

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Life of Moses (Part 3)

Numbers Chapters 1-12

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Revised 18 December 2021

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INTRODUCTION

This fourth book of the Mosaic Pentateuch generally covers the activities of the people from the second month of the second year of the Exodus, through until the last year of the Exodus journey, to the tenth month of the fortieth lunar year since leaving Egypt. Having said this, the events described in chapters 7-9 appear to have occurred in the first month, for they are “after the tabernacle was raised up”.

It appears that Moses is filling in details that he omitted from the account in Exodus 40 here, as in the context of the other matters he discusses they make more sense here. We are guessing a fair bit when it comes to specific time frames here, because Moses is not so much interested in time lines of events, as in their spiritual significance, and so he joins things together in his narrative because they spiritually make commentary on each other, not because they fit in a time sequence. Remember the Hebrew way of thinking rather than the linear Western way of thinking.

In this book we have the two census records of the tribes, giving us the totals of their army strength, as they head into the encounter with the reality of the invasion of the land at Kadesh Barnea, and later on the plains opposite Jericho. I have given below a suggestion as to the possible real numbers of fighting men involved, using the words for “thousands” (eleph = group) as was done in the Exodus passage, (Exodus 14-18), indicating that this is the term for family groups headed by a fighting man. The two census lists from Numbers then give us very similar figures to those of the original Exodus, at around 6000 fighting men in the original army.

I take it that the “Princes” listed in the first verses of chapter one are not the “judges” of the tribes, as appointed by Moses in Exodus 18:22-24, but they are the commanding “Colonels” of their tribal battalion. They are older men, and are not the leading warriors of the tribes, (the lead “Majors” of the battalion – who are the bravest of the officers), who are the ones who will be chosen to be spies in the land in Numbers 13:1-16. Israel ran as a “meritocracy”, with those who had God anointed ability and Holy Spirit empowered strength being able to rise up to prominence in leadership in war or judgment. Any leadership system that operates differently to this is fatally flawed – the cream must be allowed to rise to the top or the scum will! Remember Moses purpose here – he is mentoring leadership for successive generations.

As I noted in the Exodus commentary, I am suggesting these numbers of men as the minimum level of the numbers of the army, for the correct figures may be higher than this. As others have said, “the jury is still out on the numbers involved”. My belief is that the numbers of fighting men were around the 6000 mark throughout this period, as that makes the most sense, especially when we look at the lessons of faith that we will see are central to this book as they were to Exodus also. As I stated then, I re-state, if you wish to go higher in the numbers you believe were involved, then I will not argue with you, for we simply cannot be 100% sure at this distance, but I would hold to the lower numbers on the basis of the internal evidence Moses gives us in Exodus and here in Numbers. I reject the Septuagint guesses at numbers.

The book begins at the “Mount of God”, and the first part of the book (Chapters 1 – 10:10) is a census of the tribes and families there by the holy mountain, the dedication of tabernacle, Levites, and the gifts of the tribes for the Levites, and the procedure for moving camp to invade the land. The second part of the book covers the journey to Kadesh Barnea, ready for the invasion of the land, to their rebellion and defeat at the hands of the inhabitants of the land. (Chapters 10:11 – Chapter 14:45). The third part of the book covers various new rules for the priesthood and the people in light of their rebellion at Kadesh, various events that occur on the 37th (Solar) year of wanderings that now unfold, but also covers the further rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. (Chapters 15 – 19). Each aspect of the story has extensive leadership training material in it.

The fourth part of the book covers the journey to the land of Moab after the 37 years are fulfilled, with battles, and politics between the people of Israel, the Edomites and the Amorites. (Chapters 20 – 21:35). The fifth part covers the events that occur in the plains of Moab, especially the Satanic attack launched by the wealth hungry false prophet Balaam, who advised the king of Moab on how to disable the people of God by sexual immorality. It ends with a second census of the families of the Israelites. (Chapters 22 – 26). The sixth part of the book covers the prophetic word regarding Moses’ death, Joshua’s appointment as his successor, and some further instructions regarding both the division of the land and a number of subjects that emerge through this period of time. (Chapters 27-36).

This book is a story of 37 years of God’s faithfulness and the people’s faithlessness. **2 Timothy 2:10-15** may be written over this book. Throughout the journey, the Lord looks after the people, protecting them in grace and mercy, but they lack the living faith in their God to advance into His provision for them, and so this generation misses the best that God had for them. Instead of entering the land as the Lord had directed them to, they panic and turn away, believing they are too few and too weak to win, and so are judged by the Lord to die in the wilderness.

Even then they do not stop their foolish spirit of rebellion against the will of the Lord for them, and further active rebellions occur. The Lord will seriously judge those who persist in this rebellious mental attitude, for they indicate that they despise the Lord, His Plan, and His Word. No-one is judged in this book for a momentary lack of judgment, but all are judged for their persistent rejection of the will of the Lord for them. God is gracious and these people rebel at least thirteen times before the judgment falls upon them all. Let us not hear the Lord’s name being taken in vain or his grace and mercy insulted. God is incredibly slow to anger! **Nehemiah 9:17, Psalms 103:8, 145:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nahum 1:3.**

As Leviticus portrays grace and judgment through the sacrificial system, so the book of Numbers portrays grace and judgment through the events of the thirty seven years of wandering. God is gracious, but there is a limit set to mercy by

the Lord, and it is in the place where people have set their hearts firmly against the Lord and despise His Word and Will for their life and seek their own path. The Exodus Generation, except for Joshua and Caleb, dies the "Sin Unto Death". This is a living journal of a people who do not advance into the faith-rest life the Lord called them to walk. We are challenged to be like Joshua and Caleb. **Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12, 1 John 5:11-21.**

CHAPTER 1

NUMBERS 1:1-54

1:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; 3 From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4 And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers. 5 And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: of the tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur. 6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar. 9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon. 10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni. 12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran. 14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan. 16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel. 17 And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names: 18 And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls. 19 As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai. 20 And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 21 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. (Possibly = 465 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 22 Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 23 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. (possibly 593 family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 24 Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 25 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Gad, were forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty. (Possibly = 456 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 26 Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 27 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Judah, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. (Possibly = 746 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 28 Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 29 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 544 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 30 Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 31 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 574 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 32 Of the children of Joseph, namely, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 33 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand and five hundred. 34 Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 35 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred. (Possibly = 725 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 36 Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 37 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 354 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 38 Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 39 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Dan, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. (Possibly = 627 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 40 Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 41 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Asher, were forty and one thousand and five hundred. (Possibly = 415 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 42 Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 43 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Naphtali, were

fifty and three thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 534 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty). 44 These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. 45 So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; 46 Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. (Possibly = total of 6080 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty, making an army strength of 6080 men organized in twelve battalions of around 500 men each (Joseph's two sub-tribes as two separate battalions). 47 But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. 48 For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, 49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. 51 And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 52 And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. 53 But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony. 54 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The call comes to Moses to ready the people to move out into faith based action. The nation has been sitting by the Mount of God, Mt Horeb/Sinai, to receive the Law and to establish their worship system upon the model given to Moses in the Mountain. Having gotten their worship established and operating, the next test will be for the Levites to be able to dismantle and re-assemble the tabernacle structure quickly and efficiently. The people must then also be instructed in the new breaking of camp routine, so that they are ready to follow the Ark on the march, as they will now be doing.

To facilitate this whole process two things are needed. Firstly, the organization of the tribes needs to be more thoroughly systematized under the leadership of tribal elders who are the "princes", and rulers/leaders. As noted above, the judges for each tribe have been established, but it would appear that the men who are appointed here are different men, and may have the administrative role for the breaking of camp, and/or probably the military leadership role. To establish the order of battle, a second administrative process is required; a census is to be taken to establish the fighting strength of the tribes. Taking a Census is a fraught thing, for men may trust their own strength, but God's purpose is that they trust Him alone.

This will also be the occasion of an offering on behalf of each family for each fighting man, so that they dedicate every man to the task of battle, ransoming his soul to the Lord, before he enters the battle line. They were not to trust in their numbers, but in the Lord, and recognize that every man needed to stand before the Lord and ransom his soul before the army marched, let alone fought. Exodus 7:1-5, 30:11-16. The census was potentially a time of pride and self satisfaction for the nation, as they reflected upon their power, whereas the Lord simply wants them to see their need of His grace and through the half shekel offering dedicate their nation and it's army to the Lord's purposes and will.

Moses is ordered to number the people now and in 37 years time he will be ordered again to do the same thing. King David was later tempted to conduct an unauthorized census, and he went ahead in pride and did so, at the cost of many lives. 1 Chronicles 21:1-30, 27:23-24. The message of the Lord is clear throughout Scripture; our battles are to be won, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord". **Zechariah 4:6, Romans 15:13-19, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 2 Timothy 1:1-8.** We stand or fall in the grace, mercy, power and plan of the Lord our God alone, not by any numbers.

Verses 4 – 19. The officers in charge of each battalion of the army are now appointed, one for each tribe, except the tribe of Levi, who have the task of guarding the tabernacle, by simply standing by it in prayerfulness. The army will be empowered by God, and through His Spirit they will be victorious and Levi is not required to fight in the order of battle, but to serve in prayer by the tabernacle. These Officers/princes will be the Colonels of each regiment/battalion of the tribe. Each tribal battalion will number around 500 men and be organized by the men named in these verses. These men will lead their army group into battle, and they will lead from the front, not the rear.

They will also be the leaders in the worship of their tribes, and will bring the offering to dedicate the altar and establish the Levitical system. Their first task is going to be to co-ordinate the offering for the dedication of the altar. Numbers 7:1ff. These men were fit to lead in battle, because they were ready and keen to worship the Lord. They centre their work and lives in the following, and protecting of the Ark and the Tabernacle. The entire camp was centred in the Tabernacle and their lives were to be centred in the worship that occurred there. Just so our lives are to be centred in the worship of the Lord, for in the power and focus of our worship is the strength of our walk forward in the will of the Lord. **Isaiah 61:1-3.**

The twelve men are named and presented to the people, and then the people are to gather in their tribal groups and tell their genealogies to the leader of their tribe, proving their parentage and right to stand with that tribe. Once they have proved they belong to that tribe, and are certified as being a true member, they are to be enrolled in the army of that tribe in some form of formal ceremony. Each soldier must prove his right to serve in that tribe with confidence born of living relationship with the founder of that tribe. Ezra will later require all the people to do the same on their return from Exile in Babylon. Ezra 2:1ff, Nehemiah 7:1ff, 61-62.

We must all be able to cite our pedigree; our right to stand before the Lord as a member of His army upon the earth. What that means to us today is that we must be able to state that we are truly the genuine children of God, born again through faith in Christ Jesus. We must daily know our living relationship with the Lord our God and Saviour. Let us remember and recall the moment of our salvation and stand upon the rock of the Lord's person and plan for our life from that point into eternity.

We do not need to have "legitimate birth" here upon the earth and know anything of our earthly ancestors, but we do need to know that we are legitimately/truly "born again" of God's power, and be able to state with absolute certainty that we are the genuine "born again" children of the living God. **Matthew 7:13-23, John 3:5-8, 15-21, 36, Galatians 4:23-29, 1 Peter 1:22-25, 1 John 3:7-16, 4:7-21.**

Verses 20 – 46. I have not laboured on about the names of the men who led the tribes, for they are named to be given honour then and for all time as the princes of their people at that time. Each would fail the test at Kadesh Barnea, and yet they would still serve the Lord through their years until death ended their service. These men are a reminder to us, that even if we have a great position and honour, it is nothing without obedience and faith, and that even when we fail our service is not over until we are called home to be with the Lord forever.

As you read the names of these men, pause and pray that you may serve in your allotted path and sphere with faith guiding your every step, in order that you may not become a casualty in the ANGELIC CONFLICT as they all did. **Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 4:1-8, 11:1-3, 6, James 2:14-20.** They all failed and fell in the wilderness, but they accepted their penalty from the Lord and led with courage until their deaths. This is true leadership and we see it from Moses also – even if failure robs you of some eternal rewards, you soldier onwards and win and train others to do better than you.

The tribal groups have significant numbers of men to serve in the army. As we saw back in Exodus, the Egyptian "Ready Response" Army that was washed ashore at the Sea of Reeds and thereby equipped the army of Israel numbered between 6000 – 10,000, and the army census here is in that basic area, if the word "eleph", miss-translated in the Septuagint (LXX – 3rd century BC) as "thousands", is correctly translated for this time/age as "family groups".

If each is headed up by one active soldier, and if the families are in effect organized around the men who were over twenty and fit to be soldiers, (Note Moses words regarding each tribal group, "all that were able to go forth to war"), then the number of active, fit, and able men is just over 6000. There would be more men than this in the population but many would be too old, unfit, injured, or ill with some disease that might render them unable to go out on campaign. This is not a total census, but one of men "fit for warfare". In today's medical examinations for the Army only 1:5 men qualifies as trainable in the first place, and if older men are excluded from these numbers recorded here, then we may have far more men in the camp than in the army.

Each family group may have had three to five men for the one soldier who was "fit for war" and was given the precious weapons for his use to stand as that family's representative in the army. In this day the army had to be ready to fight in hand to hand combat for a significant number of hours and this requires great battle fitness and robust health.

Reuben	had	465	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Simeon	had	593	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Gad	had	456	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Judah	had	746	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Issachar	had	544	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Zebulon	had	574	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Joseph	had	772	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Benjamin	had	354	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Dan	had	627	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Asher	had	415	Family groups, with one soldier from each.
Naphtali	had	534	Family groups, with one soldier from each.

TOTAL ARMY STRENGTH = 6080 warriors in twelve Battalions, under their twelve leaders. Joseph's group being divided in two, with the tribe of Judah being the largest battalion at 746, and Benjamin being the smallest at 354, although if the tribe of Joseph is divided into it's two sub-tribes, then they are smallest. We will see how they marched and in what order in the next chapter. They will be organized into four Regiments, each with three fighting battalions of around 500 men in each.

Verses 47 – 54. The tribe of Levi were not to be numbered in the army as such, although they were allowed to fight for their homes and families if it was required. They were not assigned to a pacifist role, just to centre themselves round the Ark and Tabernacle and defend that if they were required. They were to trust the others to do their job and win the battles, and their job was to focus upon the spiritual needs of the nation and serve those needs within and around the tabernacle. They were never to be numbered, for the Lord would always provide enough Levites to do the work of the tabernacle. No-one else was ever to intrude anywhere near the tabernacle area on penalty of death.

The family of the priests will be camped around the tabernacle forming a physical barrier between the camps of the other tribes and the tabernacle as a shield to keep all others away. The Levites will be encamped to the North of the tabernacle and will be ready to move to assist the priests of the family of Aaron and Moses in all things they have been directed to assist in. These sons of Levi were the men assigned the tasks centred in the support of the tabernacle and everyone else was to stay away! Each was to do their own work and not interfere in others. **John 21:20-24.**

This is a vital principle for all ministry even today. In days when believers are encouraged to read the latest book on church growth and then do it locally, we are challenged by Scripture to pray and find what it is the Lord wants for us to do, and then do it without reference to any other person's ministry area or advice. We are to walk our called and assigned path, under the Lord's direction. We are not to live other people's lives, nor do the tasks assigned to them by the Lord! **1 Corinthians 12:11-27, James 3:1ff**. Each of us is called to be obedient to the Lord, not any other man's system of administration or path of service. Our mentor is the Lord, and our orders are from the Holy Spirit through the Word, not from men's words.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. It is not in numbers that we are to rejoice, although today those with the biggest churches are made to appear as if they are the "princes" of the modern church. The only criteria for success in the Lord's work, is that we are doing the Lord's work, as, when, where, and how the Lord has directed. Let us be sure of our calling and serve the Lord with focused energy in the path He has called us to walk.
2. Leadership must be God ordained and anointed. These princes would all fall and fail the Lord, at a crucial point their courage would fail them, but they would still be required to serve and move forward and train the next generation to seize what they had failed to seize. Let us be focused upon the Lord's plan, not just our blessing here. There is blessing for them after failure, as there is blessing for us after failure, as we pick ourselves up and advance down the path.
3. Organization is not evil when it is God ordered. Churches must have rolls of attendance, but like the Israelites these are to be sources of praise, worship and giving, not of pride and self satisfaction. Our trust is in the Lord alone, not our numbers.
4. Just as the soldiers of Israel had to "cite their genealogy" just so we must know our relationship with the Lord and our membership of His household through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must know we are the children of God or we cannot serve Him. Let us "examine ourselves" and be sure of our salvation and stand with assurance of our ETERNAL SECURITY and focus on pleasing our master and Lord.

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. God is pleased with believers
 - a) By asking for the right things. (1 Kings 3:9, 10)
 - b) By living a separated life. (2 Timothy 2:4)
 - c) By doing his will. (Hebrews 13:20, 21)
 - d) Walking in fellowship with him. (Hebrews 11:5, Genesis 5:24)
 - e) By praising God. (Psalm 69:30, 31)
 - f) By resting by faith in God's provision. (Hebrews 11:6)
2. The Christian life involves walking.
 - a) in the Truth (2 John 4)
 - b) by means of faith in wisdom. (2 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 4:5)
 - c) in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25)
 - d) in Love. (Ephesians 5:2)
 - e) in newness of Life. (Romans 6:4)
 - f) worthy of our vocation. (Ephesians 4:1)
 - g) worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
 - h) honestly as in the day. (Romans 13:13)
 - i) in good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - j) in light. (Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7)
 - k) in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 2:6)
 - l) circumspectly. (Ephesians 5:15,16)
 - m) as ye ought. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
3. The Christian life demands honourable conduct:
 - a) Believers have freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1), but our conduct must not
 - i) harm the weak. (1 Corinthians 8:9);
 - ii) be hypocritical (1 Peter 2:16);
 - iii) does not edify (1 Corinthians 10:23);
 - iv) lead to habits which enslave (1 Corinthians 6:12);
 - v) lead to self-indulgence (Galatians 5:13);
 - vi) offend personal conscience (Romans 14:5).
 - b) Our conduct towards God.
 - i) Done in His Name. (1 Timothy 6:1)
 - ii) As unto Him. (Colossians 3:23)
 - iii) For His glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31)
 - iv) To be worthy of Him. (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5)

c) Our conduct towards others.

- i) Be a good example. (Romans 14:7; 1 Timothy 4:12)
- ii) Worthy of our calling. (Ephesians 4:1)
- iii) Honest. (2 Corinthians 8:21)
- iv) Free from the appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22)
- v) Helpful to a neighbour. (Romans 12:18; 15:2)
- vi) Not a cause of stumbling. (Romans 14:13)
- vii) Honouring one's parents. (Colossians 3:20)
- viii) Honouring to the government. (Titus 3:1)
- ix) Must not entail unequal yoking. (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- x) Not to judge others (Romans 14:10-13)
- xi) Not to cause others to stumble by our actions (Romans 14:15,21-23)

d) Our conduct towards self.

- i) Pure and not lustful. (1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Peter 2:11)
- ii) Must not defile. (1 Corinthians 3:17; Titus 1:15)
- iii) Must not condemn. (Romans 14:22)
- iv) Must do good works. (Titus 3:8)

e) This conduct is only obtainable under the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 1:9).

4. The Christian life demands diligence:

- a) Love towards others. (Galatians 2:10, 2 Corinthians 8:8). We should be eager to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves especially by giving them the gospel.
- b) We should be keen to take care of the saints (other believers) (Hebrews 6:11, 2 Corinthians 7:12, 2 Corinthians 8:16,17, 2 Timothy 1:17)
- c) We should be eager to rest in the promises and principles of God. Happiness comes from this. An example of not resting in the promises is the Exodus generation.(Hebrews 4:11)
- d) Confirmation of our calling (2 Peter 1:5, 2 Peter 1:10) We should witness for Christ eagerly, zealously.
- e) Unity of the body. (Ephesians 4:3) We should be zealous in maintaining the unity of the body.
- f) For the commendation of God. (2 Timothy 2:15). Be eager to show yourself approved by God.
- g) To have a life without spot or blemish. (2 Peter 3:14) We should walk close to the Lord and not expose ourselves to unnecessary areas of temptation.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2**INTRODUCTION**

The camp of Israel is now described as it is to be from this point onwards for their wilderness march and their advance into Canaan. The camp centres, from the establishment of tabernacle worship, on the tabernacle itself. It has been set up away from the original camp by the Mountain, and after the instructions are given here the entire camp will re-form in the arrangement the Lord directs here.

At the centre of the new camp structure is the Tabernacle of the Lord. Around the tabernacle the family of the priesthood are to live. By the Eastern gate Moses and Aaron are to live in their tents. To the north side the family of Merari, at the back of the tabernacle outer wall, on the west side is the family of Gershon, and to the south side the family of Kohath. Numbers 3. I will suggest that a clear space of at least 160 metres will need to surround the families of the priesthood and the camp of the twelve tribes to allow the army to assemble there in what will become a parade ground and an assembly area for battle.

On the Eastern side, facing the Tabernacle door, and the tents of Moses and Aaron, are the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, under the leadership and banner of Judah. The banner of Judah is believed to be a Lion by the Rabbis. On the north side of the tabernacle, facing the north side of the tabernacle enclosure, and the family of Merari, are the tribes of Dan, Naphtali and the remnant of Levi. They are under the leadership of the tribe of Dan. The banner of the tribe of Dan was an eagle, according to the Rabbis.

On the Western side, facing the Tabernacle enclosure back wall, and the tents of Gershon, are the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, under the leadership and banner of Ephraim. The banner of Ephraim is believed to be a great Ox by the Rabbis. On the Southern side, facing the tabernacle south wall, and the tents of Kohath, are the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, under the leadership and banner of Reuben. The banner of Reuben is believed to be a Standing man by the Rabbis.

Refer back to Genesis 49:3-27, and study the patriarchal blessing of Jacob over his sons. In this passage the clues to some of the banners of the tribes are found, but also the redemption of the tribes is seen, with Reuben regaining manly rulership over a quarter of the army, with Dan becoming an eagle and a leader, although he will still strike the enemy with the speed of a snake, and with Ephraim standing like a mighty Ox in power and prosperity!

NUMBERS 2:1-34

2:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, **2** Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch. **3** And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be captain of the children of Judah. **4** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. **5** And those that do pitch next unto him shall be the tribe of Issachar: and Nethaneel the son of Zuar shall be captain of the children of Issachar. **6** And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. **7** Then the tribe of Zebulun: and Eliab the son of Helon shall be captain of the children of Zebulun. **8** And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. **9** All that were numbered in the camp of Judah were an hundred thousand and fourscore thousand and six thousand and four hundred, throughout their armies. These shall first set forth. **10** On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their armies: and the captain of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur. **11** And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. **12** And those which pitch by him shall be the tribe of Simeon: and the captain of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. **13** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. **14** Then the tribe of Gad: and the captain of the sons of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel. **15** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty and five thousand and six hundred and fifty. **16** All that were numbered in the camp of Reuben were an hundred thousand and fifty and one thousand and four hundred and fifty, throughout their armies. And they shall set forth in the second rank. **17** Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards. **18** On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud. **19** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty thousand and five hundred. **20** And by him shall be the tribe of Manasseh: and the captain of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. **21** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred. **22** Then the tribe of Benjamin: and the captain of the sons of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideon. **23** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred. **24** All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim were an hundred thousand and eight thousand and an hundred, throughout their armies. And they shall go forward in the third rank. **25** The standard of the camp of Dan shall be on the north side by their armies: and the captain of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. **26** And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. **27** And those that encamp by him shall be the tribe of Asher: and the captain of the children of Asher shall be Pagiel the

son of Ocran. 28 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty and one thousand and five hundred. 29 Then the tribe of Naphtali: and the captain of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of Enan. 30 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 31 All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan were an hundred thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred. They shall go hindmost with their standards. 32 These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. 33 But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses. 34 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The camp is to be re-organized and set up around the tabernacle, but with a good distance from it to the first row of tents of the various tribal army groups and the tents of the priests. I believe that the space between the tabernacle and the first row of tribal tents may have been at least 160 meters (“far off from the tabernacle”) so that it formed a safety barrier, and, I believe, a vast parade ground/square measuring 250 metres square (refer below for discussion and reasons for this proposal).

I believe that each of the soldiers were individually responsible for the arrangement of their immediate family tent group, and that they were sited in the place in the encampment that they stood in within the battalion of their tribe. I further believe that the “captains of” hundreds, fifties, and tens, were each assigned a place/area within the tribal camp, and were camped with their men around them, so that in a “call out” they would all leave their tents and be in order of battle in their immediate camp sites.

I suspect they paraded then in the space between the tents of the tribes and the tents of the sons of Aaron and Moses. They would then always be preparing for battle facing the tabernacle, and that makes sense to me from a military and spiritual perspective. Spiritually they were always drawn up for battle around the tabernacle and facing it as their centre remembering by the direction they were facing that it was God who would give them victory.

From a military perspective the army would be grouped in order of battle before any battle, in the centre of the camp and be able to move from there, between the tribal tent lines, to the point of threat quickly and offensively. To have the army try to fall in outside the camp, or on its perimeter, would be to place it always at a disadvantage in any enemy attack, or threat, and have it in a defensive position, whereas God’s people were to first face their God, and then face their enemies and fight offensively. In military terms this is called fighting on interior lines, and is the preferred situation to always be in. Moses is a great general under Egypt but a greater one under God, for he now has divine wisdom.

The army has twelve Battalions, divided into four “Regiments” or “Divisions”, of three Battalions each. Each Regiment has a lead Battalion, with a leading Colonel to take charge over his quarter of the army. The regiments are organized as follows in this chapter: (From chapter 10 later we discover the order of march, and where the Levites are in the army review).

First Regiment	Lead Battalion Second Battalion Third Battalion	Judah Issachar Zebulon	Banner – Lion
Levites of Gershon and Merari with their six covered wagons.			
Second Regiment	Lead Battalion Second Battalion Third Battalion	Reuben Simeon Gad	Banner – Standing Man
Levites of the family of Kohath carrying the Ark and the furniture.			
Third Regiment	Lead Battalion Second Battalion Third Battalion	Ephraim Manasseh Benjamin	Banner – Ox
Fourth Regiment	Lead Battalion Second Battalion Third Battalion	Dan Ashur Naphtali	Banner – Eagle

Verses 3 – 9. The East side was the place of Judah, to guard the gate of the tabernacle. They have the place of greatest honour as is befitting their destiny as the tribe that will deliver the kings and the Messiah himself. They stand and camp where the sun rises, for from their tribe will the Son rise up to rule over them and all the tribes! Genesis

49:8-12, Isaiah 9:1-2, 30:26-28, 31:4, 49:1-11, 60:1-3, 19-21, Jeremiah 49:19, 50:31-34, Hosea 6:1-4, Malachi 4:1-6, Matthew 4:15-17.

From the way Moses lists the tribes as armies I deduced above, that each of the tribal camps is pitched with the various platoons and companies camped together. As the description goes from East to South to West and then North, I also deduce that the tribes were camped side by side, with Judah encamped on the Northern end of the East side, with Issachar's camp next, in the middle of the eastern side and then with Zebulon's camp at the Southern end of the Eastern side.

There would be a clear space between each tribal camp, as this would provide twelve avenues, at all cardinal points of the compass, down which the army could be marched from its assembly area facing the tabernacle, to confront any threat, or attack any objective.

This way, when the shofar (Ram's horn trumpet) was blown to call the army to battle order, the men in the camps would simply file from their tents, head down any of these clear avenues, fall into their sections (of ten men), then into their platoons (50 men) as they went, and then into their companies, (100 men), and head straight out into the open space between the camp and the line of the tents of the families of Moses and Aaron, by the tabernacle enclosure Eastern wall, ready to line up as three distinct battalions, with Judah as the lead battalion to the right of the line. They will be fallen in facing the gateway to the enclosure and the door of the Tabernacle itself.

The tribal banner would be held aloft by the leader or his standard bearer and act as the point from which the lines of soldiers would form. It would be either on the right of the line or at its centre. Each battalion had its war leader at its head and he is named again here; Nahshon for Judah, Nethaneel for Issachar, and Eliab for Zebulon. They were probably organized into 10s, 50s, 100s, with between three and seven companies of around 100 men for each tribal battalion. (This is based on guess work, as the words for numbers all had very flexible meanings at this time of Moses).

From the numbers we have here again recorded we can work out how large the parade on the east side would be. Each armed man, with shield, would take up approximately a meter across the front of the line. As 10 is the smallest unit with a man assigned as its leader, I suspect the battalions probably fell in ten deep, with their section leader at the front (he may be counted as one of the ten, or be additional). With this structure each individual section could "peel off" the battle line and be led to any task by its leader who stood in the front row, or just ahead of it.

This would produce a line for Judah that was about 75 meters across, in seven companies (100s). If there were slight gaps between the 50s and the 100s with their leaders in front, then the line would be slightly longer, but around 80 metres would be a reasonable guess for 746 soldiers. (Remember, I am working on the basis of the lower numbers of soldiers, rather than the LXX figures, which would be ten times as many, that I don't believe could possibly fit in the space described here).

The tribal battalion of Issachar, fallen in ten deep in its 50s and 100s also would have a front line length facing the tabernacle of around 60 metres, in five companies. The tribal battalion of Zebulon, fallen in ten deep in its 50s and 100s also would have a line facing the tabernacle of around 60 metres, in five companies also. With a distinct gap between the three battalions of about five metres to enable ease of manoeuvre if they were to march out to battle from their parade ground, and with at least a five metre gap between the end of their "three tribe line" and the southern and northern parade lines, this gives a total battle line facing the tabernacle, and the tents of Moses and Aaron there, on the eastern side of between 220-250 metres. In ten lines all can still see the tabernacle structure through the gaps.

The depth of the line would be at least ten metres for the ten ranks, with the leader of each ten (possibly as an additional) in the front of the line, and ahead of him the captains of 50, and ahead of them the captains of each hundred, with the battle leader of each tribe under his standard ahead of them all. For Judah the number of officers, in addition to the soldiers in rank would be 70 captains of ten (I suspect counted as one of the ten), 14 captains of 50s, and 7 captains of 100s. For both Issachar and Zebulon the officers would number 50 captains of ten, 10 captains of 50s and 5 captains of 100s for each tribe. The additional men would possibly be organized as "extra numbers" for platoons under strength on a day or be added into sections at the back as regular additional numbers. Each section was likely an extended family group, and all units were thus related to each other, and such an organization has great benefits for cohesion.

The Eastern enclosure wall of the tabernacle was around 25 metres in length. This becomes a basic mathematical calculation to work out how far away the line was from the tabernacle enclosure wall, outside of which the family of Moses and Aaron had their tents pitched. Practise your high school mathematics on this problem with a piece of paper and draw out the tabernacle enclosure at 25 meters by 50 meters, (make this 2.5 cms and 5 cms) and then draw a 45 degree angle from each corner of the enclosure straight out to the edge of your paper.

The length of the line of battle of the three tribes on the Eastern side is around 250 meters, which in our diagram is 25 cms. Work out where this line would be on the 45 degree angle lines that come from the corners of the tabernacle enclosure. What you will discover is that the closest the line could be to the tabernacle enclosure is 140 metres. This gives a maximum distance to march around the entire line of the army (the circumference of the line around the Tabernacle enclosure at a distance from the wall of 140-160 metres) as around 1000 metres (250 metres each side).

