

# BIBLE BRIEFING

NUMBERS 7:1 – 9:14

*“Holy Anniversary, Moses!”*

## Introduction

One-year anniversaries may not seem like much; but, after reading these chapters in Numbers, I think you’ll see how special they can and should be.

It was the one-year anniversary of the Exodus, and God wanted His people to celebrate it with two-weeks of festivities.

(Just as an interesting matter of timing: It is our one-year anniversary here in the building).

The events in chapters 1-6 were preceded by these in chapters 7-9. The Jews were still at Mount Sinai; still preparing to march to the Promised Land. They were erecting the Tabernacle and dedicating it. It was the first day of the month in the second year after Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

The twelve tribal leaders brought gifts on the first day; it lasted twelve days. On the thirteenth day the Levites were dedicated. On the fourteenth day, the Passover was celebrated.

Numbers 7:1 Now it came to pass, when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, that he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and the altar and all its utensils; so he anointed them and consecrated them.

Numbers 7:2 Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers’ houses, who were the leaders of the tribes and over those who were numbered, made an offering.

Numbers 7:3 And they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; and they presented them before the tabernacle.

Numbers 7:4 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Numbers 7:5 “Accept *these* from them, that they may be used in doing the work of the tabernacle of meeting; and you shall give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service.”

Numbers 7:6 So Moses took the carts and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites.

Numbers 7:7 Two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service;

Numbers 7:8 and four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

Numbers 7:9 But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs was the service of the holy things, *which* they carried on their shoulders.

Six carts and twelve oxen offered at the conclusion of the building of the tabernacle.

Moses was told to “accept” these offerings. There may be occasions upon which the Lord will not want you to accept certain offerings. He knows the motives in the heart of the giver – whether it is a free will offering or something with strings attached.

Notice something else: It appears that these gifts were wholly voluntary. Moses did not ask for them; but he was told to accept them. It is interesting that no provision had been made for the frequent transporting of the Tabernacle. God purposely left it vague so that these leaders could see the need and meet it!

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The gifts of God’s people are distributed by the leadership as they are led by God. They are distributed “according to their service,” according to what is necessary to best serve God’s people.

The family of Gershon received two carts with their four oxen; they had the responsibility of transporting the fabrics of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:25-26).

The family of Merari received four carts with their eight oxen; they had the job of transporting the boards and pillars of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:31-32).

The family of Koath received no carts, and no oxen; they were to carry the holy furniture of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:4), and were to carry all things on their shoulders - so, to remove the temptation to disobey, Moses gave them no carts!

There was a second offering of gifts:

Numbers 7:10 Now the leaders offered the dedication *offering* for the altar when it was anointed; so the leaders offered their offering before the altar.  
Numbers 7:11 For the Lord said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar."

The following verses make this the longest chapter in all of the five books Moses wrote. It is the longest chapter in the Bible – except for Psalm 119. It contains a great deal of repetition – on each day for twelve successive days a leader from each of the twelve tribes brought the same offering. For example:

Numbers 7:12 And the one who offered his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah.  
Numbers 7:13 His offering was one silver platter, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;  
Numbers 7:14 one gold pan of ten *shekels*, full of incense;  
Numbers 7:15 one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering;  
Numbers 7:16 one kid of the goats as a sin offering;  
Numbers 7:17 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

Nashon brought a silver platter and a silver platter, each full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; a gold pan with incense, a bull, a ram, a male lamb, a young goat, two oxen, five rams, five adult goats, and five more lambs. These exact same gifts were brought the second day by Nethanel, the leader of Issachar (v18-23); the third day by Eliab, the leader of Zebulun (v24-29); the fourth day by Elizur,

the leader of Reuben (v30-35); the fifth day by Shelumiel, the leader of Simeon (v36-41); the sixth day by Eliasaph, the leader of Gad (v42-47); the seventh day by Elishama, the leader of Ephraim (v48-53); the eighth day by Gamaliel, the leader of Manasseh (v54-59); the ninth day by Abidan, the leader of Benjamin (v60-65); the tenth day by Ahiever, the leader of Dan (v66-71); the eleventh day by Pagiel, the leader of Asher (v72-77); and on the twelfth day (of Christmas!) by Ahira, the leader of Naphtali (v78-83).

