeate and cover the face of the earth! The sins become acceptable to all.

Why did God impose the death penalty for these sins? The sexual sin destroys the family unit just as cursing father or mother destroys the family. God chose the families for all children. Anyone who breaks the family by a sexual sin destroys the family which in turn will inevitably destroy the society. Once the fabric of society is destroyed, immorality, idolatry and all other kinds of sins will follow. The breaking of the seventh commandment will lead to the destruction of the fifth commandment. The fifth commandment was the first commandment given by God that comes with a promise. **Ephesians 6:1-3** (KJV), “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. **2** Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) **3** That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Hence it is of the utmost importance that every believer realizes the high esteem that God has for the family unit. The destruction of the world is at stake when families crumble. The sins of fornication and adultery must be seen from this perspective, for this is God’s perspective. The consequences of sexual sins are far reaching and extremely devastating. Countries have been destroyed because of loose morals. Sexual sins are very appealing simply because of the seductive nature of the sin and the pleasurable side of this deadly evil.

- Q. What can keep the believer pure and holy? How can husbands and wives be protected from the sin of adultery and our young people from fornication?

The common phrase in these verses is “their blood shall be upon them.” Literally this phrase means that they bear the brunt of their own actions and will pay the ultimate price for their own sins. The ultimate price is the death penalty sentenced by God.

- d. **20:17-21 – The Sins within the Family** – The family is once again the heart of this discourse of the LORD. Protecting the family from defilement and destruction is very high on God’s list of priorities! The following do not explicitly result in the death penalty but the sentence of being “cut-off” is devastating enough.

The sins within the family include –

- a. Verse 17 -- Seeing the nakedness of one’s sister or half sister is a wicked thing in the sight of God. The man must have stealthily sinned against his own sister thus he is entirely at fault. The judgement is stated as, “he shall bear his iniquity.” The guilty is only the man and not the sister.
- b. Verse 18 – The Bible here does not say whether the man and the woman are married or not. Their marital status is not important because this applies also to married couples. The point to note is that

the only time when a sexual relationship is acceptable in the eyes of God is within the bonds of marriage. This cannot refer to a sexual relationship outside of marriage per se, for the condemnation against such a sin would not be one of uncleanness but fornication or adultery. When the woman is having her menstrual cycle, there must be no sexual intimacy. Both parties would be cut-off from among their people.

- Q. How would an outsider know that this sin has been committed if both husbands will not tell? If so, then how can the punishment be implemented?
- c. Verse 19 – The next family sin is that between a man and his aunt. The aunt would include his mother’s or father’s sister. He must not uncover her nakedness. This has to refer to some form of sexual sin whereby both are consenting parties. The reason is that the punishment includes both of them as the clause makes clear, “they shall bear their iniquity.” The principle is one of next of kin. The confusion within the family unit is the reason for the prohibition by the LORD.
  - d. Verse 20 – The next sin on the list is that between a man and his uncle’s wife. The punishment is that they shall die childless. The assumption is that they married one another. They will not be given any children because what would the relationship be between the child and his father if he marries his own aunty? Will the child call him father or cousin? Again, the near next of kin is the basis for the family of sins.
  - e. Verse 21 – This refers to the sin of a man taking his brother’s wife while the brother is still alive. Deu 25:7-9 is the passage that explains the necessity of a widow to marry her dead husband’s brother in order to carry on the family line. It is presumed that his brother is single and not married or else the sin of confusion will arise. This kinsman redeemer concept is allowed only when there is no adultery. God cannot allow sin to occur to solve the problem of lineage. If the brother refuses to fulfill his role of kinsman redeemer, then he will be publicly embarrassed. However, if the brother is still alive, he is obviously not allowed to marry his brother’s wife. It would be an unclean relationship and morally unclean. The punishment is childlessness.

NOTE – The clause, “he has uncovered his brother’s nakedness” simply means the shame of nakedness. This was the first indicator of the knowledge of sin when the Fall of Adam occurred. They knew that they were naked and were ashamed. Why were they not ashamed of their own nakedness before the Fall? When is the nakedness between a man and a woman acceptable in the sight of God and whereby both ought not to be ashamed? That is why it is so important that all believers dress modestly at all times.

What kind of swimsuit should a Christian girl/woman be allowed to wear?

- e. **20:22-26 – Obedience, the Condition for Remaining in the Land** – The condition for such a strict life of holiness is one of relationship. Israel had entered into a personal relationship with the LORD whereby her actions and existence as a nation was vastly different from the rest of the world. This included her dressing, farming methods, planting types, eating habits, holy days, etc, which were all based upon her spiritual relationship with God. Obedience to the Word of God was crucial if Israel was to remain in the Land of Promise. This was an unconditional arrangement between God and Israel. Israel was not allowed to do whatever she wanted and still remain in the Land of Promise. The LORD used a very strong term “spue” [old spelling for spew]. He would spue Israel out of the Land of Promise. Israel was to regard God’s Word as precious and then obey all of God’s Word. This was a non-negotiable condition. Every generation was given the same condition. If one generation failed, the LORD would send prophets or others like the Gentiles nations and Judges to stop Israel from sinning and to turn back to God. The LORD demonstrated long years of patience and long-suffering when He dealt with Israel.

**Verse 23** – Using the same strength of prohibition as the Decalogue, the LORD warned Israel never to walk in the manner of the nations that the LORD would cast out from before Israel. The reason was the sins committed by these nations. They were abominations before the LORD. When God said that these Canaanites committed “all these things,” He meant the sins mentioned here in Leviticus that Israel was warned to beware of or else they would die. God was disgusted by their sins. Israel must never commit these sins.

**Verse 24** – The LORD had promised Israel that she would inherit and possess the Land which was a gift from the LORD. It was a land flowing with milk and honey which means that the land is very fertile. Milk comes from animals that eat grass. With plenty of grass to eat they would produce a voluminous amount of milk, hence the phrase “flowing with milk.” Honey comes from bees that fly from flower to flower. From these many visits the bees will make honey. This also points to a fertile land. The fact that it continues to flow indicates a continuous fertility that will not diminish. As Israel was married to the Land, the blessing upon the physical land would be a seen as both a spiritual and physical blessing to Israel.

- Q. Can we say that physical blessings from God equal spiritual blessings? Is it correct to say that spiritual blessings are always independent of material blessings?

God says that He is the LORD and Israel’s God. He had separated Israel from the other people. It is an amazing truth that the LORD employed His Name as the basis for this relationship. The covenantal Name (Jehovah) was used to emphasize the relationship that has been sealed by the blood of Christ via the types of animal sacrifices. The name of God (elohiym)

points to the power of God and that He has the power to fulfill all that He has promised. God would do His part. Would Israel do hers? God separated Israel unto Himself for sacred use. This separation means that Israel had a spiritual significance not found in any Gentile nation.

Q. Can I say that USA was once a Christian country? Is there a country today that can be called a Christian country? What is the constitution of a Christian country?

**Verse 25** – Because of who the LORD God is and what He has done for Israel, Israel must “put a difference”, i.e. consciously and deliberately ensure that she was not like other nations around her. This difference is a visible one. The visibility was in Israel’s dietary laws. Eating any of these unclean fowls or beasts would make Israel an abomination in the sight of God. Now we understand why Daniel and his three friends refused to eat the king’s food even though it was the best food money could buy. Spiritual uncleanness was very important in the believer’s life. To be an abomination means to be unclean or filthy or loathsome.

Q. Is there any food today that if eaten might make Christians an abomination in the sight of God?

Verse 26 – This is one of the most wonderful and dearest verses in the whole Bible for every believer. It says that we are to be holy unto the LORD because the LORD Himself is holy. Holiness is an attribute which belongs to God. Only those who have the righteousness of the law can possess this holiness. The act of holiness is called practical holiness whereas the status of holiness is called positional holiness. The believer has both. The positional does not change and it is given to him the moment he is born again. Practical holiness is a lifelong process. As long as the believer is in this earthen vessel, he will struggle to maintain this practical holiness in his life. The verse here emphasizes the practical side of holiness.

Q. What is the difference between holiness and godliness?

The LORD has severed, i.e. cut, Israel out from the rest of the world in order to make Israel His possession.

Q. What did the LORD sever Israel from the rest of the world? What does it mean to belong to God?

f. **20:27—Death Penalty for Witchcraft** – The similarity between this verse and verse 6 is very noticeable. Why is there a repeat of this warning of the same sin of having a familiar spirit and wizardry? This repetition is for emphasis. The sin of witchcraft was a common sin in heathen lands. Israel needed to protect herself from this grievous sin. One who has a familiar spirit refers to a necromancer. It comes from the root word which means “a water skin or a mumble from a hollow sound.” It is like a ventriloquist who speaks without moving his lips or opening his mouth.

The wizard was a conjurer who was attributed to having secret knowledge. Literally, he was called “a knowing one”. He dabbled in black arts and magic to obtain his secrets.

The penalty was death by stoning. They were worthy of death and their own blood was upon them.

Q. How can one know more about the sin of witchcraft and wizardry in Israel? Read Deu 13.

#### 4. Ministry Beyond Reproach: The Priestly Standard – 21:1-22:33

The priests were the mediators of God. They were chosen by God alone since they were priests by right of birth. The literal meaning of the word “priest” is holiness. The mark of priesthood is holiness. It is rooted in the very meaning of the word “priest”! Therefore, every priest must be holy before God in every area of his life. The “level” of holiness of the high priest was higher than that of the priest. The LORD’s emphasis on holiness is very strong in this chapter. The priest was the mediator between God and sinful man. There was no one on earth who could do this except the ones whom God called and recognized as His priests! No one could make himself a priest and force God to accept him however sincere he might be. The mediator was just as important as offering the right offerings and offering the offerings the right way.

King Saul as the first king of Israel sinned by transgressing this law and was severely chastised by Samuel in 1Samuel 13:11-14. To make matters even worse, King Saul refused to repent of his sins and for that he was replaced by a man after God’s own heart, David.

Another incident was a sin committed by King Uzziah. He was a good king when he began his reign as king of Judah. However, pride and arrogance went to his head and he crossed the line from monarchy to priesthood. He was severely punished by God and he died a leper. **2 Chronicles 26:16-21** (KJV), “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. **17** And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were* valiant men: **18** And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God. **19** Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. **20** And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. **21** And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day

of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.”

God is no respecter of persons. When sin is committed by a child of God and there is no repentance, there will be severe consequences. Even when there is repentance, there will be consequences to be borne. We must understand the difference between forgiveness and consequences of sins. God will forgive His children when they repent, as in the cases of David and Moses. God demands a high standard of holiness in His people because they have been given much more than unbelievers. God expects a higher standard of holiness in His appointed leaders. We will learn this in this chapter.

The OT Levitical priesthood has been superseded by the NT saints who are also called priests. **1 Peter 2:5** (KJV), “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” **1 Peter 2:9** (KJV), “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”

Q. What are some differences between the OT and the NT priesthood?

The next two chapters of Leviticus teach explicitly the life and rule of priesthood, what they can or cannot do.

**a. Touching the Dead (21:1-6)** – The priests were not allowed to defile themselves from contact with the dead among his people. In other words they were not to participate in any burial and to go near the dead. Bear in mind that their presence in the tent of the dead would defile them or make them and others unclean according to Holy Scriptures (see Numbers 19:11-14). This is because of their spiritual duties. They were the only legitimate mediators between God and sinful man who could help Israel find forgiveness from God by way of their offerings. No one could do the offerings except them.

However, there were exceptions. They were allowed to be defiled for the dead close family members who included mother, father, son, daughter, brother and sister being a virgin with no husband. The law is not without compassion. It always balances truth with love and care for the family. In this case, the Levitical law was quite strict so that the ministry and work of God will not be hampered.

Verse 4 is emphatic with the same strength of prohibition as the Decalogue. The priests were NOT allowed to defile themselves as they were chief men among the people. The term “chief” is the word “baal.” is the priests were the lords among the people of Israel. The term “chief” was spiritual rather than political or economical. The priests were forbidden to be ceremonially unclean. They were to do this deliberately with conviction. Their ministry to God on behalf of the people was more

important than their personal feelings for their friends. If a priest became defiled and permission was given to him and other priests to attend the funeral of their friends, then all the priests may become unclean! Then no one could be the mediator and Israel would remain in a state of sin.

The things that could disqualify a priest from performing his priestly duties include – making “baldness” upon their head; shaving off the corner of their beard and cutting their flesh. The prohibitions in verse 5 are all written with strong prohibitions similar to the Decalogue. These were heathen practices that Israel was not to observe. There are two passages in the Bible that warn Israel against such practices -- **Deuteronomy 14:1-2** (KJV), “Ye *are* the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. **2** For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.” And **Leviticus 19:27-28** (KJV,) “Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. **28** Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* the LORD.”

When the priests attend to the dead they will be unclean. They will have to go through the ceremonial cleansing prescribed by the LORD in order that they might serve the LORD again in the Tabernacle (see Numbers 19:11-22). The risk of all the priests having dead family members all at the same time that disqualify all of them was infinitesimal.

Q. What are some superstitious words and acts that believers today ought to be careful of? Remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37?

Verse 6 -- The state of holiness of the priesthood was paramount and of utmost importance in the eyes of the LORD and for Israel too. The priests were not allowed to freely do many things unlike the ordinary Israelites who could. The priests had to live with a higher standard of holiness than the ordinary Israelites who in turn were to live on a higher spiritual plane than the Gentiles. The Gentiles lived in a manner that was likened to the days of the Judges when every man did what was right in his own eyes!

The priests were to be holy unto God. God was the one they should please and not man. If they were deemed not pleasing in the sight of God, then they would be disqualified from serving as mediators! They were not allowed to profane themselves because of the need to remain holy in order to do their mediating work, which included the work of the bread, i.e. shewbread. The shewbread was to be changed once a week, i.e. on the Sabbath day. The week old shewbread was for the priests’ consumption. The moment they become defiled their work of holiness would cease until they were spiritually clean again.

Q. Nowadays, what would disqualify a modern day priest from approaching God, if at all?

**b. Choosing a wife for the priest (21:7-8)** – The wife of the priest was to be carefully chosen. He was forbidden (strong prohibition) to marry a whore or a wife who was profane. The “profane” here included a non virgin, one of illegitimate birth, a Gentile or heathen, a woman who was barren and a divorcee. Whether or not it was her fault did not matter; the priest was not allowed to marry a divorcee. The reason, as stated by the LORD, was that the priest had to be holy unto the LORD! This is a very strong reason for proper and sanctified marriages. Verse 8 elaborates in detail the nature of a priest’s ministry which was to mediate between the sinner and the holy God! No one else was qualified except the Aaronic priesthood! The priests must be kept holy because the LORD is holy and so that the LORD could make Israel holy! The role and importance of the MEDIATOR is clearly defined here.

Q. Would you say it is true that the wife of the fulltime worker or pastor or elder or deacon could destroy his ministry? If a believer marries an unbeliever, is it such a serious sin that he/she has to be chastised? If so, what kind of chastisement would suffice? If a pastor/elder/deacon got divorced while he was still serving, is it right for him to continue to serve in the same capacity?

**c. Holiness of the Priestly family (21:9)** – If the daughter of the priest (any priest, i.e. including the high priest and the retired priest) was to profane herself by become a prostitute, she shall be burnt with fire, i.e. to die by burning! This was the most severe punishment, The Bible says that her sin would profane and pollute her father, the priest! The way to “cleanse” the father of such pollution was to remove her from the face of this earth! It would pain her father and mother very much to watch her burn to death! They would not be considered guiltless in the daughter’s pollution as she had been under their care since her birth and they were supposed to mould her character and guide her in the paths of righteousness according to Holy Scriptures. They failed her and the LORD. The LORD would have to take her back!

Q. Why was the punishment so severe? She did not ask to be born into the priestly family. Is it right to expect and impose on the children of pastors/elders/deacons a higher standard of conduct in the church?