Allowing for Moses and Aaron's tents, I would suggest the line of battle is drawn up at least 140 metres from the wall of the tabernacle enclosure. This would be on the lower side, as the number of priestly family groups on the other sides

may exceed 80 tents, and the distance required beyond them to allow the army to fall in would be greater than 140 metres. I have used this figure however as the one to calculate from, as we are working guess work here and with the lower numbers of priests and people suggested it would probably work.

With the depth of the lines of soldiers of at least ten metres, and with a ten metre gap behind the last line of men to the first line of tents, the camp of the tribes is at least 160 metres away from the enclosure wall at this point. Now the Eastern and Western walls are the shortest, at around 25 metres, but they give us the general clue as to the distances here. It is of note that the back or Western enclosure wall side has the smallest Battalions.

Why have the largest army regiment (Judah, Issaachar and Zebulon = 1864 men) and the smallest (Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin = 1126) on the two shortest sides? The answer is clear when you look at the arrangement from a military perspective. By the largest "Regiment" setting the length of the side of the square, this means that there is a large gap at the ends of the north and south lines of the army battalions there, (of at least twenty metres), and this allows the tribe of Judah to lead out the entire army through that gap to the north east directly (or any other direction by marching in an anti-clockwise direction), and the rest of the tribes could follow in their order in an anti-clockwise direction.

This procedure also ensures every tribe marches past the East gate of the Tabernacle enclosure, and can "eyes left" to the Tabernacle, Altar, and Aaron and Moses at that doorway, as they go past. There is also a good reason why the smallest Regiment is facing the back wall of the enclosure which we will see below in verse 18.

Can you see why I believe the numbers at the lower end of the scale (total army = around 6080) are probably the right ones? A larger force than the one described would require the living quarters of the camp to be so far away from the tabernacle that no-one could see what was going on there, and would make the gathering of the force in one place, in any order ready for battle, a physical impossibility.

The clear space around the enclosure, (using the calculations above), allows for the tents of the families of Moses, Aaron, and the Levites, but also allows the entire people to gather here in a massed group, to see the sacrificial system operating, or hear Moses, when required also. The entire army could gather together in the system described here, with the numbers suggested, in a matter of 15-30 minutes. They could receive orders and be led out by the Battalion of Judah within 10-15 minutes. This was a brilliant military system that ensured that the entire armed strength of the nation was battle ready and on the march in battalions in under half an hour.

First Regiment	Lead Battalion	Judah	746 men	
	Second Battalion	Issaachar	544	= 1864
	Third Battalion	Zebulon	574	
Second regiment	Lead Battalion	Reuben	465	
	Second Battalion	Simeon	593	= 1524
	Third Battalion	Gad	456	
Third Regiment	Lead Battalion	Ephraim	450	
	Second Battalion	Manasseh	322	= 1126
	Third Battalion	Benjamin	354	
Fourth Regiment	Lead Battalion	Dan	627	
	Second Battalion	Ashur	415	= 1576
	Third Battalion	Naphtali	534	

Verses 10 – 16. On the south side is the camp of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad. They are the next three battalions in line when the entire army marches out. Their total strength is 1524, almost identical to the northern three tribal battalions of Dan, Ashur, Naphtali, which total 1576. The total length of their front lines facing the tabernacle enclosure is about 170 metres. On the basis that the longest line (Judah's Regiment) requires over 200 metres, and that the "square" which the army falls into lines on is about 250 metres each side, then this leaves a gap of at least twenty metres at the end of the Reuben and Gad battalions to the corner of the square.

This is ample space to enable "quick march" orders to be executed without banging into the battalion ahead, and provides a gap between the regiments that enables the marching to be well ordered, with good spacing maintained between. It also means that the entire army can move quickly from column of march into line. These are manoeuvres that armies constantly practised to ensure they could move quickly from one formation into another facing either the front or their side.

Verses 17. Levi is also to be organized into two army type formations around the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant at time of war. They will be carrying all the furniture, and conveying in the provided covered wagons (Numbers 7), the entire tabernacle on the march, when they moved as an entire nation. It is uncertain as to whether the men of Levi are armed also, although members of this tribe will be associated with the action later, and will kill at times, in a way that tells us they were trained in weapons. Numbers 25:7-9.

The order of the tribes as they march as a whole (not just the army) is the same as the army. The tribes are to move out in their tribal and family groups, Judah first, then in the same battalion order as the army. From this chapter here alone,

we would deduce that the Levites as a tribe apparently come after Gad in the column of march, exactly half way, and they do come at this point carrying the Ark and the furniture, although the wagons containing the tabernacle and enclosure curtaining and fixtures are with the families of Gershon and Merari, marching after Judah's Regiment. Numbers 10:17-21, Joshua 6:8-12.

On the first march to Paran, we will see that the Levites are split into these two groups, the first after the regiment of the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, the second with the Ark in the centre, after Reuben's regiment. The battle array is first, the regiment of Judah as the advanced Guard, then the Levites conveying the tabernacle in the six wagons that will be introduced later in Numbers 7, followed by the regiments of Reuben, then the Ark with the Kohathites, and then Ephraim, with the Rear Guard led by the regiment of Dan.

It also appears that when the entire nation were to move out on the march that there were two columns moving as separate entities; the army as one column ahead, and the rest of the people in a second column behind, both in their tribal order detailed here. This would mean that the army was always ready to move to defend their people and were already in their battalions for speed of deployment and ease of command. It would also explain why there were two groups of leaders of the tribes, with the Judges, to lead the mass of the people in their tribes, and the Princes/Colonels to lead the army of each tribe.

Verses 18 – 24. Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin made up the smallest of the regiments at only 1126 men organized in three Battalions. They would have had the biggest gap between the ends of their line and the corner of the great square around which the army assembled. For all who have marched in large columns of military men, with at least four battalions/regiments marching, you would realise the value of these two larger gaps at this point. As an army moves off there is a lag at the rear ranks which can cause trouble further down the battalion order. The larger gaps between Gad and Ephraim, and then Benjamin and Dan, mean that the pace of the march can be settled at that place, and it also means that the Kohathites with the Ark and the furniture on their shoulders can easily march into the gap between the last battalion of the regiment of Reuben and the first of Ephraim, and the entire army does not lose its momentum.

Verses 25 – 31. The fourth Regiment is now detailed, and as we have seen above, it's front extended about 170 meters in length if the men were ten deep. They were a key group, for the last Regiment of the line is the "Rear Guard", and the reinforcements if the battle begins at the head of the column in the march. They will need to strike like a snake at the enemy if called to battle. Genesis 49:16-18. They are the last hope of the army in any battle, either holding the left flank in the line, or the rear in column.

The word "standards" should be observed. While there was a banner for each of the Regiments, which each battalion took their bearings from, each Battalion, and possibly each company of 100, or even 50 and 10 may also have had their standards. These would be like our modern flags, but were more often banners with pictures or writing upon them. They were often attached to long spears, carried by key warriors who stood close to the officers to rally the men around their leaders.

Verses 32 – 34. The entire camp was organized around the banners and standards of the army. The camp was divided into areas for each section, platoon, company and tribe. The tents were organized with the banners of the tribe and the standards if the companies fluttering over the tents of the men who would rally to them in war. Everyone was to know their place in the camp and their place in the battle lines, and not take the place of any other. They were to pitch their tents where they were told by their captains, and they were to march in the place they were directed to, both the armed soldiers in the army, and the other men, women and children in the host. All were "under orders" and were to obey their commands received, and at this point they did so.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All the men who were fit and able to fight hard in the army were assigned their place within the armed host, with a captain over their section of ten, over their platoon of fifty, over their company of 100, and over their entire Battalion of 500 to 700 men. Then over their Regiment of three battalions there was a senior officer in charge of all three, and finally there was a general over the entire army. Any ordinary soldier had at least five levels of command above him and he had to obey them all.

We shy away in the modern church from orders being given and authority being recognized, but this is the Lord's way, and believers need to "get over themselves" when it comes to taking instruction from God's appointed leadership. Let us check ourselves out on this matter, for it may be a reason why we are spiritually powerless, or under discipline from the Lord. Are we ready to take orders, or do we consider ourselves above such things? Matthew 8:5-13. Read the centurion's words and Jesus' praise for his mental attitude and get with the Lord's plan and find your appointed place in the battle lines of God! Note how they had to practise and train and be rebuked about our slackness at times.

2. The Army was to fall in facing the Tabernacle, and they would march to battle in a clockwise circuit around the tabernacle and then up the avenues between the tribal encampments in the direction of the enemy. We must always face the Lord before we face the enemy, and deal with God in prayer before we deal with men. Let us ensure we take our battles to the Lord in prayer first, and seek the Lord's guidance and direction, well before we move out into action on any issue.

3. The fighting men and the entire population were to be ready to work in orderly groups to face their march and their enemies. Organization was geared to their need to move forward and face any enemy. In the church today we need organization that moves us forward, and it should always be tested by a single question; "Does our structure enable us to meet the objectives the Lord has set for us to achieve?" How quickly can we advance to seize an objective the Holy Spirit opens up?

If you cannot say a quick "YES – we can advance quickly" to these questions, you need to change your organizational structure. What does not move us prayerfully forward is not of the Lord! God is efficient, and organized, and any group that is not, is out of step with the Plan of God. How quickly do we respond to godly leadership? Moses had respect because he was trained, fit, wise, organized, and courageous. Let us remember we need to be men and women the Lord's people will find it easy to follow.

NOTES

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Under the patriarchal system, and that of many nations other than Israel, the first born of every family was the Lord's, and was set aside to be a priest for the family. The first born was already set aside by the Lord in Israel, and not just of men but of the animals also, and all had to be redeemed, with a payment of money to the tabernacle. Exodus 13:2, 11-16, 22:29, 34:20, Leviticus 27:26-27.

This payment, with the annual tithing, would be the mechanism whereby the tribe of Levi would be supported for their service in the tabernacle on behalf of the other tribes. While this principle had been laid down earlier, it appears that the offering for the first born had not been taken to this point, with everything else going on relating to the building of the tabernacle and the establishment of the worship system. This chapter records the first offering being taken.

The leadership of the entire nation was given by God to Moses and this is confirmed in this chapter. Exodus 3:2ff. The Lord has also given Aaron the rulership of the tribe of Levi as the High Priest of the nation and this is formally recorded here also. His past failures and his future ones will not hinder the grace and mercy of the Lord, nor cause him in the future to lose his role before the Lord, for he has the sacrifices to bring in repentance to receive forgiveness. Exodus 6:16-30, 32:1-16, Leviticus 16:11ff. God lifts up to leadership; we do not wisely lift ourselves up. 1 Peter 5:5-10.

We also can praise the Lord today that our failures do not stop our membership of the Lord's family, nor our leadership roles, and later effectiveness. We serve the same Creator-Saviour God as Moses and Aaron, and the Lord does not cast away His own. We also have the path of forgiveness open through repentance and confession. 1 John 1:5-10. A person must work very hard in evil to be permanently judged by the Lord, and must seriously despise the Lord, His Word, His path for life, and His Will, before the Lord will cast them off from this life. Leviticus 26:14-15, 40-45, Revelation 20:11-15.

Two of Aaron's sons had done this great evil in burning strange fire before the Lord, and they had been judged, but the two surviving sons and the father were encouraged to return to holy service, and in walking the path of the Lord for them they were delivered from a like fate. Leviticus 10:1-11. This chapter is placed just after the census of the other tribes for army service, but it does not read as if the events described here all occurred at this time of the army census, indeed at this time Moses was ordered NOT to count Levi. Numbers 2:33. Moses puts it here for a purpose, and so let us see that unfold.

Moses indicates in verse one, and verse fourteen, that this information was given by the Lord earlier, but it makes sense to record it here, as it gives the families of the tribe of Levi. From these verses it would appear the numbering of Levi had occurred many months before, and the order in verse 33 of chapter 2 was given to ensure Levi was not renumbered as part of the process of forming the Army, for they were to be kept as a distinct group. It also summarizes the details regarding the substitution of Levi for the first-born of the other tribes, as the priesthood of the nation.

This chapter is a summary of many things revealed gradually through the time period covered by Exodus and Leviticus but of relevance now in light of the army census, and so summarized here. In effect Moses makes it clear by the insertion of the details in this chapter, that God places equal value upon the work of the Levites as He does upon the work of the soldiers from each tribe, and that each is to pay his part before the Lord and look to the Lord's will for his life alone to find his value system and discover the right place for approval.

NUMBERS 3:1-51

3:1 These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that the LORD spake with Moses in mount Sinai. 2 And these are the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office. 4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father. 5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. 7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. 8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. 9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. 10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; 13 Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD. 14 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. 16 And Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded. 17 And these were the sons of Levi by their names; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. 18 And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families; Libni, and Shimei. 19 And the sons of Kohath by their families; Amram, and Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 And the sons of Merari by their families; Mahli, and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to the house of their fathers. 21 Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. 22 Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred. 23 The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward. 24 And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael. 25 And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, 26 And the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof. 27 And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izeharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites. 28 In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary. 29 The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle southward. 30 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31 And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof. 32 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be chief over the chief of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary. 33 Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites: these are the families of Merari. 34 And those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand and two hundred. 35 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail: these shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle northward. 36 And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto, 37 And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords. 38 But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand. 40 And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. 41 And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel. 42 And Moses numbered, as the LORD commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. 43 And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen. 44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD. 46 And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; 47 Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) 48 And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons. 49 And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: 50 Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 51 And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1- 4. Aaron and his sons have already been set apart as the priesthood in Exodus 28 and the details we have here were already identified then, but the repetition is important here in light of the census for the army. It can be the tendency of those who serve in the dramatic areas to undervalue the support people who work behind the scenes. The army must do its work, but that work will have no strength behind it if the worship of the nation is not correct and spiritually powerful. The tribe of Levi is not to be seen as shirkers of their duty to fight, but as obedient servants of the Lord their God, and the others are to see that the men who carry the Ark and Tabernacle have equal place in the army of the Lord and upon their service the success of the army may depend at times.

The two oldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, had terribly sinned in the matter of offering “strange fire” before the Lord and they were judged with immediate death. Refer back to Leviticus 10 and re-read this chapter, as it reminds us that with worship we are to follow the Lord’s instruction and not develop rituals and routines that violate clear principles of holiness. We have limited information on church services in the New Testament, and so we are fairly free to follow various formats for services, but must walk in the Spirit, and hear the Holy Spirit, as Moses did. Nothing must violate the central principle of worship, and that is holiness before the Lord.

In days when people are wanting new and “relevant” worship services we are challenged to maintain holiness before the Lord and a sense of something special happening every time we gather before the Lord to worship His holy name. We have the option today to adopt any format that preserves holiness and assists all people have a deep, meaningful and life transforming experience of learning and worship with God. So called “seeker services”, which are evangelistic, may be in any format and contain anything that will emphasize the Gospel message, but in believers worship services we need to be careful we maintain the elements that preserve dignity, and focus upon the character, work and will of God for us as His servants.

Verses 5 – 10. As a tribe the entire family of descendents of Levi were given up as an offering to the Lord. They brought the offerings, but they first were “offered up” as an offering to the Lord; they belonged to Him. This is the secret of all service to the Lord. First we offer ourselves up, totally and completely, to the Lord, and then we give of our money, our goods and our time and energy. Isaiah 44:1-8, Jeremiah 31:31-34, 2 Corinthians 5:13-15, 8:5.

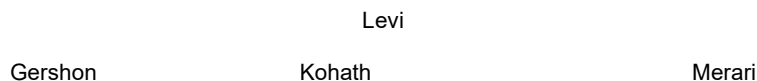
The entire tribe of Levi was “given up” to service in the tabernacle and to serve the priesthood, the sons of Aaron. At this point there were only the three men serving as priests, Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The two older men died without sons, but these two younger men will go on to have families who will grow up to serve the Lord after them.

Once again we are reminded that the numbers of the children of Israel are small, so that three full time priests can serve them. It also reminds us that even with 6000 extended family groups, each headed by a serving warrior, most people share in the corporate national sacrifices offered daily to cover their sins, and few brought an offering for themselves for sin or trespass in this day. It is a reminder that this nation operated by faith, through grace, and that the daily sacrifices, and special day sacrifices, like the Day of Atonement, were able to stand for the everyday mental attitude sins of the people, and that only significantly sinful acts required specific animal sacrifices to be brought with its associated very specific public confession of the sinful act that required that sacrifice.

- 1 John 1:5-10.** “5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*
 6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*
 7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*
 8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”*

Verses 11 – 13. The first born of the entire nation was to be the Lords, and in their place the tribe of Levi would stand as the substitute and offer the sacrifices on behalf of the entire nation. The Lord directs Moses back to the Passover night to remind him that the first born of Egypt died, and so the first born of Israel lived through the blood upon the door. With this historic picture in mind, it is the tribe of Levi who are to carry the sin offerings of the people and stand for them that all might live before the Lord and not personally suffer the penalty for sin. Exodus 12:11ff, 13:1ff.

Verses 14 – 26. At the time of census Moses was not to count the sons of Levi for battle. They were not part of the strength of the national army, but were the spiritual support for the national army. In the wilderness of Sinai however, Moses was earlier told to count the tribe of Levi, every male, from one month old and upwards, rather than the twenty years old and upwards for the soldier’s census. Within the tribe of Levi there were three sub-groups, after the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Moses has already given us his and Aaron’s genealogy in Exodus 6:16ff. He and Aaron are descendents of Kohath, the second son of Levi. It is just over 400 years since their fore-father Levi entered Egypt and so the basic family tree is given to identify the eight clans within the three sub-groups of Levi.



Libni Shimei Amram Izehar Hebron Uzziel Mahli Mushi

Moses and Aaron (from Amram)

Taking the numbers given for each subgroup and clan the way we have through from the Exodus we get numbers that would accord with the ages of the men given, (they have children very late in their lives – this occurs also with Aarons two older sons who had none, and may have been in their forties when killed), and the fact that Moses and Aaron are possibly only the third named generation from Levi. (Remember the Jewish geneology can leave out generations, and go from grandparents to grandchildren).

Both Moses and Aaron are themselves in their eighties at this point also remember. There are certainly others who have married earlier, and had children earlier than Moses and Aaron's forebears did, for the head of the Gershonites is named as Eliaseph, son of Lael, and he is clearly a son or grandson of either Libni or Shimei, but we are not told here. Lael is a great name for a Levite, as it means "belonging to God".

The Gershonites would, from the family tree above, not number seven and a half thousand men and boys! However if we remember that the word for thousands (Eleph) means complete unit/family group, and the word for hundreds (Meyah) is a primitive numeral for a fraction of the larger number/unit. Both words were used very flexibly in the ancient world and so we cannot be certain as to exact meanings of these terms in any context, and must let the context give us the best clues.

My suggestion, (and it is only that, a suggestion), is that we could have here, a number of possible options. The first would be a total of seven adult males amongst the Gershonites, and five young boys, under the age of tabernacle service. From the family tree that Moses gives us this would look a likely number, but further reflection makes it very unlikely. Given their assigned task in the care of the tabernacle, this cannot be the meaning, as this small number of men couldn't do what is assigned them. Keep remembering that the meaning of the numbers used by Moses are not now able to be absolutely identified so all our figures here are guess work. The guesses of the 3rd century BC writers of the Septuagint (LXX) are not to be taken seriously, as living languages change meanings, and that is 1200 years later.

The second suggestion would be that there are seventy five males in this sub-group. From the family tree and the ages of their fore-bears I cannot see many more than this being likely, and from the work assigned to them, I suspect the figure of seventy five men is probably going to be the maximum for packing away and supervising the carrying of the assigned items of curtaining on the march. Remember these numbers include all males from one month old and up, so only about two thirds or even half of this number will be able to do the hard work required. This will be further reduced in the following chapter, where only those between the ages of thirty and fifty will serve in the tabernacle for the work assigned.

The curtain material would be packed down and folded and placed in carts for carrying, and the work would be done systematically, starting with the tabernacle, and then moving to the enclosure. As the weight of the tent covering would require about twenty or thirty men to manoeuvre each section off or on, and the space to do this is limited, about forty men would be my estimate being required for the total task. All the fabric, skins, and curtaining would only be able to be transported in wagons and so as each item was taken down it would be folded and placed in the assigned wagon in a systematic manner so that the erection would be easy and straight forward also. As we will see in Numbers chapter seven the Lord ensured an offering of wagons was provided to ensure the right number of wagons were provided to carry all the tabernacle structure and it's enclosure structure.

Seven thousand men is clearly a wrong interpretation of the words for the figures here, as such a number would simply get in the way, given the small space of the tabernacle enclosure and the work to be done there (100 by 50 cubits, about 50 metres by 25 metres). Keep remembering, that the large numbers in our English Bibles come from a misinterpreting of the figures by the Greek speaking Jews of Alexandria in the Septuagint (LXX) Greek translation from 1200 years after Moses writes this. In that day the use of "eleph" had shifted significantly from Moses day 1200+ years before.

Note that the Gershonites were responsible for all of the tabernacle covering materials, their erection and packing down. They were also responsible for the packing down of the curtains of the entire enclosure, and the curtains for the gateways and entrance to the tabernacle, and the associated cords. Their camp was at the back of the Tabernacle complex, facing the West Enclosure wall.

It may be that there were upwards of forty family groups in this family of Levi, (working a number of two males per household) each with their own tent and their wagon and animals (although they may be tethered well away from the camp). This may mean that the gap between the enclosure wall and the first line of tents of the other tribes is further away that the 160 metres that was suggested in chapter two. Unlike modern army camp sites there were no latrines, as all human and animal waste was carried to a place outside the camp site and dumped there daily for hygiene reasons. The camp was to be kept "clean" of all wastes that might defile. Moses planning, following God's orders created the most hygienic camp site for centuries to come. Moses was a leader who noted the smallest details, for practical and holiness reasons and the people were well as a result. This is the standard for biblical leadership.

Verses 27 – 32. The Kohathites are mentioned next, although they will have the “most holy” work to do and will have the priority within Levi. Moses and Aaron are of this family, and the high priesthood will remain in this family. Their camp site was on the Southern side of the encampment, facing the second regiment of the army, the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. Their leader is Elizaphan, a descendent of Uzziel, the youngest son of the second son of Levi. We are confronted here with the Lord’s choice of the best man for a job, not simply the rulership of the oldest man. It may be that this man is the same age, and generation as Moses (born of the oldest son of Kohath, Amram), or there may be more generations in this family line than there were in the line of Amram.

To say “son of Uzziel” may mean son or grandson in the Hebrew way of speaking. Once again we cannot get too specific here, and it is most likely, given the figures of all males in the family that there is at least one further generation in this branch of the family in addition to Moses and Aaron’s branch from Amram.

The clue to this is found back in Leviticus 10:4-5, where two men called Aaron’s “uncles”, Mishael, and Elzaphon, also sons of Uzziel, are asked to remove the bodies of Nadab and Abihu. These are clearly older men and will have families of their own. The total numbers of males, working the same interpretive system as above for Gershon, (remember it is a guess work exercise only at this distance of time) would give us a total of 85 males. Once again we are faced with the question, how many men would be required to carry the items of the tabernacle assigned to them?

Their task is apparently to set up, and pack down and carry, the ark (which is always carried – never placed on a cart), the table of shewbread, the Golden altar of incense, the brazen altar, the vessels of the tabernacle and the veil between the two sections of the tabernacle (which will be used to wrap the Ark). The laver is not mentioned, although I suspect included in their role. The laver could be stored in a wagon for each move, but the altars, the ark, and the table of shewbread, were all provided with carrying poles/staves and were meant to be carried at all times during any move of camp. As we will discover in the next chapter, their actual task is just to carry and place the items mentioned. They are not permitted to touch the uncovered items lest they die!

The sons of Aaron will prepare each item for carrying and the sons of Kohath will only approach and pick up their burdens once Aaron and his sons have finished preparing them.

1. The Ark. Exodus 25:10-15.
2. The Table. Exodus 25:23-29.
3. The Brazen Altar. Exodus 27:1-8.
4. The Golden Altar of Incense. Exodus 30:1-5. Summary in Exodus 35:10-19.

Each item to be carried would require at least four men, the brazen altar, possibly eight. The Golden Candlestick is also to be carried, as we discover in the next chapter, as are all the vessels used in the tabernacle, wrapped in coverings of the same material that made up the tent itself. The covering of the items will be described in the next chapter.

The weight of some of these items is significant. These men were very strong, and able to carry heavy loads great distances, after all they had worked in the brick yards of Egypt for twelve hour days before this. Even having identified this, the minimum number of men required to carry the items listed with staves is 18, and possibly with another sixteen as back up. Once again notice that small numbers of men are required. If half of the 85 males are old enough, (as we will see in the next chapter, only those between 30 and 50 were to do this work), and fit and able to do the carrying, then they have enough to carry these items, and first of all pack down the items that can be loaded into wagons, and still have enough older men to drive these wagons.

The man who has overall control of the pack up and set up of the entire tabernacle area is Eleazar, the surviving oldest son of Aaron. Moses has placed him in charge of this task area after the death of his older brothers. This may be another reason why this chapter is here, as it explains who now has the authority to set up the tabernacle after the death of these two other men. It also gives us insight into Moses way of empowering younger leadership. He himself could have taken authority over this task, or Aaron could have as High Priest, but Moses and Aaron step back from this executive function and thereby train and empower the younger generation. Responsibility is learned only by exercising responsibility.

After Nadab and Abihu’s betrayal of their trust and their faith, it would be easier for the older men to take their jobs, but they don’t. The “old heads” only guided things until the next generation was fully trained and tested to be found morally acceptable. This is not often the way we think today, but Moses was a better man and a better manager than to make our mistakes in promoting people with qualifications in writing, but no experience, or moral character to back them. This man Eleazar may be well over forty, given that Aaron is well over eighty at this time.

They did not promote too early, but they did promote well before they were themselves decrepit! (To be a Rabbi later, a man would have to be forty, trained in theology and a trade, and had also to have been married and proven himself a good husband and father.) Let us be careful of this issue of promotion of the next generation, for we can move too quickly in promoting young men and women who have not been tested enough in lower order tasks, but we can also err in delaying promotion of people, while we hold jobs that could be used to train, test, and empower the next generation of leaders.

Let us be like Moses, and empower and promote younger believers into leadership roles, as soon as the Lord provides those with the character, skills, and spiritual maturity. Let us not hold onto power or position one second after the Lord has provided our replacement. By stepping aside quickly we can be used in other age and experience appropriate ministries and so the entire church ministry moves forward, rather than stagnating behind the road block that we have become! Older men and women are to be mentors and trainers, not ever cling to power and position.

Verses 33 – 37. The last of the families of Levi are now mentioned, the family of Merari. Their family group divided into two sub clans; the descendents of Mahli and Mushi. The meaning of the name Mahli means the “sickly one”. This ancestor did not start off with hope on the part of his father Levi. It may be that he was close to death as a baby, but the Lord blessed him and he grew and his sons and son’s sons prospered. Mushi’s name means “sensitive one”.

Both these boys of Levi’s were delicate boys, but the Lord blessed them both and their sons will serve the Lord four hundred years later as the packers of the boards of the Tabernacle, and all the pillars and heavy metal feet for them of the entire enclosure area. In addition the rods for the curtains of the enclosure and the cords for tensioning the entire enclosure are their responsibility. Can you see that they must work with the family of Gershon who will collect and fold the curtains of the enclosure, while they pick up and pack away the pillars, connecting rods upon which the curtains were hung, and the feet that the pillars sat in. Leadership here is to be shown in co-operation and co-ordination.

All the items of the family of Merari will be placed in wagons. Their numbers of males are fairly close to Gershon’s at possibly sixty two males. If half were fit and able and old enough to do the work, that would give enough to complete the task assigned and drive the wagons with the gear in them. We can see that the wagons required would involve the care and provision for two or four oxen each, and so the task of this tribe is not just to serve the tabernacle, but also to keep their animals cared for daily, and the wagons in good running order to fulfil their tasks. Refer back to the Commentary on Exodus 36 for a discussion of the tabernacle structure itself.

Verses 38 – 39. Moses, Aaron and their sons and families were encamped on the Eastern side of the tabernacle enclosure, possibly in two encampments, with Moses and his family on the right hand and Aaron on the left, providing an broad avenue down which the congregation could look into the tabernacle enclosure and see the sacrifices at times, but also for ease of access for the animals being brought in daily.

The number of their tents can only be guessed at also, and there may be more than just for family use, especially if Aaron had tents for stores and clothing, rather than these being in the tabernacle enclosure. We are not given these details in scripture. It would be normal for Moses, as the leader to have, in addition to a living tent, an enormous tent for holding meetings within with the elders and princes at times. In Arab encampments, even to today’s nomadic groups, it is common for the chief to have a significantly larger tent for this purpose.

Verses 40 – 51. The total number of the first born males of all the tribes of Israel appears to be 273 more than the total number of the total males of the Levites. What the Lord directs Moses to do is take every male Levite as a substitute for the first born males of Israel’s other tribes, and to dedicate all their cattle to the Lord as the “firstborn” of all the cattle of the other tribes. It would appear then that the Levites cattle alone may have been used for offerings from this point onwards.

The additional males are to be paid for by the people as a whole, as a redemption money offering to the Lord. Five shekels of silver per additional man was to be taken as an offering and presented to the tabernacle to redeem these additional men. A shekel is about half a troy ounce. This was a total offering (if the number 2730 is correct) of 1365 shekels of silver (redemption metal was silver), for a value, with silver at \$16-00 USD per ounce in today’s values, of \$10,920-00 USD. This is not a significant offering, given the numbers of the total family groups that are drawn from (at around 6000), but would pay for some animals, oil, incense and other items required in the tabernacle for a number of months.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The fate of Aaron’s two oldest sons do not affect the future of the two surviving sons, nor of Aaron. We are not disqualified by the sins of other adult members of our family. The exception is that a pastor is disqualified if younger members of his family, under his authority at home, are living in open rebellion to the Lord. 1 Timothy 3:2-5. Aaron, like all exercising pastoral authority, needs to be stable emotionally, and accept the fate of his sons, as the result of their free will choices, and leave them to their fate. His love for his boys must not disable him, as it later disabled David, and led to the death of thousands in the rebellion of Absalom. 2 Samuel 13:21-31, 37-39, 14:24-33, 15:1-15, 19:1ff.

We must see our children’s choices as God see them, and after bringing them up in the love of the Lord, leave them with their choices before God in clear conscience that we have done our part to assist them to meet and serve their Lord and God. Let us test ourselves in this matter. After the death of loved ones, are we able to move back quickly into service, or are we disabled? It is a good test for what we call today, “control freak behaviour”. Many feel that they ought to be able to control the choices of others well after such control is possible or right.

We must train our children well and then let them go! We are not responsible once they reach their majority (biblical standard – age twenty), but we must live with any guilt as to any bad examples we may have set them! Let us do our job as parents well, and then let us move onwards to the next phase of our life without trying to control those we are not meant to! They are to choose daily to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and if we have set a good example in this matter, they are likely to be obedient just as we have been!

