

God's People in the Wilderness
Christian Education
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NUMBERS 8.9-26 – 9.1-23

Preparation of the Levites (continued)
The Second Passover

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1. Review

1.1. Chapter 7

1.1.1. Vss. 1, 2: Tabernacle sanctified by 1st day of 2nd month (Num 4.2).

1.1.2. Vss. 3 – 88: Gifts of the tribes thru the 12th day

1.1.3. Vs. 89: God speaks to Moses from the Mercy Seat

1.2. Chapter 8

1.2.1. Vss. 1 – 4: Lampstand and shewbread

1.2.2. Vss. 5 – 22: Cleansing and dedication of the Levites

1.2.3. Vss. 23 – 26: Retirement of the Levites

2. Num 8.9 – 13

2.1. The Levites are presented to the Lord in front of the whole congregation.

2.2. The Levites are taken to the Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle).

2.3. Aaron presents the Levites before the Lord as the congregation lays hands on the heads of the Levites. The Levites are a wave offering (a kind of peace offering).

2.4. The Levites lay hands on the bulls and present one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering.

2.5. Again, the Levites are a wave offering—a living one. (Cp. Rom 12.1, 2 that we are to be a living sacrifice before the Lord.)

3. Num 8.19: The Function of the Levites

3.1. “I have given the Levites as ...”

3.2. a *gift to Aaron and to his sons* from among the sons of Israel;

3.3. to *perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting*;

3.4. and to *make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel*,

3.5. *so that there will be no plague* among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary. (I.e., to serve as a protective "fence" for the people.)

3.6. Thought: Could this be the basis for the Rabbinic concept of a "fence" around the law to keep the people from sinning against the law?

4. Num 8.20 – 22

4.1. Vss. 20 - 22: The service is completed. All the people obediently follow the will of God. All appears copacetic.

4.2. At this point one would be surprised at all the complaints soon to arise.... (wait ‘til chapter 11)

5. Num 8.23 – 26

5.1. The Retirement of the Levites. At age 50 Levites were to retire from the duty of the service (i.e., the work involved in transporting the tabernacle) because carrying the tabernacle was too hard for older men. But they were allowed to continue to act as guards (vv. 25–26).

5.2. In Num 4:23 we read that Levites start their labor of carrying the tabernacle when they are 30 years old, but here they start at age 25 (vs. 24).

5.3. There are no variants in the manuscripts about the age, so is this a contradiction?

6. David Changes the Period of Service

6.1. David found it necessary to extend the period of the Levites' service by causing it to commence at 20 years of age 1 Chr 23. 24 – 27.

6.2. This rule continued in force from the time of David and beyond (2 Chr 31:17; Ezra 3:8).

6.3. Why change the age?

7. Chapter 9.1 – 5: Keeping the Passover

7.1. The first Passover held in Egypt (Ex 12; Dt 16). Review what happened.

7.2. To be celebrated for “generations to come” (Ex 12.14)

7.3. Celebrated “at the appointed time” (twilight on 14th day [Lit. “between the two evenings”]) in accordance w/ all the “rules and regulations.” (Ex 12.5 – 10)

7.4. What can you remember some of the rules and regulations?

7.5. Note on chronology: Chapter 9 refers back to the 14th day of the *1st month of the 2nd year*, but Numbers starts w/ the 1st day of the *2nd month of the 2nd year*. We’re backtracking.

8. Num 9.6 – 8: Who Can Participate?

8.1. Uncleanliness that disqualifies: (Cf. Lev 11 – 15; Num 19): skin diseases; contact with a human corpse; contact w/ animal carcass; childbirth, menstruation or seminal emission; contact with an unclean thing or unclean person)

8.2. Num 5.1 – 4: the unclean to be sent out of the camp until purification

8.3. In this case, the individuals had come into contact w/ a dead person but earnestly wanted to participate in the Passover feast.

9. What Was Moses's Response?

9.1. Vs. 8: "Wait until I check this out w/ the Lord."

9.2. Notice Moses's humility: he does not presume to know what to do;

9.3. He's genuinely interested in the spiritual welfare of these people, and that involves participation in the religious ceremonies.

9.4. A similar question occurs in chapter 27 re: the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad.

9.5. Conclusion: Ask the Lord when decisions are difficult.

10. Num 9.9 – 13: The Lord's Answer

10.1. Vss. 9 – 11: If unclean because of a dead body or on a journey, one can celebrate on the 14th day of the 2nd month.

10.2. Vs. 12: The same rules apply as for the first Passover: Eat the whole thing by morning, and don't break any bones (Cf. Ex 12.10, 46). Applied to Jesus: Jn 19.36

10.3. Vs. 13: But one who is clean and not on a journey must celebrate the Passover or be "cut off from his people." (Cf. Gen 9.11; Is 29.20 ==> death. Many other occurrences.)

11. A Historical Note

11.1. 2 Chr 30.1: King Hezekiah invites Israelites from the northern tribes to come to Jerusalem for the Passover

11.2. 2 Chr 30.18 – 20: "18For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good Lord pardon 19 everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.' 20 So the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people."

12. Num 9.14: Non-Israelites Can Participate

12.1. Non-Israelite (after circumcision) must follow the same rules and regulations as the Israelite

12.2. “You shall have one statute, both for the alien and for the native of the land.”

12.3. Note that this rule applies to worship, not to all civil laws.

12.4. For example, Edomites and Egyptians allowed “admittance into the congregation of Israel” after the 3rd generation; Moabites and Ammonites after the 10th generation (Dt 23.2, 7, 8)

13. Before Moving On...

13.1. As w/ the question “Why bother studying the sacrifices,” why bother studying ceremonial uncleanness? What’s in it for us?

13.2. Do the uncleanness rules apply to us in any way?

13.3. What does Jesus say about what makes one unclean?

13.4. Jesus’s words: Mt 15.11, 18; Mk 7.15, 20. (Cf. Mat 23.27, 28)

13.5. Paul’s words: Rom 14.14

14. Is Communion (Lord’s Supper) a Parallel?

14.1. Jesus is the lamb that takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1.29) and our Passover (1 Cor 5.7).

14.2. None of his bones were broken at this crucifixion (Jn 19.36; cp. Num 9.12).

14.3. One must “eat the flesh and drink the blood” of the Son of Man for eternal life (Jn 6.53 – 56; 1 Cor 11.27, 29).

14.4. Danger of eating unworthily (1 Cor 11.28, 30).

15. Num 9.15 – 23: The Cloud

15.1. (This is not about the internet!)

15.2. First appears in Ex 13.21; 40. 38) to guide: cloud by day, pillar of fire by nite. (Note usefulness for desert environment.)

15.3. After completion of the tabernacle, the cloud fills and covers the tent of meeting as a symbol of God's glory (Ex 40.34, 35).

15.4. The movement of the cloud was unpredictable; it moved "by the mouth of Yahweh [Lit.]" (vs. 18).

16. Clouds in the New Testament

16.1. Transfiguration: Mt 17; Mk 9; Lk 9. A bright cloud overshadowed them

16.2. Jesus's ascension into the clouds: Act 1.9 – 11.

16.3. Jesus (Son of Man) returning in the clouds: Mt 24.30; Mk 13.26; Lk 21.27 (Cp. Dan 7.13)

17. Conclusions

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof...." (Eccl 7.8).