**d. Holiness of the High Priest (21:10-12)** – The standard for the high priest was even more stringent than for the ordinary priest! His head has been anointed with oil. He has been consecrated to put on the garments of the high priest. The word “consecrated” has the idea of “filling his hand full”. He was not allowed (strong prohibition) to uncover his head and to rend his clothes. In short, he was not allowed to mourn; to do so would render him unclean and unsuitable for the ministry of the high priest! There was no substitute for the high priest! He was the only high priest. Verse 11 states clearly that he was not allowed to mourn for the dead, not even for his own parents! He was to remain inside the sanctuary and was not allowed to defile the sanctuary by an unfinished ministry because of his personal grief. Bear in mind that the sanctuary could refer to either the

Holy of Holies or the Holy Place. In this context, it would be the Holy of Holies. The high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies only once a year on the Day of Atonement (see Lev 16). His personal life was secondary to his life of ministry.

The reason for such a high standard of holiness was because of his office. This was the highest office in the Land of Israel. It was a spiritual office that must take precedence over all human relationships. The Bible declares that the “crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.” The anointing oil was on his head and hence the use of this phrase. This was a figure depicting the high office of the high priest as revealed by God. The LORD said that this perspective must not be lowered or changed. He sealed this with a declaration that He is the LORD who gave us this commandment. This was not a negotiable statute. It was binding upon every high priest without exception.

Bear in mind that the high priest was chosen by God since it was by birth! It was not by democracy or the choice man. No one was allowed to usurp this sacred office!

Q. What is the parallel highest office in the church today or is there one or none at all? In what way can we profane the work of God today?

- e. **Choosing a wife for the High Priest (21:13-15)** – The wife of the high priest must be a virgin! There was no other option. This means that the kinsman redeemer concept would not apply in his case! He was not allowed to marry as follows: -- **Leviticus 21:14** (KJV), “A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, *or* an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.” The prohibition was very emphatic. He was allowed to marry a virgin from his own people, i.e. only an Israelite. Everything must be kept in-house! A Gentile virgin believer was also disqualified! The priestly Aaronic line was very important! The high priest must not profane his seed among his people! The reason - the LORD sanctified him! The LORD did this on the day of consecration in Leviticus 8. This sanctification stands from now onwards unto perpetuity.

Q. In what way was it important? Why was a Gentile believer not allowed to marry into the Aaronic line if she was as godly as Ruth? How would Gentile blood profane the Aaronic line?

- f. **Rules in Choosing a Priest – (21:16-24)** – The first rule in selecting a priest is that of birth. This rule was determined by God and was non-negotiable. Only the lineage of Aaron could be priests. Levites were forbidden to do the work of the priests unless permission was given, as was the case in the time of King Hezekiah when the Levites were more righteous than the priests (cf. 2Chron. 29:34-36). This was the exception rather than the rule. When Korah, a Levite, challenged the priesthood in Numbers 16, he and his family and his gang were severely punished by

God. Then the LORD called for the rod to be brought from each tribe and He demonstrated without a doubt, through the budding of Aaron's rod, that Aaron was the chosen line to be the priests. The Nazarite vow would make one qualified but his life would be changed forever as was the case in Samuel. The Nazarite vow included no touching of the fruit of the vine, dead bodies and no cutting of hair. This was allowed only for an Israelite.

The priest born with a blemish was disqualified from serving in the Tabernacle. The strong prohibition used here made it emphatic! It was a holy service unto the LORD. He was not even allowed to enter into the Holy Place to change the showbread (which was to be changed once a week on the Sabbath Day). The LORD repeated this twice for emphasis (verses 17 and 18). The blemishes included being blind, lame, having a flat nose (i.e. sunken between his eyes or mutilated in a deformed manner), anything superfluous (i.e. deformed by excess of numbers such as six fingers on one hand or six toes on one foot or extra gristles (cartilage) on one ear, etc.), having a broken foot or a broken hand (whereby he became deformed even after healing), having a crookback, was a dwarf, having a blemish in his eye (i.e. cataract or blindness or some deformity), having scurvy, was scabbed, had his stones broken (i.e. damaged testicles or hernia). These were physical deformities that were visible to the eyes, and occurred either from birth or due to an accident or carelessness.

No man who has a blemish of the seed of Aaron shall neither come near the offerings of the LORD nor offer bread unto the LORD. In short, he was banned for life from entering the Tabernacle and barred from doing the work of the LORD forever.

Q. Why was the "without blemish" rule so stringent? Were all the priests who did the work of mediating believers? Is there such a rule today for modern day priests? Who are the priests today? Why was the spiritual not as important as the physical?

**Verse 22** -- The priesthood was the LORD's inheritance. This means that they were not allowed to work for a living like the rest of Israel. They were not to own any land. They were not to farm or shepherd a flock. They had to study the Scriptures and teach the duties of the priest to the younger ones, which the blemished priests were allowed to do as well. They were allowed to eat the showbread as well as the holy food given by the worshippers.

Q. What were the holy and most holy food?

The exception is made abundantly clear here in verse 23. Using a strong prohibition, the LORD restated that the blemished priest was not allowed to enter the veil (into the most holy place as well as the holy place) and he was not to go near the altar of burnt offering. The reason - he has a blemish! To do so would profane the sanctuaries (please note the use of the plural form). The sanctuaries included both the holy place and the most holy place. The LORD sanctified these sanctuaries! They had been

made holy by the LORD. A blemished priest would profane the sanctuaries! Moses told all these to Aaron and his sons and also to all the children of Israel. This made the sin of Korah and his gang even more serious since the LORD had already made it abundantly clear that Aaron was the chosen line and no one else!

- g. Rules of Life for a Priest – (22:1-16)** – A priest’s life was very different from an Israelite’s. A higher standard of holiness was expected of every priest. As mediator, chosen and determined only by God, it made him special in the sight of God. The blemished priests were to stop themselves from doing the work of the priesthood. They would be charged with profaning the Name of the LORD otherwise. They were to sanctify the LORD as unblemished priests but as blemished priests they would desecrate it! Their physical appearance was more important than their internal relationship with God.

**Verse 3-5** – The blemished priest who disobeyed and participated in the work of the priest shall be cut off from the presence of the LORD. **Verses 2 and 3** include the declaration “I am the LORD.” This was a charge that every priest had to take very seriously. They were to maintain this high standard of holiness among themselves. They were all related to each other! God must come first and all relationships must come second. The people of Israel did not have the power or authority to enforce this statute. The priests had to police one another. They “held all the cards” as teachers and enforcers of the rules of priesthood! The cut-off would be done either by the priests themselves or by the LORD.

If a descendant of Aaron was stricken with leprosy, or had a running issue, he was not allowed to eat the holy things, UNTIL HE WAS DECLARED CLEAN, but was not barred for life. The holy things here refer to ALL the items that the people brought as tithes and offerings for worship including the shewbread that was changed once a week. The holy things were NOT all the offerings the people brought for their sacrifices unto the LORD. He was not allowed to eat the “less holy” things such as the tithes of the people of Israel until he was clean. Any form of uncleanness also disqualified the priest from eating the holy things. This included: touching anything that was made unclean by the dead (i.e. not only touching the dead but also being contaminated by the dead), and having his seed go from him (i.e. sexual intercourse). The uncleanness from these lasted only one day; whereas the uncleanness from having a running issue or leprosy lasted the duration of the illness. As long as they were not cured of their illness, they would not be allowed to eat the offerings of the people.

The causes for being unclean also included touching any creeping thing that may cause him to become unclean. The phrase “whereby he may be made unclean” means that there were certain creeping things that were not unclean. The unclean and clean creeping things are listed in **Leviticus 11:20-25**, “All fowls that creep, going upon *all* four, *shall be* an abomination unto you. **21** Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping

thing that goeth upon *all* four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; **22** *Even* these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. **23** But all *other* flying creeping things, which have four feet, *shall be* an abomination unto you. **24** And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be unclean until the even. **25** And whosoever beareth *ought* of the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.”

**Verse 6** – The soul (male and female) who has touched any unclean creeping thing shall be unclean until evening, which is the end of the day. However, if he did not go through the process of cleansing, i.e. wash his flesh with water, he was still not allowed to eat the holy things. After the period of uncleanness is over, he would not be automatically cleansed. This means that he could not begin the process of cleansing until the period of uncleanness was over. Then would he be allowed to do the washing. He had to observe the entire period of uncleanness which was compulsory. The decision to wash and become clean was his choice. Therefore, we have this scenario of compulsory uncleanness for the rest of the day (until evening) and the choice to become holy to eat holy things again.

Q. What is the difference between “ordinary and unclean” and “ordinary and holy”? If the unclean priest did not wash himself and the period of uncleanness has expired, what state would he be in? Is there a NT equivalent teaching whereby one is declared unclean and is barred from the Lord’s Supper?

NOTE – The priests were allowed to eat all the holy things. The women in the priests’ families were not allowed to eat all the holy things except the heave offering. The heave offering was the thank offering. **Numbers 18:11** teaches this truth, “And this *is* thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it.”

The tithe and firstfruits offerings of the Israelites were also considered as holy before the LORD albeit they were less holy. **Leviticus 27:32** “And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, *even* of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.” This means that everything including the tenth (for the Levites only) was also considered holy in the eyes of the LORD. However, there was a difference between “holy” and “most holy”. **Numbers 18:9** “This shall be thine of the most holy things, *reserved* from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, *shall be* most holy for thee and for thy sons.” The “most holy” were for the priests only. This refers to the “holy things” that a priest who was unclean was not allowed to eat until he was cleansed.

John Gill's explanation of Leviticus 21:22 is apt: "there were things the priests eat of, which were most holy, as what remained of the meat offerings, and of the sin offerings, and of the trespass offerings, which only the males of the priest's family might eat of, and that only in the holy place; and there were others less holy, the lighter holy things, as the Jews call them, as the wave breast, and heave shoulder, and the tithes and firstfruits, which were eaten of by all in their families, their daughters as well as their sons, and in their own houses; now of each of these might the blemished priests eat."

**Verse 7** – After washing with water (ordinary water and not the water of separation because the water of separation was for the purification of sin, cf. Numbers 19), and when the sun was down, he shall be clean. Then he would be allowed to eat of the holy things. It was his food and it was his right to eat the food.

**Verse 8** – All animals including clean animals that the Israelites were allowed to eat were considered defiled if they died a natural death or were torn by beasts. If an animal died by itself, it was probably sick and therefore was considered defiled. If a beast tore the animal, the beast may have been unclean; and since there was no way to know for sure, it was safer to not eat the animal as this would render the Israelite unclean! The prohibition was emphatic and non-negotiable. The basis: HE is the LORD! The LORD does not give the reason, He just declares it so.

**Verse 9** – The priests must keep (sha-mar) these ordinances (safeguards or sentries). The word "ordinance" comes from the root word for "keep or guard (sha-mar)." The ordinances were sentries to keep the priests' life holy so that they could eat and do the work of God which is holy. Furthermore, they were the only ones who could do them! These sentries would keep them from sin so that they would not die before the LORD. If they profaned the holy things because they were unclean, and when they ate them, they would die. The LORD had sanctified them (referring to the priesthood rather than the holy things because the closest antecedent is the third plural personal pronoun "they" which refers to the priesthood). The priesthood was not man-made. The LORD alone can make a sinner into a holy person. It is ludicrous for the church to think that she has the power and the divine authority from God to turn a sinner into a saint.

Q. How does God make a sinner into a saint? Does he just do it by His declared Word and therefore a person is transformed into a saint?

**Verse 10** – No stranger was allowed to eat of the holy thing. A sojourner of the priest or an hired servant was also forbidden to eat of the holy thing. The holy things were exclusively for the priests because they were the LORD's inheritance to do the holy work of the LORD. The stranger here was not limited to the heathens but included all non priests (which included all Israelites and the Levites - as long as they were not priests.) A sojourner would be one who was temporarily staying with the priests. Likewise the hired servant was a temporary helper and not regarded as part of the priest's family. These were not allowed to eat of the holy

thing. They could watch and observe but were not allowed to eat. They were not considered unclean, but were not holy. This separation or distinction was significant because the holy ones were separated from the ordinary.

Q. Were there ordinary people in NT times or were all the people considered unclean/clean OR sinful/holy?

**Verse 11** – But if the priest “buy any soul with his money”, that soul was allowed to eat. Those born in his house were allowed to eat of the holy thing. The “holy thing” here would have to be limited to the less holy thing. The most holy thing was reserved for the priests only. The soul bought with money would belong to the priest’s family. If he was not allowed to eat the holy thing, then he would have nothing to eat because all things given to the priest were considered holy unto the LORD.

**Verse 12-13** – The priest’s daughter, who married a stranger, i.e. a non priest and not necessarily a heathen, would no longer be allowed to eat the offering of holy things. She has married out and has become a member of another family (non priest). However, if the priest’s daughter was a widow or divorced and was childless, and she returned to her father’s house to stay, she was allowed to eat of the father’s meat. It would be as if she was a youth again in her father’s house, as if widowhood or divorce had not occurred in her life. However, the rule forbidding the stranger to eat still applied. This means that she was not allowed to bring a stranger into the house. If she had a child, the child belonged to the non priest family and therefore would not be allowed to eat the holy things. God’s compassion is remarkable. He is so good to His people. His provision is just and fair.

**Verse 14-16** – If a man ate of the holy thing unwittingly, “he shall put a fifth part thereof unto it”. This means, “a fifth part of the value of what he has eaten, to an equivalent for the whole, that is, he shall pay the full value for what he has eaten, and a fifth part besides.” (cf. John Gill, *Swordsearcher* 6.1) He shall give it to the priest together with the holy thing that he was supposed to bring. The offering unto the LORD must not be profaned. If he would not do this reparation, then he would have trespassed against the LORD. The LORD’s provision was that he need not bear the iniquity of this trespass. He had wanted to bring his offering and tithe to the LORD but unwittingly ate from that which had already been set aside for the LORD and it was not brought to the Tabernacle and given to the priest yet. It might not have been a willful trespass, nevertheless it was still a sin. He had eaten that which was holy which he was not supposed to eat. The LORD had sanctified them, referring to the holy things in particular, but by application the word also refers to the priests.

Q. Why was this non blood reparation allowed? Doesn’t the Bible say that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, i.e. forgiveness, of sin? (Hebrews 9:22)

**h. Rules on Vow and Free-will Offerings -- (22:17-25)** – There is a shift in focus here. The LORD spoke to Moses and told him to speak to Aaron, his sons and to all the children of Israel as opposed to speaking only to Aaron and his sons in verse 2. The following instruction was for both the people as well as the guardians (Levites and priests) who lived in Israel. The main thrust of this section is that there is only one way of salvation for all peoples. There is not a different way of salvation for the Gentiles and another for the Jews.

**Verse 18-20** – Whosoever, including both the Israelites and the stranger who lived in Israel, that would offer his oblation, i.e. a sacrificial present or something brought near to the altar (Hebrew word is “qor-ban”), for all his vows (whatever the vow might be) and for his freewill offerings which they offer unto the LORD as a burnt offering, must offer a male without blemish. All vows were freewill offerings but not all freewill offerings were vows. These were offered unto the LORD as a burnt offering, which means that the whole animal would be burned and nothing was left behind for the priests to consume. The offering would either be beeves, i.e. oxen, or sheep or goats. Any blemish in the animal to be offered would not be acceptable to the LORD. The LORD would emphatically reject a blemished animal sacrifice, even a freewill or vow offering. This means that the vow could not be kept and the freewill offering has not been given. The LORD would reject a blemished animal offering even when the place and the heart were right.

**Verse 21-24** – In the case of anyone who offered a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to accomplish his vow or a freewill offering, the only acceptable animals were oxen and sheep. Goats were excluded. Both of these animals were also to be perfect and without blemish to be accepted by the LORD. Animals that were blind or broken or having a wen, i.e. running sores or scurvy or scabbed, were not allowed to be offered as peace offerings and were not allowed to be offered by fire unto the LORD upon the altar of burnt offering. It is noted that the list of the causes of uncleanness for the animals was similar to the list of uncleanness for the men. However, if a bullock or a lamb has anything superfluous, i.e. extra parts on its body or lacking in his parts, the animal may be offered as a freewill offering but not for a vow offering. The vow offering was given based upon a covenantal promise; whereas the freewill offering was like its namesake. The freewill offering was to be given directly to the priest and thus it was acceptable that the animal had defects like lacking in parts. However, the animals that were bruised, crushed, broken or cut were not allowed to be offered. The vow was far more serious and only animals without blemish were allowed.