2. All tasking in this life has equal value if it is the tasking that the Lord wants us to fulfil. The only question of value that needs be asked to determine the worth of a job or role is; what is the Lord’s plan for me? God’s task is of value

eternally, nothing else is of any lasting value at all. The church cleaner is equal in value before the Lord to the pastor, as long as both of them are where they should be, and they are doing the thing they ought to be doing. The church cleaner may have more value than the pastor if he is doing his assigned task in a spirit filled manner and the pastor is not meant to be there, or is not working in a spirit filled manner.

We will only be rewarded in heaven with the crowns of God because of the service rendered in a spirit filled manner in the tasks we were assigned only. The way men value some jobs ahead of others, which they deem to be "menial", has no relevance to the Lord! Let us examine ourselves before the Lord and ensure we are doing what He has called us to, and that we are doing it in a spirit filled manner.

3. The tribe of Levi were given up to the service of the Lord. They were "sold out" to God's work. This is the call to us all today. Even for the believers of the Great Tribulation period, they will all need to be sold out for the service of the Lord. Nothing less than 100% is good enough in the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict in our days.

4. Moses is an empowering leader who promotes able and spiritually strong men into roles where their leadership skills can be fine tuned and expanded. I commented above on the twin errors of leadership that plague the modern church; firstly promoting young people into roles they are not spiritually or ability wise gifted for, and the equally major error of the old pastors holding onto power and authority and not allowing God's appointed and anointed replacements to learn on the job. Eleazar will have forty years to watch Moses and his father Aaron from his role as executive officer of the tabernacle and will be thus very ready to assume the role of High Priest on the death of his father. Let us train the young to replace us, and then get out of their way so they can!

REFLECTION UPON THE "GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT OF THE LOST"

1. The judgment of the Great White Throne is the last judgment for unsaved mankind. (Revelation 20:11, 15)
2. Only the unsaved are judged at the last judgment, as there is no condemnation for Christians. (Romans 8:1)
3. The last judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium. (Revelation 20:7-15)
4. The unsaved are judged "according to their works" from the Books of Works. (Revelation 20:12)
5. The judgment is to show that the Human good works of man cannot satisfy the justice of God. God is totally fair and shows that he is only satisfied by, "The Good Work" - The death of Christ on the Cross. These people have believed in time that their "good works" made them "good enough", so as not to worry about, or value the work of Jesus for them on the Cross. They have this opportunity to prove that they are "good enough" to enter heaven on the basis of their own works, but like the first rebel, Cain, they are condemned.
6. Having shown the unsaved they have failed to satisfy the holiness of God, the condemned are cast into the Lake of Fire where they join the devil and his demons, who first fell in the same spirit of arrogance. (Revelation 20:15). It is arrogant rejection of the person and work of Jesus alone that leads to this judgment.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE NEED FOR CONFESSION AND THE CERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is based upon the results of the death of Christ. (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1 :5)
2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ. (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31)
3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the cross. (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1: 9).
5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. (1 John 2:1,2)
6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). We are forgiven totally and we are called upon to forgive others, without holding back any hatred towards them. This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23)
7. Steps towards forgiveness and restoration of fellowship
 - [a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation. [2 Corinthians 14:5]
 - [b] Act on what you see [Romans 4:7-8]
 - [c] Deal with any sin by confession. [1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18]

[d] Forget the sin which you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. [Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12]

[e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. [Hebrews 12:12-13]

[f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God. [James 5:16]

[g] Get moving and grow up. [2 Peter 2:17-18]

REFLECTION UPON OUR "REASONABLE SERVICE"

1. Our duty is to surrender our entire lives to God. (Romans 12:1)
2. Willingness is essential. (Judges 5:2, 8:25, Isaiah 1:19, 2 Corinthians 8:3)
3. Service in the big things requires by faithfulness in the small things.
4. Monotony and difficulties are transformed into the opportunities with the correct attitude (Matthew 6:33)
5. Everything we do should be "as unto the Lord". (Colossians 3:17)
6. Service to Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. (Romans 14:18)
7. Our work should be completed right to the end. (John 4:34, 17:4, Acts 20:24, 2 Timothy 4:7)
8. The example of Christ. (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27, Philippians 2:7)
9. Qualities of our service:-
 - a) It is demanded. (Hebrews 12:28)
 - b) It should be immediate. (Matthew 21:28)
 - c) It is abundant. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
 - d) It is according to ability. (Matthew 25:22, Luke 12:48)
 - e) It is in co-operation with God. (2 Corinthians 6:1)
 - f) Must be exclusive (Luke 16:13)
 - g) In the power of the spirit (Romans 1:9)
 - h) Undertaken in Godly fear (Hebrews 12:28)
 - i) Motivated by love (Galatians 5:13)
10. It is :-
 - a) Following Christ (John 12:26)
 - b) For him whom all Christians serve (Colossians 3:24)
 - c) Service to God (Acts 27:23).
11. It requires:-
 - a) Turning from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
 - b) Fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37)
 - c) Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).
12. Benefits of Service:-
 - a) It glorifies God. (Matthew 5:16, John 15:8)
 - b) It enriches life. (1 Timothy 6:18-19)
 - c) It gives a pattern for imitation. (Titus 2:7)
 - d) It encourages others in their tasks. (Hebrews 10:24)
 - e) It shows neighbourliness. (Luke 10:36-37)
 - f) It lightens life's burdens. (Galatians 6:2,16)
 - g) It demonstrates love. (John 21:15-17)
 - h) It demonstrates faith. (James 2:17-18, 1 Peter 2:12)
 - i) It is Christ like. (John 13:12-15)

REFLECTION UPON "SEPARATION"

1. Believers are instructed to be separated from habitually carnal believers. (1 Corinthians 5:10, 11)
2. Separation is ordered from apostate religious organisations. (2 Corinthians 6:17)

3. Separation is commanded from unbelievers where scripture is compromised by the relationship or marriage, business partners. (2 Corinthians 6:14 ff)
4. Separation is commanded from the human viewpoint. (Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17, 18)
5. Separation is commanded from pseudo spirituality. (Romans 16:17, 18)
6. Separation is commanded from those who seek pleasure in fast living - pursuit of parties, immoral situations. (1 Peter 4:4)
7. Separation is commanded from other believers who reject Bible doctrine. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15)

REFLECTIONS UPON THE SUBJECT OF "WORLDLINESS"

1. Worldliness means to follow the beliefs and philosophy of man rather than that of God
2. Worldliness is the opposite to Godliness; it is thinking/doing in opposition to God's revealed word. Titus 2:11-14.
3. All people are faced with the constant choice of following God's way or the world's. Romans 5:12, 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 2:12, James 1:27, 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20.
4. Satan is the "prince of this world", and has power to deceive those who are negative to God's plans. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8,9.
5. We must not love the world, 1 John 2:15-17.
6. We must hate all the world stands for, in thought and in deed. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:30-32, Galatians 6:14, James 1:27, James 4:4, 2 Peter 1:3,4, 1 Corinthians 3:18, 19.
7. We must not return to our old behaviour patterns, Ephesians 2:1-7.
8. This evil world system and the prince of this world will be condemned. Matthew 18:7, John 12:31, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 2:1ff.

NOTES

CHAPTER 4**INTRODUCTION**

The Lord's instructions are now received regarding the service of the three families of Levi. Their ages and the nature of their service will be detailed by the Lord. Before they move the furniture of the tabernacle the priests will place covers over each item and the process and the coverings are described here. The Lord is specific about how He wants things to be done. Leadership is the right balance between passing all care and responsibility over to subordinates, and the micro-managing that destroys initiative. God's specifics must be fulfilled, and the leader must give direct and specific instruction in this, and each man's responsibility to walk under the Holy Spirit's guidance honoured.

It is to be noted how specific the Lord is regarding the service that all these men will perform. We must take note of the Lord's care for the specifics of service, especially where there is a teaching point to be made to the people, and an example set by the servant of the Lord. The Lord remains a God of the details, and in our own lives we are to be careful whenever we are engaged in activities where others will take their lead, example, or learn doctrines from our actions.

The first 33 verses cover the particulars of their service, the next section, verses 34 – 49, covers the numbering of the men in the specified age bracket for each group. Once again we are confronted with the lack of accuracy with which we can identify the actual numbers of men involved. Moses was accurate in his day, and his people understood him, but we are guessing what he meant by the ancient terms he used at this distance in time, and the Septuagint (LXX) numbers certainly appear to be too large.

Compare Solomon's numbering of the Levites ready for service in the planned Temple in 1 Chronicles 23:1ff. This is after five hundred years of population growth and prosperity in the whole land. The total of serving age men at that time is recorded as 32,000 (could be, given the terms used, anywhere from 3200 – 32,000). This is at least a ten fold increase over the few hundred I believe may have been involved here in Moses day.

NUMBERS 4:1- 49

4:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, **2** Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, **3** From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. **4** This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: **5** And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of testimony with it: **6** And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. **7** And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: **8** And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. **9** And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuff dishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: **10** And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. **11** And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: **12** And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar: **13** And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: **14** And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the basins, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. **15** And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation. **16** And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof. **17** And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron saying, **18** Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: **19** But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: **20** But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die. **21** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying. **22** Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; **23** From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. **24** This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: **25** And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, **26** And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. **27** At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. **28** This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the

congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 29 As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; 30 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. 31 And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, 32 And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. 33 This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 34 And Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 35 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation: 36 And those that were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37 These were they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 38 And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers, 39 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 40 Even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred and thirty. 41 These are they that were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD. 42 And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, 43 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 44 Even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred. 45 These be those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 46 All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 47 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation. 48 Even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore, 49 According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. A second, more specific numbering of the Levites is now ordered by the Lord. Moses is to begin with the house of his own ancestor Kohath, and number the men who are between thirty and fifty years of age. It is in this age group that the work will be done. This twenty year period of service would be the time period for actual service in the tabernacle, possibly prefixed by some years of learning by observation, and followed by a further period of teaching younger men their tasks. These years are the peak performance years of all men, and particularly when strength is required for tasks, these years are those when men will have the strength to perform what is required of them.

It is of note that recent studies in my own field of Occupational Health have shown that men who continue doing hard shift work routines after fifty years of age, have increasing morbidity and mortality. The studies identify that if men persist in heavy and hard shift work that puts pressure upon their body's ability to reset their body clock too frequently, then their health and life are affected, and it gets worse every year after fifty they persist in their work area. The age of fifty was the year that the ancients identified as the age of "Eldership". At that time men and women were expected to step aside from their normal job roles and take up "elder" type tasks. God knows best about our age-stage health and fitness for work.

These tasks, in Greece and Rome, involved mentorship, teaching, spiritual service, diplomatic work, with senior leadership roles alone continuing in the Armed Forces, if they were held beforehand. This time of "Eldership" was not seen as retirement, but as a shift in emphasis of activities, from paid work to voluntary work, from money oriented tasks to service tasks, from professional and technical tasks to spiritual, strategic, and wisdom based roles. There is a lesson here for us! Good leadership always encourages older people to keep working, as mentors and examples, and enables the younger ones to take up the burdens and serve with focused commitment.

The age of accountability will be set at Kadesh Barnea as twenty years of age, and from that point on, all will be held personally responsible for their choices in the spiritual area. Numbers 14:29. There is a gap then of ten years, I suspect for learning, apprenticeship, and spiritual testing for fitness for the role, before full and responsible service begins at thirty. David, as an older man, numbers them from twenty years and older, indicating that some form of training and basic service may have traditionally began around twenty. 1 Chronicles 23:24ff, 28:11-13. The age for formal service training will later be set by the Lord to Moses as twenty five and this will be the age until the days of David, when the Levites were no longer required to carry the tabernacle and its contents again. Numbers 8:24.

At thirty it is full service that begins during this period, so any learning has occurred before. Leadership roles begin at this point a number of times in the scripture. Joseph stands before Pharaoh as Prime Minister at thirty years of age. Genesis 41:46. Ezekiel is thirty when called. Ezekiel 1:1. It is around the age of thirty years that the Lord begins his ministry. Luke 3:23. The early church set this age as the youngest age for full time service as a pastor teacher, as the role of "bishop" of the flock required maturity, and that was traditionally expected by thirty years of age, but rarely before. 1 Timothy 3:6.

Verses 4 – 8. The family of Kohath had the most holy part of the service of the families of Levi, for they dealt with the “most holy things”. This was Moses branch of the family, but we cannot say that he selected them for this role, for the Lord did. Kohath was not the oldest son, but was the appointed, and therefore the anointed one to do the holy work of the tabernacle. It is a reminder to us that it is not our birth, but our second birth that determines our role before the Lord. We are Holy Spirit gifted for service and it is the Lord’s gifting and direction that is to be sought, not any natural abilities or factors that flow from our natural birth. **1 Corinthians 12:1-13.**

The work of dismantling the tabernacle began with Aaron and his two sons coming first and taking down the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place and covering the Ark of the Covenant with that veil. It was clearly folded in such a way as not to drag along the ground when the Ark was carried, and not placed in such a way as to hinder the role of the staves which went through the rings in the side of the Ark. Exodus 25:10-21.

In the study on Exodus I raised the questions about the coverings for the items of furniture on the march, and it is in this place that we hear basically how things were to be done. Specific details are not given, for they are secret, only needing to be known by the High Priest and his sons who would follow him. In the Armed Forces we call this the principle of “need to know”. Only details we actually need to know for service are given to us; the rest is secret. Good leaders know what to share and what to remain silent about.

The family of Aaron was responsible for the covering of the Ark. The rest of the Levites were, I suspect drawn up in their three companies outside in the courtyard awaiting the word of Eleazar that they could begin their assigned tasks. Once the Ark was covered with the Veil, then two further coverings were placed over it. Some commentators believe the sacred items were “wrapped”, but this does not fully make sense if they were being carried with the staves.

Once again we are guessing here, for the men who did this didn’t need to explain, as they alone did these things and passed the detail to their sons alone. There is clearly some “wrapping” using the material described so that loose items associated with some of the holy things didn’t fall out on the march, but the wrapping must have left the staves clear. Moses simply explains the overall process but the details were for the men who did it alone. In the Armed Forces we speak of the distinction between “need to know” and “nice to know”, and no-one other than this family needed to know.

Once the veil has been placed over the Ark, by Aaron and his sons, a covering of “badger” skins, (Sea cow – refer back to discussions of the materials used to cover the tabernacle in Exodus 26:14ff), is placed by them also, over the veil itself so it cannot be seen, and is protected from weather on the march. Over the “badger” skins is placed a cloth of pure blue – speaking of heaven. The “badger”(sea cow) skins and the blue fabric were the same items as had been used for the tabernacle itself and were additional to the requirement for the tent itself.

As noted in the previous chapter, Aaron’s campsite may have had several tents set aside for supplies for the tabernacle, including additional materials of each fabric and skin that could be used to repair damage, and replace worn out materials. From this supply these additional items were drawn to cover the furniture on the move. Once they had placed the third cover in place, their last job was to put the staves into the rings so that the Ark was ready to be carried out of the tabernacle by the Kohathites.

The table of the shewbread was also to be covered. It was first covered with a cloth of blue also, then the dishes and utensils used upon it were laid (or re-laid) upon the blue cloth, and upon these the loaves of shew bread. Over this was placed a red cloth to hold all the items intact and in their place, and protect them from the gaze of onlookers, and the badgers skin covering was added here also to protect from the elements. The staves are then added, just as with the Ark.

Even the Kohathites were not permitted to see or touch the Table, any more than the Ark itself. These things were associated with the secret role of the high priesthood family only and the others were to carry them only. There were rules about handling all these things that appear strange and restrictive, but they were the rules the Lord set and were to be followed. Man was not to think that he knew better than the Lord on any matter. Obedience was the issue for each of these groups of men. They were not to follow the example of Nadab and Abihu, but the example of Moses and Aaron and do the things that the Lord directed alone. They were to serve in their role only and not desire any other’s role!

Verses 9 – 12. The golden candlestick was also wrapped, and clearly it is “wrapped”, as it had removable parts and things could get lost if they were not carefully bundled together. It is wrapped in the blue cloth and then the badger skins and then hung under a bar, or staff for two or four men to carry suspended beneath the bar. We are not told the nature of the “bar”, whether it was of wood or of metal itself. The Golden Altar of incense was also covered with a covering of blue, and then with the weather proof badger skins. All the items used within the tabernacle area were then wrapped in a cloth of blue and then wrapped in badger/manatee skins and as with the candlestick, they are to be slung under a bar that is carried on the shoulders of two or four men (we are not told how many men are required).

Verses 13 – 14. The Altar speaks of the sacrifice for sin of the Chosen One of God and so the covering of the altar is different to that of the other items. It is cleaned of all ashes, and then the entire structure covered with a royal purple cloth, the altar is hollow and has a grate in the midst of it, and the purple cloth covers this grate. Into this hollow of purple are placed all the items used in the sacrificial offerings. They are then covered over by a covering of badger skins and then the staves are placed through the carrying rings. Until this point the Levites stand waiting, and Aaron and his sons do all the work in the order described here by Moses.

Verses 15 – 20. The sons of Kohath only approach and pick up the holy items after Aaron and his sons have finished the wrapping and readying process. For anyone other than the priests to touch the holy things was to die! They are to wait until Aaron and his sons are finished the preparation before they move forward and pick up the items, and they only do that when the entire camp is ready to move out on the march.

While they wait, the other families of Levi are doing their dismantling work, and from these verses here, it appears the sacred items are left exactly where Aaron and his sons wrap them, and they are not picked up until everything else is packed away in wagons and the entire camp is ready to move out. It may be that these men stand by while the others work, or that their job is to assist the other Levite families pack up their camp, and then head for the tabernacle area, now cleared and stand by the items to be carried and then move out when the order is given. We simply do not know this detail.

Eleazar has the care over the supplies of oil, for lamps, meal offerings, and anointing, and the supplies of wheat for the meal offering. These are stored in a separate place somewhere and Eleazar is to ensure it is packed away for the march and that it is ready to be brought out for use straight away. The other family groups of Levi would assign the men to the tasks they were given, but the task, or holy burden, of carrying the holy things was so special, that the priests themselves selected who from Kohath carried what item. Each man was assigned an item by the priests and that was his to carry until he died, or reached the age of fifty.

As noted previously, this was not “retirement” in a passive sense, for the older men were likely responsible for training and also would still have the role of “pack up and unpack” of the family tents. It may be that the exclusion of men under thirty and over fifty ensured that there were enough men in each camp to pack the camp up, and also have enough in each family to do the work at the tabernacle itself.

The men of the other tribes also had two areas of responsibility, with those “fit for war” falling in as the army for the march, and those not in the active army at that point being the men who drove the wagons and the stock with the family tribal groups.

The Lord repeats to Moses that the Kohathites were not to approach and enter the tabernacle, or look upon any of the items they carried before they were covered. They would pick them up on order, and when they arrived at the place that the next camp was to be established in, they were ordered where to place each item and the tabernacle was built up by the other families around those items. They were not unwrapped from their coverings until the tabernacle and its enclosure were in place. They were unwrapped by Aaron and his sons only. No-one did the other’s jobs!

This doubled up instruction of Moses to his own clan is important to note. Nadab and Abihu died because they believed they could do things that were not ordered and were forbidden. Familiarity with sacred things can breed a casualness that can become contempt. The Lord was most concerned that the family of Kohath did not ever over step their boundaries and try to “help out” Aaron and his sons by unpacking any sacred item. They were to do their work and that was that!

This remains an important principle today for worship and for ministry. In the area of worship believers are urged to be reflective, careful and prayerful when approaching Communion, for a casual attitude can bring judgment. 1 Corinthians 11:27-34. Believers are also urged to remember, that no-one is to seek an office with authority unless the Lord’s hand is specifically upon them, lest they also be judged by their presumption. James 3:1ff. Each person has a Holy Spirit called role in the church and good leadership facilitates their fulfilment of the Holy Spirit’s call. This may involve training and also correction where people are not listening to the Word and the Spirit!

Verses 21 – 28. The service of the Gershonites is now introduced as the Kohathites has been. They also are under the verbal orders of Aaron and his sons. As Eleazar was responsible for the orders to the Kohathites, so Ithamar was given the authority and responsibility for the direction of the Gershonites in all their tasks. Exodus 38:21.

Although from this joint order to obey any of the three men, I suspect Aaron and his sons would learn their own tasks, and also know the tasks of the others, and so in time the two younger men would train their own sons in all aspects of their administrative tasks to break and establish camp. The final responsibility however rested with Ithamar solely for the coverings and hangings of the tabernacle and the courtyard. We may delegate jobs and roles at times, but we must always remember that the responsibility is always with the person the Lord has directed to take charge of the total task.

Verses 29 – 33. The last house is that of Merari, the Merarites, and so now the tasking for them is formally repeated at this point. Numbers 3:26-27. Ithamar also has the direction of the house of Merari. All that pertains to the tabernacle and the courtyard structures is his responsibility, just as the contents are Eleazar’s sole responsibility.

Verses 34 – 49. The numbering of the families now is given to us. However given the uncertainty of the use of the terms at this time we are guessing as to the precise numbers involved. For comparison we can go to the days of Solomon and of Ezra. 1 Chronicles 6, 23:1-5, 24-27, Ezra 2:36ff. By the days of David and Solomon, where population numbers were likely well over a million, there were 38,000 men of the tribe of Levi numbered. This was the point of their greatest numbers for many centuries. Of these, 24,000 were set aside to serve in the Temple, 6000 were officers and judges over the land, 4000 were porters, and 4000 were singers, all by courses (divided into twelve groups).

After the Exile, the numbers of the Levites had fallen to a total of 4630 out of the total returning population of 42360. I believe the population of the Exiles is probably close to the population of the Exodus and this gives us a clue to the correct interpretation of the numbers here, but it remains a guess at this distance.

As they stand in the LXX Greek translation of the Hebrew text, which our English translations have copied, the numbers are, for men aged thirty to fifty.

For the family of Kohath 2750 of a total population of that sub group.

For the family of Gershon 2630 of a total population of that sub group.

For the family of Merari 3200 of a total population of that sub group.

This gave a total population of 8580 for serving men of the ages 30-50. If we recall the terms used by Moses, the word for thousands (Eleph) may have referred to any family group.

The space available to do the jobs required men that any more than a couple of hundred men would get in the way. If the actual numbers were anywhere between, 30 and 300 for each group, we simply cannot be sure of the use of the terms Moses uses. My suspicion is that it is at the lower end, as around 25 – 35 men would be able to do all the tasks in a systematic way, pack things away, and be ready to move within an hour or two, without tripping over each other in the work. Keep remembering the size of this enclosure and building; the tabernacle is only about 6 by 10 metres, the enclosure, about 25 by 50 metres.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us not promote to leadership roles too early, nor too late. This is a matter for every pastor to be in prayer over, and as he gets into his fifties, to be seriously looking for his replacement within the congregation and so train him up. As pastors/shepherds of the Lord's flock we need to have a loose hand upon power and not desire to keep it, nor cling to its trappings. We are here to serve, and when that service is complete we are to move on to the next opportunity the Lord has for us.

Great pastorates in history have gone on until the leader is very old (Moses will be 120 years old and will be strong and mentally alert until the last day), but we must be ready to train up the next generation. Every church ought to be a Bible College, training the next generation of evangelists, church planters, missionaries, pastors and counsellors for the churches of the kingdom. Let us be ready to train and promote into learning roles, all whom the Lord has placed His hand upon.

2. In the matter of the wrapping of the sacred items we noted many restrictive orders and secret processes. I noted then, and remind you now again, we simply don't need to know the details, for we didn't have to do these things. God's orders are specific to the people required, and that is enough. We leave the details to those who have to do the work and do not trouble ourselves with arguing about them.

The real issue for each servant is to do the work that the Lord has placed before us. Obedience is the key to successful service. We will not receive eternal reward because of the amount of work we do, but because we did what was asked of us. Many people are "driven" and obsessively busy, and this is not to be confused with being obedient to the Lord. Let us pause here and reflect upon the sole question that matters; are we doing the thing that the Lord has directed us to do?

3. Let us be cautious, that we never become casual with sacred things. Familiarity can breed contempt and we are in danger if we relax too much in spiritual matters. The only relaxation we ought to have in spiritual service in the church is relaxation into prayer. We are not ordered to be sombre, quiet, serious, or worried, but to be in praise and prayer as we serve the Lord. The one order that rings through the ages that we need in our casual day to hear again, is, be obedient to the Lord's calling upon you and do not do any other persons work, but do your own with holy concentration and praise. Philippians 4:4-7.

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF THE SHEPHERD

1. In the Bible, sheep represent believers. Matthew 25:33-34 - they are contrasted with goats (unbelievers)

2. Sheep are helpless, they need to be led, fed and protected. They cannot defend themselves.

3. In the Old Testament Israel was called the sheep of his fold. Psalm 74:1, 79:13, 95:7, 100:3 Jeremiah 23:1

4. The Lord Jesus Christ, the true shepherd came to the fold of Israel and while some responded most rejected him and the Lord called out a flock to establish a new group - John 10:10-16

5. He is the only door to fellowship. Acts 4:12 John 3:36, John 10:28-29

6. Judaism is the fold out of which the Lord led his sheep to form a new flock on the hills in freedom, the contrast between the fold and the flock. The fold no longer exists, for it was Jewish and legal and is set aside at this time. There is neither Jew nor Gentile at this point, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. This is the theme of the book of Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews; the just will live by faith. Our church should be a place where we learn to walk with the Lord under the control of the Holy Spirit. The shepherds protect, guide and feed the sheep on the open hills.

7. In the fold the sheep are within four walls under the protection of the man in charge of the fold whereas the flock is moving, feeding and are under the control of the shepherd. This is where the walk in the spirit occurs. Christianity is a relationship and is active. Galatians 1:6-9 - here Paul says we must walk in the spirit not a lot of rules such as in Judaism. We are to fight the enemy on the hills and be in the world but not of it.

8. There is today only one flock and all sheep should know it. Believers show their character as sheep by how they respond to the shepherd. The Lord Jesus is the shepherd, and all pastors are simply "under-shepherds", to pass on the Lord's message to his sheep and keep them safe.

9. The Lord Jesus Christ is seen as the shepherd in five different ways in 1 Peter 2:21-25.

- a) The suffering shepherd. (v 21)
- b) The sinless shepherd. (v 22)
- c) The submissive shepherd. (v 23)
- d) The substitutionary shepherd. (v 24)
- e) The seeking shepherd. (v 25)

10. The Shepherd as Christ appears in three successive Psalms.

- a) Psalm 22 - the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is the Door (John 10:9).
- b) Psalm 23 - the Lord is my shepherd - the great shepherd of the sheep. (Heb 13:20).
- c) Psalm 24 - the chief shepherd appears as the Man of Glory. (1 Pet 5:4).

d) These show the shepherd dying for His sheep, the resurrected shepherd tending and caring for His sheep and the future shepherd ruling over His sheep.

PASTORS - SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP

1Peter 5:2-4 "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

1. As pastors we are all "fellow-elders", equals before God, tried by suffering, focused and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with a heart for service, and an expectation of glory within to drive us.

2. We are to "shepherd the flock; loving, self sacrificial service is in view here.

3. We are to feed the flock; they must not starve when they are with us.

4. They are God's flock, not ours. We have the care and responsibility, but we answer to the Lord himself for our work with the flock he has given us.

5. We are to exercise oversight, so as to receive a good report from the Lord, and we are to be focused, as we serve Him, on His well done not anything else (Matthew 25:21-23).

6. We are to serve in a free way, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not from any other "constraint". No compulsion is to drive us except the desire coming from within from love for our Lord.

7. We are to be as keen as a volunteer, and with all the passion that this involves.

8. Lust for money, power, authority, position, or reputation, are not to be a part of our lives at all. Such lust for power is illustrated by Diotrephes. (3 John 9-10).

9. We are to be filled with passion, ready to serve, with total zeal for the task to which we are called.

10. Not lording it over the flock, as monarchs or dictators.

11. Being patterns, role models that others can follow in holy and joy filled living.

12. Being focused on winning the crown of glory, that is the eternal reward for the pastor who serves well. This involves being prepared to wear the crown of suffering in time with glory in our hearts, for they are fixed on eternal realities, where our true reward will be received.

Lazy pastors, power or money hungry pastors, are strongly rebuked here, and are reminded that the Lord's expectation of them is serious, and the consequences of failure or success (as the Lord determines it), are eternal. The Lord is the Chief Shepherd, he is the one to whom we must give account, and it is his well done that we are to focus on.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

Numbers takes us from the holy mountain to the plains of Moab; from the place of holiness to a place of immorality. Numbers is the book about living the life of a believer in the wilderness that this life can be. It covers the forty years of wandering. It only took God four days to get the children of Israel from Egypt into the wilderness but it took forty years to get Egypt out of the children of Israel.

This is its significance to us today. We carry a lot of "Egypt" within us from our days as unbelievers, and the Lord wants us to go to work on that "stuff" and in the power of the Holy Spirit eliminate it from our life. This "stuff" can be belief systems, value systems, bad behaviours, jealousies, resentments, sinful life style choices, friendships with evil men and women, associations, and any manner of thing that holds us into a pattern of ungodliness rather than freeing us for holy service of the Lord.

Numbers is about purifying us from the things that stop us "seizing the land"; in our terms, this means, stops us seizing the opportunities for service that the Lord provides. This highlights the mentorship and educational roles of leadership, for each and every one of us has things to "let go of" and things to grasp hold of in order to advance, and we must be sensitive to each person's call so that each one does what the Holy Spirit requires. We cannot deal with believers in any "one size fits all" mentality.

ABIDING

It was necessary for these people to learn to trust the Lord rather than their experiences, for they had not walked long enough with the Lord to know Him as they needed to know Him. It was a time where they had to get religion out of their system and get a strong relationship into its place. It is not a matter of what the children of Israel can do for God, it is more a matter of what God has done for the children of Israel, and wants to do with and through them. It was this that was to be their source of confidence.

What God wants is for His people to be spirit filled, obedient to His commands, and available for His service. The crying need for the believer, now and back then, is to draw closer to the Lord. To draw closer to the Lord means to deal with sin, confront hypocrisy and fake religion, and seek the truth of fellowship with the living God. Psalms 89:7, Hebrews 12:29.

Egypt is a "type" or picture of religion rather than relationship with God. Running down to Egypt in the Bible, means going into false religion, going into ritual without reality, and experiences without solid truth. Living faith is a relationship with God; it is not a religion. The daily need of the believer is to draw closer to Him and deepen that relationship, and so become more available for service. Egypt expresses externals, whereas living faith in God expresses internals; what things are, rather than what things look like.

The Lord wants us to bring every thought into captivity to Christ, Romans 12:1-2, because eventually what is hidden away inside, will go outside into the fabric of daily life. God wants to deal with sin while it is but a foolish thought and so stop it ever working out into the fabric of daily life and spoiling the garment of our life. Assisting all to come to that safe place where they open their lives to God's work is the role of all leaders.

