

Numbers 15:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave offering unto the LORD.

Analysis

When ye eat of the bread of the land—agricultural prosperity in Canaan required acknowledging God as provider through firstfruits offerings. The "bread of the land" refers to grain harvests, contrasting with wilderness manna. Normal agricultural production would replace miraculous provision, yet God still demanded recognition as ultimate source. The terumah (תְּרוּמָה, "heave offering") involved lifting a portion of dough upward before God, symbolizing giving back to Him from what He first gave.

This offering acknowledged that the land's fertility came from Yahweh, not Baal or other Canaanite fertility deities. In Canaan, Israel would constantly be tempted toward Baal worship for agricultural success. These regulations established counter-practices: every harvest and even bread-making acknowledged Yahweh as true provider. The instruction to offer from "the first" (reshit, רֵאשִׁית) prioritized God before personal consumption, teaching that covenant relationship precedes personal gratification.

Historical Context

Canaan's agricultural economy centered on grain (wheat and barley), grapes, and olives—the "land flowing with milk and honey." Unlike Egypt's Nile-irrigated agriculture, Canaan depended on seasonal rains, making fertility anxieties acute. Canaanite religion focused on Baal (storm/fertility god) and Asherah (mother goddess). Israel's firstfruits laws countered this by attributing all fertility to

Yahweh. Archaeological evidence from Canaanite sites shows extensive Baal worship paraphernalia, explaining Israel's later syncretism.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you acknowledge God's provision in your daily sustenance, not just in extraordinary blessings?
2. What modern equivalents to Baal worship tempt you to look elsewhere than God for provision?
3. How does the principle of offering "firstfruits" challenge consumer culture's mentality of self-first?

Interlinear Text.

וְכִי ה	בְּאַכְלָכָם	מִלְּקָמָם	בְּאַרְצָה	תְּרַיְמָה
H1961	Then it shall be that when ye eat	of the bread	of the land	ye shall offer up

תְּרוּם הַלְּיָהוָה:
an heave offering unto the LORD
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