Q. Why was there a distinction between animals that were superfluous like having parts lacking and animals that were injured? Why were the former accepted and the latter not?

**Verse 25** -- If the stranger who lived in the land of Israel (probably a proselyte, i.e. a heathen who has turned away from idolatry and believed in Christ), gave offerings that were blemished like what was mentioned

above, their offerings would not be accepted as well. There was only one way of salvation for all who lived in Israel. The LORD did not allow other religions to be practised in the Land of Promise.

- i. **Rules on the Animals for Sacrifice – (22:26-33)** – The age of the animals is the focus in this section. Not only were the clean animals to be without blemish, they were also to be of a certain age. The law on when the sacrifice ought to be eaten is also highlighted.

**Verse 26-28** – When a bullock (a calf) or a sheep (a lamb) or a goat (a kid) is brought before the LORD for sacrifice, it shall be seven days under the dam (i.e. mother). It means that the animal shall be fed by the mother for seven days. From the eighth day onwards shall it be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD. Some proposed explanations have included the seven days for circumcision or perhaps the seven days that God took to create the earth or that the animal did not have sufficient nutrients in it until after the seven days or the LORD wanted the animal to go through at least one Sabbath day before being offered. It could be all of the above or some of the above or none of the above. It is very hard to be certain why seven days were chosen. As for circumcision, medical doctors have suggested that from the eighth day onwards, blood clotting is present for the circumcision of the infant. But since the animal was to be offered as a burnt offering the blood clotting purpose is of no relevance.

**Verse 29-33** – The offering of thanksgiving was always a freewill offering in that it was not forced but the choice of the individual. The animal was to be a clean animal, either male or female, an ox or a sheep or a goat. On the same day the animal was to be eaten up. None of the parts of the animal was to be left until the morrow. The LORD said that He is the LORD and He dictates the manner and time. What could possibly be the significance for not keeping them till the morrow and that they were to be consumed within the same day? Leviticus 7:15-18 give a similar injunction but it pertains to food offered as a vow or voluntary offering. The food could be eaten over a two day period and on the third day the remainder was to be burned or else the offering would not be accepted by the LORD. However, the flesh for the peace offering was to be consumed on the same day that it was offered and not left until the morning (Lev 7:15). If it was eaten on the third day, the entire offering would become an abomination unto the LORD.

One possible reason for eating within the same day and not keeping until the morrow is the fear of putrefaction. Once the flesh is spoilt, the offering would be rejected. It would cease to be without blemish.

Verse 31 – Israel was to obey all that the LORD had commanded because they were precious (keep-“shamar”) truths given to them by God. This was to be Israel’s attitude toward God’s Word. They were to guard them because they were precious to Israel, then obey them or do them or practise them in their lives. The latter is the outcome of the former. Very

often when the former is absent, the latter is also absent. It is very difficult to obey God's Word when God's Word is not precious to us. The reason is that God is the LORD! The covenantal Name was used to remind Israel of their promise to obey God's Word as part of the covenantal agreement.

Verses 32-33 – Verse 31 emphasizes obedience whereas verse 32 emphasizes caution. Israel shall not profane the LORD's Name.

Q. How would Israel have profaned, i.e. polluted the Name of the LORD? How can a believer today be charged with profaning God's Name? Have you committed this sin before?

The opposite of "profane" is "sanctify." Israel was commanded by the LORD to hallow (to sanctify) the name of the LORD by the way they lived as a nation. The basis was that the LORD had hallowed His people.

Q. How did God sanctify OT saints? Was it by way of the animal sacrifices or the blood of Christ?

By living a holy life in obedience to God's Word, the children were said to have hallowed the LORD among the children of Israel. The reason for this requirement and expectation from God is that He had already hallowed Israel. The ground for this act was that the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt so that Israel would have the LORD as her God. The LORD declared this to be so and it was so.

**E. The Devotional Standard: Regular Worship – 23:1-25:55**

1. **Disciplined Time for God: Feasts -- 23:1-44** – Life in Israel was not unlike life in other nations. The holy-days of Israel and Gentile nations were similar in that they had religious significance. The main difference was that other nations' holy-days came from man whereas Israel's came from the LORD. Israel was to observe them according to God's dictates and was not allowed to change them. The significance of these holy-days was given by God, not man. Israel was to keep them for her own protection and as a testimony of God's grace and mercies in her life.

These holy-days would distinguish Israel from the other nations of the world and if kept faithfully would reflect the character of God in Israel's existence. The national witness of Israel had a spiritual significance through the observance of these holy-days. It must be noted that the sacred calendar year is different from the civil calendar year for Israel. The first sacred year is the calendar for this whole chapter. The following shows the Jewish sacred and civil calendars and our present calendar:

Jewish – Sacred	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Civil	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
English (approx)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3

- a. **Regulating Feast Days, an introduction – 23:1-2** – God commanded Moses to speak to the people of Israel regarding the feasts of the LORD. The word “feasts” literally means “appointments” or “fixed times or seasons.” When we think of feasts, we think of eating and drinking. In the context of this chapter, it simply means appointed times that God had set aside for Israel to be annual special occasions. These feasts were times when Israel met with the LORD in one way or another. The significance of this relationship between Israel and the LORD depended on the nature of the feast itself.

These appointments were to be characterized by holiness because they were holy to God. This thread of holiness would be sewn throughout all the holy-days. These appointments were to be set apart from the other days of every calendar year because they were holy convocations unto the LORD. The word “convocation” means “assembly” or “calling.” These national assemblies were determined and appointed by the LORD, not man. Everything about these appointments originated from God, not man.

Israel was the only nation whose culture originated from God. The LORD called the feasts “my feasts”. As God’s people, Israel had to observe all these feasts. They were not to be regarded as or equated with the traditions of man.

- Q. If a church member does not wish to attend the Christmas Praise service or the Good Friday service, can he be charged with sinning against God? If an Israelite did not attend the Passover or the Feast of Booths, could he be charged with sinning against God? If a church member does not attend Sunday worship service, can he be charged with sinning against God?

- b. **Sabbath Day Rest – 23:3** – First on the list of holy appointments was the Sabbath Day rest. Six days shall work be done. Man was allowed to work only for six days to keep body and soul together. That was the limit God set for man to labour for the things of this earth. Whatever God blessed them with within these six days was all they needed to live. To work on the Sabbath Day, perhaps due to greed or faithlessness, to get more was to show discontentment toward God for what He had given throughout the six days. Whatever the reason, it was a sin. There was no justification for the ordinary Israelite to break the Sabbath Day except in cases of mercy where material gain was not the motivation.

The seventh day was the Sabbath of rest. The phrase “Sabbath of rest” literally means “Sabbath of Sabbaths” or “rest of rests.” The Israelites were to lay down their work tools and spend time with God and God’s people. This was the purpose of a holy convocation. It was different from the rest of the days whereby he worked for himself. The Sabbath Day was for the LORD. The believer was to set this day aside as holy unto the LORD. He was not allowed to let anyone or anything rob him of this holy day, either by working or doing some menial task for money. The prohibition was of the same strength as the Ten Commandments. Absolutely no work was permitted! This Sabbath Day rest was to be kept by Israel while they were in the wilderness.

The reason for the rest was that the day belonged to the LORD, not man! This was a non-negotiable injunction from the LORD. Man must obey this for his own spiritual well-being. Every home in the Land of Promise was to obey. This did not apply to Gentile nations.

- Q. Did the keeping of the Sabbath Day apply to Israelites who lived outside of the Land? If they wanted to observe the Sabbath Day, how would they keep it outside Israel? Today, should a believer who works for an unbeliever or in an unbeliever's company that requires him to work on Sundays keep the Sabbath Day?
- c. **Feast of the Passover – 23:4-8** – As mentioned before, “feasts” means “appointments.” Verse 4 seems to be a title verse for the verses that follow. It seems that God wanted to make a distinction between the Sabbath Day holy convocation and the rest of the feasts. The possible reason could be the frequency of the observance. In the case of the Sabbath Day, it was a weekly observance; the rest were annual events.

Regardless of the frequency of observance, they were to be proclaimed or announced to the people of Israel according to their seasons. The word for “seasons” is the same as the word for “feasts.” Literally, these feasts were to be kept according to their respective feasts. They could not be mixed or changed according to man's fancies. The LORD set the frequency and the duration.

The Passover Feast was observed on the fourteenth day of the first month at even or evening. The Jewish day begins at 6.00 pm. The first month of the Jewish year is in our calendar the month of April. The origin of the Passover is found in Exodus 12. The LORD married the sign of circumcision with the Passover Feast when the Passover was instituted by the LORD. The uncircumcised were not allowed to take the Passover. In Exodus 12, the LORD also linked the Passover with the Feast of unleavened bread.

The Feast of unleavened bread lasted 7 days. The first and last days were to be holy convocations unto the LORD. No servile work except eating was allowed on those two days. Anyone who ate leaven during this period would be cut off. An offering made by fire unto the LORD must be made throughout the seven days. The offering included burnt offering, meat offering and a sin offering. This is revealed to us in Numbers 28:16-25. These three offerings were offered every morning and for all the seven days.

The significance of the Passover and the Feast of unleavened bread was to remind the Israelites of their humble beginning. It was the LORD who delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt by a mighty hand. The firstborn son of every Israelite home that kept the Passover and Feast of unleavened bread was spared. The Passover lamb died in the place of the firstborn son in every Israelite home. The daily sacrifices of the three offerings throughout the feast of unleavened bread taught the doctrine of

sanctification. To have leaven in the home or to eat leaven was to have sin in the home or to sin respectively. The Passover feast and feast of unleavened bread were kept only once during the wilderness wandering (cf. Num 9:1-14). When the people of Israel entered the Promised Land, they were to keep the Passover in the place where the Lord would set up His Tabernacle (cf. Deu 16:5-6). This means that the people of Israel kept the Passover only twice in their respective homes.

Living a holy and separated life from sin was the thrust of keeping this holy convocation. The doctrine of biblical separation was emphasized. Israel was a separated people unlike all the peoples of the world.

- d. **Feast of Firstfruits – 23:9-14** – The next holy convocation or assembly was the Feast of firstfruits. This could only be kept after they entered the Promised Land. It must be noted that what was planted by the Canaanites during the conquest of the Promised Land led by Joshua was not to be eaten until after the fourth year. **Leviticus 19:23-25** (KJV), “And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. **24** But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD *withal*. **25** And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I *am* the LORD your God.” It took Joshua about six to seven years to conquer the Promised Land. In the meantime, the Israelites were not allowed to eat of the fruits of the land until the fifth year. The fruits of the trees in fourth year were to be dedicated to the LORD.

In the fifth year of their harvest, the firstfruits were given to the priest as an offering to the LORD. A sheaf, i.e. an omer or a handful, of the firstfruits of the Israelite harvest was brought to the priest. The priest would then wave the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted for the Israelites. All the firstfruits from the Israelites would be given to the priests for their consumption (cf. Num 18:9-19). All the Levites would receive the tithes (10% of their harvest) of the Israelites (cf. Num 18:20-24). This was done on the morrow after the sabbath, which refers to the first day of the feast of unleavened bread sabbath. It does not refer to the regular weekly sabbath. This means that the date would be the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first month Nisan. On this day and during the rest of the days of the feast of unleavened bread, an omer of the firstfruits was given to the priest to wave it before the LORD for the people of Israel.

Verse 12 -- On that day, the people of Israel shall offer a he lamb without blemish of the first year for a **burnt offering** unto the LORD. The burnt offering was for the atonement of sin.

Verse 13 – This was followed by the meat offering. In the **meat offering** was two tenth deals (tenth part) of fine flour, which is equivalent to two omers mingled with oil. This was an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour sacrifice. Then the **drink offering** shall be of

wine, the fourth part of an hin, i.e. 660 ml. These were thank offerings which emphasized thanksgiving.

Verse 14 – The people of Israel were forbidden to eat bread or parched corn or green ears until the selfsame day that they had brought an offering unto the LORD. In other words, they were not allowed to eat the above until they had offered to the LORD first. Bear in mind that this was done during the feast of unleavened bread. Leaven was not allowed in the home of every Israelite at this time. None of the above was allowed to be used as staple food until they had brought the offerings as mentioned above unto the LORD.

Sin offering (purification) and peace offering were not included here. What was emphasized at this juncture, in the midst of the feast of unleavened bread, was that the sins of Israel were forgiven and they were to approach the LORD with thanksgiving. The firstfruits represented the provision of the LORD for His people and His people remembered that this was based upon a holy relationship between them and God (hence the burnt-offering sacrifice). They were very thankful to the LORD for everything that they had in the Land of Promise including the Land itself.

- e. **Feast of Pentecost – 23:15-21** – From the day after the sabbath, i.e. the day when the sheaf of the wave offering was offered (the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first month Nisan), the people of Israel were to count seven sabbaths, i.e. 49 days. On the day after the seventh sabbath Israel was to count fifty days. On the fiftieth day Israel shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. [The sabbath here is not to be confused with the sabbath used in the Sabbath day week.]

Verse 17 – Israel shall bring forth out of their habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals of fine flour (two omers or two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour) and make two loaves out of them. These loaves shall be baked with leaven. These were the firstfruits unto the LORD. Based upon Leviticus 2:4, only unleavened bread was to be offered unto the LORD. Therefore, this firstfruit offering of leavened bread would have to be given to the priests for their consumption.

Verse 18 -- On this fiftieth day, i.e. the Day of Pentecost (in Greek, “Pentecost” means fiftieth) in addition to the two loaves of leavened bread, Israel must also offer seven lambs without blemish of the first year, one young bullock, and two rams. These animals were to be offered unto the LORD as **burnt offerings**, together with the **meat offering** and **drink offering** which was done on the first day. The above burnt offerings were to be done on the fiftieth day together with the two loaves of leavened bread.

Verse 19 – A kid of the goats would be for the **sin offering** and two lambs of the first year would be offered for a sacrifice of **peace offerings**.

Verse 20 -- The priests would wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a **wave offering** before the LORD together with the two lambs (peace offerings). They shall all be holy unto the LORD for the priest.

Verse 21 – On this Day of Pentecost, Israel shall proclaim it is a day of holy convocation unto Israel. No servile work must be done. This would be a statute forever in all the dwellings in Israel throughout their generations.

The entire spectrum of offerings was offered during this Day of Pentecost. As this Feast of Pentecost was to be observed at the end of harvesting season, we can conclude that this feast was kept to teach the Israelites that all that they had came from the LORD. Thanksgiving, with a deep sense of gratitude to God was the emphasis. Through this annual reminder Israel would also not forget where they came from. Arrogance and pride would be kept away and in its place would be a humble heart of gratitude.

- f. **Biblical Gleaning – 23:22** – Present methods of harvesting aim for maximum efficiency and profit. Nothing must be left behind or else there would be wastage and money lost. Not so for Israel. The people of Israel were supposed to leave behind certain parts of their farm land unharvested. In fact, they were commanded to do so. By God’s command, they were NOT to be absolutely “efficient” in harvesting their crops.

The corners of their fields were to be left unharvested. They were also forbidden by God’s law to gather the gleanings of their harvest. They were not allowed to pick up the fallen spears of grain. If they were harvesting fruits or wheat or corn, whatever fell on the ground remained on the ground.

The reason for this law was to ensure that the poor in Israel, including the strangers who came to Israel to stay or visit, had food. This was the LORD’s provision of a social system to care for the disadvantaged. Strangers could not own land in Israel as the Land of Promise was divided by lot only to Israelites and not to Gentiles. Gentiles lived in Israel at the sufferance of Israel. By this biblical law of gleaning, the poor and strangers were looked after and would not suffer unjustly. The food was not free in that the poor and the strangers had to go to the farmlands to pick and “work” for food! This solves the problem of laziness as well that the present day dole system in many western countries which is a great detriment to their citizens.

The application for us is that we need to help one another but never at the expense of encouraging laziness. Helping the poor (believers) is more than just providing subsistence; it is also about their depending on and worship of God.