God is changing the Israelites slowly in Numbers. Finally the Lord had to wait until the majority of this first generation had died, before he could bring the second one into the land, because they would not learn. Their sin was to fail to deal with sin! They failed to purify their hearts and minds and so they failed to follow through with the Lord's orders and seize the land, but there is good news here. They will train their children, and they will enter the land. 2 Corinthians 10:5.

This present chapter is looking at purity, and flows from the strict rules for the Kohathites in the last chapter. If God is going to use us, it is essential for us to get our lives cleansed from the sins that will otherwise stop our service. The one who cleanses is the Holy Spirit, and we are challenged not to grieve or quench the work of the Spirit within us. The greatest concern of God is the spiritual condition of His people. You are commanded to be pure, for God can only use a pure vessel for His service. 1 Timothy 5:22, Philippians 4:8.

"Be thou holy, for I am Holy", says the Lord. Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 21:6-8. You are commanded to build upon confession of sin with spiritual growth. You are going to be blessed by it, but it is still a command. He says that as we have become His children so we are to learn to act like His children. The church today is to follow through on this order.

The local church is for fellowship and worship, but it is also for teaching members of the royal family of God to act as members of the Royal Family. If we fail to teach the church becomes another social club, and that is not our call. If you do not recognise the importance of training in the ministry you will always be failing to "seize the land" that God has given you. 1 Corinthians 3:17, Ephesians 1:4, 5:27, Colossians 1:22, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Peter 1:12-16.

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is one of the central things that is taught in Numbers. This is to be the natural spiritual growth from positional sanctification to experiential sanctification. You have become sons and daughters of God, you are citizens of

heaven not of this world; that is positional sanctification. What the Lord wants now, is obedience in daily life that produces changes in life and character, in order to make you each moment holy before the Lord and ready for His service.

In this passage before us we have the case of leprosy being cast out of the camp. As we saw earlier in the study in Leviticus 14, it was a contagious disease at this time and needed to be isolated from the general community, and there were very precise instructions for the priesthood to diagnose and offer sacrifices after recovery from this disease.

Moses has been told that anybody with leprosy, or a weeping sore that was undiagnosed, was to be put outside the camp and to live away from those who were well to make sure that the contagious diseases were not spread from one person to another. They were to be assessed carefully and isolation was the only treatment. You do not treat a contagious disease in company; it is always treated in isolation. They are not put out of the camp to die, as there were special offerings to offer when the leper had been cured. There was an expectation that the Lord could and did heal some cases, and until then the family had the duty of care to ensure the person from their family was fed and clothed.

Leprosy is a terrible picture, or type, of sin; it is a disease of the body that eats away at the flesh and kills the nerves. The flesh rots off. The leper does more harm to themselves than the disease because they are unaware of pain. They may burn their own flesh and not know it. This is just like the effect of sin in the life. When you sin repeatedly, each act of sin reduces your sensitivity and rots part of you. It is contagious, and destroys others you come into contact with, and poisons your own mind and destroys your own body over time. People are often mentally and physically sick today because of sins such as uncontrolled sexual lusts, alcoholism, gluttony, and drug abuse.

Even when a drug addict comes to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ they still may have residual memory loss, or brain function problems, due to their previous drug addiction. With sexual immorality, conditions such as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-AIDS are a natural result of the sin of promiscuity, and often an innocent party is affected and destroyed by them. Many people become mentally and physically sick because of harbouring sin in their life. If you do not deal with sin you can end up with psychosomatic and very real illnesses. The main causes of depression are often those things that are bottled up inside a person and not let out. Leadership directly addresses these issues, it does not shrink away from facing them.

Most Cancer is in a different category than these sin-related illnesses, but it can also be a picture of the result of sin in mankind; in this case it is a consequence of corruption getting loose amongst the human population as a result of Adam's sin. Cancer is our own body turning on ourselves, and although it must not be seen as a result of personal sin, (for it is simply a reflection of the fallen state of mankind as a whole and the fact that man's body decays), it is also a type or picture of the result of the sin of man. Sin rots you from the inside and needs to be dealt with in isolation where each takes responsibility for their own sins and deals with them. God wants us to take action over sin in our life, not just confess our sins, weep for them, and then later return to them.

PAUL AND THE CORINTHIANS

Paul warned the Corinthians about sin. He said, because of habitual sin some in the church were sick and some had even died. 1 Corinthians 3:1-20, 11:27-34, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 2 Corinthians 13:5-6. If we judge our actions, and take action on what we see, then we shall not be judged as sinners. James 1:22-27, 1 John 1:5-10. As the leper in Israel had to be relocated out of the camp, just so sin that is unconfessed has to be removed from the church. We have to remove sin from our life. If we do not, then we will ruin our self and others.

Leprosy tends to be caught in dirty places; it is a dirty disease and therefore a good analogy to sin on that score also. Some people in Israel had contracted leprosy because of their own bad habits, but others had been contaminated by others without being aware of the dangers they were in. On all these fronts this makes the disease a perfect analogy for sin and its effects.

There are some people who are too dangerous to hug or give a kiss of peace to because they will infect you with something. There will also be people who are so emotionally needy and self absorbed that they will drain you emotionally like a leech. Ministers and doctors top the list of professions experiencing mental breakdowns, simply because of the draining nature of caring for dependent people, but even more because of the danger of manipulative and emotionally demanding people.

If you do not learn to deal with the leech type person, they will drain you. If you take over a church where the previous pastor has **not** been a good Bible teacher you may find about 80% "leeches". You need to steel yourself and teach them in Holy Spirit anointed power to transform this dependency state. Ezekiel 3:4-20. It is therefore important that we deal with both our own sin as often as is needed, and be aware of the sin of others, and be alert to their dangers, as we would to a case of leprosy. We must deal with the sins in our life by confronting them, and hate the sin, through confession of sin, and hate the sins of others and avoid contamination. Jude 22-23, 1 John 1:9.

SEPARATION

When you have a person who is in sin and deliberately and persistently refusing to confess it, you should withdraw and separate from them, and separate them from the fellowship of the church until they have addressed that sin. The Christian who is out of fellowship through unconfessed and deliberate sin can often lead you and the church into

disaster. It is therefore very important to teach the Bible systematically, covering all doctrines as they come up in their contexts, and teach them with vigour and enthusiasm. As you do this you will cut down on counselling work, but if people wish to deal with specific sins, then any counselling required can be done to help the individual break their sinful life pattern.

If there is no one placed over the youth group, then you as the pastor should take the responsibility to deal with them personally on a regular basis. You must protect the young people with systematic teaching of Bible doctrine. You must teach them as they have never been taught before. The young people are the people who will crash and burn and bring the name of the Lord Jesus Christ into disrepute and their lives into shipwreck unless they are protected by the truth of God's Word. Start with the first seven chapters of Proverbs, and build from there.

Having recognized those who are deliberately walking outside the Lord's plan, deal with them as per Matthew 18:15-22. Initially you go to them and talk to them about their sin. If they will not listen you go with elders and if they still will not listen they are brought before the church. As a final act of separation they must be removed from the church until such time that they have repented. There is no biblical statement about permanent excommunication. While a person lives there is hope of repentance and it should be prayed for. The man in the church at Corinth, below, is the example of this.

This may seem a tough process but the alternative is worse. If you do not do the things the Apostles order, in the Holy Spirit, then you will have some objectionable, arrogant person in the church who will lead others astray. Persistent sinners must be put out of the church! These people may be deluded believers, sin filled believers, or unbelievers masquerading as believers; you must find them out by teaching the truth and by watching their response to the truth! Remember Jesus words, Matthew 7:13ff, "By their fruit you will know them".

You should not accept that every body who calls themselves a Christian is a lovely likeable person, or that everyone who claims to be a Christian, actually is one. If you are a shepherd and a wolf comes in with a sheep skin on, then you must detect the wolf quickly, and eliminate it. In a church constitution you must have the ability to get rid of those whose ongoing presence endangers the spiritual lives of others.

When you separate in a biblical manner, you draw back to give the Holy Spirit room to move upon that person. It is not only a benefit for the church, but it is also for the benefit of the person who is thrown out, so that they can consider their situation and take remedial action. The case history of the person living in a sexual relationship with his step mother in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, is a biblical example where having been ejected for a sin, that was even shocking the pagans, he confronted his actions, stopped his actions and genuinely repented of his sin (evidenced by his changed life).

Happily he repented, but was then having trouble returning to the church. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul said that this man now had to be welcomed back into the church. This is the biblical evidence that no sin is too bad to be permanently excluded from fellowship for. If however the guilty person does not repent, then the biblical order is clear, and the believers are to have nothing to do with them, either spiritually or socially.

We must also separate from those who are in apostate religious organizations. No Christian should marry an unbeliever, nor be in a close business relationship where our Christian witness may be compromised, as we saw in our previous reflections upon the concept of SEPARATION. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Refer to studies of the Corinthian letters for a full study of these passages.

Treatment for all such cases, as are included in the category of deliberate refusal to confront sin, are given in Matthew 18:15-22, Titus 1:13-14, 3:10, Galatians 1:6-10, 1 Timothy 1:20. We see an application of this principle of separation and assessment of fruit in the lives of "make believers", in the passage where John the Baptist challenges the religious leaders of the day in Luke 3:7ff. They were coming to be baptised as a good luck charm. Their spirituality was fake and their lives proved it so. John said that they needed to show that they were genuine by genuine change in their lives. If a person's life has not changed, they have not met the Lord Jesus Christ!

Another example was Zacchaeus the tax collector in Luke 19 where on his repentance he agreed to give back the extra taxes he had stolen from people, with interest, as set out under the Mosaic Law in Exodus 22. He sorts out his sin with God, and then with man. This shows that his faith is genuine because it works out in his life in actions that can be seen by all, just as his previous sins had been seen by all. James 2:14-26.

In the passage before us the Israelite peoples are ordered to deal with things that separate them from God, and make them unholy and unfit to serve the Lord. This will involve diseases that contaminate, the sins of theft and adultery that defile the divine institutions of Marriage, the family and the nation, and their associated mental attitudes that can corrupt the minds of the guilty and the victims. As leaders let us be challenged by these things, for our role is to assist people make the cut between the things that help them grow spiritually and the things that slow them down.

NUMBERS 5:1- 31

"5:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: 3 Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell. 4 And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel. 5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 6 Speak unto the children of Israel,

When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; 7 Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. 8 But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him. 9 And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his. 10 And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his. 11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, 13 And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; 14 And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled: 15 Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16 And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD: 17 And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: 18 And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse: 19 And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: 20 But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: 21 Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; 22 And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen. 23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water: 24 And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter. 25 Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the LORD, and offer it upon the altar: 26 And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. 28 And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. 29 This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; 30 Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. 31 Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity."

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. All who were defiled in any way through contact with the dead, or with any skin disease that might be infectious, or any bodily discharge, were to be put out of the camp precincts away from everyone else. The camp was to be kept clean and free of all possible contaminants. Burials were to be done outside the camp and those who touched the dead body were to remain separate, outside the camp for the prescribed time until they were allowed to return to the camp site. There are good reasons for this medically and spiritually.

Male and female, all who had any running sore, or discharge of any sort, were declared unclean and were to remain outside the camp for the days required for the condition to clear, the discharge to be over, or for the time of contamination of the dead to be completed. The camp was to be ritually and physically clean. I reflect that as I travel the world and meet truly Christian leaders world wide, that they are always clean and tidy, no matter whether they live in a palace or a mud hut. Believers are to be known as clean and hygienic people – for we serve the Lord of all and holiness and cleanliness always go together.

The Lord dwells within the camp and nothing contaminated was to remain within the camp area. We must remember this principle today, for each of us needs to deal with any sinful habit that exists in our lives, and forsake any pattern of life that may lead to sin. The Lord is holy and He dwells within us, and He seeks a clean place in which to live, and a clean vessel to work through. **1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, Titus 3:10-11, Hebrews 12:15-17, 2 John 10-11.**

Verses 5 – 10. Any crime against property created "uncleanness" in the camp, and God hates all crime that abuses the rights and families/property of others! This is an interesting perspective on theft and wilful damage, but it is the Lord's and so we had better take it seriously, for the Lord clearly does! **1 Corinthians 6:10, 1 Peter 4:15.** Property crime defiles a community and renders it unclean in God's sight, and no thief can have peace with God, nor acceptance with the Lord until that sin is confessed, forsaken and the evils caused are set right by restitution.

The standard of restitution has been set before, Leviticus 6:1-7, and it is repeated here to underline the defiling nature of any sin against property, and the need to set it right with the victim. Praise God many are saved. **1 Corinthians 6:9-12.**

When you have been a victim of theft you feel defiled, and the Lord agrees with you. This is a defiling act that has occurred, and the Lord wants it set right by a formal process whereby the thief acknowledges their sin and makes it right with God and his victim. His acceptance before God is going to be evidenced by his restitution to his victims. Once again the principle is seen; if there is no fruit of repentance in restitution, then in Gods sight, there is no genuine repentance! If there is no change of lifestyle choices, from the criminal to the godly, then that person is not right with God! **Psalms 5:5, Matthew 7:15-23, Luke 19:1-10, 2 Timothy 2:19, James 1:22-27, 2:14-26.**

Verses 11 – 16. This is a passage upon suspected adultery and its defiling impact upon the trust within a marriage. In this case it is the man who suspects his wife, but from the passages on adultery, where the opposite situation is covered, we can be sure that this passage would also cover the wife who suspects her husband, just as the Leviticus passages covered the man and the woman, although only are addressed to the man. Leviticus 18:20, 20:10.

There is no double standard here, for the penalty of death applies to both the male and the female parties to adultery. Adultery is seen today as a casual sin, of no real consequence, except in the sadness to all who are affronted by it, but to God it is the ultimate defiling of the DIVINE INSTITUTIONS of marriage and the family. It is always satanic to break down marriage and the family and we are to see the enemy's footprint in all actions that assault the foundations of stable society.

The case of suspected adultery here is a cause of complete breakdown of trust in the marriage relationship. There is no evidence of adultery that would secure conviction (and execution of both guilty parties) and both accused parties are keeping their silence. In such a situation the worried and aggrieved spouse is to bring their suspect partner to the priest with a specific jealousy offering. It is not a "sweet savour" offering, so has no oil or frankincense added to it. Jealousy stinks and the offering is not meant to be a pleasant smelling one; it is going to be burnt bread, which is a good picture of what has happened in the family and marriage involved.

The suspected person is then brought to the altar and is to "stand before the Lord". Maximum psychological pressure is applied to this person to identify the truth and eliminate the cause of jealousy once and for all. Because a death penalty hangs over this situation the pressure cannot get any higher than this. Adultery would not always lead to death, and forgiveness was possible after confession and sacrifices for sin. David deals with his sin and lives, but with terrible punishment from the Lord directly, and terrible flow on natural consequences. 2 Samuel 11-13, Psalms 51.

Verses 17 – 22. The woman is being brought before the Lord to swear a solemn oath that she is innocent, and the procedure here was so serious that it was designed to prove that fully and finally. If the woman was guilty, then the understanding was that her false oath before the Lord and the drinking of this draught of special water, would bring about her death. She was guilty then of adultery and blasphemy, but would die slowly enough to be restored to fellowship, through confession, in the process. Gods point here is the strongest one possible. His people are to be holy, and they are not to treat adultery lightly, nor feel they can slide out of it with a good lawyer! The Lord is going to find them out and they will be judged. The Lords people are to be holy! This is why the standards for the pastor-teacher in the church were set so high – they were to be beyond reproach in all these moral matters.

The woman stands before the Lord at the altar. The priest solemnly takes pure water from the brazen laver (holy water = water that is "set apart" for the work of God) and then adds to it a sprinkle of dust from the earthen tabernacle floor. This is called "the bitter water", and speaks of the curse upon man because of sin. Genesis 3:13-19. The dust of the earth is the sign of the curse upon man and becomes the potent symbol of sin in this case. There is nothing fatal in most ordinary earth, and so the drink of water with a little dust over the top of it is not going to naturally cause any major problems to a person drinking it. It is the associated oath and the curse attached to it that psychologically is to do the work of conviction upon the guilty person.

The woman has her head uncovered, and now stands bare headed before the Lord, without the normal woman's head covering, that speaks of her husbands love and care for her. She stands alone before the Lord, to affirm her innocence. She carries the meal offering in her hand, and the water in the earthen pot. She is made to recite an oath affirming her innocence, and also an oath whereby she accepts the punishment of death if she is lying about the alleged adultery. She is to affirm both oaths with a loud (not a fake falsely humble soft answer) "Amen, amen!"

Verses 23 – 31. The priest then writes the curses and oath out in a "book" that is kept. This means a manuscript, or piece of papyrus. The writing is then sponged away by some of the water from the earthen pot and the woman is made to drink water from the pot. This sponging away is the picture used by the Biblical writers to speak of the Lord "expunging", or washing away our sins. **Psalms 51:1-9, Isaiah 1:16-20, 43:25, 44:22, Acts 3:19-21.**

The woman is now to drink from the water that has become the embodiment of the curses. As it enters her body the water will become bitter to her if she is a sinner indeed. Once she has drunk some of the water the priest takes the meal offering from her hand and waves it before the Lord and then offers a portion of it up upon the altar. Once this is done the woman then drinks some more of the water.

If she is innocent she will receive no ill from the water, but if she is guilty she will suffer terribly and her very flesh will rot from her. This is clearly a judgment, for there is no natural process that will cause eating some dirt in water to create such a physiological reaction. This is no corrupt medieval trial by ordeal, but a process by which the Lord is able to judge those who lie to their spouses and then to Him.

If the woman is innocent she will have no ill effects from the drinking of the water, and she will go on to bear children and she will have her name publicly cleared of all rumour as a result of this very public process. After this process the now publicly proven innocent woman would have her head covering returned to its place either by the priest or her husband.

This is not mentioned here, but is the logical ending to the ritual, for her innocence is proved and she is restored to the covering of her husband. I suspect the priest did this and passed her formally back to her husband with prayer for them both. They were certainly not just bundled out of the tabernacle to continue their bitter feelings. The sacrifice and oaths were to end the bitterness and jealousy and restore harmony.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All sin defiles the sinner and the contagious nature of it must be recognized. If we fail to deal with a sinful pattern in our life that pattern will eventually lead to evil that will infect and afflict those we love and care for. Like leprosy, any sinful pattern in life needs to be identified, diagnosed properly, dealt with thoroughly and isolated completely. Sin is not to be played with, but confessed before God and forsaken before it destroys all we hold dear.
2. Crime against property defiles the victim and the community that tolerates it. God hates theft and those who persist in thieving, or any other sinful pattern, are insulting the grace of God and will not inherit eternal life. God's Word is clear on this from one end to the other.
3. Adultery rots the heart out of a marriage. Jealousy destroys people and when unfaced and uncontrolled creates murder. All such destructive emotions were to be faced and resolved before the Lord's Holy Altar. Jealousy was not to be left to simmer away and create family/domestic violence, but was to be faced before the Lord and solemn oaths taken about the truth of the matter that was at the heart of the jealousy. Let us ensure we confront all mental attitude sins before they destroy all we hold dear.

REFLECTION UPON THE CONCEPT OF "ABIDING IN GOD"

1. The word "abide" speaks of perfect provision, supply, sustenance and fellowship. - Deuteronomy 33:27-28
2. The key to "abiding" is living in the reality of God's provision - John 13:17
3. "Abiding" means there is total provision for every need for every believer at every point in his life - Psalm 23:1,5, Psalm 91:1-10, John 15:4, James 1:2-4.
4. Abide in John 15:4 is in the aorist imperative ingressive, a command possible at all times because of absolute provisions. Psalm 91:1-2
5. There is never a time or condition under which the child of God may not "abide" - Psalm 91:1, 4, 9-10a
6. Earthly problems are temporal and variable but divine solutions are absolute Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28
7. The only time Jesus Christ is at home in us is when we abide in Him. Ephesians 3:16,17, Colossians 3:15, 16

REFLECTION UPON THE SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Unbelievers only) (Acts 7:51, John 16:8-11) This is hardening to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT (Unbelievers only) (Matthew 12:31) The purpose of the Holy Spirit was to reveal the person of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees rejected this by claiming He was demon possessed.
3. LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (Acts 5:1-3) A sin of false motivation. - Ananias and Sapphira.
4. GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (Ephesians 4:30) Any sin which the believer commits.
5. QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (1 Thessalonians 5:19) A believer who is not allowing the Holy Spirit to exert His full influence.
6. THE UNPARDONABLE SIN (Matthew 12:22-32)
 - a) Rejection of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour is the only sin which cannot be forgiven. This unbelief is shown in Matthew 12:24, denying the person and power of Jesus.
 - b) It is impossible for a believer to commit the unpardonable sin. (Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 44:22, 1 John 1:7)

PSALM 51: FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION

The way back to full communion with and service for God is shown in Psalm 51.

51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. - Recognition of sin and the ability through grace of God to cleanse.

51:2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin - That sin is thoroughly judged before God and full cleansing is available.

51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. - We must admit our sin to God (1 John 1:9)

51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. - Acknowledgement that the sin is against God alone.

51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. - Recognising that we have inherited a sin nature from Adam.

51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. - The place of blessing is where one is free from sin.

51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow - Forgiveness and cleansing is through the blood sacrifice.

51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me - The cleansing is complete. (v 7-10) (John 13:4-10, Ephesians 5:26, 1 John 1:9)

51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. - That as part of discipline the Holy Spirit could be taken away in the Old Testament. This is not the case in the present age, the Church Age as the Holy Spirit indwells all believers forever. (John 14:16)

51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. - Restoration means renewal of joy.

51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. - Once we are cleansed we are to teach others who are sinners and evangelise the unsaved

51:14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

51:15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. - True worship comes from a restored life.

51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. - God desires obedience not rituals. (v 16-17)

51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

51:19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar. - We then have full fellowship with God. (v 18-19)

NOTES

CHAPTER 6**INTRODUCTION**

The Nazarite vow was a special vow to be taken voluntarily by a person who felt called so to do. There was no compulsion upon anyone to take this vow, and it did not need to be for life, but it had very serious consequences once taken. There may be a time for a person to particularly dedicate themselves to the Lord for a time.

The word Nazarite means, “the one who separates themselves, for God’s service, or to holiness”. To take this vow was to dedicate oneself to God, and to separation from the affairs of ordinary life, and be holy before the Lord. The Nazarite was to be physically, what the entire congregation was to be spiritually.

This vow may be taken for a range of reasons; due to an upcoming major life decision, or a personal, family or national crisis, or simply to experience a period of total dedication to the Lord before returning to the normality of daily agrarian life. It was a specific vow that set the person apart from normal life for the time of the vow, to be dedicated to the Lord through that time.

As we will see, as we go through this section, the early church utilized this vow at times and followed its provisions to affirm their Jewishness against accusations that they hated and had rejected the Mosaic Law. This chapter before us also became the basis for all the monastic orders of the early church. This passage ends with the wonderful Aaronic blessing that is still used today in many contexts.

NUMBERS 6:1- 27

6:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **2** Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: **3** He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. **4** All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. **5** All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. **6** All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. **7** He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. **8** All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD. **9** And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. **10** And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: **11** And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. **12** And he shall consecrate unto the LORD the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. **13** And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: **14** And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, **15** And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings. **16** And the priest shall bring them before the LORD, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering: **17** And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering. **18** And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. **19** And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them upon the hands of the Nazarite, after the hair of his separation is shaven: **20** And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine. **21** This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering unto the LORD for his separation, beside that that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation. **22** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **23** Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, **24** The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: **25** The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: **26** The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. **27** And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The heart of the vow is summed up in these introductory verses. The Nazarite Vow was for those who wanted to separate themselves from normal secular life and set themselves apart to be with the Lord in a time of prayer, meditation, study and quietness, away from the cares of daily business and family life. Leviticus 20:26. The use of the vow envisaged by the Lord, as given to Moses in these instructions, is that the vow will be a temporary thing,

to set that person aside from the community to be with the Lord away from distracting cares and concerns, to draw near to the Lord for a specific purpose.

To achieve this, without being accused of being lazy and not meeting family and community responsibilities, there was a need for a formal process to be put in place. This was so that all could recognize the spiritual nature of the vow, and also test it, to ensure it was not to become a way of escape from responsibilities for the shirker. Spirituality can often be the cloak of idleness, whereby people use super-spiritual words to cover their laziness and disobedience. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13.

It was not to be an easy option to avoid work, but a really serious option to draw near to the Lord at times of specific spiritual need. Through the centuries this vow was used as the Lord envisaged it, but there are three biblical examples of life long Nazarites, with Samson (failed until the last moment), Samuel (faithful but flawed), and John the Baptist (faithful until death). Judges 13:5-14, 1 Samuel 1:11, Luke 1:15.

Verses 3 – 8. The vow involved three key points of marked difference making their separation from the normal life of the community quite a visible one. Firstly there was to be no food taken in any form from the grape vine. All the fruit of the grape, from the grape itself, to grape juice, to raisins, and to wine, all spoke of gladness and joy in life and prosperity. Wine could be intoxicating, and so drunkenness was forbidden, but all the fruit of the grape was for celebration and many dainty and tasty sweets were made from the grape vine, and all were forbidden during the time of the vow. The Nazarite vow was a separation from all the joys of ordinary life to concentrate upon spiritual matters.

The second matter of separation was good grooming; the person taking this vow had to put aside all self centred concentration upon how they looked, and see their hair as their crown from the Lord and let it take whatever form it was to take. The person taking the vow was not allowed to cut his hair in any way at all. It could be washed and clean, but no razor was to touch his head and shave his beard or hair through the time of the vow.

Thirdly, the Nazarite was forbidden the normal activities associated with the burial of the dead, even the closest relative. They were not allowed to be involved in any burial rituals. Just as for the High Priest, Leviticus 21:11, the Nazarite was set apart for the Lord and was not to touch or come near to the dead. This was a particularly hard thing, for they were not able to say goodbye and grieve for the closest loved one through their time under this vow. They were to be as scrupulous as the High Priest of the nation in matters of uncleanness, and separate themselves totally to the Lord and his fellowship through this time.

Verses 9 – 12. If by chance someone suddenly died close by him, then he would be defiled by contact with the dead, and there was a special ritual he had to go through to atone for this contact and recommit to his vow. It was meant to be a costly exercise so that no-one ever took this vow lightly. We are used to considering the care of the dead as a holy and lovely thing for believers to do, and this is both right and good. Our care for the dead and the funerals we give the believing dead are testimonies of our faith and theirs.

It is not that there is anything wrong with care of the dead or dying, but that the Nazarite was supposed to be living quite separately from the community in prayer and contemplation and so if a man had taken this vow and remained in contact with the general population too often, he was not spending the time he had set aside in his spiritual activities and so the risk he ran of being defiled was more real. For such a person this provision was there and it was expensive for them.

If he came in contact with the dead, he was to set himself aside for eight days, and on the seventh day he was to cut off/shave all his hair. On the eighth day he was to bring to the priest two turtle doves, or two young pigeons, and deliver them at the door of the tabernacle enclosure. The sin and burnt offerings were then to be offered by the priest on behalf of the man who had become “accidentally” defiled. He then re-commits to his vow, not just for all the days that are remaining, but he begins again completely from day one, with a new trespass offering.

It was a serious incentive to be careful in public places. It is also a reminder that once a vow was made it was to be kept no matter what else happened. To be released from a vow involved a serious payment, and a sin offering was also required. Leviticus 27:1ff, Deuteronomy 23:22-23. It was treated as a serious sin if a person went back on what they had vowed to the Lord. Careless and hasty promises were not to be made to the Lord about anything or anyone.

Verses 13 – 21. Once the days of the vow are fulfilled the Nazarite is to be brought by his family, or supporters, to the door of the tabernacle enclosure and they are to bring for him his offering, two yearly lambs and one yearling ram. This will cover a sin offering, a burnt offering and a peace offering for him. In addition he is to offer all the possible meal offerings; and so is required to bring a basket of unleavened bread made of fine flour, unleavened bread baked with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil.

His supporters are also to have with them wine for a drink offering. Numbers 15:1-5. He himself stands with those who bring him, not touching any of these things, for they are brought on his behalf. It was considered an honour and a spiritual offering to the Lord to pay for someone to undertake this vow. Acts 21:23ff.

After all the offerings were made on his behalf the Nazarite is to take the hair he has shaved from his face and head and now enter the tabernacle and place the hair himself under the fire where the peace offering is burning on the brazen altar. The priest then takes a shoulder of the peace offering ram and one piece of unleavened bread from the basket of

them, and he places both onto the outstretched hands of the Nazarite. He then lifts them up and waves them before the Lord as a wave offering.

These are holy for the priest and the priesthood may eat of this food and the other assigned portions from the other sacrifices. At this point the Nazarite celebrates the re-entry into the ordinary world with his first cup of wine with his friends, possibly from the container that was used to bring the drink offering.

Verses 22 – 27. Blessing the children of God is something God loves to do, and expects His servants and leaders to do in His name. The formula for this blessing may not have been given until this point, or this may be the formalizing of it here, we cannot know. Aaron had blessed the people before. Leviticus 9:22ff. Earlier blessings were given to the patriarchs and show us that this is a principle for application in many situations. We are to be a blessing by our words and behaviours and by our formal prayers for those we come across.

The first is by Melchizedek upon Abraham in God's name. Genesis 14:18-20. Laban and Bethuel bless Rebekah. Genesis 24:58-60. Isaac blesses the tricky Jacob in Genesis 27:27-29, and then Esau also in verses 39-40. Isaac then formally blesses Jacob, who he now understands is to be the blessed of the Lord. Genesis 28:1-5. Jacob blesses Pharaoh of Egypt. Genesis 47:10. Jacob then blessed Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Genesis 48:15-20.

Note the nature of the blessing. This is my favourite benediction to end important services, especially weddings, where the couple are believers. Let us note the elements here, for they all appear in the Old and New Testaments as greetings for the people of God:

1. **The Lord bless you** – blessing is from the Lord only, for none else can give without it being taken away later.
2. **The Lord keep you** – only the Lord's power will keep/guard our lives from the enemy and keep us safe to achieve all that He has placed us here to complete. Philippians 4:7, Jude 21-24.
3. **The Lord make his face to shine upon you** – the fellowship of the Lord is the joy we can know in the midst of trouble, the comfort in trial and difficulties. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Nehemiah 8:10, Isaiah 61:3, James 1:2ff.
4. **The Lord be gracious to you** – grace comes from the Lord and we are recipients of His grace, mercy and love. Romans 1:5-7, 5:15-21, 2 Corinthians 9:8ff.
5. **The Lord give you peace** – this remains the gift of God alone. Peace with God, inner peace and peace in society and between nations comes from the Lord alone. John 14:27, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 John 3, 3 John 14.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God desires to bless us and our task to receive this blessing is to position ourselves in the place of obedient service for the Lord. Blessing is God's desired work, and judgment is His "strange work". Isaiah 28:21. Let us be a blessing to others and so receive God's blessing also. Let us always be ready to be a blessing and pray for God's blessing upon those we meet, be they believer or unbeliever. Remember, the greatest blessing the unbeliever can receive is the Gospel of Christ, so to pray for their blessing is to pray for their salvation. As Jacob's prayer for Pharaoh was bone fide, so our prayers for those we meet are bone fide when they come from a grateful and loving heart.