There are many meditations here:

1. For one thing... They all brought the same gifts to the Lord. Since the Lord doesn't need your gift, He places different value on gifts than we do. Regardless you are rich or poor, you come to God with your gift on an equal footing. Thus the widow who gives her tiny coin can be giving more than the wealthy man who is holding back. Give as God guides.
2. For another thing... Each gift was recorded. God looks upon the giver and keeps a record of your generosity. His interest is in you – the giver – more than the gift. He knows your name; when you stand before Him, He will review your giving (and every other aspect of your life) with a desire to reward you.
3. Finally, the leaders are *mentioned*, but not *merited*. They were not applauded or given plaques; each one simply represented the rest of their tribe. We are careful not to give too much merit to your giving. It tends to puff-up with pride and to detract from God.

Here is another interesting observation: Apparently they did not stop to observe the Sabbath during these twelve days; it was suspended in light of the spiritual character of the entire two week period. It's the spirit of the Sabbath that was kept the whole time.

Numbers 7:84 This was the dedication *offering* for the altar from the leaders of Israel, when it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold pans.

Numbers 7:85 Each silver platter *weighed* one hundred and thirty *shekels* and each bowl seventy *shekels*. All the silver of the vessels *weighed* two thousand four hundred *shekels*, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

Numbers 7:86 The twelve gold pans full of incense *weighed* ten *shekels* apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the pans *weighed* one hundred and twenty *shekels*.

Numbers 7:87 All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve young bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, with their grain offering, and the kids of the goats as a sin offering twelve.

Numbers 7:88 And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, and the lambs in their first year sixty. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

A careful *count* and *accounting* was performed. Likewise we always want to make a careful count and be able to give an accurate accounting of the gifts from God's people.

Numbers 7:89 Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

In the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, before the veil, Moses would speak to God, and God would speak to Moses from behind the veil – from the Mercy Seat. Then Moses would pass along God's orders to the people.

God wants to guide His people and He utilizes divinely appointed leaders to do so. In the Church, every believer is a priest in the sense that you can come directly into God's presence. There is no veil separating you from the Holy Presence of God; and there is no 'Moses,' no man through whom you must hear from God.

Decisions need to be made; someone, or some group, needs to make them. Churches must determine how they are made. Should the whole congregation have a vote? Should one man have all the power?

God raises-up leadership for the Church: A pastor, Elders, and Deacons. God works in and through them to direct the movements of His people. They should be respected for their position and obeyed in so far as they are biblical in their guidance.

We meet together; we pray together; we seek God's will together. If you have the right men – and by that I mean, the men God raises-up; then they will discern God's will.

God spoke to Moses about three important matters:

1. Caring for the lamps (8:1-4).
2. Dedicating the Levites (8:5-26).
3. Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14).

Numbers 8:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Numbers 8:2 “Speak to Aaron, and say to him, ‘When you arrange the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.’”

Numbers 8:3 And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Numbers 8:4 Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

We’ve encountered this lampstand many times before. It provided the only light within the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. It represented many things – especially these two:

1. Israel was to be a light to the surrounding nations of the glory of God.
2. Jesus is the light of the world – the only true source of light about God and salvation.

It was the duty of the priests to trim the wicks, light the lamps, and fill the bowls with oil. Here is how **you** can perform that same function today:

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

Philippians 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

Philippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

The oil is always a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We must be born of the Spirit... Filled with the Spirit... Led by the Spirit... And baptized with the Spirit, if we are to shine.

Next we see the dedication of the Levites:

Numbers 8:5 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Numbers 8:6 “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them *ceremonially*.

Numbers 8:7 Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

Numbers 8:8 Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering.

Numbers 8:9 And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel.

Numbers 8:10 So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites;

Numbers 8:11 and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord *like* a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the Lord.

Numbers 8:12 Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites.