Q. How should we help unbelievers?

- g. Feast of Trumpets – 23:24-25** – The Feast of Trumpets was kept on the first day of the seventh month of the year. On this first day, a day of sabbath, i.e. day of rest, was instituted. On this day the trumpets were blown, unlike the normal blowing of trumpets which were done at the beginning of every month and in gladness (see Num 10:10). NOTE – To have an overview of the different reasons for blowing trumpets in Israel, read Numbers 10:1-10.

The seventh month could be compared with the seventh day and the seventh year which were sabbath day and year respectively. Here we have the seventh month whereby the most number of feasts were observed. The seventh month observed – New Year Day; Day of Judgement and Memorial (Num 29:1); Day of Atonement on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month (Lev 16); Feast of Tabernacles from 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> (Lev 23:24); and the solemn assembly held on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

This was a holy convocation or assembly that the whole nation was involved in. No servile work was to be done on this day. An offering made by fire was to be offered to the LORD. The nature of the offering is found in **Numbers 29:1-6** (KJV), “And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you. **2** And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savour unto the LORD; one young bullock, one ram, *and* seven lambs of the first year without blemish: **3** And their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, *and* two tenth deals for a ram, **4** And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: **5** And one kid of the goats *for a sin offering*, to make an atonement for you: **6** Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.” [Emphasis added]

The offerings above emphasized the forgiveness of sin, purification and thanksgiving. This marks the new calendar year for Israel. The trumpet sounds would remind Israel of the blessings they received the past year from God; at the same time they would look forward to the New Year praying for God to bless and keep Israel. It was a memorable time of reflection and contemplation as God’s people meditated on what was important and what was not, what was holy and what was sinful. They would evaluate what had weighed them down in their spiritual walk and what they needed to do to improve in their walk with Christ and to make the new year better than the year before.

- h. Day of Atonement – 23:26-32** – The Day of Atonement was one of the most special days on Israel’s calendar. This was the only Day when the high priest was permitted by the LORD to enter into the most Holy Place. This day was commemorated on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. It shall be a holy convocation to all of Israel. They shall afflict their souls and offer an offering unto the LORD. The word “afflict” means “to deal hardily with oneself” or “to abase oneself.” This means that there must be

no laughter, enjoyment or celebration throughout the Land on this Day of Atonement. The meaning of this Day is also taught in **Leviticus 16:29-34** (KJV), “And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: **30** For on that day shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that ye* may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. **31** It *shall be* a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. **32** And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, *even* the holy garments: **33** And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. **34** And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.” [Emphasis added]

The above passage reveals the scope of the atonement: It was for the holy sanctuary (Holy of holies); the tabernacle of the congregation (the holy place and the entire courtyard); the altar (used for the burning of offerings and the fire of the altar started by God that could not be put out); the priests; and the people of the congregation (Gentiles and Israelites). Everything and everyone spiritual were included here for the spiritual cleansing sacrifices.

The kinds of animals and offerings to be offered on this Day of Atonement is found in **Numbers 29:7-11** (KJV), “And ye shall have on the tenth *day* of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work *therein*: **8** But ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD *for* a sweet savour; one young bullock, one ram, *and* seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish: **9** And their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, *and* two tenth deals to one ram, **10** A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: **11** One kid of the goats *for* a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings.” [Emphasis added]

**Verse 28** – No one in Israel was allowed to do any kind of work on this Day. The priests were to make atonement for the people of Israel before the LORD their God.

**Verse 29** -- Any soul that deliberately refused to afflict himself on this day shall definitely be cut off from among his people. To refuse was like telling God that he was not interested in having his sins forgiven and that he wanted to remain in his sins! The holy LORD will not tolerate such impudence and will surely punish.

**Verse 30** – Any soul who did work on that day would be destroyed by the LORD. The word “destroy” means “to perish.” That soul would surely die. The LORD would surely know if any in Israel would dare to break this Day of Atonement by celebrating or working.

**Verse 31** – No work must be done on that Day. It shall be a statute forever throughout the generations in Israel in all their homes. This was a statute (custom) and it could not be broken.

**Verse 32** -- This was a sabbath of rest (sabbaths) unto Israel. Israel shall afflict her souls. In the ninth day of the month at even, from even to even, shall this day of rest be celebrated or kept. The Israelite day began from 6.00 pm to 6.00 pm, thus the use of “even to even”. The people would start preparing the day before the Day of Atonement.

This Day of Atonement, if kept faithfully and from the heart, would guarantee spiritual success. Once every year, all Israel must reflect on their relationship with the LORD and how they have sinned. The privilege of being the only light in a spiritually dark world must be treasured and not flippantly regarded. The Day of Atonement also reminded Israel of the mercies of God in her existence.

- i. **Feast of Tabernacles – 23:33-44** -- The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the Feast of Booths. This was because the Israelites were to dwell in booths during this feast. The start of the Feast of Tabernacles was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. This would be around September in our calendar. The Feast would last for seven days. It was a feast to be kept unto the LORD. This means that it was non-negotiable. To not keep it would be a sin. This was not a tradition of man.

The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles was a holy convocation, which means that no servile work was allowed. Examples of servile work included money making work or sending the slaves out into the field to work. Throughout the seven days, offerings were to be made by fire unto the LORD. The eighth day was also a day of holy convocation unto Israel, which means that no servile work was allowed. It was to be a day of solemn assembly like the first day.

Verses 37-38 -- These seem to summarize all the feasts mentioned from verse 1. All of them were to be holy convocations, i.e. public assemblies, unto the LORD. The offerings to be offered unto the LORD during these periods were burnt offering, meat offering, a sacrifice (most likely refers to sin-offering) and drink offering. The phrase "everything upon his day" means that every feast mentioned above was to be kept according to its respective instruction from the LORD. They were not to be mixed or interchanged at will. They were to be strictly adhered to because each and every one had its own spiritual significance.

These feasts were to be kept in addition to the regular sabbaths of the LORD such as weekly and yearly sabbaths, the gift, vow, and freewill offerings of the Israelites that were given unto the LORD. They were not

to be replacement feasts. These feasts were expensive feasts as many more animals had to be sacrificed, though there was the temptation to replace one feast for another especially when some of these feasts could overlap! For example, if a certain sabbath day fell in the middle of the seven days of the Feast of tabernacles, the master could insist that his servants go to the fields to work as there would be two other sabbath days at the start and end of the feast. He would not want to lose any more labour cost so he might send his slaves out to work to gain back that day. Anyone who refused to obey or diminish these statutes in any way would surely have to bear the consequences for sins committed.

The keeping of these feasts were part of being holy before the LORD, for these were all statutes commanded by the LORD to be kept unto Him and not man.

Verse 39 -- Back to the Feast of tabernacles. The harvesting of the crops would have been completed by the time this feast started. The first day was to be a sabbath and the last day a sabbath as well. If the feast had its first day on the Sabbath (Lord's Day), there would not be an extra sabbath rest the next day like what we have today, that if a holiday falls on a Sunday, Monday would be a public holiday.

Verse 40 -- The manner of keeping the Feast of tabernacles is explained here. On the first day of the feast, the Israelites were to take the boughs of goodly trees, i.e. branches, with fruits on them such as lime or lemon or other kinds of fruits, branches of palm trees and the boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook and they shall rejoice before the LORD for seven days.

Verse 41 -- These must be done for the next seven days as a statute forever unto the LORD. **Nehemiah 8:13-18** "And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as *it is* written. So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner."

Verse 42 – With the branches they were to make booths built on top of their flat roof houses. All Israel was to live in these booths for seven days. The Gentiles who lived in the land and the slaves of the Israelites did not need to do so. The significance of this feast is explained by the LORD in the next verse.

Verse 43 -- **Leviticus 23:43** "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God." The feast was meant to remind Israel that they lived in tents when they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Israel would remember the following --

- \* It was because of unbelief that they had to wander in the wilderness;
- \* All the adults 20 years and above who could not enter the Promised Land died in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb;
- \* It was by God's grace that they were now landlords and living in the Promised Land;
- \* They had a spiritual purpose for being in the Promised Land and they were different from other nations and must never be like them;
- \* This world is not their home and they have a home in heaven awaiting them.

Verse 44 -- Moses declared to the children of Israel all the feasts that they must keep unto the LORD in order to be a holy nation. Every nation has its own holy-days but only Israel obtained her holy-days from the LORD.

2. **Order in the Sanctuary: Tabernacle Worship – 24:1-9** -- This was to be a daily and weekly ritual that Aaron and the priests had to religiously follow. The first to be highlighted were the oil and the lamp stand. Again this instruction came from the LORD and was to be kept without question. It was a sin not to do so. Moses was to command the people of Israel to bring to him pure oil olive beaten for the light. This means that the oil would come from the people of God as their contribution to the entire event. The oil must only be olive and the purest of oil without mixture. (The anointing oil could be mixed, cf. Exo 30:22-30). **Exodus 27:20-21** "And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which *is* before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel." [Emphasis added]

Verses 2-3 -- The lamp must be burnt continuously, which means that it would be lit at the start of every new day, i.e. in the evening, and would be snuffed out at the start of each morning. This was the duty of the priests only as they were the only ones allowed to enter the Holy Place. The Lampstand was located on the left side as one entered the Holy Place; the Table of Shewbread was on the right and the Table of Incenses was placed in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

**Exodus 30:7-9** "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon." [Emphasis added]

The candlestick or Lampstand must be kept pure and clean and burning at all times before the LORD. This was symbolic of the Christ who is the Light of the world (John 8:12).

Q. Can we say that believers today are the light of the world on the earth? If the answer is yes, how are believers the light of the world? (cf. Matt 5:14). Are you the light of your world?

**Verses 5-7** -- Fine flour means the best and purest flour was to be used to bake the shewbread. The total number was 12 cakes. Two tenths deal shall be in one cake, i.e. the size of each cake shall be about two omers. One omer was the amount of manna that a man could eat in one day. Two omers would be enough bread for two men to eat in one day. The shewbread was to be placed in two rows on the table of shewbread. Aaron or the future high priest shall put pure frankincense upon each row that it might be a memorial or an offering made unto the LORD. Then the frankincense was to be burned with fire unto the LORD and not the shewbread. The shewbread would remind Israel of the manna from heaven that the LORD provided for Israel when they were in the wilderness for forty long years. It was also a reminder of the importance of eating their food with thanksgiving. The frankincense was to remind Israel that their life of faith would ascend unto the LORD as a sweet savour sacrifice when it was burnt.

**Verses 8-9** -- The shewbread was to be replaced with fresh loaves of twelve every sabbath day. This was to be done continuously as long as Israel was in the Promised Land. This was an everlasting covenant between the LORD and Israel. The week old shewbread was for only Aaron and his sons to consume, and in the holy place only. This was a most holy service unto the LORD as it was made by fire in the burning of the frankincense.

Q. Is there an example in the OT of non priests who ate the showbread, outside the tabernacle, and were not killed? (cf. 1Sam 21:1-9; Matt 12:1-9)

3. **Reverence for God's name: Blasphemy – 24:10-23** – A scenario arose that Moses had not experienced before. There was trouble within the camp. The son of an Israelitish (i.e. feminine for Israel) woman, whose father was an Egyptian, thus he was part Israelite and part Gentile, had a strife with a man of Israel. During the conflict, the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed. The word "blaspheme" means "to puncture or to put holes into something." The name of the LORD came under attack (an example would be to say that the LORD is not the Creator of Heaven and Earth; another would be that He is just one of many gods). The word "curse"

means "to lightly esteem." The woman's son probably made fun of the Name of God like saying that He is not great or He did not do the miracles recorded in Exodus. Believers in the past and today are guilty of taking the name of the LORD in vain when they lightly esteem His Name.

**Verse 11** -- He was brought to Moses to be judged. It is recorded that his mother's name was Shel'o-mith (i.e. peaceable). Why does the Bible mention his mother's name and his tribe? Perhaps it is to tell us that this incident was real and that all who lived in the Land of Israel had to comply with God's laws. There was no exception as there was only one law and one God who would judge all who chose to dwell in Israel. God is no respecter of persons! Perhaps it is also to warn us of the danger of unequally yoked marriages!

**Verse 12** – The man was put into ward or prison while they sought the mind of the LORD. Should he be punished or not, since he was part Egyptian and part Israelite? The best way to making a right judgement is to seek the will of the LORD. This would also set the standard for the rest of Israel and non Israelites who lived in Israel. Certainly Moses did not assume the role of a dictator and did not do what was right in his own eyes. How much more an elder and a pastor today ought to seek the will of the LORD in all matters concerning the welfare and spiritual well-being of the church. Consultation with fellow elders is also the way to go in making decisions of the church. They need to seek the mind of God together as they make unanimous decisions.

**Verse 13-14** – “The LORD spake unto Moses” means that Moses had asked the LORD on behalf of the people. The LORD told Moses to bring forth (imperative) the son of the Israelitish woman who had cursed without the camp and to let all who heard him lay their hands upon his head. This act of laying on of hands was not to anoint, like laying hands on the animals for sacrifice or at the time of ordination. It was for the purpose of witnessing against this person! The penalty was stoning. There is no mention of the death penalty, just the stoning. A person who is stoned may not necessarily die, unless he is stoned until he dies. The apostle Paul testified that he was stoned and he did not die (cf. 2Cor 11:25). Sharp sizable stones were easily found in Israel and in the wilderness. It was a very painful way to be punished. To stone of one of their own, who must have been screaming, must have been a very painful judgement to deliver. He was not to be stoned unless the witnesses were prepared to lay their hands on him and to swear that they heard him say blasphemous words and cursed God. This was God's mercy toward such a sinner, and the penalty for cursing father or mother was the death penalty (cf. Exo 21:17).

**Verse 15** – Then Moses was to warn the rest of Israel that whosoever cursed his God shall bear his sin. This referred only to Israelites who lived in the Land of Promise. The God of Israel is the one living and true God. The LORD has a very high regard for the third Commandment which is to not take the Name of the LORD in vain. The one who did so would have to bear his sin. It was also a warning to all Israelite parents to teach their children well; otherwise, if the children grow up and curse God, parents would see them die.

**Verse 16** – The one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death (emphatic). It appears from the severity of punishment that blaspheming was worse than cursing. The entire congregation shall stone him to death. This also applies to the stranger who blasphemes the LORD. He would be treated as one who was born in the Land. A stranger in the Land of Promise was expected to know the law of the Land. If he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death. This law is also applied today. Anyone who enters into Singapore will be dealt with according to the laws of Singapore. If he brings in drugs and is caught, or he commits murder, he faces the death penalty.

Q. What sin constitutes a blasphemy and a curse in our context today? Is it blasphemy or cursing if one teaches that the Bible has mistakes?

**Verse 17** – He who kills any man shall surely be put to death (emphatic). This is not about accidental killing but only pre-meditated murder as Exodus 21:17-36 reveals. All the different scenarios are described here to indicate which kinds of killing require the death penalty. Breaking the sixth commandment was a very serious sin as evident in the penalty given by God.

**Verse 18** – If a person kills a beast then he shall make good – beast for beast. This was probably for accidental killing and even deliberate killing of the neighbour's beast. If he kills a sheep, he pays back with another sheep of the same value. If he kills his neighbour's ox, then he pays back with an ox of equal value. This did not apply to stealing, killing and selling the beast (cf. Exo 22:1).

**Verse 19-20** – If a man causes a blemish in his neighbor, then, what he has done to his neighbour would be done to him too. This was called the breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth law. This was the law of equity and just retribution. It is not to be interpreted literally. The word “blemish” is the word “stain.” This could include staining one’s name or body. If it is his name, then it means character assassination. If it is to the body, then it refers to bodily harm. This law of equity is not found in any country today. The reason is that man's laws are twisted and based upon democracy. Man's morals are extremely corrupt today. How can corrupt men produce just laws? A good tree produces good fruits and a bad tree produces bad fruits.