2. The Nazarite vow was only for a time, but it was to be taken seriously through that time and the person involved was to devote themselves to prayer and separation from the normal details of life. If they were careless the cost was high to them, but if they used the vow as a time of separation for prayer and focus, and they had the support of family or friends for this time, it was a time of great blessing and ended in great joy.

3. Asceticism is not commanded, nor even recommended by scripture, but if a person needs to take time out of normal life they should devote themselves to a routine like that of the Nazarite, to ensure that they spend the time in spiritual pursuits, not foolishness. If a vow is taken it must be followed through, and no-one is to use spiritual things to earn points with man or impress people. Let us take the things of God seriously and devote ourselves to daily service of the Lord, and be careful in our service lest we be contaminated by this world.

REFLECTION UPON THE MEANING OF CONSECRATION

1. Consecration means full surrender of self to God. (Romans 6:13)
2. This is the attitude of "denying self" and "not my will, but yours be done". (Matthew 16:24, 26:39, Galatians 2:20).
3. This is the only acceptable gift to God. (Romans 12:1,2)
4. The consecration of the Temple is a picture of the believer's life: the Outer Court (the body), the Holy Place (the soul) and the Holy of Holies (spirit).
5. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore must be set apart as a holy vessel. (Romans 12:1-2 cf 1 Kings 8:1-11)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST”

1. SCRIPTURE (Galatians 2:20) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. "

2. Evaluation or Literal Translation

a) "I am crucified with Christ". I have been crucified with Christ in the past with a result that I keep on being crucified with Christ forever identification with Christ in His death). Passive voice - I have received this crucifixion (this occurs at the point of salvation). We are dead to the law after crucifixion with Christ because Christ fulfilled the law. (Matthew. 5:17). We are overcomers (1 John 5:4,5)

b) "yet not I" - I no longer live - my old life of sin and self has died

c) "but Christ lives in me" - Christ keeps on living in me. (Galatians. 4:19). Christ lives in us for fellowship as well - (Revelation. 3:20, John 14:20, 2 Corinthians. 13:5, Romans. 8:10, Colossians. 1:27)

d) "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (or power) of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

3. The only way to fulfil the law is through the character of Christ formed in the believer through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2-4). In our own strength we are unable to keep the law because we have a sinful nature.

NOTES

CHAPTER 7**INTRODUCTION**

The list that occurs here may seem to be a waste of precious manuscript space and most readers of the scriptures will speed through this chapter. Let's pause and reflect upon why Moses records these things before we rush through the details that we are not concerned with.

These are the gifts given by the princes of each tribal group at the time of completion of the tabernacle. Leviticus 8:10-11. These gifts will be needed and used during the wilderness march and so Moses apparently remembers the significance of them at this point in his narrative and breaks into the story, and records the details here, before we have the moving out of the entire people for Kadesh Barnea. The events of Leviticus 8-10 occur just after the erection of the tabernacle also, and may run simultaneously with the things described there. I suspect they do, and refer to this below.

The death of Nadab and Abihu, recorded in Leviticus 10, would have been even more dramatic in their impact if they occur during the process of the giving of the gifts we read about here. That incident stands alone in Leviticus 10 because of its significance after the installation of the priesthood, and it is most likely that it occurs while Aaron, Moses and the rest of the people are distracted by the formal gift giving and the sacrifices associated with it. Now it may be that the twelve days of the tribal gift giving occurs in the second month, but I open the door to the possibility here that it occurs in the first month, and that chapters 7-9 are an insertion by Moses to fill in the details of that first month before returning to the narrative that leads to their departure on the twentieth day of the second month.

From Exodus 40:17ff, Leviticus 7:37-38, 8:1-3, 9:1, there can only be a maximum of forty days between the raising of the Tabernacle and the departure recorded in Numbers 10:11ff. The fact that Moses breaks into the flow of the narrative is evidence of the importance to him (and to the Holy Spirit – who guides him) of this detail, and it is another piece of strong evidence that there is one author of this account, and it is Moses. A later author would have smoothed the narrative.

A "redactor", author, or editor in later centuries would get the time line sorted before they started, whereas a man writing at the time will at times miss a detail occasionally and return to it later when another event or description reminds him he has forgotten something, or he will group events by their spiritual rather than their temporal relationship. I suspect this is Moses point here, not to get time lines accurate, and easy for us to follow, but to get spiritual relationships right.

I will break the text below up into the twelve tribal groups for ease of reading and discussion. Note the order of the tribal offerings in relation to the placement of the tribes in the camp. We have met these princes before in Numbers chapter 1. The order of the tribes that was used then, was Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali. The birth order used for their blessings in Genesis 49:3ff is, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), Benjamin.

The organization of the tribes for the camp was, from Numbers Chapter 2, to the East, under the standard of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, and to the South, under the standard of Reuben, Simeon and Gad. On the west side of the tabernacle, under the standard of Ephraim, was Manasseh and Benjamin, and to the North under the standard of Dan, was Asher and Naphtali. If you go back to Genesis 46:8-25, you will see why the camp was grouped in this order, and why the standards were with the tribes they were.

The two oldest sons of Leah and the oldest son of her maid Zilpah form the Southern group. The three youngest sons of Leah form the Eastern group. The sons of Rachel form the Western group. The sons of Rachel's maid Bilhah, with the youngest son of Zilpah form the Northern group. The ancestral links between the peoples are kept in their tribal groupings. Refer back to the discussion of the tribal groupings in the camp in the commentary on Numbers chapter 2.

The order of the offerings will slightly differ again from the other listings, but the basic principles will be the same; Leah's sons have precedence, with her maid's sons being "covered" by her own, or lastly the youngest maid's son joined with the youngest of Bilhah's. Rachel's sons come in precedence after Leah's, and Rachel's youngest "covers" Bilhah's oldest son Dan, and they precede the last two youngest sons of the servant maids. Even though Dan will lead a division of the army, when the tribes come before the Lord it is remembered that Dan's mother was a servant and he stands after the sons of the free women.

In effect there are three wagons for the sons of Leah and her maid Zilpah, and three wagons for the sons of Rachel and her maid Bilhah, with the youngest sons of the two servants under Rachel's group in the sacrificial offering. The timing of the offerings and the dedication of the Tabernacle and the Levites ties in with the first Passover and we will refer to this in chapter nine below.

NUMBERS 7:1- 89

7:1 And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them; 2 That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered: 3 And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought

them before the tabernacle. 4 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 5 Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. 6 And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. 7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service: 8 And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

10 And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar. 11 And the LORD said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar. 12 And he that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah: 13 And his offering was one silver charger, the weight thereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them were full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering 14 One spoon of ten shekels of gold, full of incense: 15 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 16 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 17 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

18 On the second day Nethaneel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, did offer: 19 He offered for his offering one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 20 One spoon of gold of ten shekels, full of incense: 21 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 22 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 23 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Nethaneel the son of Zuar.

24 On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun, did offer: 25 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 26 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 27 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 28 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 29 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon.

30 On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, prince of the children of Reuben, did offer: 31 His offering was one silver charger of the weight of an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 32 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 33 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 34 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 35 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur.

36 On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the children of Simeon, did offer: 37 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 38 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 39 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 40 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 41 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

42 On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad, offered: 43 His offering was one silver charger of the weight of an hundred and thirty shekels, a silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 44 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 45 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 46 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 47 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

48 On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim, offered: 49 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 50 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 51 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 52 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 53 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud.

54 On the eighth day offered Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, prince of the children of Manasseh: 55 His offering was one silver charger of the weight of an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 56 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 57 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 58 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 59 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

60 On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the children of Benjamin, offered: 61 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels,

after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 62 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 63 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 64 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 65 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideon.

66 On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the children of Dan, offered: 67 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 68 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 69 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 70 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 71 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

72 On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran, prince of the children of Asher, offered: 73 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 74 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 75 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 76 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 77 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran.

78 On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali, offered: 79 His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 80 One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 81 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 82 One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 83 And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan.

84 This was the dedication of the altar, in the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold: 85 Each charger of silver weighing an hundred and thirty shekels, each bowl seventy: all the silver vessels weighed two thousand and four hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 86 The golden spoons were twelve, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary: all the gold of the spoons was an hundred and twenty shekels. 87 All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve bullocks, the rams twelve, the lambs of the first year twelve, with their meat offering: and the kids of the goats for sin offering twelve. 88 And all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace offerings were twenty and four bullocks, the rams sixty, the he goats sixty, the lambs of the first year sixty. This was the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed. 89 And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 9. The events described here begin to occur on the day of the dedication of the tabernacle. This is the day the tabernacle is raised up for the first time. The first day is described here, with a formal presentation from all the tribes, each tribe providing an ox and each tribe joining with another to provide a covered wagon to contain their joint offering.

It appears that the tribes joined together by their birth mothers of origin, with two wagons from the sons of Leah, (Days 1-4), then one of the son of Leah, Simeon, with the Oldest of her maid of Zilpah, Gad (Days 5-6). One wagon from the descendents of Rachel (day 7-8). The next wagon has the youngest son of Rachel, Benjamin, and the oldest son of Rachel's maid Bilhah, Dan, (Days 9-10), and the final pair being Zilpah and Bilhah's youngest sons, Asher and Naphtali (Days 11 – 12).

The oxen will not form the prime sacrifice for each of the twelve days that the gifts are formally presented, tribe by tribe, but will be used for the "duties" of the Levites, probably in pulling these wagons, for they will later be used to carry the tabernacle structure itself.

The twelve wagons are clearly lined up by the tribes bringing them at this one time, and half the contents of each is going to be taken out formally and presented each (I suspect following day – refer below to chapter 9 for a discussion of the timing of this in relation to the first Passover celebrated in the tabernacle) day, with the appropriate sacrifices being offered daily as was recorded back in Leviticus 7-8. The dedication of the priesthood must also occur through this time frame.

The wagons are on their presentation lined up, and then the Lord speaks specifically to Moses about what is to be done with them. They are to be placed under the care of two of the sub-tribes of the family of Levi. These gifts are to go to the Levites as a thanks offering in advance of their future service in the tabernacle and the oxen and wagons are to be means of transport for the items of the tabernacle that these priests will have to haul away at each move of the tabernacle.

Two wagons and four oxen are given to the sons of Gershon, and four wagons and eight oxen are given to the sons of Merari. These wagons are under the overall authority now of Ithamar the second surviving son of Aaron, as he is

responsible for the logistics of the move of the structure of the tabernacle. The family of Kohath do not receive care over any wagons, for their role is that of carrying the holy things on their shoulders, and so they do not need any wagons to carry items. As for the contents of the wagons, their service is reward enough.

It is of note that the men tasked with the administrative and construction work (Pack and unpack of the tabernacle) are the ones who receive the gifts, while those tasked with the holy tasks are not rewarded at this point. This is how it should be in the church also. If we are to bless and encourage the workers of the church, then we ought to begin by blessing those who do the cleaning and administration, well ahead of the pastoral staff who administer the holy things of God's Word.

This may seem a little strange, but it is the Lord's way. His choicest servants are to be rewarded most by His "well done", while those who are tasked with the tough physical roles need to receive more physical and tangible reward more immediately. This means if there is a wage rise for the pastor, the cleaner receives one also, and should get his/hers first. Biblical leadership means the leader is the servant of all, John 13, and is rewarded after the servants are.

Notice also that they receive these gifts in advance of taking down the tabernacle for the first time, and at the start of each day ready for the first sacrifice with an hour or so to spare. They have helped Moses erect the tabernacle, but the real task of taking it down and putting it up in the next camp site is yet to be done. God provides and rewards in grace here, and He continues to do so.

We receive blessings well in advance of any deserving of them, and any need for them! It is also a reminder that the provision of God, often through other believers, will always meet the orders and requirements of the service demanded of the tasked believer. When tasked with a job that we cannot perform or meet, we are to pray, not to panic, for if the task is the Lord's then He will provide for it through answers to prayer. We rest in the Lord's plan, and that means we expect the Lord's provision on the Lord's path, for it is His work and His path. Prayer brethren – never panic or despair.

Verses 10 – 17. The gifts now identified were presented one day after the other, one tribe's gifts being formally handed over each day. As the sacrificial animals for each day are included in the gifts, the ceremony must have been first thing in the morning, before the first sacrifice; it may be that the ceremony was a dawn one as the first sacrifice was at 9am. This is another reason why I believe the wagons were handed over on the first of Nissan, but the gifts were formally presented only from the second of Nissan to the thirteenth. The Fourteenth is what day?.... remember....

It would appear that the Levites did the handling of the gifts and the prince of each tribe stood by as it's representative to oversee this; the Levites working on his and his tribe's behalf. The animals listed in each tribe's offering were not mentioned initially as part of the twelve wagons, and it may be, to save the fodder of the Levites, that the tribal groups brought them separately and passed them over on the day. We cannot know this for sure. I personally suspect however that the entire tribe fell in behind their prince to applaud and praise the Lord as the gifts were taken out by the Levites and lifted high as a wave offering to the Lord and passed over one by one to the sons of Aaron, and it may be that individual members of the tribe led the animals listed forward to the Levites.

Everyone is part of the blessing here. The tribe of Judah's offering is listed thus:

1. A silver "charger" of 130 shekels weight. (A shekel is half a Troy ounce).
 2. A silver bowl of 70 shekels weight.
 3. Both were filled with fine flour with oil for offering the meal offerings for the dedication.
 4. A golden "spoon" (kaph in Hebrew = a small container that would fit in the palm of the hand) of weight of ten shekels of gold. It was filled with incense.
 5. A young Bullock, one ram, a yearly lamb, a kid, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five yearling lambs.
- All the sacrifices for this first day are therefore provided by the tribe of Judah.

These precious metal objects were clearly things received from the Egyptians that individual families had received when they left the land. Exodus 12:33-36. The princes had asked the people to identify gifts that they could give as a tribe to honour the tabernacle and some families here, possibly princely ones, prayed and gave these extremely valuable items.

What we have here is a twelve piece dinner set of some very wealthy Egyptian noble, possibly a Governor, that each prince of each of the tribes received one of each piece of. It may be the princes discussed this matter of the gifts for the dedication, and the Holy Spirit simply identified this shared dinner set as a gift of the right level of magnificence for such an event as the dedication of their tabernacle. If I am right in this, it is wonderful to reflect that the Lord gave them this great dinner service to be spread through the twelve tribes, and then to be re-united after a year in the tabernacle. The individual princes could enjoy it for a year but then they had to be ready to give it up to the Lord on behalf of their tribe. This is the way the Lord works today also, giving us things to enjoy and then pass over to receive greater glory.

The Lord wants us to examine our hearts and give as we feel led by the Holy Spirit to the work of the Lord. For some people they will feel led to give extremely valuable things to the Lord, without any personal acknowledgement, but the assurance of rewards in heaven for their obedience. At times the Lord will give us the enjoyment of amazing things, but a day will come when He wants us to pass it over to Him. We are challenged to have a light hold on our "stuff", for whatever it is, and no matter how much joy owning it brings, it will be left behind when we die. Let us heed the Holy Spirit and give to the Lord what He asks of us now. **2 Corinthians 8:5-15, 9:6-11.**

On a shopping trip yesterday in 2008, the Lord led me down the industrial street, where the EBCWA ministry started way back in 1986. The keen young pastor then serving in that church showed me the old hall where this entire ministry

began. I told him with joy in recollection how the Lord provided the building and a bank account sufficient to prepare it for the work. He then showed me the work they had done over recent years, and with joy told me, "not one cent is owed for all this, for God's people came forward and donations of material and labour provided it all!" This is how God works, and so if you are short of anything in your work pastor, pray to the Lord and wait the bounty of the Lord. By 2017 the entire building had been swept away for new development by the Local Government, with God's people apparently "robbed" by the process, and we must all "sit with" the events and see what God is now to do with the people involved from 1987-2017. Finally its never just about buildings but about the people in them who use them to God's glory.

Verses 18 – 23. The second day of the dedication of the tabernacle the tribe of Issachar came forward and fell in behind it's prince as the Levites took the items listed below one by one out of the wagon, lifted them high as a wave offering and passed them to Aaron. The tribe also brought forward the animals as listed.

1. A silver charger of 130 Shekel weight.
 2. A silver bowl of 70 shekels weight.
 3. Both filled with flour mingled with oil.
 4. A spoon of gold of ten shekel weight filled with incense.
 5. A young Bullock, one ram, a yearly lamb, a kid, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five yearling lambs.
- All the sacrifices for this second day are therefore provided by the tribe of Issachar.

Verses 24 –83. The other tribes all give the identical offering. This makes it clear that the princes have got together to discuss this matter and prayed corporately about this, and come to a shared plan to honour the Lord with the greatest gift they received as they left Egypt. The people are all equal in their gifts, and none can feel any superiority, but all can feel the great joy of presenting to the Lord what was given to them through the Lord's grace. This is how giving works! Let us examine our hearts and give with joy to the Lord.

Verses 84 – 89. Moses now lists the total of the giving and the values of the offering. In sheer weight of silver and gold the values are very high. This mornings silver price was \$15-75 per troy ounce USD. This mornings (2008) gold price was \$874-50 per troy ounce USD. These items were however works of art and in today's valuations this dinner set would be worth millions of dollars and the value of the animals used was also considerable, to tens of thousands of dollars. The Lord is pleased with the devotion of the people and when Moses enters the tabernacle to speak with the Lord, the Lord speaks with him. God wants us to worship with the abundance He has provided us. As we pour blessing back to the Lord, so we will have joy and the enrichment of our fellowship with the Lord.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God provides all that is needed to do what is required of us. The Lord will often utilize other believers to meet our needs, for by that way there is more cause for blessing and rejoicing. Let us give as the Holy Spirit leads us, and let us pray for all that is needed to do the work the Lord demands of us. His demands are backed by His provisions. If they are lacking, then we need to pray, for something is wrong on our side.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE BELIEVER'S GIVING

1. Giving is an important part of spiritual life. It includes your attitude, the giving of yourself, your capacity as well as your possessions. Giving is as much a part of worship as praying, singing, listening to teaching, observing the Lord's Table, reading the Word. It is a function of priesthood for team work and often to sustain the work of leadership.

2. Basic Principles of Giving

(a) Old Testament Giving - this giving was grace giving just as it is in our age. (Proverbs 11:24,25)

(b) New Testament Giving - (2 Corinthians 9:7) also grace giving.

(c) Tithing - this means ten per cent. It was a form of income tax in Israel. Offerings or giving were above this. Tithing was for all Jews, offerings for believers only. It should be remembered that Israel was a theocracy.

[i] In Israel two tithes were required annually

[ii] Tithe 1 - for the maintenance of the Levites (Numbers 18:21, 24) Civil servants in a theocracy.

[iii] Tithe 2 - for national feasts and sacrifices (Deuteronomy 14:22-26)

[iv] Every third year a third tithe was required:-

[v] Tithe 3 - for the poor of the land. (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29) Social security. In (Malachi 3:8-10) it mentions tithes and offerings, the tithes to be brought to the storehouse or treasury.

(d) The time to give - the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16:2)

(e) How much - as God has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2)

3. General Scripture on Giving. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9)

(a) 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. Contrasts the Macedonian givers to the Corinthian givers, the former having been made poor by Roman oppression gave liberally. The Corinthians, the richest Church in Greece, gave sparingly.

(b) Giving is an attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than compulsion or the amount donated (2 Corinthians 8:2)

(c) Before money is given you must give yourself. (2 Corinthians 8:5)

(d) Giving is as important an act as any other act in the fellowship. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

(e) Giving is love giving not law giving (2 Corinthians 8:8)

- (f) Giving depends on being oriented to grace, the prime example being the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- (g) Money given in the Lord's service must be properly administered. (2 Corinthians 8:19-21)
- (h) If you give in grace you reap bountifully. If you give in legalism or with strings you reap sparingly. (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- (i) How to give. Giving is a reflection of your character, by grace not habit. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- (j) God has given unto us his unspeakable Gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Peter 2:24)
- [k] Giving should be regular. 1Corinthians 16:2.
- [m] As we are prospered so we give: God provides the capital with which to give. 2 Corinthians 9:7-10.
- [n] Mature believers are most effective givers. 2 Corinthians 9:10. Generosity of mind leads to generous giving. 2 Corinthians 9:11. Philippians 4:14-18.
- [o] The pastor's logistical support comes from giving: He makes an issue out of the word never money, if he does his job God will provide the money. Pastor provides spiritual food and receives money for physical needs. Mutual blessing is thus assured, as the people show their appreciation for the ministry of the word. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, Philippians 1:3-5, 4:10, 4:14.

NOTES

CHAPTER 8**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter flows from the last, and centres in the ceremonies associated with the start of tabernacle worship. My suspicion, is that the event of the dedication of the Levites occurs on the morning of Passover, as it follows directly after the account of the dedication of the gifts. The instructions regarding the way the candle-stick is to be lit and the direction the light is to be thrown in is covered, and then the consecration of the Levites for their task is laid out. Much of this has been introduced in Exodus, and here Moses returns to various themes to emphasize the grace of the Lord through each specific instruction, but the dedication of the Levites fits here, after the dedication of the gifts and the Passover account in the next chapter. For a time line we must remember that the events described here all occurred in the two weeks following the erection of the tabernacle, which is described in Exodus 40.

NUMBERS 8:1- 26

8:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **2** Speak unto Aaron and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. **3** And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the LORD commanded Moses. **4** And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick. **5** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **6** Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. **7** And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. **8** Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. **9** And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: **10** And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: **11** And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. **12** And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. **13** And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. **14** Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. **15** And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. **16** For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. **17** For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. **18** And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. **19** And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. **20** And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. **21** And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. **22** And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them. **23** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **24** This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: **25** And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: **26** But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1- 4. In Exodus 25:31-37 Moses had received instruction as to exactly how the seven branched candle-stick was to be made. Refer back to the commentary on that passage and re-read it. The great Holy Spirit gifted artisan Bezaleel had been set aside by the Lord for this work and it was made so that the wick and oil holders at the top of each branch would have thrown their light forward. The oil and wick containers at the top were shaped like almonds resting upon a flower, and were apparently detachable, very likely so that they could be removed, cleaned and filled with oil, and new wicks fitted.

When they were replaced into their socket on their branch, Aaron is warned to put them back carefully so that the light is cast forward, as Bezaleel has made them to do. He is not to act in haste and he is to check each of the seven, every time he changes the oil and wicks, so that the light always is thrown forward. God's light is always thrown forward on where we are to go, never back or to the side; our focus is always to be forward, seeking the Lord's plan for our life only. The Lord wants us moving forward in the light of his presence, and this candle stick – lamp stand was to portray this. **Psalm 119:105-107, 114-116, 130-133, 139-142.** Be careful, prayerful and deliberate; never panic, always audit and move forward with the Lord beside you and the Holy Spirit active within.

Verses 5 – 7. The ceremony for the purification of the Levites before they begin their formal duties is now described. Some commentators are at pains to point out the difference between the washing and shaving of the cleansed leper and that of the Levites, but as I read these instructions I feel the similarities, rather than the contrasts. Refer back firstly to Leviticus 8 and read the consecration ceremony for the priests, as this is quite different. The priests are washed at the laver by Moses, but they are not shaved at all, and then they are formally dressed in their robes of office.

Now the event we read here in Numbers 8 occurs within a few days of the events of Leviticus 8, so the people would note the similarity and differences. Turn now to Leviticus 15:11-15. When a person was defiled because of any running sore on the body, there was a washing of clothes and body and then the offerings of the sin offering and the burnt offering. Turn now to Leviticus 14:1-20. Re-read this section and study the commentary on this passage. Note that the leper must wash, shave and repeat the process after eight days, and that a full array of sacrifices are made for him.

Note now the ceremony for the priests. The command is to Moses, for he is to establish the priesthood, as a Levite himself, but once things are in place, he is to step aside and he will not serve again. He is the type for John the Baptist later, making way for the High Priest, who replaces him in the service of the Lord. Moses remains the political leader, but Aaron will become the spiritual leader and intermediary between the Lord and the people once the consecration is complete. John 3:22-36.

The Levites are to first shave all the hair off their bodies, then wash their clothes, and make themselves clean. Now I don't know about you, but for me this involves washing yourself also with water and making yourself clean physically before putting on clean clothes! All the argument of the commentators about them not washing is I think a reflection on some dirty habits of those north European commentators!

I believe that these men do exactly what the leper does, and that is significant, for leprosy is a type of sin, and these men are recognizing that they need cleansing for their service, and all that is associated with uncleanness and pride (their hair) is to be removed and they are to stand before the Lord clean to serve Him. Genesis 35:2, Exodus 19:10.

Verses 8 – 12. The specific offerings are now made. A young bullock is the burnt offering and another one is the sin offering. To accompany the burnt offering a meal offering is made of fine flour mingled with oil. Before the two sacrifices are made for the Levites, the entire population is to gather before the tabernacle and witness the formal consecration. The covering of their sin, and their cleansing is not private, for these men will carry the tabernacle on behalf of the entire people, and so their consecration is a very public event. This is why even today a pastor's sin is to be publicly dealt with, for he stands before the people, and the Lord's representative, and if he falls he needs to deal with all the people and confess his failure in his duty to them, as well as his failure to the Lord. 1 Timothy 5:19-22. In today's legal world pastors who fall will have employment "terminated" but often with confidentiality clauses attached, but a genuine pastor will always publically front the people and confess. Such a man may be restored over time, but the man who scuttles away like a crab under his shell of "confidentiality" must never enter any pulpit/leadership role again.

The entire congregation will lay their hands upon them. Now pause here and reflect how this will be possible with even the 30,000 I believe is the correct number, let alone the 3,000,000 that some believe are here. Firstly it is clear that all the people can be gathered together and were able to see the event, and this once again favours the smaller number being the correct one, but even then, how can they "lay hands upon"? Also remember the numbers of the Levites involved. My suspicion is that they number around 100-200 men in the thirty to fifty age range.

Now these Levites stand for the first born of all the tribes and will serve on their behalf. The princes of the twelve tribes, standing for their tribal peoples, were likely to do the laying on of hands physically, but that means each prince is to go along the line and lay his hands upon each Levite, for everyone is to be dedicated by a representative of every tribe. This is not a short ceremony. Just as we do today in our services, I suspect the entire population, gathered around the tabernacle enclosure, may have lifted up their hands over the gathering of the Levites to join in with their princes in the process.

This also suggests that, as I observed in an earlier chapter, the placing of the tabernacle was likely always in a slight depression in the landscape, with surrounding low rises/hills, so that the 30,000+ people could gather and see into the tabernacle and observe the events there. Everyone is to be involved, see the ritual and act by holding their hand of blessing out to the priesthood and Levites. These men will stand for the entire people and the entire people join Moses in their dedication.

Aaron then formally leads the Levites forward into the tabernacle area to dedicate them as a living "Offering" to the Lord on behalf of the people. They will stand before the Lord on the people's behalf and so they are a living offering, just as Paul considered his life as a pastor as a living offering to the Lord. This remains the picture for us all as believers; that we are to present ourselves daily as living offerings to the Lord, and having given ourselves, only then do we give of our substance. **Romans 12:1-2, 15:16, 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, Philippians 2:17-18.**

Every pastor-teacher must lead his people to the place where they see that their lives are to be a living offering to the Lord daily. Paul ends his life speaking of this daily mental attitude of presenting himself as an offering to the Lord, every moment to be a sweet smelling offering to the Lord of praise and obedient service. He pictures himself as the drink offering, being poured out daily to the glory of God. This is our picture for daily life upon this temporary planet. 2 Timothy

4:6-8. All of us as older people are to mentor this to the young, for all of us are called to be examples of Christ to the young, and the first step in this consecration of life is to present your body a living sacrifice daily.

The two bullocks are now led forward and the Levites lay their hands upon the bullocks. Once again the entire group apparently walks by the two bullocks and lays their hands upon them in turn, and then would have fallen in on the far side of the altar. Remember the spaces involved here and once again reflect that the total numbers of men of the right age is probably around about 100-200. Much more than this number and the courtyard area of the tabernacle would be over full, and the sacrifice wouldn't be able to be completed.

The first bullock becomes the sin offering and the second the burnt offering. The entire people have dedicated the Levites as their substitutes, to serve them before the Lord, and the Levites have placed their sins upon the bullocks, and the atonement is made for them. They were physically clean by their shaving and washing, and now they are spiritually declared clean through the sacrifices. They are now ready to serve on behalf of the people.

Verses 13 – 19. The Lord now formally accepts the "offering" of these men to stand before Him and serve the tabernacle. The Lord now reminds Moses that the Levites are to stand for the rest of the nation in place of the first born of each family and serve the Lord. All this has been said before, but the repetition here is to be taken note of. When the Lord repeats a principle, the people of the Lord need to take significant note of that principle.

The people have no right to come before the Lord, but through the sacrificial system and the offices of the Levites, then they are provided for. They must come to the Lord the way prescribed and not become casual for a second in their faith. The danger of the sin of Cain is always present with arrogant people, who think that the Lord is so impressed with them that they can come to God any way they choose. There is one way to come to the Lord, and that is HIS WAY! There are not many ways up to God; there is only one way! Genesis 4:3-12, John 3:16-36, 10:7, Acts 2:21, 3:14-26, 4:8-12, 5:30-32, 16:30.

Verses 20 – 26. Everything that the Lord required was done for the Levites to be presented to the Lord as the sacrificial offering for the people's service. All that was ordered was completed. Once again Moses notes this, rather obvious thing, to remind us that obedience to the commands of the Lord is what is required of the servants of the Lord. From this time onwards the Levites did the service duties within the Tabernacle, and this would involve all the duties not assigned personally to Aaron and his sons.

In verse 23 we find that, even though the numbering was from thirty to fifty, the age of service begins at 25 years. As noted previously, I suspect that from 25 – 30 years was the training period and full service begins at 30. Their retirement age is fifty years of age, at which time they were free to be the co-ordinators of the campsite and possibly be the trainers of the young. Note that from fifty onwards they could assist their younger relatives, but not actually do the work.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There is no retirement from the service of the Lord, just a change of emphasis and duties. The Levites served from thirty to fifty, with a five year period of training in all aspects of their role, and with their post fifty, "retirement years", being times to assist in any matter, while leaving the formal and heavy tasks to the younger men. Leadership involved empowering the young to take charge, and then getting out of their way so that they can do the task without interference. Leadership also involves the ability to move from a place of power and authority to an administrative task without feeling put down, or demanding any special treatment. At fifty these men went from full service to being assistants and trainers/mentors. Let us be ready to train the young and step aside for them to serve, and then adopt the tasks that we can to assist the young in their work.
2. The service of the Lord demands care and attention to detail. The Levites were to act carefully, and so are all who serve the Lord in any capacity. Let us be thoughtful and careful in all our service. There is a right way to serve the Lord and a wrong way.
3. The entire congregation were involved in the dedication of these men who would stand and serve on their behalf. It is a biblical principle for the entire congregation to take responsibility for dedication of ministers in the local church. All the people should be involved in any dedication for service that occurs, so that all feel the corporate responsibility to uphold in prayer, and support in any way they can.
4. Our daily lives are to be an offering to the Lord. We are to dedicate each day to the Lord's service in any capacity He calls us to serve that day. Let us see our days as drink offerings and pour them out to the Lord in praise and service. Let no task be too small or too menial for us to apply ourselves to.