Numbers 8:13 “And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them *like* a wave offering to the Lord.

Numbers 8:14 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.

Numbers 8:15 After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them *like* a wave offering.

Numbers 8:16 For they *are* wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel.

Numbers 8:17 For all the firstborn among the children of Israel *are* Mine, *both* man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself.

Numbers 8:18 I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

Numbers 8:19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.”

The Levites (you’ll remember) cared for the Tabernacle, took the structure down for each march, carried it during the march, then erected it at the new location.

The Levites were, in a sense, dedicated to God as living sacrifices. The leaders of the tribes, representing the whole nation, laid their hands on them as an act of dedication. The Levites were their substitutes, serving on their behalf.

A Levite began training at age 25 and serving at age 30. They were semi-retired at age 50.

Several lessons emerge from the Levites:

1. God chooses your service & gifts.
2. Your first service is to the Lord, as a living sacrifice.
3. Since you serve the Lord, your service should be both cheerful & careful.

Chapter nine begins by recording the celebration of the second Passover. (The first had been in Egypt, on the night of their deliverance).

Numbers 9:1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

Numbers 9:2 “Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time.

Numbers 9:3 On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.”

Numbers 9:4 So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover.

Numbers 9:5 And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.

They could look back over their first year and see all that God had done. *What rejoicing must have taken place!* Then, too, they could look forward to what God had promised – a land of their own, flowing (as it were) with milk and honey!

Now we are coming up on our first year in the new facility (our twentieth overall). Let’s not fall short of the future God has planned for us by *resting* or *relaxing*.

Back in Numbers, at Mount Sinai... A serious situation occurred:

Numbers 9:6 Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day.

Numbers 9:7 And those men said to him, “We *became* defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord at its appointed time among the children of Israel?”



Numbers 9:8 And Moses said to them, “Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you.”

Numbers 9:9 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Numbers 9:10 “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or *is* far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord’s Passover.

Numbers 9:11 On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Numbers 9:12 They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

If you touched a corpse, you were considered unclean as far as your participating in religious activities. These men could not participate in the Passover at the prescribed time; so the Lord graciously told them they could celebrate it one month later.

Notice: **They wanted to celebrate!** They were bummed when they realized they were defiled. These may have been the guys who removed the scorched bodies of Nadab and Abihu from the Tabernacle after God ‘fired’ them in Leviticus chapter ten.

Others in the camp may have been defiled, too; perhaps they were happy to avoid the keeping of the Passover? Instead of a religious ritual they could have a day off!

God was gracious to these men. Don’t confuse grace with your convenience:

Numbers 9:13 But the man who *is* clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

Some of the Jews might find it more convenient to wait and celebrate the Passover a month later. Maybe they didn’t like crowds... There could be a million reasons. God’s gracious provision for those defiled was not one of personal convenience.

In this age of grace, it is easy to put convenience ahead of personal sacrifice for the Lord. While we want always to be careful to not burden God’s people with legalistic rules and rites and rituals... It’s important that we, on an individual basis, don’t fall into the habit of

preferring our own convenience and making spiritual decisions accordingly.

Numbers 9:14 'And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord's Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.'

The foreigner might think the second Passover was a little less serious or "religious" than the first. Not so! They must convert and be circumcised in order to participate in either.

### Conclusion

This was the second... and **last** Passover the Jews celebrated until Joshua led them into the Promised Land nearly forty years later. A lot has been made of their failure to keep it; but the command in Exodus 12:25 reads, "and it shall come to pass when ye be come to the land that the Lord will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service."

It wasn't that they disobeyed the command to keep the Passover; it's that they disobeyed the Lord by refusing to claim His promises and enter the land. They **couldn't** keep the Passover!

We sometimes get burdened by our so-called obligations – like attending Bible study. There are blessings which we would sorely miss if they were no longer available to us.

Avail yourself; not out of duty, but delight. If you are in charge of a ministry, overseeing an area – have joy and make it a delight for others to attend.

The joy of the Lord is our strength! (Nehemiah 8:10).