#### AN EYE FOR AN EYE -- COURT RULES

[WORLD WEEKEND TODAY – 26 November 2008]

Tehran – A man who blinded a woman in an acid attack after she spurned his marriage proposals has been sentenced to the same punishment, in a literal application of Iran’s sharia “eye-for-an-eye” laws. In a highly unusual judgement, Tehran province criminal court ordered Mr Majid Movahedi, 27, to be blinded in both eyes from drops of acid in response to a plea from his victim, Ms Ameneh Bahrami. The punishment is legal under the sharia code of *qisas*, which allows retribution for violent crimes. The court also ordered Mr Movahedi to pay compensation to the victim. Ms Bahrami was left horrifically disfigured after Mr Movahedi threw a jar of acid in her face as she walked home from work in a busy Tehran neighbourhood in October 2004. She had previously complained to police about being threatened and harassed

by Mr Movahedi, whom she had known while they were both university students, but had been told no action could be taken. Since the attack, Ms Bahrami has undergone 17 operations in an unsuccessful attempt to have her face reconstructed. Her injuries led to the loss of one eye and left her blind in the other. The Iranian government has contributed US\$34,000 towards her treatment. Testifying in Mr Movahedi's presence, she told the court that she wanted "to inflict the same life on him that he inflicted on me." Asked by the judge if she wanted his face to be splashed with acid, she replied: "That is impossible and horrific. Just drip 20 drops of acid in his eyes so he can realise what pain I am undergoing." Mr Movahedi said he decided to attack Ms Bahrami after she told him she had married someone else and pleaded with him to leave her alone. "I decided to splash acid on her face so her husband would leave her and I could have her," he told the court. He said he had earlier contemplated suicide. Asked if he was still prepared to marry Ms Bahrami, he replied, "Yes, I love her."

Q. Could this be right, that if a man blinds my left eye, his left eye ought to be blinded as punishment? (cf. Exo 21:2-15) Do you think that the death sentence law in Singapore is just and equitable, or is it too harsh?

**Verse 21** — He that killeth a beast shall restore another beast of the same value. It is the life of a beast. He that killeth a man shall be put to death (this refers to murder). The life of a human far exceeds that of an animal.

Q. Should a man who killed a cat be put into prison? Should a man who killed an animal be put into prison?

**Verse 22** – There was to be only one law for all who dwelled in Israel and not two or more different laws for the strangers who lived in Israel. This would cause chaos. This dictum is also true today for every country. Everyone in Israel had to keep all the laws of Israel including the holy laws. It was a sin to have idols in any part of Israel.

Q. Should the Sabbath Law be observed by Singaporeans, or only by believers, or only by members of Calvary Pandan BPC?

**Verse 23** – The above were instructions given to Moses by the LORD and Moses gave instructions regarding the Israelitish woman's son. He was to be brought from his ward out of the camp to be stoned. The children of Israel did what they were told.

4. **Extensions of the Sabbath: Sabbatical Years – 25:1-55** – The Sabbath law is expanded here. When the people of Israel enter the Land of Promise they must keep a Sabbath unto the LORD. The LORD said in clear terms that He was the One who GAVE the Land to Israel. Israel must obey the LORD's command.

**Verse 3-7 (Keeping the Sabbath Year)** – Six years shall the fields of the Israelites be used for sowing, and six years the vineyard can be pruned and the Land can be gathered for fruit thereof. But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath ("shabbath") of rest (literally Sabbaths – "shabbathon") unto the land (note it is not the people that needed the rest). This was called a Sabbath for the LORD. Israel was forbidden to sow their fields and prune their vineyards.

**Verse 5** -- That which grew by itself in the fields and vineyards of the Israelites, Israel was not allowed to reap from the fields or to gather from the vine. The reason is that it was a year of rest for all the farmlands and vineyards. The land must be left alone.

**Verse 6** -- However, the Sabbath of the land shall be meat for Israel. This means that the rest of the land that was not farmed by Israel shall become food for Israel, like the fruits from fruit trees that were already in the land when Israel entered, olives, or anything that they could find in the land that was undressed. This was not limited to only the landlord and his family but applied to everyone. The servants, the maids, and the hired servants including the stranger (i.e. the Gentiles) who sojourneth with the landlord and his family would all share the food that was gleaned from the Sabbath of the Land.

There would be no distinction between landlords, slaves or strangers. Everyone was to be treated the same way while looking for food from the same places. The significance of this was not only one of faith; it was also a reminder to Israel and her inhabitants that they were different from the rest of the world only by the grace of God and by the spiritual responsibility they had been entrusted with. They were all tenants on the earth! God is the only true owner. Israel, however, had a spiritual responsibility to fulfill and at all times.

Their spiritual responsibility was of the messianic lineage. Israel was also entrusted to be a godly witness to the world that is in spiritual darkness. All of us are the same before the LORD, but with different ministries that the LORD gives to us. The men and women have their respective ministries even though salvation is the same for all. The different callings, functions and ministries must not be confused with the doctrine of salvation. When this distinction is blurred, there will be problems and chaos in families and churches. The following two passages emphasize the two doctrines very clearly and must be carefully understood and complemented.

**Galatians 3:26-29** (KJV) teaches that salvation is without distinction "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. **27** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

**1 Timothy 2:8-15** (KJV) teaches that there is a clear distinction in function and service in the church of God, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. **9** In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; **10** But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. **11** Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. **12** But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. **13** For Adam was first formed, then Eve. **14** And Adam was not deceived, but the woman

being deceived was in the transgression. **15** Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

- Q. Should this distinction be applied in our society and government today like equality for women in the workplace and government leadership such as women prime ministers or CEOs?

**Verse 7** – This also applied to the cattle, i.e. the domesticated animals that the Jews owned, and the beast, i.e. the wild beast that roamed in the forest of Israel. They too would also eat the increase that of the land that was not farmed by Israelites. This was a wonderful time for Israel to exercise faith and to not forget that everything that they ate and owned was from the LORD. Israel lived in the Land of Promise that was flowing with milk and honey. It was so easy to forget the LORD when there was plenty to eat and drink to their hearts' content. But whenever they observed the sabbath year rest, they would be quickly brought down to earth with the reminder that their livelihood depended entirely on God's grace and mercies and not even their labour or hard work. It was all God's doing. They did not have to work for one full year and yet there would be plenty to eat! What a wonderful life of faith and practice that the LORD had planned for Israel when they entered the Promised Land.

Very often we forget that it is not the food we eat or the water we drink that keeps us alive but it is the LORD! The LORD can and does use these secondary sources to help keep us alive but ultimately it is always by the LORD's mercies and grace. When the rest of the world sees this equality in Israel's life, then they would also know that the God of Israel is the God of the whole world as well.

- Q. Can this sabbath year be applied to all believers today? Does it apply to the pastors or fulltime workers in the church? Is this something that is impossible to observe today? Is it for us to draw the right principles? What are they?

**Verses 8-17 (Keeping the Fiftieth Year -- Jubilee Year)** – Israel shall number seven sabbaths of years, i.e. seven times seven years, which makes a total of 49 years in total. Then Israel shall blow the trumpet on the tenth day of seventh month in the Day of Atonement throughout all the land of Israel. Note that the seventh month on the religious calendar is equivalent to the first month of the civil calendar (page 188). In other words, based upon the civil calendar, it was to be during the period of the new calendar year. The Day of Atonement in the fiftieth or jubilee year was also the day that Israel was to commemorate the jubilee year.

**Verse 10** – The fiftieth year would be a hallowed year, i.e. holy unto the LORD. Liberty would be proclaimed throughout the Land of Israel. This applied to all the inhabitants in the Land. Every item that belonged to someone else must be returned. These items included collateral taken on behalf of a loan. It could also include land that was loaned to the creditor until the debt was completely paid up when the creditor farmed the land that belonged to the debtor. If the loan was too great, then the debtor and

sometimes even his family members could end up as slaves to the creditor until the debt was completely paid up. Then he and his family could return to their home. But in the year of the jubilee, all debts were to be erased and everyone and everything were allowed to return home. Everyone was given a fresh new beginning.

**Verse 11** – Whatever applied in the time of the sabbath year also applied in the jubilee year. The land owned by Israel was not to be farmed. There was to be no sowing or reaping, and no gathering of grapes from the vineyard that belonged to Israel which was used for farming. Even the natural growth in the land that used for farming could not be eaten. The land was to have complete rest! Therefore, every fiftieth year Israel would experience two consecutive years of no farming as commanded by the LORD who was the true owner of the Land.

**Verse 12** – The jubilee was to be a holy year unto Israel. All in Israel shall eat the increase that they find from the Land. The LORD's provision was the emphasis, just like in the sabbath year. That was the KEY . . . it was holy unto Israel. If they did not see the jubilee as holy unto themselves, they would not keep it. To see an entire year as holy and therefore not do any work requires a lot of faith.

Q. What do you think is the best way to progress toward a faith strong enough to keep this jubilee? Monetary gain would be "lost" for sure when this is applied. How can this best approach of spiritual growth be applied today if at all?

**Verses 13-14** –The LORD knows the heart of wicked man very well. Verses 13 to 17 explain and warn against any abuse to a wonderful and blessed statute. The LORD made it very clear when He repeated what He already mentioned in verse 10b. In verse 13 the LORD categorically states that in the year of the jubilee, Israel shall return to every man his possession.

They were forbidden to oppress one another in buying and selling transactions. The nature of this oppression is explained in the next few verses. The word "oppress" means "to treat violently." It is to be very angry with another brother and beats him up because of the anger.

**Verse 15-16** -- In the year of the jubilee every debt would be cancelled. However, if redemption was sought then these two verses would guide the law of redemption that determined how much was to be paid for the redemption. According to the number of years to the year of jubilee the Israelites could buy and sell to one another. For example, if the number of years to the next jubilee is 20 years, then the amount sold would be less than if there are 30 years to the next jubilee year. Thus the new owner has 20 years to farm the land before it is returned to the original owner, which means that the amount of fruits he can get out of the land is less than if he had 30 years. This was also true for property being sold. The reason for selling was perhaps of debt. The Israelites were forbidden to sell their portions of the land which were allotted to them by lot in the days of Joshua after the conquest of the Promised Land. **Numbers 26:54-56** (KJV), "To many thou shalt give the

more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. **55** Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. **56** According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few." **Leviticus 25:23-24** (KJV), "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me. **24** And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land."

**Verse 17** -- The business must adjust to the jubilee and sabbath years and not the other way round. The jubilee and sabbath years were not negotiable and were to be observed at all costs. Debts owed were to be decided based upon these statutes that the LORD gave to Israel. The Israelites were never to oppress one another because of these statutes that the LORD gave. The LORD invoked His holy Name to secure this statute. No one was allowed to take advantage of his fellow brethren because of the LORD's statutes. The LORD said so! That seals it.

The instructions on the sabbath and jubilee years would set Israel apart from all the Gentile nations. This was to remind Israel that the LORD is the one who gives and sustains life and not this earth or "mother nature"! Wealthy landlords and their servants including strangers were brought to equal standing before the LORD during these times.

Q. Are there Christians who see themselves as better than their "underlings", which would include their maids and employees? Has the subtle influence of the world caused us to be biased toward those who are not "better off" in the eyes of the world than we are? Do we think and behave like the world, and sadly behave even worse than unbelievers in our treatment of others we consider to be beneath us in the social strata? What a shame to the Name of Christ if the answer is "yes". How can we regard one another as equals?

**Verses 18-22 (Reason for the sabbath and jubilee years)** – The LORD emphasized here that Israel must do the statutes and keep, i.e. guard and do, the judgements of the LORD. The judgements would be the laws about not oppressing one another. The statutes would be the sabbath and jubilee laws. If Israel obeys, then she would dwell in the land in safety. The protection of the LORD would be upon her. If she does not, then there will be consequences. These laws were part and parcel of Israel's testimony to the world that the LORD was with Israel. Israel was to be very different in the way she lived in the Land of Promise. Obedience was the condition for blessings. Israel was not allowed to do whatever they wanted in the Land. The LORD was the regulator of the Land.

**Verse 19** – The meaning of "safety" is elaborated in verse 19. The Land shall yield, i.e. give her fruit, and Israel shall eat her fill and dwell in safety. This means that safety also included being safe from famine and drought. Israel was married to the land as a national witness. Therefore, her obedience would result in spiritual and material blessings. The local church today is an ecclesiastical witness where she is NOT married to the land in which the church is built. This clear distinction must be borne in mind all the time

whenever we interpret OT passages that speak of such physical blessings from God to Israel. If these OT passages are applied in totality from nation to church, then wrong doctrines would result. This is the main problem in many Charismatic churches.

**Verses 20-22** – In anticipation of the Israelites asking, "what will we eat during the seventh year if we do not sow and do not gather in the increase?", the LORD said that He would command His blessing upon the sixth year and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. The LORD thought of everything! Why would the LORD provide for three years when Israel was told not to work for only one year? When Israel begins planting at the end of the sabbath year, they will still need food before the land is able to bring forth food at the end of the first year. The LORD will provide more than enough through the sabbath year and after.

Israel needed to have faith and to trust in the LORD to provide and not be greedy. When Israel experiences the bumper triple harvest in the sixth year, she must not reason that the sabbath year could be just as good or that more was needed as reserves for a rainy day. Then she would not observe the sabbath year and sin against the LORD. Israel had to believe that the LORD will keep His promise and that her duty was to keep her promises! As long as Israel thinks spiritually, she will be fine. The moment she thinks materialistically like the world, she will lose her spiritual bearings and become like the world in her existence. Then Israel will be cursed by the LORD.

Israel would sow in the eighth year and eat of the old fruit unto the ninth year, until the new fruits came in. Thus Israel would reap in the second year of the next set of seven years. The emphasis in all these statutes and judgements was that Israel must exercise faith and trust in the LORD. Would Israel obey and be a spiritual witness? If Israel could show to the world that it is the LORD who sustains them, then the world should also realize that it is the LORD of Israel who sustains the world as well.

**Verses 23-24 (True Owner of the Land)** – Israel was never to forget that they were tenants in the Land of Promise. She was not to sell the portions of land given to them by lot in the days of Joshua. It was the LORD who gave the Land to Israel. It was the LORD who also divided the Land for Israel according to His sovereign will. The LORD states very clearly here in verse 23 that the Land belongs to Him and not Israel. The Israelites were strangers and sojourners (i.e. resident alien) with the LORD in the Land. Israel must never make the Promised Land their permanent home. The fact that her existence was for a spiritual purpose should be sufficient for her to remember that she was bound for heaven. Sadly, instead of changing the world, Israel was changed by the world. It was the case of Israel wanting to be like the world rather than the world wanting to be like Israel.

In all the land of Israel's possession, she shall grant or give a redemption for the land. This means that even when the land was given to the creditor because of an unpaid debt, the debtor must always be given the opportunity to redeem the land at any time.

Q. Who is the true owner of all that we have, including our freedom, children and life? How do we remind ourselves that we are strangers and sojourners on this earth? How does this knowledge impact our lives and attitude toward our work or jobs?

**Verses 25-34 (Law on Redemption)** – The scenario cited here is that of a man who became poor and had to sell some of his possessions. If any of his relatives want to redeem what he sold, then they must be allowed to do so. This is the doctrine of kinsman redemption. This was the built-in procedure whereby relatives were encouraged to help one another. This way, the property remained in the family.

If the poor man has no one to redeem his possessions for him, then he would have to wait until he has the ability to redeem them himself. The law of redemption demands fairness in the redemption. The poor man would count the number of years that remain of his debt and he could pay the possessor the balance of what his possession was worth. The harvest of the crops, the debt and the years of sabbath that remained would be taken into consideration in the calculation.

**Verse 28** – However, if he is not able to redeem it for himself, then he would wait until the year of the jubilee and his possessions will be returned to him free of charge. Until then, the poor man has no right to his possessions. The right of ownership belonged to the creditor. This law ensured that the first law of God, i.e. "the land shall not be sold forever, for the land is the LORD's" would always stand. If it was the land that the poor man sold, he would be allowed to stay in his house on the land.

Q. Why was the LORD's perpetual ownership of the land so important to Israel? Why was Israel not allowed to sell their land? This law applied even into the period of the monarchy. Can you cite an example of this?

**Verses 29-30** – However, the method of redemption changes if the person sells a possession that is a city dwelling. The seller has one year from the sale to redeem his property. If he does not redeem his possession within that one year, then the house that is in the walled city shall forever belong to the one who bought it and to his generation.

His dwelling would not be returned to him even in the year of the jubilee because the redemption purpose in the year of jubilee did not apply to a city dwelling but only to landed property.