REFLECTION UPON "LIGHT"

1. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
2. The Lord is the visible manifestation of that light. (John 1:4, 8:12, 12:46)
3. The Lord's coming as the Light of the World was prophesied. (Isaiah 49:6)

4. The light was seen in the darkness of the world. (Matthew 4:16, Luke 2:32)
5. The Lord brought light and immortality through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10)
6. Believers are said to be light bearers. (Matthew 5:14-16, John 12:36)
7. We are said to be the children of the light. (John 11:9-10, Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 1 Peter 2:9)
8. Light is necessary for man's existence on the earth. (Ecclesiastes 11:7; Jeremiah 31:35)
9. Divine guidance of Israel was provided by God through light. (Exodus 14:20)
10. Bible doctrine in the soul is portrayed by light. (Psalm 119, 105,130)
11. The gospel is called light. (2 Corinthians 4:3,4; 2 Timothy 1:10)
12. Salvation brings the believer out of darkness into light just as the planet Earth was brought out of darkness into light by God. (Luke 1:79; 1 Peter 2:9).
13. Satan is the distorter, the angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)
14. Satan's strategy is to outshine the true light with his own false gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)

CHRIST: "I AM"

The use of the " I AM" means that the Lord was saying that He is God. In Exodus 3:14 God reveals Himself to Moses as, I AM THAT I AM. Using this phrase at His arrest in John 18:2-6, He caused the army group to fall backwards due to His power as God flashing forth for a millisecond, before being led away as a willing sacrifice. We are not confronted with the Jesus of liberalism here, but with the Lord of lords, King of kings, God stepping down to speak authoritatively to mankind. There are seven significantly doctrinal "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John. Begin by looking at the others in John 8:21-24, 58, by way of introduction, for the Lord uses this phrase often to challenge his hearers that he is not just a prophet or teacher.

1. PROVISION - I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE John 6:30-35 - The feeding of the five thousand - a miracle involving bread. God provided miraculous physical food in the desert for forty years - Manna. Christ is our spiritual food. He says that he is the only source of spiritual food for you. There is life in no other. No one else can satisfy the spiritual hunger in man. He tells us He is the bread from heaven - He shows Himself as God. The bread of the Passover - unleavened, pierced and griddled; speaking of his body.
2. SPIRITUALITY - I AM THE LIGHT John 8:12 - The feast of Tabernacles (where He also told the people to have the everlasting water John 7:37-39). When the Lord says this He is saying that He is the only source of pure light as shown in His matchless character. He is stating that He is God. 1 John 1 says that God is light and in Him is there no darkness at all. We are to walk in the light in fellowship with God.
3. SALVATION - I AM THE DOOR John 10:7 - The Sheepfolds of Jerusalem, Psalms 22-24. To be the door of the sheepfold, He is the only way into the plan of God. Anyone that tries to come any other way is a liar and a thief. If this is not true there is no way to God.
4. GUIDANCE - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD John 10:11 - the good shepherd, the only one who really cares. Many from other religions say that they really care but it is Jesus the good shepherd, the only one who really cares. All other systems drop you into hell.
5. RESURRECTION - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE John 11:20-25 - The death of Lazarus. Christ conquers death proving He is God, the resurrection and the life, He is the way the truth and life forever. The only way to eternal life is in Christ Jesus. To reject Him is to have eternal life in the Lake of Fire
6. TRUTH/LIFE - I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE John 14: 6 - There is no other way to gain meaning in this life and eternal life than through him. We are related to the King of kings and Lord of lords who came and died for us that we might live. We should be obedient to our Lord who bought us with His blood. I am the way the truth and the life. The only way to live is in the truth, the only way to have life and have it more abundantly is in Him. The only way to God is through the God man Jesus Christ. We need to live in Him as He is the only one who has the truth.
7. PRODUCTION - I AM THE TRUE VINE John 15:1-5 - Walking from the Passover meal past the Temple towards Gethsemane, He talks about the spiritual production that is ours in union with Him. I am the true vine - the only way to spiritual productivity is in Christ Jesus through the fruit of the Spirit. Love Joy Peace and the other fruit is only available in Christ. You have to be in the vine to have fruit. Many unbelievers want joy and peace but they cannot have it without Christ.

CHAPTER 9**INTRODUCTION**

The details of this chapter bore considerable significance for two believers of the first century of our era. To care for the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, Joseph and Nicodemus were ceremonially defiled by contact with the dead body, and were unable to eat of the Passover with their family at that time. The provisions of this chapter tell us that one month later they were able to eat the Passover, and with renewed significance in it, for they had seen the risen Lord, and were able to celebrate as never before. **Matthew 27:57-66, Mark 15:43-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42.**

It is of interest that they would have celebrated their Passover within the first month (Lunar month at that time of 28 days) after the resurrection, and resurrection appearances occur in this time frame, and that means, Jesus himself may have attended! We cannot be sure of this, but the time line allows it, and we do not have all the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord listed in the scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. These two believers certainly had the benefit of this chapter before us and enjoyed that Passover in the special way that all Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah now, still do.

This chapter before us also records the mechanism that the Lord used to direct the Israelites to move camp and set up a new one, and Moses certifies here that this was what they did every time, in obedience to the Lord. Once again the point is made here, that obedience to the Lord is central to the blessing and guidance of the Lord's people.

NUMBERS 9:1-23

9:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, **2** Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. **3** In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. **4** And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. **5** And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. **6** And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: **7** And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? **8** And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you. **9** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **10** Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. **11** The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. **12** They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it. **13** But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin. **14** And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land. **15** And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. **16** So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. **17** And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. **18** At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. **19** And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. **20** And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed. **21** And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. **22** Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. **23** At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1- 5. The Passover festival is instituted back in Exodus 12. Turn back to the commentary on that chapter and re-read it thoroughly before going through this chapter. The people have celebrated Passover before, but this is the first time since the formal giving of the Law and the establishment of the tabernacle, and the existence of the tabernacle as the focus of the celebration will alter the way the festival is celebrated from this day forward until the loss of the Temple during the Babylonian Exile, and then after the 70 year exile break, since 70AD.

The central sacrifices are made at the tabernacle, but then each extended family kills its own lamb (or the lamb is killed at the tabernacle on temporary altars by all the priesthood working) and celebrates as an extended family group in their tents. The people were obedient and kept this Passover in the wilderness by the Mountain of God gathered around the Tabernacle that had been raised up a few days beforehand. Exodus 40:17. The events described in this chapter occur then within the days following the Tabernacle being raised, which was on the first day of Nissan.

Now pause here and think about this. The Passover festival is counted from the tenth day of the first month. On this day a lamb is set aside by each family/household for the feast. It is watched for four days. On the fourteenth day of the month Nissan the Passover is slain "between the evenings" (3-6pm). Now the events that we read about in Numbers chapter 7 begin on that first day. Numbers 7:1-12. My suspicion is that the twelve wagons are brought to the Tabernacle and handed over on the late afternoon of the first of Nissan, but that the early morning presentations from each tribe begin on the second of Nissan, and go through until the thirteenth of the Nissan.

This would make sense, in that the raising up of the Tabernacle for the first time, and setting everything in order may have taken a significant part of a day, which ends with the presentation of the wagons. They are handed over to the sons of Levi and held for the next days until each tribe, day by day, can present their offerings in turn. The altar being fully and finally dedicated over the twelve day period, on the 13th Nissan, the day before the Passover sacrifice on the fourteenth Nissan of that year.

This raises another question. Because the twelve days of gift giving involve the dedication of the altar then the dedication of Aaron as High Priest, and his sons as priests must occur over an eight day period simultaneously to the twelve day period of dedication of the gifts for the Tabernacle. There certainly was time each day for both things to be happening at different times in the day. Leviticus chapter eight covers this detail, and it is not clear what relation this has to the other events, but it must have occurred before Passover, and it appears to occur as soon as the Tabernacle is set up, most likely starting that first day.

So much is going on through this first month of the tabernacles operation that Moses gives separate explanations of each event, but does not give us a time line account, because his purpose is to explain the spiritual significance of each separate event. If my analysis is correct here, each day's services went from dawn to dusk, with the entire population out to watch them. For those who complain about long services today, give thanks you were not there in this fourteen day period of Israel's history!

The dedication period (of the Altar, the Priesthood, and the gifts) therefore leads directly in to the Passover this year. As the Passover was slain "between the evenings" (3pm and 6pm) of the fourteenth of Nissan, the entire day was available for the events described in chapter eight, the dedication of the Levites. My belief is that the dedication of the Levites ends with the Passover Sacrifice conducted in the tabernacle and the people disperse from there to their tents to prepare and eat their own Passover Lamb (temporary altars are established to slay each lamb in the temple period, and that tradition may have begun here - unknown). By the time of the Passover sacrifice in the tabernacle, everything and everyone involved in its operation has been sanctified and dedicated for their service.

The next question, regarding the case of those who had dealt with a dead body in the period leading up to Passover, could have been raised by those affected by this, at any point from the first of Nissan, as this entire month was a "count down" to the fourteenth when the lamb was killed. Although after the tenth there would not be time for them to be purified before the Passover was taken, and so it is approaching this time period that it is most likely the question was asked, as it was a seven day period of uncleanness after a burial, for all who had touched the body – Numbers 19:11-16.

It is a reminder to us that people were old, sick and died at times, even in this most special time, and the person's family had the responsibility to care for their sick, dying and dead, even if they missed out on the blessing of the spiritual things happening in the community. 1 Timothy 5:8. First things first, and family responsibility to the dying/dead is always first.

Verses 6 – 9. For those who have experienced a death in their family in these great days, there was a double grief. Firstly there was the loss of the loved one, but then there was the loss at the greatest time of celebration and dedication in their spiritual history as a people. Those who were ceremonially defiled with the dead had to leave the camp and stay outside it. It was such a special time that some re-enter the camp and ask Moses the question here. They were forbidden to re-enter the camp as they were unclean, but they run the risk of censure because they do not want to be "robbed" of this time of worship.

This is the hunger for worship that God's people ought to have at all times. Moses orders them to stand still and await the Lord's answer and he immediately goes to prayer on the matter. These men are not to sit down in the camp, for they are defiled, but they are not chided for their passion to serve the Lord and celebrate this great feast. Moses goes to prayer to seek the Lord's answer; he does not give his own judgement. It is a reminder to us all that there are questions we can answer directly, and there are issues that need prayer and special divine guidance. The prophet Nathan had to discover this when David sought to build the Lord a Temple. 2 Samuel 7:1-29.

Verses 10 – 12. The Lord's answer is clear; no-one is to miss out on the Passover for a reason they cannot control, like the death of a loved one, or an urgent journey which had them overseas at the time. The Lord makes special provision from this second Passover for all caught in such circumstances. They are to wait until another month has passed, and then on the tenth day of that month set aside their lamb and on the fourteenth slay it and follow the exact rules for an ordinary Passover. This is a special grace provision, but the lamb is to be prepared and devoured exactly as

on the correct date, and no bones are to be broken. It is a reminder to us that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this type as the perfect Passover lamb who came and indeed took away the sins of the world.

Verses 13 – 14. It is a different matter altogether for a person within the nation to deliberately ignore this feast day. No matter what the excuse, if a person deliberately fails to keep the Passover, then that person is under the most severe judgement, for it is at the core of the nation's identity and being. All that Israel is and will be is tied up in Passover, and it is a realisation that Y'shua (Jesus Christ) was indeed the Messiah, the Passover Lamb, that brings national deliverance to Israel for that last fateful time in the Great Tribulation period. Zechariah 12:10ff.

There is one law for Passover and it applies to all in the land, be they strangers or nationals. It is a law to last while time lasts and it will find its fulfilment in the rulership of the Lamb over the earth in the Millennial Kingdom. Exodus 12:14-17.

Verses 15 – 23. The way the Lord led them through the wilderness has already been recorded back in Exodus 13:20-22, for the Lord had led them out of Egypt by means of the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. This passage is Moses way of reminding us that the means of the Lord did not change through the forty years of their wanderings. Until the day they enter the land the cloud is with them, and from then on the Ark alone is the centre of the presence of the Lord with them. Exodus 40:34-38, Numbers 14:14, Deuteronomy 31:15, Joshua 3:5ff.

This section before us in this chapter is a repetition and enlargement of this Exodus passage and a reminder that the events here occur in this first fortnight after the erection of the tabernacle. The cloud rested over the tabernacle of the Lord as a visible sign that the Ark was to remain at that place until further notice. When it was time to move the cloud would lift up from the tabernacle and move in a certain direction and the people were to break camp at that point, fall into their order for marching and move out under Moses direction and follow after the cloud.

They were to learn total obedience to the direction of the Lord and follow His presence to the new place for them for the next days, weeks or months. Where the cloud rested they were to pitch their tents, the tabernacle being first, and the entire camp taking its bearings from the placement of the Ark directly under the cloud and the tabernacle and its courtyard built up around it. They were to watch the cloud daily and be ready to respond daily to the geographical will of the Lord for them. This remains our "daily orders". We are also to be ready to "move out" as, when and where the Lord directs. Psalms 32:8-9, 48:14, 73:22-28, 77:20, 107:1-10, 143:7-11.

- Proverbs 3:1-8.** *"1. My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:
2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.
3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:
4. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.
5. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
7. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.
8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."*

Isaiah 30:18. *"18. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."*

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Obedience to the Lord is the challenge for all who would be happy in their fellowship with the Lord their God. We are to be as careful in looking into the heart of our Lord as the Israelites were in looking at the cloud by day and the fire by night. We have the fire of the Lord within us through the Holy Spirit, and so let us meditate daily on the matter of His geographical and operational will for us this day. Where are we to go, and what are we to do?

We are not to live in such a programmed and predictable way that the Lord cannot direct us else-where. Let us study the doctrine of Guidance again and open our heart to anything we have missed in the Lord's direction of us.

2. We are never to be irritated by the concerns and stressors of caring for an elderly or dying relative, especially if it interferes in our worship, or a special time of blessing in the local church. The care of the dying takes precedence over all else, and the Lord will make up for whatever we miss in the process. We are to be known as people who care for one another. James 2-3, 1 John 4:7.

3. When in doubt about a course of action or a principle for application, the man or woman of God is to pray for guidance and not stop their prayers until the Lord has answered with peace in their heart. Moses needs a specific word from the Lord, and at times we will also. This is known by the Lord and He seeks our obedient believing prayer, and He always answers such prayers.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE "LAMB OF GOD"

The lamb is a central feature of typology in the Bible as a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we see the developing topic of the Lamb from the sacrifice by Abel to the Lord of Glory.

It shows the importance of a word study when examining the Scriptures.

1. Genesis 4:3-5a
 - a) Abel brought a lamb from his flock.
 - b) Propitiation emphasised - covering.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for sin.

2. Genesis 22:7-14
 - a) Abraham was provided with a ram.
 - b) Substitution emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for one person.

3. Exodus 12:3-7
 - a) The lamb had to be slain.
 - b) Protection emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for one family.

4. Leviticus 1:10-13, 16:15
 - a) The lamb without spot or blemish.
 - b) Character of the lamb emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for the nation Israel.

5. Isaiah 53:4-8
 - a) Shows that the lamb to be provided is a person.
 - b) Expiation emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for the elect.

6. John 1:29
 - a) Shows that the lamb was Jesus.
 - b) Complete removal of sin emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for the whole world.

7. Acts 8:30-37
 - a) Shows that Jesus is the Christ the promised Messiah.
 - b) Individual salvation emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for whosoever.

8. 1 Peter 1:18-21
 - a) Shows the resurrection of the lamb.
 - b) Redemption emphasised.
 - c) The lamb was an offering for all generations.

9. Revelation 5:6-10
 - a) Shows the glorification of the lamb.
 - b) Government of the lamb emphasised.
 - c) The lamb of the whole universe.

10. Revelation 22:1-5
 - a) Shows the everlasting kingship of the lamb.
 - b) Eternal glory of the lamb emphasised.
 - c) The lamb for all eternity.

The developing topic of the lamb shows how Jesus Christ is the central figure in all the Scriptures and how the inspired writers of the Bible gradually developed the revelation of his character, work and glorification from a lamb to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

NOTES

CHAPTER 10**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we have further organizational elements described that relate to the way Moses gave orders to the armed forces of the tribes, and then their order of march is given, and this makes clear the details given earlier in chapter 2. I still stand by my observations at that point, that the army fell in as a group and led the people, who were also organized in tribal groups, but likely followed the army. This was the standard way for people groups to move in the ancient world, with army in front for protection and freedom of manoeuvre, and camp followers behind at a safe distance so that if there was trouble, they could form a tight camp and the older and younger men there could make a "last stand" to protect the women and children.

Each time I read the names of the princes who led the people I think of where we are going with the story. Sadly every one of these princes mentioned here will fail to exercise their leadership in a manner that fully honours God's plan for their people. They will all die in the wilderness because they do not have faith at a crucial point in the words of God through Moses. They march out like the princes they are, but they will die like sad old men by the wayside in the desert, because they do not advance in faith and seize the land when the Lord makes it clear they have it as His gift to them. They could have been the signet ring on the finger of God, but they became the dust of history! **Jeremiah 22:24, Haggai 2:23, Romans 14:23, Titus 2:1-15, Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11.**

This remains the challenge for us all, that we might be the people of God as we are meant to be, and that we might walk where He wants us to walk. God wants us to adorn the Gospel, like a signet ring adorns the hand. Let us commit ourselves again this day to the service of the Lord with joy and faith while it is called "today", and be like those who advance in glory, not like those who falter in unbelief. Read again Titus 2:1-15, Hebrews 3:7-16, 4:1-12.

NUMBERS 10:1-36

10:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **2** Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. **3** And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. **4** And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. **5** When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. **6** When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. **7** But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. **8** And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. **9** And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. **10** Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God. **11** And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. **12** And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. **13** And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. **14** In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. **15** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethaneel the son of Zuar. **16** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon. **17** And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle. **18** And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur the son of Shedeur. **19** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. **20** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel. **21** And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against they came. **22** And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama the son of Ammihud. **23** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. **24** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni. **25** And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, which was the rereward of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. **26** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran. **27** And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. **28** Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward. **29** And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. **30** And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. **31** And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. **32** And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee. **33** And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. **34** And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. **35** And it came to pass,

when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. 36 And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 10. The two silver trumpets are to be made. Bezaleel is the obvious man to do this of beaten sheets of silver, which they appear to have had plenty of, or at least enough left over after the tabernacle building to make the two trumpets. There is time to make this before they move out, for the order of the Lord to move out is given on the twentieth day of the second month, and if they are of beaten sheets of silver, then hours and days will be taken to make each rather than weeks and months. (Verse 11).

They are like the trumpets that we see heralds using at royal ceremonies. Josephus records that the silver trumpets of his day were copied from older days, and they were about a cubit long (18 inches). Because each one is beaten separately they will be of slightly different size and shape and will make a distinct sound when blown. This is significant, for each will mean a different thing.

The silver trumpets here became the forerunners of a significant orchestra in Solomon's Temple, where 120 silver trumpets blew as the Ark was brought into the new Temple. 2 Chronicles 5:12. In Moses day the meaning of the blowing of the trumpets was made clear to all the people. As verse 10 makes clear, the trumpets were to be blown over the sacrifices to celebrate what they meant. The trumpets were at these times blown for sheer joy in the salvation that the Lord had provided through the eternal plan of salvation illustrated in the shed blood of the sacrificial animal.

When both trumpets sounded together however, all the population was to gather together at the door of the tabernacle. When one trumpet alone blew the princes were to gather with the elders and receive instructions from Moses. A different sound was the "alarm", which was a call to battle. When the "alarm" sounds the army is to strap on weapons and head for the parade ground. The advanced guard that leads the Army is the Eastern Regiment. The tribe that leads the Eastern Regiment out is Judah, (with Issachar and Zebulun). They are to assemble and march out as the first group to meet the enemy.

The second "Alarm" sounded on the trumpet means the second or Southern Regiment, led by Reuben (with Simeon and Gad) are to follow the first regiment out to face the enemy. As they go they sound the "alarm" again, possibly with their ram's horn shofar, so that the sound is distinct from the earlier two calls, as a warning to the other two camps that their army battalions are now on the march, and the Western and Northern Regiments are to be ready to join them soon.

In the gap between the first and second trumpet call, the tabernacle, carried by the Levites in their wagons, is to be in the line of battle, following the regiment led by Judah. Once they are moving in their order, the second trumpet is blown to call the regiment led by Reuben to follow the families of Gershon and Merari of the Levites. It is clear later (verses 21), that they set up the tabernacle structure on arrival at the camp site the cloud hovers over, and the Kohathites arrive later and place the items within the erected structure, ready for Aaron to unwrap.

From a military perspective, the wagons presence would make manoeuvre slightly more difficult for the four regiments, although there are only six wagons. These Levites are exposed to the enemy, almost at the head of the Army. Their place is a place of faith and trust in God. They must sit with their wagons, as the Kohathites, further down the line, stand with the Ark and furniture on their shoulders, and trust their fate to the Lord and their brothers, to protect them from any threat. The most valuable items of the nation are thus at the head of their army exposed to any enemy.

They are to deliberately place the symbols of the presence of God at their head, to remind themselves that the Lord is with them, and will protect them. They are also to realise that there are no "risks" in the Lord's plan if it is followed obediently. The Ark will not be lost, except through gross disobedience. 1 Samuel 2:12-25, 4:1-11.

The "Alarm" signal is not to be sounded when the entire congregation is to be gathered. It is for the gathering of the army only. There are signals that need to be serious and singular in their meaning, and the call to war is one of them. 1 Corinthians 14:8. This is also a reminder of the discussion we had in chapter two regarding the army and the people setting out separately. The calls of the trumpet distinguish between the people and the army as the two cannot be mixed on the march otherwise the security of the entire group is compromised.

An army cannot straggle along with their family members around them; they must be armed, ready and free to manoeuvre quickly to face any threat to the larger group. There are ample men in the entire congregation, who are not fully fighting fit for war, who can break camp and assist the wagon driving for the women and children. I believe the Army is probably comprised of men only between twenty and fifty, just as the active Levites are, with then ample men in their late teens and over fifty to coordinate and work to break and set up the rest of the camp, and act as "army reserve".

The two men tasked with the blowing of the trumpets are the surviving sons of Aaron. The death of Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:1ff, may have occurred as early as the ninth or tenth day of the first month. Aaron and Moses are clearly very busy in this period just after the raising up of the tabernacle, and do not notice the two men approaching with their "strange fire", and so the Lord judges them before most are even aware of what they are doing. Aaron and the other two sons, are told to keep on working, and uncles bury the remains of the two sinful disobedient men. Leviticus 10:4-5. There is no period of mourning, for the joy of the occasion of the gift giving, and the seriousness of the first offerings being offered, is too significant to let the death of disobedient men spoil the worship.

The same thing happens in the early church with Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 4:36 - 5:11. If I am correct on the timing of the events of this first month, then we can see Nadab and Abihu's actions as a satanic attempt to lead the people away from true worship at a crucial time, and we can see the Lord's instructions as the demand upon us all, right through until today, that nothing is to distract us from true worship and correct service. The disobedient dead are to be buried without ceremony, and the obedient people of God are to move onwards without distracting themselves a minute over the fate of the evil/foolish. If the seven days uncleanness applied to the uncles, it doesn't affect them celebrating Passover.

The trumpets are to summon the help of the army and call them into action in their Regiments, but the Lord tells Moses that even after they are settled in the land they are to use the trumpets to sound the alarm to gather the troops for war. The primary purpose of the trumpet is a communication device, but the Lord makes it clear that it works in two directions; to gather the army, and to summon the Lord's help also. The Lord's promise is that He will hear the trumpet and respond, so that even as the soldiers are gathering the Lord is already there helping them.

Again and again the Lord will remind them that their safety is not in their armed forces, but in their obedience to the Lord, for He is their help in time of trouble. They are to be ready to fight, but they are always to recognize that the battle is the Lords, and so are we today. Exodus 14:13, Deuteronomy 7:2-24, 11:25, Psalms 33:20, 40:13-17, 46:1-5, 70:1-5, 108:12, Proverbs 21:29-31, Ecclesiastes 9:11-18.

Verses 11 – 27. The first moving out of the children of Israel now occurs. It is the twentieth day of the second month. After fourteen days of solid sacrifice and drama in the first month, the Passover is celebrated, and then the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There is a gap of around four weeks then until the camp is ordered by the Lord to move. The camp will be established in their new site before the Feast of Pentecost, which should be celebrated in the land itself (Leviticus 23:9ff), but it will be another forty years before they celebrate this feast.

This gap of a month after the worship time is about the time needed to bring an army that needs to march in order to the right level of readiness for the march, and for the people in the tribal encampments to be readied for their move also. They have time to train and prepare under their leaders. They have had nearly a month of worship, and now they have a month of preparation for the march to the gateway of the Land at Kadesh Barnea. Note – they will still fail there! Given the preparation through worship, can you see in advance why God's judgment will be so strong on this Exodus generation of older people. They ought not to have failed to enter after this worshipful preparation.

Every wagon is able to be repaired, ready for the rigor of the journey, and they will have worked out where every item they have will fit in that wagon, and each family will have a routine for taking down their tent and packing. They will have to do this without their strong and fit family soldier, as he will be fallen in on the parade ground. Everyone must work, older men and women, and the younger women and older children; all have a task and it is well practised by the day the cloud moves towards Paran.

They are to head for the area of northern Sinai called then the land of "Paran" and their date with destiny at Kadesh Barnea. Numbers 12:16. Even before they arrive in that camp site there is trouble with the "Mixed multitude", Numbers 11, and with Miriam and Aaron again. Numbers 12. The order to move out is received directly from the Lord. The cloud that hovered over the tabernacle lifts up and moves to the compass point that they are to move out towards. The cloud moves towards the area of Paran and hovers over that area many miles to the West. The cloud waits there until the army and the people are in their order ready to wheel out of camp and onto the march and it only moves to further direct their march.

Moses directs the army and people as to the route to take to reach that destination, to ensure they are heading for the cloud the best way across the landscape. This is the area that Moses and Aaron walked through to get back to Egypt, and so he knows the best way to get to each place. They are also marching into an area that Egyptian spies and agents will be present within, and Egyptian frontier armies may be waiting for them. Moses needs to guide them the best way to reach the place the cloud has directed them to. The Lord sets the final location and Moses is expected to draw upon all his leadership skills and background knowledge and lead.

Moses also wants his brother in law, Hobab, a Midianite, to join them as he is even better in this area, but he will not be keen, Verses 29-32. This is the way the Lord guides today still; he does not do everything, but provides enough information for leadership to exercise its gifting and apply its God given past experiences, and good counsellors, who do their job to lead God's people from the front.

We are only guessing, but the movement described here to get the army and then the people out of the camp site, appears to be a wheeling movement, with the eastern Army Regiment leading, then the two families of Levites, then the Southern, then the Kohathites, then the Western, and finally the Northern group. By marching in an anti-clockwise direction they could head off in the signalled direction quickly from their "parade ground" between the tabernacle enclosure and the camps of the tribes.

Sunday school pictures and Hollywood movies tend to have the people as a great mass of humanity surging forward, but Moses was a general of Egypt, and he understood, as all generals do, that "masses" of people are just mobs and are easy pickings for disciplined groups of enemies. The children of Israel were well organized, well led, and coordinated in all they did. After the army divisions have filed out in order of battle, the tribes filed out in the same basic order, with their wagons loaded, and animals well controlled at the rear.

The way the “hosts” are described indicates to me that they are separate groups in their own column, as is the army itself, with the camp followers (mixed multitude) behind them all. The army also needs to be ahead of the bulk of the wagons, as they will break up the ground and the animals following will foul it. Both these factors make manoeuvre over such ground more fraught with difficulty for foot soldiers. An army can move faster, by twice or more, than the speed of wagons carrying women and children. The army regiments could be detached by Moses at any time to the rear or flanks and they would be able to quickly protect the entire array of the people from any dangers on the march.

This area of the Sinai Peninsula was controlled by Egypt at this time, and so alertness would be required on this route, and faith all the way. They are only safer when out of Egyptian controlled areas and well into Midian (Saudi Arabia). I believe they are already there at this point at Jebel Al Mus/Lawz. They were still however marching into danger at every step of the way, because the Midianites were not all helpful, but they are marching in God’s direction, and so they can relax and trust Him to guide them! The regiments march with their banners flying so that all can see the head of each column in the dust of the march. The army groups have their banners and the people have their banners. All can focus upon the standard of their own tribe and take their bearings from there.

Judah leads, under its prince (Colonel) Nahshon. With them went Issachar and Zebulun under their “Colonels”. Next came, from the words of Moses here, the tabernacle tent and structures, in its six covered wagons, controlled by the sons of Gershon and Merari. The second “regiment” of the army followed after the second trumpet blast from one of the sons of Aaron. Once they were well on the way, they blew their alarm on their own shofar and this gave the warning to the tribes led by Ephraim to begin to move out behind them, after the ark and the furniture carried by the Kohathites, was in the line.

There are at least six loads being carried and possibly seven. (The Ark, the Altar of Incense, the Brazen Altar, the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Candlestick, the bundle of items used for the sacrifices, and possibly the bronze laver itself.) This group of items is not going to take up much space, and the men carrying them could be quickly marshalled into the line after the regiment of Reuben has marched past.

In verse 21 we have the mention of the Kohathites, who carry the Ark and Furniture, as they are coming after Reuben’s three battalions. It is only at this point clear, that they set up their items, ready for the sons of Aaron to unpack them, only after the other Levites have set up the tabernacle and enclosure. At the siege of Jericho, Judges 6:4ff, the arrangement is different, for the tabernacle remains pitched in the centre of the camp and only the Ark moves out with the army at that time. It would appear then that the Ark is carried at the head of the army, with all the Levites of the families of Gershon and Merari marching in order ahead of it and the twelve tribal battalions after them.

Dan was the leader of the “rear guard” Regiment and their task was to be the group that kept the army tightly together. They were the key to the defence of the line. The relationship of the army in their march, to the people in their march is not fully clear from Moses descriptions here or in other places. It has been traditional amongst commentators to have the armed groups marching at the head of their tribal array of women and children, but for all the military reasons detailed above, I cannot see this being the way it was done. Moses was too experienced a commander of men to make such a strategic mistake and hinder his manoeuvring and fighting ability.

As noted above, the Sinai Peninsula was under Egyptian domination at this time, and so marching in battle array would be required for the first months, to be instantly ready to deal with an attack from any Egyptian frontier force that might be there. Once they were in Arabian territory they were also by no means safe, even though Jethro was Moses father-in-law. They are now heading back into Egyptian controlled land towards Kadesh Barnea and so battle can be expected at some point. None of the older Bible commentators were soldiers, and none had ever marched in battle array with significant numbers of civilians in tow, nor studied and applied the records of those who have done this at various points in history.