Q. Why was there a distinction between property within a city and landed properties? The reason is that the landed property was the life of Israel as a nation, whereas city properties were manmade structures that when sold did not affect the nation of Israel as a whole. City homes were "extras" for all Israelites except for the Levites who lived in their 48 Levitical cities. All the Israelites owned landed properties.

**Verse 31** – Houses of villages which have no walls round about them shall be counted as fields. These houses were considered as properties and could be redeemed at any time by the next of kin or by the seller himself. The yearly limit did not apply. It would be returned to the seller in the year of the jubilee.

The fairness of this ruling is truly a reflection of the just justice of the LORD. There was no cause for anyone to be reckless and to abuse the laws of the sabbath and jubilee. Those who “played the fool” with their properties and made bad business investments would pay the penalty. On the other hand, the wiser ones were not to take advantage of the down and out. Even if they were not compassionate to return the possession the law would ensure that they did. This way everyone was given an even break to start afresh and the rich deterred from being greedy.

**Verses 32-33** –The houses within the Levitical cities may be redeemed by the Levites at any time. There was no one year restriction as well. If anyone buys a house of a Levite, the law of jubilee applies and the house must be returned to him even if the redemption money is not paid. The reason given by the LORD is that the houses of the cities of the Levites were their possession among the children of Israel. The Levitical cities were just like the land inherited by the Israelites which cannot be sold and must be redeemed or returned to them in the year of the jubilee. If this law of jubilee did not apply to the Levitical cities, then many Levites would be without a home!

The LORD takes care of His own! God would not allow His people to take advantage of others, especially those who tend to make poor judgements in life.

**Verse 34** – The fields of the suburbs of their (Israelite) cities may not be sold at all. It was their perpetual possession.

**Verses 35-38 (How to treat the poor)** –The words "waxen poor" literally means "to become thin", impoverished to the point of starvation as the next phrase "fallen into decay" highlights! When “thy brother”, an Israelite is in this state and in desperate need of help, his fellow Israelite must help. Even the stranger (non Israelite), including a sojourner, must be helped. The reason is, that he might live with the Israelites. The cause of his state of abject poverty is not the issue. The fact of the matter is that he is in dire straits and in need of help. Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey. No one ought to be in such a desperate state in the Promise Land. Israel was to be a land where compassion ruled. No one was to be ostracized but helped. The LORD made sure that all who entered the Land of Promise, regardless of their spiritual standing before Him, would be looked after or helped.

Q. How can this be applied to a local church context?

**Verse 36** –The LORD commands that the person who renders help is forbidden to charge any interest. He is to fear God. If he disregards this judgement of the LORD and wants to charge interest, he would be sinning against God. He had better be prepared for God to severely deal with him.

God is telling the Israelites that they should think of what He has done for them and treat the debtor accordingly!

This is a very important judgement from the LORD.

**Verse 37** -- If money is loaned to him, no usury or interest is to be charged. If food is loaned to him, then it must not be for increase, i.e. with interest in terms of bartering. If seeds were loaned to him for farming, then the debtor need only return what was lent to him and no extra amount is to be required of him. He must not take advantage of the debtor. God does not want the down and out to be marginalized and remain in their state of poverty with little help. These are people who are in desperate need of help and to charge them interest would be a sin. If they remain in the state of waxen poverty, they will probably end up in slavery and even death.

**Verse 38** – The basis for this judgement was that He brought Israel out of Egypt and gave the Land to them. He was their God and therefore Israel had to obey this judgement concerning their belongings and their help rendered. This verse has two truths for Israel: First, they were slaves and waxen poor when they were in Egypt. They knew it was demeaning. They were not to treat others the same way. Second, the Land was not theirs but the LORD's. Everything they had was given to them. They did not actually own anything. As the real owner, the LORD wanted Israel to give to their fellowmen what belonged to God. As their God, He had every right to expect this and as the people of God Israel had to obey!

Q. Can this be applied in the local church today? The LORD's command is similar but not the same as what the Apostle Paul said to Philemon in Philemon 1:11-19.

**Verses 39-46 (How to treat slaves)** – The waxen poor brother could end up being a slave if the amount he owes is very great. This means that the sale of the possession was not sufficient to pay off the great debt and so he has to sell himself, and in some cases his family as well, to the creditor (cf. Matt 18:21-35). A fellow Israelite must never (same strength of prohibition as the Ten Commandments) be made a slave or treated as one. Special consideration must be given to fellow Israelites who are in this state of poverty!

**Verse 40** – He will be treated as a hired servant, i.e. he will be given payment. He will be treated like a sojourner, i.e. a resident stranger who works or can work in Israel for money. He will remain in the home of the Israelite creditor until his service is done. But if the debt is so great that he cannot pay it all within his lifetime, then he must be set free in the year of the jubilee. The year of jubilee applied to all Israelites who live in the Land of Promise.

**Verse 41** – This servant/Israelite would be set free. If he served with his family, then he and his family would be set free together. They would all return to their own home and land and be free to begin their lives again.

**Verse 42** – The reason for this judgement by the LORD is explained in this verse. All Israel was HIS servant! He brought all of them out of Egypt and therefore they belonged to Him. They were not to be treated as slaves and to be sold as slaves! It would be an insult to God if this was done to His servants by His other servants! Therefore, they were to treat each other as brothers. There must be no master-slave relationships among them.

**Verse 43** – The LORD forbade all Israelites to rule over their fellow Israelites with vigour, i.e. with severity until they break apart. This was how slaves were treated in those days. They were treated like animals or mere lifeless properties with no rights at all. They were abused and killed and the law of life for life was applied differently when a slave died. However, paid servants had rights.

The fear of God was the basis for obedience!

Q. Can this be applied in business between believers today? How does this apply if they are in the same church and one party cannot pay up?

**Verse 44** – The male and female slaves in Israel's homes had to be only the heathen who dwelt in the Land of Promise. Slaves could only be bought from the surrounding nations.

**Verse 45** – Also, strangers, and their families, who entered the Promised Land and lived in the midst of Israel could be purchased as slaves in the homes of the Israelites. Fathers, mothers and children could be made slaves in Israel by Israelites.

The LORD not only condoned slavery but encouraged it as well.

**Verse 46** – Not only that, the LORD in this verse says that Israel could even take these slaves as an inheritance for their children to own after the parents have died! This means that the slaves could remain as slaves for generations to come. They were treated as possessions. They were like objects to be bought and sold and owned and inherited!

They shall be the bondmen of the Israelites FOREVER!

But Israel was expressly forbidden by the LORD to do the same with fellow Israelites, as mentioned in the preceding verses!

Q. Do you feel that the LORD had a "double standard" in dealing with people in the Land of Israel? Do you think that it was a good thing to have slaves in Israel in those days?

Q. Is slavery a good or bad thing? What was slavery in Israel supposed to be like? Cf. Exodus 21:11; Deu 15:1-18.

**Verses 47-55 (How to treat Gentile owners)** – In the event that a sojourner or a stranger becomes rich in the midst of Israel, through the goodness of Israel, and an Israelite becomes very poor and sells himself as a slave to the

stranger or sojourner or to the family members of the stranger, the following rules would apply. How sad it would be if the people of God were reduced to abject poverty because of foolishness and had to be subject to a heathen who had become rich in Israel. Such a scenario ought not to happen but in the event that it does, the LORD has provided a way to regulate such a relationship.

**Verse 48** – Firstly, the Israelite slave can be redeemed at any time, either by another Israelite or by himself. In other words, he can work himself out of being a slave until the debt is cleared.

Q. Do you think it was fair that the heathen slaves, including their entire families, were supposed to be slaves for life, whereas the Israelite slaves could be redeemed at any time and be freed?

**Verse 49** – Who would qualify to redeem such an Israelite slave? His uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him. If they do not wish to, then any of his relatives can redeem him if they so choose. If he is able, he can redeem himself at any time. He can borrow money or do whatever it takes within legal and biblical boundaries.

**Verse 50** – The calculation of the amount to be paid for his redemption would be from the year he was sold as a slave to the year of the jubilee. This would be the maximum amount to be levied against the Israelite slave.

**Verse 51** – Just because the Israelite slave could be redeemed it does not mean that the stranger or the sojourner should be short changed in the redemption. The LORD ensured that justice and fairness prevailed in Israel. If the Jewish slave had already served many years up to the year of the jubilee and is to be freed, how would one know if the amount of debt has been sufficiently and completely paid up? The number of years that he served would be multiplied by the amount to be paid to a hired servant. If there is still an amount to be paid when it is time for him to be freed in the year of the jubilee, then it has to be paid up. For example, he owed 500 shekels of silver when he became a slave. He served a total of 10 years and one of his relatives wishes to redeem him. There are 10 more years to the jubilee year. To calculate the amount of redemption money, the price of a paid servant is used. Supposing a paid servant is paid 20 shekels of silver per year. Therefore the slave has served a worth of 200 shekels of silver and the balance of his debt is 300 shekels of silver. The redemption amount of 300 shekels of silver would be paid to the sojourner to free the Jewish slave before the jubilee year.

**Verse 52** – If there are only a few years more to the jubilee, then the balance will counted according to the number of years that remain. The sojourner is fairly treated and will not suffer loss. The Jewish slave is also well treated so that he will learn his lesson and realize his spiritual responsibility to the world.

**Verse 53** – Until the jubilee year of his release, he has to serve as a slave in the house of the sojourner. The sojourner has to follow the Israelite law on

how slaves are to be treated. He is forbidden to abuse or treat them harshly. He shall treat them as hired servants rather than slaves even though they are not paid like regular servants.

**Verse 54-55** – If he is not redeemed, then he shall be set free in the year of the jubilee. If his whole family becomes slaves together with him, then the entire family would be set free. The reason is that the Israelites were the servants of the LORD whom He has redeemed out of the Land of Egypt.

- F. The Concluding Appeal: Exhortation – 26:1-46** – In this chapter, the consequences of obedience and disobedience were carefully explained by the LORD to Israel. Blessings and curses were brought to bear once again, perhaps as a reminder to Israel that the relationship she had with the LORD was suzerainty in nature. Israel had to obey the statutes and judgements of the LORD upon entering the Promised Land if she wanted to enjoy the blessings that the LORD promised her. There would be grievous consequences if she did not want to obey. She would be punished by her enemies and the Land would be devastated. The keeping of the sabbath and jubilee years were highlighted again for emphasis. Israel was warned to take the laws of the sabbath and jubilee years seriously. This was one of the measures of their faith and trust in the LORD. If in a state of great pain and punishment, Israel must repent, humble herself and turn back unto the LORD. The LORD will surely forgive. Even if Israel was put into exile and she repented, the LORD would hear and remember the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When life in the wilderness was tough, it was so easy for Israel to remember the LORD and to lean on Him for daily sustenance. It is so easy to forget when life is good. When the stomachs are full and life is successful, we forget the LORD and begin to think that the strength to generate wealth is by our own hands! Very soon we have replaced the LORD with someone or something else! The instructions in this chapter were to warn and remind Israel that she was not to backslide and go wayward! There will be consequences! But the moment she repents, the LORD will return. There is no such thing as an unpardonable sin. All sins will be pardoned by the LORD if only sinners will repent. This applies to Israel as well.

- 1. Idolatry and Sabbath keeping related (26:1-2)** – The LORD used three strong prohibitions (same strength as the Ten Commandments) to emphasize the importance of the instruction and warning in the first verse of this chapter. This was a non-negotiable command and demand from the LORD.

- *Ye shall* (definitely) *not make idols or graven image*; -- there is no such thing as making an idol by accident. It is always a deliberate act. The LORD emphasizes that the act of making an idol or anything carved is deliberate and is strictly forbidden;
- *Ye shall* (definitely) *not rear you up a standing image* (a pillar like structure that resembles nothing); -- This refers to making a tall standing image for all to bow in worship. The standing image here refers to an upright structure like a tall piece of wood or stone or rock that need not resemble anything or feature. It is a faceless piece of

erected structure for worship! This is also expressly forbidden by God;

- *Ye shall* (definitely) *not set up any image* (a carved structure that resembles a creature or man) *of stone in your land, to bow down unto it.* – This refers to setting up or giving any image (a carved structure with features) of stone in your land for worship. The LORD was not against carved stones as these were used for the building of the Temple in Solomon's time. The LORD was against carved stone for worship! The act of worship turns a piece of art into an object of idolatry.

The basis for these three strong prohibitions was simply, "I am the LORD your God." God does not need to explain Himself to Israel or to anyone. He just says it and that is it! Israel was God's and God was Israel's God. This was good enough! The position and distinction of Deity and covenantal people is very clear, like a parent child relationship! These instructions from the LORD were for Israel's good. If Israel disobeys, she will be severely disciplined by the LORD as verses 14 to 46 delineate. If she obeys, then the blessings will come (verses 3-13). The LORD appealed to Israel by emphasizing that He is the LORD, i.e. a covenantal relationship requires these prohibitions. The LORD used the phrase "your God", which means that it is not an option. The power and authority of the God of Israel demands such prohibitions.

This chapter of Leviticus is very similar to Deuteronomy 28. The big difference is in the introduction. In Deuteronomy, there is no introduction for both lists of blessings and curses; whereas there seems to be one here in Leviticus. Verses 1 and 2 seem to be an introduction for both lists. Other than this observation, both lists are very similar.

**Deuteronomy 28:1-2** (KJV), "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: **2** And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." The emphasis in Deuteronomy is on obeying ALL the commandments. By then Israel would have had all the first five books of the Bible which the Jews call the Torah (the Law)! The emphasis is also on the promotion of Israel as a living testimony to the world, that the world may see how great God is through Israel's life and obedience to God's Word. Then the list of blessings begins immediately. After the list of the blessings ends, the list of curses begins which is preceded by a warning. **Deuteronomy 28:15** (KJV), "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:"

However, in Leviticus the warning that precedes both lists seems to be a little shorter. **Leviticus 26:3** (KJV) introduces the list of blessings: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;" The list of curses is introduced by two verses, **Leviticus 26:14-15** (KJV), "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; **15** And if ye shall

despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, *but* that ye break my covenant:" The word "all" here has to include all that had already been given and all that would be given in the future.

This means that to obey the Torah, blessings. To disobey the Torah, curses! The instruction was very clear and leaves no room for any misunderstanding. By way of application, the believer throughout the ages has to obey the entire Bible. The key element to consider in this injunction is whether it is the Word of God. If it is the Word of God, it does not matter if it was given in the time of Moses or some 1,000 years later, the command to obey applies.

**Verse 2** – This verse before the list of blessings and curses focuses on the Sabbaths. This seems to be a strange emphasis. The reference is to all the Sabbaths mentioned in the Bible (weekly, yearly and other Sabbaths required on certain holy feasts). Israel must keep the Sabbaths and she must also reverence (the word for "fear") the LORD's sanctuary. The literal translation is, "My sabbaths you shall keep, my sanctuary you shall reverence, I am the LORD." The placing of the direct object in front of the verb is for emphasis. It is not the mere act of keeping and fearing but what Israel is keeping and fearing! In other words, Israel will keep and fear something all through her life and she must ensure that it is the sabbaths she must keep and the sanctuary she must reverence.

The word "keep" means "to guard or protect." We guard or protect something that we value. We do not care much for things that we do not consider as valuable. If we find that playing computer games is important or the time devoted to playing the game is valuable, then we would set aside some time for it, and most likely on a daily basis! We would not allow anything that we consider as less important to intrude and take that time away from us. However, if we regard time spent with the LORD as more important, then that computer game time would be replaced by prayer and reading of God's Word. This is true when we consider the law of the Sabbaths. Among all the Sabbaths, the most difficult sabbath to observe would be the weekly sabbath. The reason is that it is to be kept once every week. There is no let up until the believer dies. If we can keep the weekly sabbaths regularly, then the other sabbaths would not be hard to keep. If we consider the weekly sabbaths as precious or valuable above all other activities including making money, then it is easy to keep as it is placed at the top of the priority list. The believer would not allow any activity to intrude and take away his "treasure." However, if he does not consider it as a treasure, then other more important things would easily crowd in and take away his sabbath.

Q. What is keeping the weekly sabbath like or supposed to be?

How was Israel to reverence or fear God's sanctuary? The sanctuary has to be the Tabernacle which had just been completed at the close of the Book of Exodus and before the beginning of the revelation of the Book of Leviticus. The sanctuary or holy place refers to the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place within the Tabernacle. The sanctuary represents the LORD's home and hence the presence of the LORD. The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place were the

two rooms that the priests and high priests could enter to do their duties. Blood sacrifices had to be made before the priests could enter. The Israelites were not allowed to enter at all. The Tabernacle was to the Israelites the most holy place in all Israel and the world! It was the place where the sins of the people of God were cleansed by way of the sacrifices that they brought. The sanctuary was the place of holiness and where the Israelites received the mercies of the LORD. They deserved death but through the sacrificial system availed them by the LORD, they could receive His mercy and grace.

When they reverence the sanctuary, they would not want to sin against the LORD. They would live holy lives before the LORD.

The basis is that God is the LORD. He reminded them of their covenantal relationship.

Verse 1 warns of what Israel must not do. Verse 2 was a reminder to Israel of the right that she must do. Both actions combined together would be complete obedience.

Q. Would you say that it is possible for a person to not commit adultery, steal, kill, bear false witness and covet and yet he does not pray and study God's Word? In other words, he does only the do-nots but not the do's? Is it possible for the person to do the do's but not the do-nots and be considered pleasing in the sight of God?

2. **Obedience and Blessing Explained (26:3-13)** – Verses 4 to 13 contain the blessings. Verse 3 is a protasis or condition that is the basis for blessings to be poured down upon Israel. The list of blessings that follow is the apodosis. The protasis states that IF Israel walks continuously, i.e. obeys the statutes of the LORD and keeps, i.e. guard them continuously and do them continuously, then all that is stated in the apodosis would come to pass in the life of Israel. The literal translation of verse 3 is, "If my statutes you walk and my commandments you keep and do them." The emphasis is the statutes and commandments of the LORD. The object of what they keep and obey is the emphasis. Israel will walk and keep and do many things in life like everyone else. The difference is that it is the statutes and commandments of the LORD that she walks, keeps and does, not the statutes and commandments of someone else.

**Verses 4-12** -- The following are the LORD's blessings promised to Israel which will become her experience and enjoyment if the protasis is true in her life:-

- **V. 4** "I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." [emphasis added] – *FRUITFUL LAND*. *Israel was married to the Land of Promise; without the Land to call her own Israel could not be called a nation. Therefore the blessings had to include a blessing of the land.*

- **V. 5** "And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely." – *FRUITFUL CROPS*. *When the Land is fruitful it goes without saying that the crops would also be fruitful. There would be no pestilence to destroy their crops. There would be no bandits and oppressors to rob them. There would be no drought but plenty of timely and fruitful rain to soak the earth.*
- **V. 6** "And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land." [emphasis added] – *PEACE AND SECURITY*. *There would be no enemies strong enough to hurt them. Beasts in the land would stay away from Israel and all the land that Israel has chosen for farming. Israel shall enjoy peace and security and not fear.*
- **V. 7-8** "And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." -- *INVINCIBLE*. *No one would be able to attack and overwhelm Israel. In fact, they would be so powerful and strong that the ratio of Israel's might was given by the LORD. 5 would chase 100. 100 Israelites would be able to put 10,000 enemies to flight! Israel's enemies would fail and perish by the sword when they fight against Israel.*
- **V. 9-10** "For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new." [emphasis added] – *FACE HONOURED*. *The LORD would be delighted to see the face of Israel. He would make everything that Israel touches turn to gold! Israel would increase in strength and numbers. The covenant that the LORD made with Israel would come to pass and nothing would be able to stop Israel's growth. Israel shall "eat old store", meaning that Israel would have plenty to eat and no matter how much she consumed the food would never run out. Israel shall "bring forth the old because of the new", meaning that before she could consume last year's harvest the new would arrive. She would have to throw out the old harvest to make room for the new harvest. This was a wonderful way to describe the meaning of making Israel "fruitful" by the LORD.*
- **V. 11-12** "And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." [emphasis added] -- *PRESENCE OF THE LORD*. *This is the best promise the LORD could ever give to anyone. This was greatly appreciated by Moses in Exodus 33 when the Israelites made the golden calf before the LORD at the foot of Mount Sinai even as the mount was still trembling and quaking! The LORD punished Israel severely and said that He would not accompany Israel any further but would send an angel instead. Moses said that the only difference between Israel and the rest of the nations of the world was in*

*the fact that the LORD was with Israel! If the LORD would not be with Israel, Moses said that he would not want to go to the Promised Land! What great knowledge Moses had. This is the language of ownership! What a wonderful blessing from the LORD that He would not be ashamed but proud to be identified with Israel.*

Q. Did not Christ give a similar promise to the church in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20? How do you feel about Christ's promise to His church? Do you feel safe and secure and empowered with strength to live for Christ and to fight the good fight of faith?

Q. Do you think that the LORD is proud to be identified with your church? Do you think the LORD is proud to be identified with you?

**Verse 13** – The basis for these blessings is that He is the LORD and God of Israel. How did He become the LORD God of Israel? He brought Israel out of the land of Egypt. He delivered Israel so that she need not remain in bondage to the Egyptians. He broke the bands of her yoke enabling her to stand on her own two feet and not be ashamed and humiliated by slavery!

Q. Do you feel that you have been delivered from bondage? What is it like to be free? What does that make us want to do with our lives knowing that we were once in bondage and now we will never be in bondage again? The yoke and bands have been broken forever. We have been liberated. Do you know what you have been liberated from? How ought we to live then?

**3. Disobedience and Curses Explained (26:14-39)** – Immediately following the list of blessings is the warning of curses. Using the adversative "but" to contrast the two sections, the LORD said that if Israel refuses to obey Him and would not do the commandments of the LORD; and if Israel shall despise the statutes of the LORD or abhor the judgements of the LORD, i.e. to break the covenant of the LORD, then the apodosis would become a reality in Israel's life! These warnings of the LORD were of the same strength as the Ten Commandments in terms of seriousness and force. The emphasis in verse 15 is on the object of Israel's acts of despising and abhorring - the statutes and commandments of the LORD.

Q. Is it accurate to say that to despise the Word of God is to despise God Himself?

**Verses 16-39** – The curses of the LORD were far more than the blessings of the LORD. Why is that so? There are 24 verses on curses against 11 verses on blessing. The answer is that when it comes to blessings, the LORD does not give in drips and drabs but He gives copiously and in full. But for the curses, the LORD listed them out in progression of severity. The LORD interspersed the list of curses with a maximum level of punishment at various levels hoping that Israel would repent at that point of punishment and that further punishment would not be needed. This is the clear evidence of the LORD's mercy which is also seen in the use of the phrase "seven times" (verses 18, 21, 24 and 28). After the final "seven times", the LORD brought

in the curse of exile. Note that the phrase "seven times" is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 28.

The last and final phase of the curse was the worst. It included cannibalism of their own children, many deaths and destruction of cities. The end would be exile to a foreign land and dispersion. Israel in exile, as well as the remnant who remain in the Land of Promise, would daily experience the loss of peace of mind and heart, which would be replaced with great fear and severe paranoia. One punishment would not end before the next one comes. The Books of Judges and Ruth reveal this truth. The list of curses is given below:-

- **V. 16** "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it." – *SICKNESS. Bodily harm coupled with pain is the least intrusive as there can be a cure in most cases. This is more so when sickness is used by the LORD as a form of chastisement or punishment. This means that repentance brings recovery in many cases.*
- **V. 17** "And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." – *DEATHS FROM ENEMIES. This is more severe. The harm comes from other human beings. Outside oppressors would sporadically come and deal with Israel. Nations sent by the LORD to punish Israel is a clear sign of the LORD's punishment because the LORD had said that when Israel obeyed they would be invincible.*
- **V. 18** "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins." – *INCREASE 7 TIMES. This is the first level of curses to restore Israel back to the LORD. It will be maximized by the LORD before He enters into the next level of curses.*
- **V. 19-20** "And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits." -- *FAMINE AND DROUGHT. The devastation of the Land of Promise is another very clear sign for Israel to see that it is due to sin and transgression against the LORD that the Land has ceased to flow with milk and honey. Starvation is an effective way to bring God's people back to the LORD. All clever and self sufficient people would be reduced to nothingness. All pride would be destroyed.*
- **V. 21** "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." – *INCREASE 7 TIMES. Like before, the LORD will increase this curse to its maximum before he enforces the next level of severe punishment to bring Israel to her knees before the LORD.*

- **V. 22** "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your *high ways* shall be desolate." – *DESTRUCTIVE WILD BEASTS*. *The Land of Israel was always occupied by wild beasts; not every square inch was used for farming by Israel. When the wild beasts roam into the fields and homes of Israel, Israel would lose her peace and safety from within. Children and cattle would be killed. They would not be able to go in and out of their homes anymore in peace and safety. This is also another way that the LORD hoped would drive Israel to her knees and repent.*
- **V. 23-24** "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins." – *PUNISH 7 TIMES*.
- **V. 25** "And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of *my* covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy." – *SWORD AND PESTILENCE*.
- **V. 26** "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver *you* your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied." – *FAMINE*.
- **V. 27-28** "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins." -- *CHASTISE 7 TIMES*.
- **V. 29** "And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat." – *CANNIBALISM OF SONS*. *This would be a dark time in Israel if they have to resort to eating their own sons just to survive. What kind of famine would drive a person to eat his own dead son in order to live? How tragic and how hardened the hearts of Israel must have been when the LORD had to do this in the hope that Israel would stop sinning and return back to the LORD.*
- **V. 30** "And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you." – *DEAD BODIES LITTER THE STREETS*.
- **V. 31** "And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours." - - *CITIES DESTROYED*. *Once the cities are destroyed, the end is near! This was the experience of both Israel and Judah when the Assyrians and Babylonians came and destroyed them.*
- **V. 32** "And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it." – *LAND DESOLATE*. *When the enemies take over and own and live in the Land of Promise Israel would be finished. Ownership of the Land was paramount to Israel's*

*sovereignty and existence. They were the only tenants and the LORD was the Owner. Gentiles would take over the role of Israel.*

- **V. 33-35** "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye *be* in your enemies' land; *even* then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it." -- *EXILE*. This is the final straw, to not be allowed to live in the Land of Promise! There is no clearer message than this to show the LORD's disapproval of Israel's testimony! Exile means a complete removal of Israel's testimony because she ceases to be a nation.
- **V. 36-37** "And upon them that are left *alive* of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies." – *FEARFUL AND PARANOIA*.
- **V. 38** "And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up." – *PERISH*.
- **V. 39** "And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them." – *MELT AWAY IN EXLIE*. *It means that the Israelites would be dispersed far and wide across many lands. The Land of Promise would remain but the people would not be allowed to occupy the Land as their testimony stinks in the sight of the LORD. Israel must not portray the image of a false god to the rest of the world. The LORD will not tolerate such a great and severe sin like idolatry, especially when it comes from God's people.*

Q. Do you think that genuine believers would go back to worshipping idols? Is there is difference between an idolatrous person and an idolatrous nation/church? Is it possible to find a genuine believer living in an idolatrous nation or a modernist/liberal local church?

4. **Repentance and Restoration Explained (26:40-46)** – No matter how far gone Israel becomes repentance will always begin the road to restoration. Verses 40 and 41 are the protasis and verses 42 to 45 are the apodosis. The protasis speaks of the manner of repentance and the apodosis speaks of the manner of God's abiding presence and restoration.

**The protasis of repentance (vs. 40-41)** – The LORD's punishment was always for the purpose of stopping Israel in her sinful track. It was never vindictiveness. Israel had a spiritual responsibility to witness to the world the truth of who God is. When Israel failed, the LORD wanted to bring Israel back to the right path. After many sessions of prophesying and warnings and

still Israel refused to listen, the only option left was the curses. Exile was the final straw. At any of the levels of the curses, Israel could always repent and come back to the LORD. Even when Israel hit rock bottom she could still come back. All that the LORD required was repentance, which included a turning away from sin.

- **V. 40** "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;" – *CONFESSION OF PAST AND PRESENT SINS*. *There must be repentance from sin before there can be forgiveness and restoration. Israel had to repent of the sins of her fathers as well because they were a covenant nation. The generation in exile was born in exile. They might think that they did not do wrong and that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers. That is not the right reasoning. As a covenantal people the consequences of the sins of their fathers have to be borne or shared by the sons. Now that it is time for return, the sons have to repent of the sins of their fathers as well. This was the covenantal requirement for national restoration. In the case of a personal restoration, personal sins need to be repented of. This is also true for the local church.*
- **V. 41** "And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:" -- *HUMBLE THEMSELVES*. *They have to humble themselves before the LORD. It is always one of pleading for mercy even if it is the tail end of the period of punishment or exile. Daniel prayed to the LORD to bring Israel back to the Promised Land at the end of 70 years of captivity (Daniel 9). Acceptance of the punishment is also included here. There must be no discontentment of the LORD's treatment. Such would be murmuring and a sin.*

#### **The apodosis of restoration (verses 42-45) –**

- **V. 42-43** "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes." – *ACCEPT THE PUNISHMENT AND COVENANTAL REMEMBRANCE*. *The LORD's response is that He will remember the covenant, for the covenant includes repentance and restoration. The reverse order of the names of the patriarchs is interesting. Also, the name Jacob (the name means usurper) is used here instead of Israel (prince of God). This is to remind Israel of her state of sin after repentance. It was the "old" usurping Israel that was punished by the LORD. Now it is time to return. The LORD says that He remembers the Land. The rest given to the Land is complete. Israel has repented. Israel can come home and continue to be the LORD's witness.*

- **V. 44** "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I *am* the LORD their God." – *UNBREAKABLE COVENANT*. *Even when Israel is in exile the LORD will not forsake her. Do not confuse the blessings that come with the covenant with the breaking of the covenant. The covenant that the LORD has with Israel is twofold. The first is that of the coming Messiah which cannot be broken. The Messiah must be born in Israel as an Israelite. The second part is one of blessings upon blessings which are conditioned upon obedience as this chapter of Leviticus has revealed. This part of the covenant can be broken. When Israel sins and fails to testify truthfully to the whole world who the LORD really is, then the LORD must intervene and stop Israel's false representation. Israel will surely be punished. But the LORD will still be with Israel in her exile and dispersion because of the first part of the covenant. Verse 44 speaks of the first part. When the LORD says that Israel will no longer be God's people like in the book of Hosea, he means their witness. He has rejected Israel as the LORD's witness because of her false representation. It does not mean that the LORD has rejected Israel as the chosen nation for the coming of the Messiah!*
- **V. 45** "But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD." – *REMEMBER ANCESTORS*. *The LORD's basis is that His covenant with Israel did not start with Moses. It was a continuation of a covenant that began as far back as Adam's time. The LORD bringing Israel out of Egypt was not to be understood as the starting point of the covenant. It was a continuation. The LORD always wanted an earthly witness to testify of His grace, mercy and love to a world of sinners bound for Hell. He never left the world without a witness. His remnant still remains today. This is the love of God. This was Israel's duty and legacy to the world. But Israel failed the LORD miserably. Israel was unfaithful but the LORD always remained faithful even when Israel was in exile. The books of Daniel and Ezekiel were written when Israel was in exile.*

Q. Will the LORD deal with Israel the same way as mentioned above in terms of the curses and blessing?

**Verse 46** – "These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." – *The Book of Leviticus contains statutes (i.e. customs) and the commandments.*

## G. Appendix on Voluntary Devotional Vows -- 27:1-34

The concluding remarks in this wonderful book are on vows and how they must be kept. The LORD always considers man's vows very seriously. Vows are oaths made by the people of God in the name of God. The warning from Ecclesiastes sums up very aptly God's view on vows made by His people. **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6**

(KJV) "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. **5** Better *is it* that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. **6** Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?"