I believe the army and the tribal groups were separate, with animals at the rear of all, but this is ONLY my belief, and it may be wrong. I am happy to be corrected by Moses when I meet him in heaven, but I do not bow to these older commentators who failed to understand the military realities of such a journey by such a group in this ambush terrain.

Verses 28 – 32. The journeying now really starts for the children of Israel. The first year has been a training camp experience, and it is only now that they head out as an army with their correct banners and their spiritual centre, the Ark and tabernacle, at the heart of the army. Moses briefs Hobab, the son of his father-in-law, about their next move at this point. Raguel (also called Jethro), his father-in-law had been living with him at an earlier point, Exodus 18, but had not expected to journey with them further, and had already returned further south into Midian Exodus 18:27. (He probably lived around the area of Mecca today).

These Arabic peoples are called the Midianites, or the Kenites. Hobab has clearly stayed on with his brother in law until this point as a part of Moses encampment. Refer back to the Commentary on Exodus 18 for a discussion of the family dynamic. Moses enjoys his company, and values his ability as a local guide, and asks him to accompany the march to Paran, and in faith and confidence promises him nothing but good things. Moses is absolutely sure that the Lord is going to bless Israel and for Hobab there could be blessing by association if he joins them.

Hobab however is not too keen about heading back into the area controlled by Egypt and risking all with the Israelites. He loves his brother in law but would clearly prefer to be back with his family to the south out of harms way. Moses is

insistent, and we are not told directly here whether Hobab relented or not, but with Moses immediately moving to discuss the move, the suspicion of most commentators is that this man, and his family joined the march to Kadesh Barnea. He would appear to be mentioned in Judges 1:16, and that would indicate that he gained a share of the land with the Israelites he guided and served, and that he did not suffer the fate of the disobedient Israelites and die in the next thirty eight years. Numbers 14:26ff.

His descendents were still there in the days of King Saul nearly four hundred years later, and Saul remembers their ancestors work for Israel. 1 Samuel 15:5-8. David lied to the Philistine king of Gath that he had "laid waste" to the Kenites (Arabians), for he knew that this would impress him, as no Israelite would harm these people, who had helped Israel come out of Egypt. 1 Samuel 27:7-12.

Verses 33 – 36. The march is a three day journey, during which they do not make a formal camp at any point, but sleep under the stars in their columns. This was not an uncommon thing to do for a people group on the move. They could walk and then lay down and sleep by the way, and only make a formal camp when they intended to stay at that place for more than a few days. Three days at a walking or ox cart pace will cover twenty five kilometres per day very easily, and forty for most fit groups. They could have covered between 75 and 120 kilometres during this walk without taking time out to formally establish any camp and unpack any belongings. If you look at maps of Sinai and Arabia then you can see that such a distance places them well within range of the top of the Gulf of Aqaba, whether you are starting at the traditional Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula, or at the more likely Horeb in the Arabian Desert.

Keep in mind, that the identification of the mountain presently called Mt Sinai, as the "Mount of God" was only made in the fourth century of our own era, by relatives of the first Roman Christian Emperor, Constantine, (notably his mother!). It is not an ancient identification, indeed Paul identifies the mountain as, "in Arabia". Galatians 4:25. I believe personally that the sacred mountain is in what is now Saudi Arabia, and that their three day journey took them across towards Ezion Geber at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. The present Sinai Peninsula was under Egyptian control for its mines.

Notice the words of Moses at the start of each day and at the end. This underlines the reality of the dangers of approaching the Egyptian held areas. There was a real expectation clearly each day of attack. The identification of the sites that Moses will mention on the journey is pure guess work, and mostly drawing on traditions from the fourth or later centuries, which is nearly 2000 years after Moses! Empress Helena was as far from Moses as we are from the Lord!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The princes who led out their tribes all failed to live up to their noble positions, because they failed to have faith in the Lord at this crucial time. Let us walk in faith today, not falter in unbelief as they did.
2. Just as the Levites had to trust the Lord and their brethren in a battle, so we are to trust the Lord and our brethren in the church. The only question we need to ask each day is, are we in the Lord's will for ourselves today? If the answer is "yes" to this question, then we need not concern ourselves about any losses we have endured. The trumpet call is there to summon the men to battle orders, but also to announce their prayers to the Lord. The Lord stands with them in any battle, for they are His people and so any battle is the Lords battle. This is so with us also; we are to trust and obey, and leave the results of our obedience with the Lord.
3. Moses makes a promise to Hobab the Kenite, and the Lord and God's people through the centuries honoured that promise, and this man and his descendents were truly blessed by their association with Israel. All associated with the ministries of the church ought to be blessed by their association. If there is not blessing from involvement with the Lord's work, then something is wrong at a foundational level. Organizations are known by their fruit, and if there is not a stream of blessing flowing from a work, then it is safe to assume that it is not a godly work!
4. Moses is heading back into danger when he leaves the relative safety of Arabia and heads towards Kadesh Barnea, and he prays each day for the Lord's protection, and for victory if battle is to occur. The tensions will be high through this time, and will get higher and higher as they draw closer to the Egyptian fortresses that are in this area. The two rebellions that occur on this march are testimony to the tension that exists.

Moses has faith in the Lord and advances as the Lord directs, but he also prays aloud every day these prayers to underline his faith. Even if guidance is clear, pray each day and affirm it aloud, to encourage yourself and all around you. Let us be encouragers and keep advancing in the plan and purposes of God.

NOTES

CHAPTER 11**MOANING RATHER THAN BELIEVING AND WALKING**

This area could be entitled, "How to get answers to prayers which you would be better without". Numbers 11 illustrates the short way to spiritual uselessness, but it is a vital one for all leadership to ponder over, for it explains the things to avoid. It is a sad chapter, as is the next one to it, but it is one that covers the sort of issue that most pastors have to face as they begin any great enterprise. The introduction to this chapter is long, but only because the principles are vital to grasp a firm hold of. These verses here before us are pastoral survival messages, to encourage, correct and challenge us all. This chapter opens with carnal self pity by the people and closes with the judgment of these people.

As a pastor you have to get used to the fact that the sheep will bleat, and sadly, the sheep will often follow Satanic thinking rather than God's Word being their guide. The sheep at times will be carnal sheep. You will pour your heart out for them, teach them, and set a godly example for them, and people will twist your words and ignore your teaching and example, and criticize some minor aspect of the work. You will be amazed at what people say you are teaching, and will always be surprised at the strange things people say about the path of God, and the devious way they go about trying to avoid God's plan for their life.

This chapter gives warning to all pastors and all sheep of the Great Shepherd. There is a great burden to be borne when you pastor, but there is a heavier one if you fall from God's path! You will have a very heavy burden if you get away from teaching and living God's Word. The attacks of the foolish and deceived sheep will tempt you to get away from the systematic teaching of the Word of God and entertain them, but if you fall into this error, you will suffer greatly, and so will they. Much of the modern church growth movement speaks of entertaining people and keeping them happy by meeting their "needs". We will see God's perspective of "needs meeting" ministries here.

The two greatest men that ever lived were Moses and Paul, with perhaps David being the third; all three men teach us the vital importance of hearing and applying the Word of God into daily life and making no compromises with the teaching of it.

The story of the Exodus is, in a way, the story of Moses Bible Class in the desert and God's working upon His people, trying to teach them this lesson of feeding upon the Word daily and applying it daily in faith. Most of the forty years they were not marching, they were camped. They did not have to work for their food, for the Lord was providing it so that they could hear His words and heed His call to them. The enemy's initial attack, through the carnal ones, is upon this food, provided by the Lord so that they can rest from pastoral labour and hear the Word.

Moses is teaching the people daily for forty years in the "University of the Desert", so that all could earn their B.D. degree [the backside of the desert]. What did they do? They moaned and complained about the grace provision of God. God does not like it when believers moan. When you are moaning you know you are out of fellowship with the Lord. You need to take all your situations as from the Lord and relax and trust HIM in the midst of them. If the Lord provides Manna, you don't ask for sirloin steak or grilled fish, you give thanks for the Manna. **1 Peter 5:5-11**.

Challenges on the walk through life happen so that we can be refined in our life walk and build our faith and service powerfully to the glory of God. Heaven is where our mansion awaits, but here is where we fight on the battle field of the Angelic Conflict. Again and again we come back to **Ephesians 6:10-18, Hebrews 3:7 – 4:12**.

In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. **Proverbs 3:1-8**. Casting all your cares on Him for He cares for you. **1 Peter 5:5-11**. These are the promises which sum up the lessons of this chapter. These people lost their discernment, because they rejected God's path for them, and they followed their own lusts, and God burnt them up. When you moan and complain, rather than learning more of God and His path for you, you will eventually come under God's judgment. **1 Corinthians 11:27-34**. A casual attitude to the communion table led to death in Corinth, and a casual or disobedient attitude to the Lord's clear direction will lead to a life of misery, pointlessness and finally judgment. **Isaiah 28:7-21, 1 Peter 3:18-20, 2 Peter 3:9**.

Self pity must be weeded out of leadership circles irrespective of who the guilty ones are. When we give way to "poor me" syndrome, and feel self pity we are in danger of being put on the spiritual shelf for several years, for God cannot use those who are so self absorbed, only those who are Holy Spirit filled. Do not think that you are above the discipline and correction of God? Do you think that you should only have smooth paths, and that all things ought always to be light and bright for you? Have you forgotten that you are called to spiritual warfare and there are many battles for the Lord in this life? **1 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 10:4, 1 Timothy 1:18**.

The Lord will close doors at times, and He will ask us to walk difficult paths often. If He does so, take it as unto the Lord, take your discipline, or accept the tough path, and make your life right, for the Lord's promise is that He is with you and will never forsake you, and He walked a far harder path than the one you are called to walk. **Matthew 7:13ff, 11:28-30, 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:5-6**.

INTRODUCTION

Verses 3-5 Notice that they are trying to tell God what they are doing, rather than listening to the guidance of God. People too often say, "Lord you have given me this, but I want that". Beware of badgering God when God has said "No". Do not complain, and do not moan. Take your burdens to the Lord in prayer and leave them there.

This chapter reminds us to be careful. This chapter reminds us that God knows best and He always provides the best. **Romans 8:28-39**. Are you constantly aware that He loves you? Why then do we blame Him and pray as if He does not understand our problems when He gives us something that we do not like? When the world hands you a lemon, add the sugar of faith, and the water of the Word, and make some lemonade.

The people we meet in this chapter were a mixed group, some of whom could not trace their lineage clearly back to one of the Patriarchs. There were other people however, the "mixed multitude" who are probably not saved at all but have joined themselves to the Israelites for financial or other reasons. Many people seek membership of a local assembly for reasons other than a genuine desire to learn more about God and worship Him.

Be careful of the wolves in sheep's clothing in the local assembly. Matthew 7:15-25, 10:16-18, Luke 10:3-7, Acts 20:28-32. In the last chapter we met Hobab, a non-Israelite, but one who is there as a believer in the true God and a worshipper of Him whom Moses respects. Not all non-Israelites will be part of this dodgy "mixed multitude"; there will be some amazing ones like Hobab.

These dodgy fellow travellers are "wolves", and are in the congregation, but they are not genuine Israelites by faith and they do not love the Lord. You will find to your sadness that there is a "mixed multitude" in every church you will minister in. These are the people who tend to start the rot in every church. They are not led by the Holy Spirit but are led by their Old Sin Nature. **Romans 8:8-10**. Lust rules them. Your preaching, if biblical, will expose them and leave them without excuse before the throne of God, and that is your task before the Lord.

Do not be surprised nor alarmed when they reject the truth, for they never knew it; they were in church for reasons other than godly ones. Some are there because their parents were there, others for business, others for politics, others for their children – many will be there for baffling social and political reasons. Watch for spiritual fruit and you will discern quickly who are real believers and who are dangerous.

GOD'S PROVISION AS A TEST FOR BELIEVER'S VOLITION

The manna that they had was God's perfect provision. It had all the vitamins and minerals they needed for health and life; it was a perfect food. The testimony of the benefit of the food is that all remained healthy and did not suffer from the common diseases of people with inadequate diets or mineral/vitamin deficiencies. **Deuteronomy 8:2-6**.

However in verse 10 Moses records they rejected God's provision and in its place they wanted what they desired. Here they were weeping for themselves, every man at the door of his tent, all of them feeling sorry for themselves and weeping about meat and salad vegetables. The Men should have been encouraging their families in faith and trust in God's provision, not insulting it.

This is His provision and you are to give grace over all that the Lord provides, no matter how humble. God says to them, and to ourselves today, "look at what I have given you, not what I haven't given you, and give thanks for My grace and love". When you get your eyes off the Lord's provision, and onto other things you will get bitter and frustrated. Moses got displeased with them as well. He was seeing things and thinking how God thought. He saw the crowd's desire to have quail, exactly as it truly was, as rebellion against God's specific provision of manna.

We are all bought by the Blood of Christ, and so the logic of grace tell us, that it is none of our business to run our own life, or to complain about the way that God is doing things. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 7:20-24, 1 Peter 1:18-25. What He hasn't given you is His prerogative, and what He has given you is in accordance with His plan. You leave it all with Him and give thanks for what you have received. We are to seek the path He wants us to walk, not moan about how hard ours is and how easy another person's path appears to be. God's Path for you alone believer!

We are to carry our own cross as He did! The Lord will relieve us when we need relief. Until then let us not moan and groan about what appears to be happening, for God alone knows what is really happening, and what is going to happen. We are in the hands of the author of history. Matthew 16:24-26. We see only a fraction of surrounding reality!

In verse 11 Moses asks the Lord where he had gone wrong in leading the people. In places we do go wrong and we need to evaluate our ministry and then tighten up in areas that require adjustment. It is easy to get worn out. In this case however, Moses has not really got anything wrong at all. It is difficult when you have been teaching a group of people well, as Moses had, and they ignore the teaching. In this case the dissension became so marked that the whole nation became discouraged.

As we will see through this and the next book in the Pentateuch, there were times in Moses' ministry when everybody turned their backs on him. At times as the Lord's pastor you will stand alone, and even your deacons and elders will be

against you. You are not to get upset about it. Get your own life right and then walk in and face them and teach God's Word again.

DEPRESSION

Moses appears to be suffering from a clinical depression in verse 15. Is it wrong for Christians to be depressed? No, it is quite normal to get depressed when you are under the pressure that Moses was under at that moment. When you are honest with the Lord, He can correct you. The Lord wants honesty before anything else and then any depression in the work can be lifted. I love the words of the great Jewish psychiatrist from last century, Dr Viktor Frankl, who said, "there are certain things, when they happen to you, and you don't lose your mind, it is only because you didn't have a mind to lose".

In verses 16-17 seventy people were appointed to assist Moses. This group was the basis of the Sanhedrin, who 1500 years later would conspire to execute the Messiah, and this group will be formally replaced by the Lord's own appointment of seventy evangelists. Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:1-24. The establishment of this group was not a wrong thing, and we don't want to judge them on the basis of their descendant's work 1500 years later! Moses was simply doing a fine tuning of the administration that had begun to be set up in Exodus 18:13-26, but as we will see there may have been a better plan had he asked the Lord for it.

Now I believe Moses could have borne the burden by himself, and with the help of a couple of other key men, like young Joshua, for example, but the Lord said to choose seventy men, and that the Holy Spirit would be shared between these people and Moses. There is not more of the Holy Spirit, it is just that he is now equally upon 71 instead of upon one. When the Holy Spirit is shared upon many there is not less power for each, but the same full power!

Delegation is a very good thing administratively, as long as the leader keeps the audit responsibility firmly in their hands. We must always remember when we delegate however, that some people love titles and power, and their Old Sin Nature will be open to the enemy through their self centeredness and pride. The enemy will always use all who are open to him, whether they have a legitimate position of authority in a group, or just want to have power. Be careful of "committee people" because they often want position and status without real performance; they will talk but not act. God calls us to be disciples, and pick up our Cross and follow Him, not to sit on a committee and discuss things for hours.

There is a shadow hanging over this group. When you are depressed cast your cares on the Lord but be very careful for what you ask. Moses really did not need this help, he needed the power of God through him rather than his power. There were already judges, and there were the twelve princes, who we have met. This is another layer of leadership – and it will not stop the rot that has begun with the mixed multitude. When you have a major problem with morale or faith, you need both disciplined actions and strong biblical doctrinal teaching. When you have dealt with these problems you will, like Moses, probably feel exhausted. Don't be surprised at this, for the pastoral load is a heavy one! 2 Corinthians 11:23-31, James 3:1-6.

We now move from Moses teaching and the challenge to the people to walk in faith, (because of their disobedience and moaning), to the Lord's direct administration to discipline. You do not get away with sin as believers, and remember, whatever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23. These people do not only need to know the Word of God but also to be confronted by its importance through discipline. You can write Hebrews 12:5ff against this passage.

The Lord basically says to these people, "You want flesh, ok then, you will get it until you are sick of it". This is where we get to the heart of God; for He wants the best for us, and may at times discipline us with second best just to remind us that He does indeed know what is the best for us.

DISOBEDIENCE

Your disobedience revolts the Lord. God is against you if you complain to Him about what is happening in your life. God will not put it aside; He will deal with you. It is absolutely critical that you are obedient to God's Word. We are not to compare our self with others. If we doubt this we just need to look at the story of the Pharisee and the sinner and their attitudes when they prayed in the Temple where the Pharisee thanked God that he was not as the other man and the Lord makes it clear that his prayers are not heard. Luke 18:10-14.

If you are not obeying the Word of God you will come under discipline, for the Lord our God is not mocked. We are in everything to give thanks. Whilst we might not be tempted to steal or commit adultery we can all too often moan about things and this is a serious spiritual situation. The truth is that the Lord can carry us through but we can be tempted to think that He cannot rescue us unless we help Him, or He changes something in the plan to suit our reading of the situation.

We have a problem and that is sinful stupidity, for we think, when we moan, that we know better than the Lord of all. The Lord has no problem understanding all things. We are creatures of space and time, and He made those categories of our thinking! He is the creator and we are creatures. We need to learn this truth again and again. Job 38:4ff, 42:1-6, 10ff.

Once you get depressed about the situation you are facing, and stay there without prayer saturating the problem, then you go into a spiral downwards over a period of time, and it takes time to get out of that situation, but confession begins the process. When you do bounce back and recover, celebrate your recovery in prayer and Bible study again. Moses is

told what he has to do to get out of the depression that overwhelms him here. The Lord is going to be encouraging Moses while He is disciplining the nation.

THE QUAIL

In verse 31, note, "the Lord caused the quail, to come". Quail that were migrating across the Mediterranean fell outside the camp, a distance of a day's journey; this is a matter of 10-20 kilometres from the camp. This meant that if they wanted to eat the quail, the people had to make a great effort to get to them. The Lord therefore makes it hard for these people to fulfil their lusts. He is, in grace, trying to make them see that this is not His will. This was the opportunity for the people to reflect on travelling that distance purely to eat meat.

However for 36 hours they collected quail in all sorts of containers, for there were quails everywhere. Before they had eaten the quail the Lord smote them with a plague and many died where they had lusted. God gave the warning, He made it hard to fulfil their lusts, but they persisted, and so they received judgment in accordance with their gluttony. There will be times when, because of your situation, with a bit of effort you will be able to fulfil your lusts. The challenge the Lord gives, is to fulfil His will, rather than your lust. Whatever you lust after, the Lord in grace, will make it hard; see what is happening and hold back and move steadily away from the temptation.

Take the events of this chapter before us as a warning, and pull back from temptation, and remember holiness before the Lord your God, making confession before Him. The source of lust is identified in **James 1:13-15, 19-25**, and it is not necessarily Satan trying to tempt you; you are drawn away by your own Old Sin Nature pattern of lusts. Deal with lusts as the sins they are, and recognize where you will end up if you do not get the principles here clearly.

NUMBERS 11:1- 35

"11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. **2** And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. **3** And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. **4** And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? **5** We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: **6** But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. **7** And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. **8** And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. **9** And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it. **10** Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. **11** And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? **12** Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? **13** Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. **14** I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. **15** And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. **16** And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. **17** And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. **18** And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. **19** Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; **20** But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? **21** And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. **22** Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? **23** And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not. **24** And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. **25** And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. **26** But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. **27** And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. **28** And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. **29** And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them! **30** And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. **31** And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey

on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. **32** And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. **33** And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. **34** And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted. **35** And the people journeyed from Kibrothhattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. Many get excited when they read about the actual site of these events and want to go there, but I repeat my word of caution. Most identification of sites associated with the Exodus was done by the Emperor Constantine's mother Helena, in the fourth century of our era, and great lady that she was, and great believer in the Lord, she didn't have much to go on. The others who made identifications of Exodus sites also worked on very flimsy information, and so do not jump to conclusions that maps in the back of your Bible with place names are the actual ones.

The entire topography of the deserts of Arabia has changed since the days of Moses in 1450 BC, and were different again to 340 AD, let alone today. This entire area was very fertile in the days of Moses, and was not desert at the time, it was pastoral land. The term "wilderness" refers to it being open pastoral land, without cities, not desert. Modern archaeological study has given us a lot of details about the cultures of the people of these places where settlements existed and have been studied, and the fertility of the area of what is now Saudi Arabia was good. The Sahara desert of Africa at this time was not "desert", and most of what is now desert across North Africa was fertile cropping land until the fourth century of our era, and the worst desert now, was pastoral land in the second millennium BC.

In these verses we have the first of the rebellious incidents that come to their ultimate disgrace in the refusal of the people to enter and seize the land. The people begin with general complaints about the order to march, and possibly the pace and direction of the march also. They have marched three days and not made a formal camp; simply slept by their wagons, possibly in defensive mode all night, each night. The people who complain are those on the outskirts of the camp, and it may be they were worried because if the camp is attacked, then they feared that they would be killed first.

My belief, as outlined in the previous chapter, is that the biblical Mount Horeb/Sinai, (where they have been), is in what is now Saudi Arabia, not the Sinai Peninsula. If I am correct in this, then they have now headed back into Sinai, which was Egyptian dominated land, moving now towards Canaan, with the very real possibility of attack by Egyptian frontier forces, that after only just over a year since their escape from Egypt, may still be looking for them. It is of note that it is the outskirts of the camp (the first place to be attacked) that the rebellion centres. Psalms 78:17-43.

The Lord judges the complainants directly by sending fire into the area of the camp that the rebellion centres and many who lead it are killed. It is a serious rebellion and it is taken seriously by the Lord, and all ought to be warned by these things, but those who doubt their faith, will become bitter with the Lord about His direct action here. They cry aloud to Moses for him to stop the judgment, and Moses prays for the sinful people and the judgment stops.

Moses is a humble man and does not blow his own trumpet, nor seek to explain himself here. Did he try to deal with these rebels, or was he not even aware of these events? Did the princes do their work, or was there a failure of leadership on their part? We do not know, but we can deduce by future events that there is a systemic failure here of all the leadership to identify the problems and quickly move to deal with any worries and confront the moaners with the real spiritual issues involved. The place is called, Taberah – or "place of the burning". This doesn't help us, because there was no settlement to identify, just a vast temporary camping ground in pastoral land. There may not even be a water supply here, although a significant well would be expected close by for 30,000 people.

Verses 4 – 9. The next moaning incident is over the manna. We are not told that this was the same day or a later one. Now Manna had been provided by the Lord since the earliest days of the Exodus when the people were unable to produce any food for themselves, and their supplies from Egypt had run out. The Lord sent the Manna as a result of the people's moaning, not their prayer of faith, and so every time they gathered it they ought to have remembered that the Lord provided, even though they didn't deserve it. Exodus 16: 2ff.

The Lord had also provided quail at that time for them to eat meat, but at that time the quail covered the camp, whereas this time the people will have to walk a long way to get them, as we noted above. After a year of eating Manna they complain about the grace provision of the Lord for them and want their old lives back in Egypt. This comes up because they are heading back towards Egypt now and it will be easier to get there than it was from Arabia, where I believe the real Mt Horeb is, and where they have been encamped for many months in safety and relaxation.

Notice the things they lust after. They want the variety of foods of the land of Egypt, and this desire grows stronger as they approach the Egyptian frontier fortresses, and at times they would have been possibly able to see the Nile in the far distance from the high hills around their camping places. They are being tested as they draw nearer to potential danger from Egyptian forces, and also to the possibility of return to Egypt.

The Lord will bring them to Kadesh Barnea for their entry point to the southern part of the land of Canaan, because they will have to confront both issues directly. When the Lord calls us to do great things, He calls us to confront our fears and our false desires, and replace them with confidence and faith. We must face our fears in faith, before we can do

anything for the Lord in His power. God provides the power through the Holy Spirit, but we must walk in the Spirit to win the crown set before us!

Verses 10 - 15. Moses loses the plot himself under the pressures of leading these complaining people. He is feeling as many of us have at times of great strain, especially after a prolonged period of great events. Moses has been leading great worship for a number of weeks before the march begins, and often the toughest tests come just after times of greatest joy and closeness to God. Moses leads the people off, with the army leading, and the Ark and the tabernacle wrapped and on shoulders or in the wagons, and the entire army and people moving as one.

It would have been a stressful time in itself, with people getting used to this very organized way of moving, three days of hard marching, and then with only the two nights under the stars, not allowed to formally make a camp. The pressure is on in such situations, and the pressure is on the leaders to keep morale up, but this is not too bad. In the Armed Forces we were trained to move around our men when on this sort of route march. Each time we stopped we were to make sure all was well, and that food and water were provided, and all were healthy, and any problems were resolved quickly.

There are the princes to coordinate the Army's needs here, and the judges to sort out problems amongst the family groups that may have occurred on the march. All should have gone well, for they have **only** been marching for three days after all! This is the first time in three days that they have made camp and they are all exhausted and depressed about the rigors of the march. Their ability to handle the challenges of the march, let alone seizing the land, appear to be beyond them at this point.

Things turn badly by sunset of this third day. This is not looking as if this group can seize the land! Moses has given them a bit of route march training and they have wimped out. The terrible thing about this is that the leaders must be there weeping also! The very people who ought to be leading the people have been exhausted and depressed by the march. What has happened here? During their time at the Mount of God they have all become unfit. They have sat still for too long and now they act as if they resent the exercise that is being forced upon them. Its not just physical fitness, but mental toughness, and spiritual fitness, that is being tested here also. Note Moses words here. This is a seriously frustrated man given the incredible worshipful preparation for this march.

The despair is nation wide, every woman and man, instead of setting the example of courage and tenacity is weeping at their tent door, and this must include the princes, who ought to be banging heads together! The Lord gets very angry with the moaning, and Moses is really angry also. The Lord and Moses have a reason to be angry, for every morning the Manna has been provided, and all the people have had to do is follow the cloud. There is evidence of God's care, protection and guidance, and the toughness of the road ought not to be more real than the Lord's clear provision for the road. Their exhaustion is due to their lack of spiritual and physical fitness, and their readiness to perspire, and this is the time for confession, worship, and training, not for moaning.

Let us challenge ourselves here, for we also can falter under great or even little pressure. When the reality of our problems becomes stronger than the reality of our fellowship with the Lord, then we are in the same trouble as these people. Let us ensure that daily praise and worship overcomes fears and doubts. **Isaiah 61:3**. The joy of the Lord must be our strength and then worship banishes fears. **Nehemiah 8:10, 9:16-17**.

The Lord has asked Moses to carry these people as a father carries his own baby. Good fathers do not get distressed, nor become abusive, when babies cry or are "grumpy" over something, rather than anger they strain every fibre of their being to comfort and sooth their child. Moses is called to this sort of care over these baby believers, and he is worn out with their lack of moral fibre. His words to the Lord indicate that he knows within that he shouldn't be so upset with them, for they are babies indeed and he needs more patience with them.

Having said this, we must remember that discipline is needed here. These people are behaving like the babies they are, but they need correction, and then encouragement to stand in the truth of God's Plan and Love for them. Moses is so flattened by the pressures he is under that he would rather die now than see the collapse of the vision he has from the Lord. Now pause here and ask yourself, is there any danger that the plan of God will not be fulfilled? We can get to the same place as Moses does here, and let us praise God for this man, for his honesty and example enables us to challenge our own dark times and walk back into the light!

The land they are heading for the Lord their God "swore" was to be their land, and this promise was made to their forefathers. The promise of God is 450 years old at this point, and will be fulfilled, and it has been repeated to this generation through Moses. Exodus 3-7. Moses is saddened and annoyed that these people are so foolish and disobedient that they reject the clear promises of God to their ancestors. They must be challenged to see that the promises of God are more real and certain than the fears of man.

The people have let their discomfort physically overflow to spiritual dissatisfaction and doubts about the whole plan, but their emotion centres in their desire for meat and vegetables as they had in Egypt. The people are literally screaming for meat, and their complaint is directed specifically at Moses, and has got to the point where they are possibly suggesting that if he doesn't provide fresh meat for them that they will eat him! Things have got to a disgraceful place within the camp and the leadership has shown no moral strength, nor ability to control themselves or this rebellion.

Moses asks for help or death, but does not pause long enough and ask the more vital questions; firstly, where can help come from if all the men are looking for meat rather than the will of God? Secondly, Leadership requires the ability to put

up with hard rations and tough marches, and the majority of the men have proved themselves incapable of both, so where can leaders come from who are not compromised already? There are some good men in the camp left, like Joshua and Caleb, but events and time alone will reveal them. Great leadership will emerge, but it will emerge mainly from the next generation, not this first one that lusts for meat and an easy road.

Moses hasty request for leaders to assist him now is flawed, as are all our requests when we are depressed or desperate. God's timing, and God's provision is always going to be better than our suggestions! Let us be challenged in tough times to relax into faith in the character of God and the plan of God, and so avoid asking for help we later regret receiving! It is an interesting question to ask, as to what the Lord would have done if Moses had stood and simply asked for the Lord's answer to this issue?

Verses 16 – 23. In grace the Lord hears Moses cry for help and does answer him immediately. The situation is desperate and the Lord responds and will bring good out of evil here. Romans 8:28. Seventy men are to be identified who are the "best of a bad bunch". They have failed to lead at this point, but they are men who have proved some ability before in some matters and the others identify them as their "elders". These men are to be gathered immediately and taken to the door of the tabernacle. Time is short to stop this rebellion in its tracks and the gathering of these 70 men from every point of the camp will cause people to pause and reflect on what might be happening.

Once they are standing before the Lord there the Lord will act. The Lord promises to speak with Moses at that point and give him instruction, and will take from him some of the Holy Spirit's power and place it upon the seventy in addition to the Spirit being with Moses. These men will stand, as Spirit filled leaders, with Moses in all future decision making problems. The Lord recognizes that the biggest issue is the aloneness of leadership for Moses. His deepest and very human desire is for men to stand with him so that he does not feel so alone and exposed before the people.

This remains one of the biggest challenges of leadership; that we must be able to stand alone, without the support and understanding of even our closest friends and family. God's leaders will often have to stand without any support other than the Lord and the Holy Spirit within for months, and this is the challenge of leadership training, to get the young leader dependent upon the Lord alone for strength. It is a sad reflection upon the "princes" that they do not give him this comfort! As time and events will unfold we will see that two men will actually be the ones to stand with him, and they are Joshua and Caleb. Of all the leaders, Moses is only encouraged by two of the 70+! Don't be discouraged pastor!

Once the message has been received about the thing to be done with the 70 men, the Lord tells Moses to give a message to all the people. They are to set themselves apart overnight, for the Lord has heard their "prayers" and He will grant them their request. They will think that it will be as it was a year before, but they are in for an unpleasant surprise. Exodus 16:2-20.

The Lord then gives a full account of their "prayers" to Him and the full extent of their rebellion becomes apparent. They have begged for meat to eat, but also have said to God and their neighbours that it was better for them in Egypt and well fed slaves than to be free with Moses and God in the Wilderness eating fighting rations. They have insulted their God in this. They have forgotten the struggle to gain their freedom, and forgotten the slavery that they and their ancestors cried to be relieved from. Exodus 3:7-10, 17-21.

The Lord makes it clear to Moses that they will get flesh alright, and they will eat it this time until they are totally and thoroughly sick of it. The issue is that they have asked for things not in the plan of God. They have therefore despised the Lord in rejecting His plan and so they will reap the consequences of this in their bodies and minds. They have sought any easy and pleasant way, but there is no way other than the Lord's through this life that will have a pleasant outcome.

Short-sighted pleasant feasts upon quail are not what this journey is about, it is about reaching a land of "milk and honey", and they are to be ready to sacrifice a little to get there. What God has is far better than scrawny quail, but if they select the quail, then the Lord is going to make them see their stupidity quite seriously!

Moses reminds the Lord just how many birds we are talking about to supply the entire army and people, and even with the smaller number that my estimate centres around (around 30,000 people all together) we are talking a vast flock of a million birds to feed them for a month, at 30,000 per day allowing one bird per person (they are not that large a bird).

The Lord's answer is that He can do it (that there is no power shortage with the Lord) and that Moses will see that the Lord will punish these people by means of the answer to their prayer. Remember that there are times when we do not want the Lord to answer some prayers, for if He does, we might just get more than we bargained for. Examine in the doctrinal study on prayer the point about the difference between our petition and our desire in our prayers; for we often do not think what we really want, and our petition does not match our true desire. The challenge is to have as our desire the glory of the Lord.

Verses 24 – 30. The majority of the people are now gathered around the tabernacle enclosure and Moses is able to address them all. The entire population is not gathered, but the vast majority of them are there. We will see that this is important later with two of the seventy who don't get to the tabernacle in time. This is just another indicator as to the numbers here, which are manageable, so that he is able to speak with them all at one place and time.

He then gathers the seventy men and stands them around the tabernacle. There are seventy of them and the building itself is small, so the line of men will completely circle the tabernacle between it and the enclosure wall. If the people are

gathered on low hills around the tabernacle then they can look in and see all that goes on. What occurs is high drama. The cloud of the Lord's presence comes down upon Moses and power from him goes up and then rests upon each of the seventy men in the circle. Remember, all these men will fail at Kadesh Barnea and won't support Moses at all.....

Each gives evidence of the anointing power of the Holy Spirit by prophesying in the Lord's name and not stopping uttering worship to the Lord for some considerable time. This is a Mount of Transfiguration or Day of Pentecost type experience and was the sign to Israel of the anointing of God at any major change of history; the next one being the conversion of Israel during the Great Tribulation period. Joel 2:28-32, Zechariah 12:10-14, Luke 9:34ff, Acts 2:1ff, 11:15-24, 1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 32, 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Of the seventy men chosen, two, Eldad and Medad, had not even got to the tabernacle; for some reason they had remained in the camp itself. Whether these men had been lazy, were ill, delayed by family problems, or were disinterested, we are not told directly. Even though they have not got to the right place to be anointed they still are anointed. Another man who is also still in the camp comes running to the tabernacle and reports the fact that these two men are prophesying in the camp. Moses records that they were of the names that he had "written" down to be called. Clearly Moses had sent around the camp a list of names of men he wanted to be there.

Joshua is a good and loyal servant of the Lord and Moses, and this is the first time we find him coming to the fore as a man with leadership potential. He speaks up and urges that Moses order these men to be silent, for they have not done things the right way and been there, and so they are not, in his eyes, entitled to speak for God.

Moses reply gives Joshua and us all, a good lesson in the grace of God here. God is not interested most of the time in process, but in the production of the Holy Spirit in our life. We can get process wrong a lot of the time, but if we are spirit filled and open to do the Lord's work then it will be blessed by the Lord, for He always blesses the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Lord continues to use all the various churches that honour His name, even if they do it in very different ways.

We also get a good insight into Moses' humility in this incident. He is not a man who greatly values his own status and position; he sees all he does as simple service to the Lord. He does not envy others, but seeks to empower them to serve the Lord as he does. This is the pattern for godly leadership. A godly leader seeks for his students to surpass him in spiritual exploits. A true spiritual master always seeks greater rewards for his students than his own. This is Moses. His desire would be for all to speak prophecy to the Lord's people, and one day his prayer for this will be answered. It's called the Millennial Kingdom, as we have seen before in our study.

Having heard the Lord's message Moses gets out into the camp with the elders to make sure all know the Lord's will and purpose for them in relation to their request for meat and their rebellion against His revealed will. Moses is not going to be leading these people out to gather quail; he will have no part in this and I suspect the 70 men will also remain in the camp when the quail fly over and head off to fall 10-20 kilometres away. Moses entry into the camp is to teach, exhort, convict and warn, and with the seventy men backing him now in the power of the Holy Spirit. All who wait in the camp are safe from any judgment, and they are rested and refreshed, whereas those who have to go after their lusts will have at least a twenty to forty kilometre round trip!

Verses 31 – 35. The Lord now sends a wind and the quail are brought from far away by that wind, from their migration path to fall around the camp, but at a good day's march from the outer line of tents. Remember, these people have complained about how hard the march has been, and how sore they are, and yet they are prepared to march another day and back (20-40 kilometres) to get quail for their family's food variety! The quantity of birds was extreme, and they fell on piles 2 meters high! Once the miles were covered to get there, it was easy to pick up vast numbers of birds and those who head out do exactly that. Now, not every one goes after these birds. The wise and the spiritual remain in the camp and heed the words of Moses and the 70 "prophets" and quietly eat their manna and give thanks for the Lord's provision.

The people who went out stayed out of camp gathering quail from 36-48 hours and plucked, cooked, and preserved them in containers. Those who gathered least, gathered ten homers. Now this is equivalent to ten pints measure, or about twenty preserved birds, but some were really greedy and gathered many, many more! Their gluttony and greed drove them to physical exertions that they were complaining about two days before! This is the Lord's point in His provision of these birds. To meet and fulfil their lust they were prepared to go to extreme lengths and work for up to 48 hours without sleep, yet for the Lord's plan they have not been prepared to march for three days march at a steady pace.

The place will be called literally "the graves of lust", and camp is moved from this place of judgment to Hazeroth – the place of enclosures (possibly a place where there were ample enclosed pastoral areas for the animals) – this place is also unknown today. The people who gathered the meat, cooked and ate it on the spot as well as storing it in containers, and their greed and lust controlled lives were such that the Lord judged those who went this far as they ate the quail.

Before you say God is unfair here pause and reflect on the scene. The birds are provided, but provided in such a way that if they are left alone they will fly away again. They are blown to the ground and pile up, but are not dead or damaged. If the people leave them they will fly away and be available legitimately for food at a later time. The people may choose to partake of the food now, for they have the Lord's permission, but they must learn that their moaning has been sinful, and the Lord hopes that on their long walk to get the quail, that they will come to terms with their sin.

If they had been relaxed in their gathering of the quail, and calm and thankful in their eating, they would not have been judged. They eat with greed, and without thanks to God, and their attitude and actions prove they have learned nothing and are incapable and, what is worse, unwilling to repent and change and have faith in their God. They are judged and many die there in their lust. They have had to work very hard, over 48 hours to get to this place of judgment.

Do not accuse the Lord of being harsh, for these people have lusted very hard to bring themselves to this place. As I noted above, we have to work hard to position ourselves in the place of discipline. **Isaiah 28:21, Hebrews 12:1-15**. If we used the same energy to serve the Lord, as we used to lust, then we would be blessed every day. As we go through these books of Moses we see his point, "Its all about our choices..." Do we obey the Lord, or follow our OSN lusts?

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are daily challenged to adopt, accept and applaud God's Plan for our life, and not seek some second best option that we dream up in a place of panic or lust. God's plan for us is the best possible and we must be "very scared" of praying for things away from the plan, for they will lead to leanness of spirit or judgment! Psalms 106:14-15. God's Plan for us is the best place to be at all times, even if at times we hurt there. We do not complain when the gym instructor makes our muscles hurt at times, because we want to be fit for life, and so, let us be more willing to walk the tough path with the Lord who went to the Cross for us, so that we can be fit for eternity.

2. The burden of leadership is a heavy burden. It is hard to lead and guide people who are at times rebellious, and we need to be spirit filled, not surrounded by more assistants. Moses selects an option that gives him men to stand beside him in the spirit, but he remains at the centre of the problems as we will see, and in the next chapter, within days of the events here, meets the next rebellion and this time it is within his own family! As leaders we must learn to stand alone before men, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and never depend upon other men or women to be with us. How secure are you pastor in the company of the Lord alone? Let us draw near the Lord and depend only upon Him.

3. Hardship goes with the battlefield of this life. Remember we are in the Angelic Conflict and a battle is raging. At times you will be on short rations and have to work very hard, at times you will be suffering in the road, but as long as it is the road of the Lord for you, let the garments of praise lift off the spirit of heaviness and hopelessness. Isaiah 61:3.

We will get depressed about depressing things, but we do not need to stay in that depressed place. Let us praise and pray our way through the troubles of each and every day, and confront our difficulties in a spirit filled way. The path to judgment is an even harder one than God's path for us. You have to work really hard to fall into big temptations, and if you put half that effort into walking in the Spirit, you will have victory. Let us stop working and walking in sinful patterns, and rather begin to praise God for His will, and worship Him, and say "Amen" with actions that are obedient to His will. Isaiah 61:3!

REFLECTION UPON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. God's faithfulness is based on his unchangeability - Hebrews 13:8
2. God's faithfulness is renewed "every day" - Lamentations 3:21-24
3. His promises are sure. - Hebrews 10:23
4. The faithfulness of Christ continues even when we are unfaithful. - 2 Timothy 2:13
5. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
6. God is faithful to forgive sins - 1 John 1:9
7. God is faithful to keep us saved - 2 Timothy 2:13
8. God is faithful to deliver us through temptation - 1 Corinthians 10:13
9. God is faithful to keep His promises to us - Hebrews 10:23
10. God is faithful to us in suffering - 1 Peter 4:19
11. God is faithful in fulfilling His plan for us - 1 Thessalonians 5:24
12. God is faithful to strengthen us - 2 Thessalonians 3:3
13. God is the faithful partner of our union with Christ - 1 Corinthians 1:9
14. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
15. Jesus Christ is synonymous with faithfulness - Revelation 19:11

CHAPTER 12**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter Miriam and Aaron judge and criticize Moses, and verbalize their disapproval of his actions in marrying an Ethiopian woman in the Exodus group. Go back to Exodus 4:19-26, and 18:1-27, and re-read these passages and study my earlier commentary on them. When Moses decided to answer God's call to His work, he was required to circumcise his sons. He was struck ill because he had failed to do this earlier and his wife did at least the first boy to save Moses life, but there she stopped, and she made it very clear she disapproved, and she moved out and left him. His father in law Jethro tried to get them back together again but this was not possible, due to the conflict between them. As we enter chapter 12 of Numbers, a year has gone by since Jethro has left, and Moses has remarried, and Miriam and Aaron started maligning him behind his back because of his remarriage.

Even when you think a servant of God is wrong, to malign them or run them down behind their back is worse. If you do this to a person who has been called to the Lord's service you are wrong, and you will be judged, even if that person is wrong. Romans 2:1-11, 14:3-13, 1 Corinthians 4:1-7. If you have something against your brother go to him, and there is a chance that you will win him back as a brother, if he is wrong. If the situation is not as you imagined, or had heard, then you can be corrected, but the spreading of gossip on the basis of "hearsay" is always a dangerous thing to do. If however you malign someone in the Lord, especially a pastor, you have God's Word on it, you will be disciplined, and the person you are maligning will be blessed. 1 Corinthians 6:1-12, Colossians 3:13-17, 1 Timothy 5:19, James 5:9.

Do not be fearful as a pastor if people malign you. When you find out that something like this has happened, you go and find those who are talking about the "issue", and ascertain the facts, and then act upon them. Miriam and Aaron are saying, "Is Moses the only pastor? God is using us as well?" Now, what was going on here? They were trying to undermine Moses' authority, by saying that in his actions in remarrying he has become too high and mighty, and yet their comments indicated that it is they who are afflicted by pride. This is the 180 degree logic of the narcissistic; what they are saying is 180 degrees to the truth, and so what they accuse Moses of they are guilty of!

You will find this happens in any church that is well led. There will be people who will try and undermine the Lord's leader. Beware of those people, and be watchful for their attacks; they may be your closest friends in the ministry, and most times, if you move quickly, they can be recovered for ministry. The challenge when you are attacked this way, is to deal with the gossip, deal with the sin of the people involved, and then move on, still leading them forward in the Lord's plan.

HUMILITY

Moses was a very meek man. Numbers 12:3. Meekness is strength; it is not weakness. The word here means, humble, gentle in spirit, thoughtful of others, and self effacing. Moses was the opposite of a pride filled man who believed he was above the Law that applied to others. He takes the Ethiopian woman as his wife and makes no reference to it in his narrative, except here when he is attacked. This woman becomes his quiet home strength after Zipporah has left him and headed back to her home.

As a younger man and prince of Egypt, tradition records that Moses was the Egyptian General who conquered Ethiopia for Egypt, so the culture and people, and possibly the language of the Ethiopians was well known to him. To Moses Ethiopia is not "foreign" or strange. Moses draws a veil over his private life and what happens to Miriam here must warn us that criticism of Moses is way out of line on this matter.

It is a marriage that is cross-cultural and inter-racial, just as one before, (Tamar), and two more later, when we will see Rahab and Ruth enter the Line of the Lord. Matthew 1:3-6. From this we know that this woman was a strong believer, and had clearly joined the Exodus in affirmation of her faith in the God of Israel.

The only forbidden marriage for a believer is an "unequal one"; namely with an unbeliever, or persistently carnal believer. Race or cultural difference is an irrelevancy to believers. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Moses was meek enough, not to be concerned about what was being said about the marriage and he will place the entire issue in the Lord's hands for solution.

This incident reminds us also that all theoretical debate about divorced people not being entitled to remarriage must take account of this very high profile leader remarrying, and the reality of God certainly dealing with those who opposed him. It is too easy to grab a principle from scripture and apply it without laying out all the scriptural case histories. We must be very careful in our criticisms of people, and in our laying down of doctrinal principles without identifying that the Lord may have significant exceptions to apparently standard rules! Refer to a commentary on 1 Timothy 3:2 for a discussion of the concept behind the phrase, "one woman man" = eyes for their own partner only.

God hates divorce, that is clear from all scripture, but when a spiritually negative partner walks away from their strong believing partner because that believer desires to follow the Lord fully, then it would appear the Lord does not forbid His servant from a remarriage to a person who will walk with them in the path of God. 1 Corinthians 7:15-16. The departing partner has simply robbed themselves of God's blessing, by not walking ahead into the plan, but the believing and

obedient one is not robbed of company and support at home, for the Lord may provide another who can walk forward in service.

Moses and his brother and sister are called down to the Tabernacle. God said then to them all, that He talked to prophets by visions and dreams, but to Moses He talked to face to face. God told them that they should not attack God's man, especially this man. They have their own jobs to do and they should not try also to do Moses job as well. The message is clear from this "correction" by the Lord. If you are a lowly servant in the church, be the best lowly servant in the church. The Lord will raise you up in due time, if it is in the plan, but do not try to lift yourself up by pulling anyone else down! 1 Peter 5:6-7.

You should not stab people in the back. The Lord hates those with such mental attitude sins dominating their lives. Let God magnify your ministry, or let it not be magnified. Let God defend you in matters of gossip and maligning, and bring the matter before the Lord, with the people involved. Miriam was the one who sang the great song of doctrine back in Exodus 15:20-21. She has however allowed pride, and maybe resentment, to cloud her vision. She is "number 1 Israelite woman" and doesn't want this woman to become number 1 as Moses new wife.....

People who get proud, or resentful, try to rob others of their role and place, and will often try to get other gifts that are not theirs from the Lord. 1 Corinthians 12:7-21. Refer to a commentary on this passage. When the believer becomes presumptuous they lose their spiritual status to go after pride filled objectives that are not their proper place for service. You are tempting God to judge you if you follow Miriam and Aaron here. Your prayer should be, "Lord, show me where you want me to be, or what you want me to do now". When you see it, do it, and get your eyes off others. Do it in the power of the Spirit with enthusiasm, but do not make unhelpful and irrelevant comments upon the lives and ministries of others.

Romans 14:4. *"4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."*

Miriam will receive a case of leprosy. Aaron looked upon her and she became covered in white pussy sores. Leprosy is a symbol of sin; in this case the sin of pride, and the sin of disobedience. By covering her with leprosy God shows what her sin looks like to Him. Moses prays for her, and notes his ongoing love for her, saying to the Lord, that he does not want to see her being destroyed in front of him.

The Lord tells them that she will be cured in seven days, but she must sit outside the camp for that time. The lesson had been learnt, but it had to be seen to have been learned by everyone in the camp. Aaron, as High Priest, will have to undertake to provide, and the extended family pay for the sacrifices for the cleansing ceremony, and then offer up personally the sacrifices for her cleansing. Leviticus 14, Numbers 5. Everyone has abused and gossiped about Moses and all must confront this sin, but as the key player Miriam has the physical suffering, and Aaron has the cost.

NUMBERS 12:1- 16

12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.**2** And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. **3** (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) **4** And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. **5** And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. **6** And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. **7** My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. **8** With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? **9** And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. **10** And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. **11** And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. **12** Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. **13** And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. **14** And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. **15** And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. **16** And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. Now Moses is writing these words, although many believe that a later writer adds verse three. It is likely that if verse three was added, then it was added by one of, Joshua, Samuel, or Ezra, and so it is well within the scriptures as a Holy Spirit certified comment upon this man Moses. Notice what is at the heart of Miriam's and Aaron's sin; it was exactly in the same category as the "mixed multitude", it was rebellion against the leadership of God's anointed man. To attack the Lord's anointed is to tempt the Lord to judge in the matter, and if you are wrong, it is to directly insult God's choice and plan.

Miriam and Aaron were both older than Moses, and Miriam's bravery as a girl of around ten, certainly saved his life as a baby. Exodus 2:1-10. She was a prophetess and was used of the Lord. She is over ninety at this point, and Aaron is slightly younger. Moses is at least eighty at this point. At its heart, the issue here is jealousy and resentment, and we are never too old to get jealous and bitter. Miriam has felt that Moses has had the "golden spoon" all his life. He got to live in the palace and then be the prince, while Miriam and Aaron were just slaves in a hovel. Now, he is the leader and they are still "second fiddle"! They feel that they should be getting equal renown to Moses and be recognized as equal leaders. Neither of them has even made the list for the seventy elders!

Now, pause and reflect here, for both have significant roles within the plan of God. Aaron is the high priest and Miriam is the prophetess of the nation. They speak for the Lord also, but their path and their role is of necessity different to Moses. Aaron has already proven himself unable to resist the people in the affair of the golden calf, Exodus 32, but we cannot blame Miriam here 100%, for although she will be judged directly as the instigator of this, Aaron has the moral responsibility to act in God's name and stop this nonsense.

This conflict here confronts us with the fact of the sovereignty of God, and the fact that each of us are called to walk a different path in this life, and we are not to compare our path with others. This is also dramatically portrayed by three prophets later in Israel's dark days from 620 – 535 BC. Jeremiah speaks for the Lord and serves Him from a place of poverty; although growing up in an aristocratic home, he is in jail, in rented accommodation at times, and at others on the run without any roof over his head, finally dying in exile in Egypt. Ezekiel speaks for the Lord from Babylonian captivity in a mud hut, and Daniel speaks and serves as a Babylonian Governor from the palace in Babylon.

Some people apparently have physically easy lives, and others have harsh ones. Why does the Lord do this? The answer is hidden in the sovereignty of the Plan of God, and we need to remember that we are creatures before our Creator and Saviour-King in this matter. We do not have answers to this, but we do have a solution to all our worries about it. We are to walk the path the Lord has placed before us and win the crowns that are possible on our path, without resentment or envy of another. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

The Lord assesses our work for eternal reward in accordance with the path we were called by Him to walk, not according to any wealth, power or status rule. We don't have to look successful according to the standards of the world to be successful in the Lord's plan. We have to be in the place the Lord called us to, and be doing what He wants us to do. God judges our production on the basis of what we were called to do, not any uniform standard of how men measure "success". Success before the Lord is playing our specific and called/anointed part in the eternal plan and do so in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Four very important things are recorded in these verses.

1. Miriam and Aaron both felt resentful; of Moses position, of his marital happiness possibly, of his authority over them, and the people, and his "fame".
2. Moses marriage to the Ethiopian woman acts as a trigger to their bitter gossip. There may be racism overtones here, and they are seriously critical of his decision to marry this particular woman. It may be that they do not believe he is entitled to marry again after his first wife leaves him. The marriage and also the woman, is at the centre of the cause of their open rebellion.
3. They feel resentful that people look to Moses (and now the 70) for the voice of God to be heard, when they have also been used of the Lord to communicate truth to the people. They want a bit of the lime light here, even though they both still have their God ordained positions!
4. God hears their complaints and attack upon Moses – God always hears us, both our good prayers and our sinful complaints!

Moses doesn't even have time to take this to the Lord, but he realizes that this attack is not about him, but about them. They have the problem, for Moses knows, that clearly God doesn't have a problem with his decision, and so he is happy to place himself before the Lord for decision making on the matter. God doesn't even wait for Moses to ask the Lord the answer, he directly speaks to the three of them in the midst of what may have been a serious argument.

Verses 4 – 8. Without any warning the argument was over with a direct word from the Lord Himself. In Naval terms they were summoned to the Commander's office to "please explain"! The three of them head for the tabernacle from their camp just outside the gateway. I suspect many overheard the argument, for it is difficult to keep anything private when you are living in a tent, and they are told to "come out" from their camp, which indicates they were surrounded by people at this point.

The Lord descends in the form of the cloud over the door of the tabernacle itself and speaks directly to them. God calls them to do what will always resolve theological conflict; they must hear the words of the Lord Himself. The Lord's answer avoids all reference to the marriage. The Lord focuses upon the authority issue, and who is a prophet and who is to give way in precedence to whom.

The Lord tells them bluntly that Moses is superior to any prophet that there will ever be, until the Lord Himself comes. The Lord makes it clear to them that prophets are spoken to by Him in visions and dreams, and difficult sayings, but Moses hears the Lord face to face. He is unique and they must recognize that their brother is a special anointed man.

Pause here and reflect on this, for if you hear a preacher or prophet today saying that they are hearing the Lord's words as Moses did, then they are deceived or deceivers! Moses is a unique character and there have been none like him amongst men since. Moses is also certified by the Lord as a faithful man above all others. The Lord's testimony to Moses is the sort that we all ought to earnestly desire; to be known as faithful to the Lord in all things we are asked to do. Given Moses position and the special revelation that was normal for him, but unique amongst men, why were not Miriam and Aaron scared of raising their voice against him?

Verses 9 – 16. The Lord is angry and makes it clear to the three of them that He is angry with the two siblings of Moses. The cloud and the Lord depart from them and the three are left there in shock I suspect. The cloud simply departs from being upon the tabernacle, and either stands in its place outside the camp in the direction where they are to go next, or hover above the tabernacle. What they notice as the cloud lifts from off the tabernacle, and them, is that Miriam is covered in the signs of leprosy. Aaron is the one whose job it is to diagnose the disease using the rules the Lord has given, and he has to move now and condemn his own sister to exile outside the camp.

Aaron now addresses his younger brother correctly, as "my lord", for indeed the Lord has made Moses lord (under shepherd) of all the Israelites. He goes further also and addresses his sin and Miriam's directly. Miriam has spoken before quite a lot, and it has not been complimentary to Moses, but now she is silent before him. I suspect Miriam is in total shock and horror at what has happened, for it may be permanent as far as she knows, and she faces the prospect of being an outcast for the rest of her life.

Aaron pleads with Moses not to allow the Lord to leave this great curse upon them, and he owns up to his part in the sin that both have shared here. He calls it for what it was, both sin and foolishness. He pleads for his sister that she not die as a half decomposed still born child. This way of speaking indicates just how rotten her flesh becomes quickly under this judgment – they each fear she could die before the seven days are over. Moses shows his compassion and his lack of arrogance, vengeance, and malice towards them both, and he prays earnestly for Miriam's healing. As Job is requested to pray for his friends, who have abused him, so Moses prays for those who have abused him, as the Lord's will demands we do. **Job 42:7-11, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:28.**

The Lord's answer is swift and very blunt. She has insulted Moses, and as Moses is God's man, she has insulted the grace and plan of God. If in the ancient world, for a grievous insult received, a father spat on his daughters face, it was an indication of the greatest shame to the family, and for the people involved seven days of separation was called for, and so the Lord takes this ultimate insult of a father to his child, and demands that Miriam serve at least that period of mourning and shame outside the camp.

She should have been afraid to do this evil, and so she will be ashamed for seven days with the skin of her body covered in leprosy. The Lord promises however that at that time He will heal her and restore her to health and allow her to re-enter the camp of Israel.

Miriam is forced to remain outside the camp sleeping on whatever the family provide her. She will be taken food, by either Moses or Aaron I suspect, but must wait away from the food until the family have departed and only then eat. She feels the ultimate isolation and rejection possible. After seven days of separation she is cleansed and she re-enters the camp, and would have had to shave her head and wash her body and undertake all the sacrifices ordered in Leviticus 14, and the entire extended family will have to provide them. Moses is I suspect one of those who voluntarily provides the sacrifices for his sister, with Aaron, for then Aaron to offer up for their sisters healing. Only then do the people move forward on their journey again.

For the next area they head into, there is a reasonable idea of its location, and it is certainly within the Sinai Peninsula. The journey may have taken several days from Hazereth through to Paran, and they do not camp until they arrive at Paran ready for the next big test as a nation. This time, they do not moan when they arrive after some tough days of marching and sleeping outside of their tents. Things are not looking good for their success; they have failed many times, but the Lord still allows them to approach the land, and the possibility is there that they will repent, accept the Lord's will, and enter the land in faith.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God hates self righteousness and hypocrisy, almost ahead of all else. God hates sin of all forms, but religious people need to be "very scared" at times when they piously condemn a fellow believer for their behaviour in some area on theological grounds, but with malice or self righteousness as the reason behind it. God hates divorce, but He clearly hates more the self righteous condemnation of a godly divorced person who was not at fault in their divorce. God seeks our heart to be clean before Him and to devote ourselves to His service without putting down others in their work.

Moses could not salvage his marriage without abandoning his ministry, and so he is apparently in God's sight, free to move on. He does not do so in haste, but in spiritual focus forward, with a woman who is his spiritual equal. Aaron and Miriam are condemned by the Lord. Let us be careful about our theological correctness, when it is applied without biblical case history being studied also. God hates divorce, but he hates self righteousness even more! Moses is allowed to remarry, and is defended by the Lord, and we must factor this into any discussion of marriage and divorce.

2. Jealousy is a wicked thing and to be resisted and confessed if it has got hold. It is an evil from the pit of hell and destroys good people faster and more subtly than anything else. We have no reason to be jealous in the Lord's work, for

we have been called to walk our path, not other people's paths and so there ought to be no comparison of our life with any others. God wants us looking to Him, not at each other comparing what each one has. There is no biblical warrant for any prosperity gospel, with wealth, power and position being the guide to anything spiritual. Let us beware of such evils, for they nearly destroy the siblings of Moses and they continue to wreak havoc in the churches of today.

3. God hears our prayers and our complaints, and it is a dangerous thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, and God is always angry at self righteousness and all its manifestations. God hates sin, and we are all too often light in our own attitudes towards it. Let us see things as God sees them and be very scared of falling into the hands of divine judgment. The Lord is not mocked, and when we accuse Him of being unfair, we mock His plan and His character. Let us focus on the Lord and His will for our lives and not on the path that others are walking.

REFLECTION ON THE FACT THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU

1. God knows ...

- a) Our sorrows. (Exodus 3:7)
- b) Our devotions. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
- c) Our thoughts. (Psalm 44:21)
- d) Our foolishness. (Psalm 69:5)
- e) Our frailties. (Psalm 103:14)
- f) Our deeds. (Psalm 139:2)
- g) Our words. (Psalm 139:4)
- h) The composition of the universe. (Psalm 147:4)
- i) All things. (Proverbs 15:3)
- j) Our needs. (Matthew 6:32)
- k) About animal creation. (Matthew 10:29)
- l) Mankind. (Matthew 10:30)
- m) What might or could have been. (Matthew 11:23)
- n) His own. (John 10:14)
- o) Past, present and future. (Acts 15:18)

2. God is able to ...

- a) Save forever those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ - Hebrews 7:25
- b) Supply every need - 2 Corinthians 9:8
- c) Deliver all who are tempted - Hebrews 2:18
- d) Sustain the weak believer and make him stand - Romans 14:4
- e) Keep us from falling and make us blameless - Jude 24,25
- f) Surpass all that we could ask or think - Ephesians 3:20
- g) Raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son - Hebrews 11:19

3. With God, all things are possible - Matthew 19:26

4. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not able to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

5. God's character is stable.

- a) if God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
- b) no matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)

6. God's promises are secure for he is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)

7. God's power is always the same:-

- a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
- b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)
- c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)

8. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)

9. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

10. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)

REFLECTIONS UPON HUMILITY

1. Humility is to be sought - Zephaniah 2:3

2. Humility is manifest in restraint - Luke 6:28-29

3. Humility is produced by the Holy Spirit - Galatians 5:22-23
4. Humility is essential in teaching - 2 Timothy 2:25
5. Humility is essential in learning. - James 1:21
6. Humility is valuable to God. - Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5
7. Humility is the path to promotion - 1 Peter 5:6
8. Humility gives proper self evaluation. - Romans 12:3
9. Examples of humility
 - a) Moses - Numbers 12:3
 - b) David - 2 Samuel 16:11
 - c) Jeremiah - Jeremiah 26:14
 - d) Stephen - Acts 7:60
 - e) Paul - 2 Timothy 4:16
10. Evidences of humility
 - a) Forbearance to others - Ephesians 4:2,6:9, Colossians 3:13
 - b) Endurance in trials - 1 Corinthians 13:7, James 1:12
 - c) Compassion - 1 Thessalonians 2:7
 - d) Peaceability - James 3:17
11. Humility was the primary characteristic of Christ - Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 11:29, 21:5
12. Promises to the humble - Psalm 22:26, 37:11, 147:6, Isaiah 29:19