God is not against His people making vows. It is very appropriate for God's people to take the stand in the court of law, to put their hands on the Bible and make a vow to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This teaching does not contradict Christ's warning in Matthew 5:33-37 when He taught the multitude gathered at the Mount to hear Him preach. Jesus was teaching within the context of the distorted traditions of the Jews. They had various levels of oath making. When they swore in the Name of God, they would keep it for fear of breaking the Third Commandment. By the time of Christ, the Jews had cleverly replaced God's name in oath making to another name. They would make oaths in the name of heaven or the earth or even a man's own head! Since the oaths were not made in the name of God, there was no danger of breaking the Third Commandment and therefore God would not be displeased. Hence, when they speak to one another they would not mean what they say or say what they mean. Lying became a way of life. Jesus corrected such great sins in Israel. Therefore, Christ's teaching in Matthew 5 does not contradict but in fact supports the Old Testament teaching on making vows.

Leviticus 27 focuses on the many vows that the Israelites might make and how they must be kept once they were made. There is also a section on the things that were devoted to the LORD that were forbidden to be redeemed by Israel. Whatever was for Israel to use on this earth could be vowed and redeemed by Israel. But whatever was devoted to the LORD could not be redeemed because it was not for Israel but for the LORD always.

**1. Making a singular vow – 27:1-2** – The sequence of this instruction was: from the LORD to Moses to the people of Israel. This was the method that the people of Israel asked for in Exodus 20 when the LORD appeared and spoke out of Mount Sinai and gave them the Ten Commandments and they became very afraid. They said that whatever the LORD said to Moses and Moses in turn said to them, they would receive as the very Word of God.

The conjunction "when" is used instead of the conditional "if" in verse 2. This means that Israel was to make the various vows in Leviticus 27. The LORD called them "singular vows", which means "wonderful or marvelous vows." They were, of course, voluntary vows as well. These were vows to be made by Israel to dedicate something or someone unto the LORD's service. These vows were not to be mistaken as Nazarite vows which could not be redeemed and must be carried out by the individual. For whatever reason, the person or thing dedicated could not be received by the LORD, perhaps for some practical reasons such as too great a number; in such instances, the vow could be redeemed. The amount to be given to buy back the vow was called the estimation. The following verses describe the different values of estimation.

**2. Redeeming a Human Being – 27:3-8** – The estimation to redeem a male is different from the estimation to redeem a female. The age of the person is also a factor. For a male between the ages of 20 and 60 years, the estimation to redeem

him is 50 shekels of silver according to the shekels of the sanctuary. The reason for the redemption is that the person's vow could not be met and he would have to pay a penalty to deliver himself out of the holy service unto the LORD. His time of service is the issue. That is why different ages demanded different amounts of estimation.

For example, if he offered/vowed to collect wood for the offerings and he broke his leg, he can no longer keep the vow he made. Then he has to pay the estimation to the priest. The priest will evaluate him according to his present ability and the vow of collecting wood to keep the altar of burnt offering burning, and make an estimation that the person can afford to pay.

**Verses 4-7** -- For a female, the estimation is 30 shekels. The assumption is that her age is also the same as the male, i.e. between 20 to 60 years. If the age is between 5 and 20 years, then the estimation is 20 shekels for the male and 10 shekels for the female. If the age is between 1 month and 5 years, then the estimation for the male is 5 shekels and 3 shekels for the female. If the age is from 60 years and above, then it is 15 shekels for the male and 10 shekels for the female.

Why is there a discrepancy in estimation between the ages and the gender? The reason is probably due to the individual's effectiveness to the LORD in terms of service. Thus the different estimations were done according to the age. A new born baby is too young to be of any use in terms of service, and if a parent had dedicated the child to the LORD and wishes to redeem the child, then the appropriate estimation is as described here. A young man and woman between the ages of 20 and 60 had higher estimations because of their physical strength and mental capacity to serve and do well for the LORD.

**Verse 8** -- However, if the estimation is too high and the Israelite cannot pay, the LORD provides a way to reduce the estimation. The individual will present himself before the priest and the priest shall value him according to his ability. It is the person who made the vow who must now stand before the priest to be evaluated according to his ability in relation to the vow he made. Then he will pay the priest accordingly. The amount, of course, cannot be more than what the LORD has stipulated here for all concerned.

The priest was entrusted with a lot of power to make decisions pertaining to the well-being of the people of Israel. This power includes declaring a person unclean or clean.

Q. What if the priests are corrupt, then would that not ruin the entire priestly system and Levitical system of restoring fellowship with the LORD?

Q. Are there people in the church given this kind of responsibilities and power? What happens to the church if these individuals are corrupt?

**3. Redeeming a Beast – 27:9-13** – If a clean beast has been vowed to the LORD and needs to be redeemed, then there is a different estimation. The stipulation from the LORD is that the beast cannot be redeemed once it has been vowed to the LORD! The beasts are considered holy unto the LORD once they have been vowed.

It cannot be altered. The one who vowed the beast is forbidden to change the beast for another. He cannot change it for good or for bad. The moment the beast is vowed to the LORD, it is considered holy to Him and remains holy permanently. If he wants to change beast for beast, then both beasts would be considered holy unto the LORD. In other words, once the clean beast, such as the ox, sheep or goat, has been vowed to the LORD there is no way to "unholy" the animal and to allow it to be used for ordinary work.

**Verses 11-13** -- However, if the beast vowed is an unclean beast which cannot be offered unto the LORD as an offering, then the beast shall be presented before the priest. The priest shall value it whether it be good or bad and whatever the priest values will be the value thereof. The person who vowed the unclean beast will pay the amount accordingly. There will be an additional 20% extra if the unclean beast is to be redeemed. These animals would include the ass which is a very good beast of burden that can be used by the priests for their day to day work or when they travel.

There is a noted difference between what is meant for food to the Israelites and offerings to the LORD. The difference is between Israel and the rest of the world and Israel and God. The people of God must know that they are holy to the rest of the world that is in spiritual darkness and must live as such. They measure themselves according to the standard of holiness that God has set for them. This is the standard for Israel because her God is holy. This is the only way and standard required by God for Israel in order for her to be accepted. The nature of the difference in the vows that Israel made symbolized this wonderful truth!

**4. Redeeming a Property – 27:14-25** – When a man sanctifies his house, i.e. sets apart his house as holy unto the LORD, the priest shall estimate it, i.e., he goes to the house to evaluate it. The priest sees if it is good or bad and his decision is final. The house can be rented out or sold and the proceeds used for the sanctuary. Why a man would sanctify his house is not stated. It could be similar to what some of us do today, such as making a promise to devote something to the Lord IF the LORD would answer our prayers. Whatever the reason, once a house is devoted to the LORD it belongs to the LORD and will be for the LORD's use.

**Verse 15** -- However, if the owner of the house who has sanctified it for the LORD's use decides to redeem it, then he shall add a fifth part of the money of the priest's estimation and the house shall be returned to him.

**Verse 16-21** -- If a man sanctifies unto the LORD a part of his field, the priest's estimation shall be according to the seed, i.e. the ability of the field to produce seeds. For example, a homer of barley (72 pints or 34 liters) seed shall be valued at 50 shekels of silver if the sanctifying is from the year of the jubilee. Perhaps the man is to receive the part of the land back but he sanctified it unto the LORD. Anyway, if the land is sanctified to the LORD from the year of jubilee, then the priest will count the estimation of the land from that time onwards which would be the maximum of 49 or 50 years. The preposition "from" could refer to after the jubilee or in the year of the jubilee itself that the land is sanctified unto the LORD. If it is after the year of jubilee, then it will be 49 years total before the next jubilee. According to many commentators like Matthew Poole, the amount of 50 shekels was meant to be a one off payment rather than a yearly one. The reason is because

50 shekels was too high a price for barley. If this was meant to be a one off payment, then it is possible that this was to be the entire amount for the jubilee cycle of 50 years. This means that it will be 1 shekel for every year until the next jubilee year. The reason for this explanation is that if the amount is too large, then it would be impossible for the people of Israel to sanctify their field unto the LORD.

If the man sanctifies his field after the jubilee, i.e. a few years after the jubilee, then the priest shall reckon unto him the money according to the years that remain unto the year of the next jubilee. The balance would be deducted according to the years that remain until the next jubilee year. If the man has sanctified part of his field and wants to redeem it, then he pays a 20% extra on top of the priest's estimation. The land would be returned to him as if he had not sanctified it at all. If he chooses not to redeem the land, then it will not be redeemed at all.

If he sold the field to another man, then the land cannot be redeemed at all by the one who bought the land. He who sells a piece of land will lose the land forever; it will not be redeemed and returned to him, not even in the year of the jubilee.

A field that has been returned in the jubilee shall remain holy unto the LORD like a field that has been devoted to the LORD. The priest will be the owner of the land. Whether he has to pay the needed shekels is not stated in the context. Some commentators like John Gill suggest that the priest will have to pay the full amount of 50 shekels since the release was in the year of the jubilee. Others like Matthew Poole left it silent and did not comment. My personal view is that the priest does not have to make any payment since his inheritance is the LORD's. The word for "devoted" here is the word "cherem" which means a thing given over to the LORD permanently, like the word used to describe the city of Jericho before her total destruction. Since the priest's inheritance is the LORD and the land is under "cherem," there is no reason why the priest ought to pay for something that he is to take and use.

**Verses 22-26** – If a man purchased a land that does not belong to his lineage but to another and he sanctified it unto the LORD, then the priest shall reckon unto him the worth of the estimation up to the year of the jubilee. The man shall give the amount of the estimation to the LORD as a holy thing. In the year of the jubilee the field shall be returned to the person who sold the land, i.e. back to the original inheritance of the person who sold it.

All the estimations will be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 20 gerahs equals 1 shekel. In order to have a rough estimation on the value of shekel and gerah, the following account on the ransom of an Israelite by the LORD to Moses is instructive. **Exodus 30:11-16** (KJV), "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **12** When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when *thou* numberest them. **13** This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. **14** Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. **15** The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *they* give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. **16** And thou

shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." [Emphasis added] Half a shekel was the price of a man in offering money to the LORD.

**5. Compulsory Devotion – 27:26-34** – There were certain things in Israel's possession that were considered to be compulsory offerings unto the LORD. Verses 1 to 25 were considered as optional and voluntary in their dedication to the LORD and therefore could be redeemed if the "offerer" changes his mind. However, there were certain things in the life of Israel that were compulsory and were to be given to the LORD because they were considered "cherem" by God. These would include the firstlings of the clean beasts. Man was forbidden to sanctify these that already belonged to the LORD! These beasts refer to clean animals such as ox or sheep only. Birds and fish were not included here. The firstlings (masculine gender) refer to the first males and not the females. Female oxen were rare. The reason for this is explained by John Calvin in his commentary, "Here a caution is interposed, that none should offer what is already the property of God. For since men are so greatly given to ostentation, and therefore in testifying their piety *whitewash two walls*, as the saying is, *out of the same pot*, God provides against this sin by forbidding the first-born to be offered to Him, since that would be to present stolen goods to Him. The sum is, that they should not, by consecrating to God what is already due to Him, steal from Him in their fictitious liberality what is consecrated and not their own. Nor let us be surprised at this law, because this ambition is almost natural to us all, to desire to lay God under obligation by the empty appearance of liberality, and therefore to seek for various grounds of boasting of religious duties, which, after all, are nought. And, undoubtedly, if this restraint had not been put upon the Jews, they would have aimed at the reputation of double zeal by this deceitful oblation, nor would they have scrupled, under the pretext of offering, to deprive God of what was His own."

**Verse 27** – In the case of the firstling of an unclean beast it shall be redeemed according to the estimation plus an additional 20%. The priest would make the estimation. If the owner does not wish to redeem the firstling of the unclean beast, then it shall be sold to another man according to the estimation. It is assumed here that the money from the sale would be given to the LORD for holy use.

**Verses 28-29** – No devoted (i.e. "cherem") thing unto the LORD shall be sold or redeemed. These devoted things refer only to the possessions of that man which include man and beast, and his field that he owns. "Every devoted (cherem) thing is most holy unto the LORD" is the reason why it cannot be redeemed and or sold. That which has been devoted unto the LORD cannot be redeemed but shall be put to death!

Q. Can a man devote, i.e. "cherem", another human being and thus condemn or put that human being to death in the process? Joshua 6:17 and 1Samuel 15:3 refer to the city of Jericho and the Amalekites respectively of which the LORD had initiated the "cherem" against their total and complete destruction. The first occurrence of the verb form of "cherem" (which is "charam") is in Exodus 22:20 regarding the utter destruction of one who sacrificed to other gods. This was a law that the LORD stipulated that a man was not to initiate a "cherem" on another! But in Numbers

21:1-3, the Israelites made a "cherem" against their enemies to the LORD and their request was answered and carried out by the Israelites. **Numbers 21:1-3** (KJV), "And *when* king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took *some* of them prisoners. **2** And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. **3** And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah." [Emphasis added] The root word for "Hormah" is the word "charam" which means "devoted."

In short, it was possible for a man to devote another unto the LORD. The one devoted would die or serve the LORD till he died because he belonged to the LORD and was holy unto the LORD and could not be redeemed.

Q. Will a parent devote his own children unto the LORD or a master his slave so that they would be put to death?

**Verses 30-31** – All the tithes of the land whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree are the LORD's and therefore they are holy unto the LORD. They can be redeemed by man provided they add an extra 20% to the 10 percent of what belongs to the LORD. In other words, they do not need to give in kind and can be redeemed by shekels.

**Verses 32-34** – All the tithes (meant for the Levites and priests) of the herd or of the flock, and "whatsoever passeth under the rod", i.e. every tenth animal that the one who tithes would touch with his rod shall be holy unto the LORD. The "tither" shall not search whether they are good or bad and change it. If he changes it, then both animals are considered holy and shall not be redeemed.

Q. Why was it that the seed of the land could be redeemed whereas the tithes of herd and flock could not be?

These were the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.

## CONCLUSION

**THE PURPOSE OF THE LEVITICAL LAWS** – The moral laws of God are the Ten Commandments. They are forever applicable throughout the ages as they define the very attributes of God when they are kept by God's people. The moral laws are also known as the apodictic laws of God which are absolute and will never be abrogated or change. The moral laws are the foundation for the casuistic laws. The casuistic laws include the civil laws of Israel. As an illustration, if a man smites or curses his father or mother, he faces the death penalty. If a man steals a sheep and the sheep is killed and he is caught, he has to pay four sheep. If he steals an ox, kills and sells it and he is caught, he has to pay five oxen. If he steals a man and is caught, he faces the death penalty. Stealing is wrong according to the eighth Commandment. But the penalty according to the civil laws differs depending on the item stolen. The man who has sinned against another man may make restitution. After the restitution and payment of the penalty, he is now right with the person and society again. But every sin is

also a sin against God. What restitution could a man make to God in order to have his fellowship with God restored? This is where the Levitical laws come in.

The Levitical laws were instituted for the purpose of restoring the fellowship of the people of Israel with her God. The animal sacrifices and the priesthood functioned to accomplish this purpose. Sin put asunder the fellowship between God and His people but the Levitical system of sacrifice restored it.

An Israelite was not forced to bring an offering. It was always a freewill offering including the sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering and thank offering. The Israel who has sinned and did not wish to bring his offering to God to restore the relationship because he felt that it was too expensive would remain "at odds" with God and his prayers would not be heard by God. Not only that, God's judgement would hang over his head, meaning that God could bring judgement upon him at any time.

**A SHADOW** – The animal sacrifices were not powerless or useless. They had power to cleanse priests and the worshippers of their sins based upon what Christ would do in the future. The entire Levitical system of sacrifice was a shadow of what Christ would do on the cross of Calvary. It is unbiblical to say that the animal sacrifices were without value and had no potency to cleanse. **Hebrews 9:13-14** (KJV), "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: **14** How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The contrast between Christ's blood and the animals' blood only makes sense if the latter has the potency to cleanse, albeit only externally. That is why the animal offerings had to be made every day for hundreds of years because they did not provide permanent and internal cleansing which only the blood of Christ has the power to do. Hebrews 10:1-14 seals any argument once and for all:

**Hebrews 10:1-14** (KJV) "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. **2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. **3** But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. **4** For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. **5** Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: **6** In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. **7** Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. **8** Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; **9** Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. **10** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. **11** And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: **12** But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; **13** From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. **14** For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."