

Numbers Chapter 7

Verses 7:1 – 10:36: These 4 chapters show how the Lord spoke to Moses (7:89), and led Israel (9:22; 10:11-12), from the tabernacle. As Israel was properly oriented toward the Lord and obeyed His word, God gave them victory over their enemies (10:35).

Verses 1-89: Numbers (chapters 7-9), records events whose beginning and end are marked by the inclusion of “on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle” (7:1; 9:15). Chapter 7 records the “princes of Israel” and their gifts for the altar. It serves a theological purpose in that it follows the Aaronic blessing (in 6:22-27), and associates the priesthood and the altar, since they belong together. The princes (“leaders”), are depicted as responding to the grace of God shown in the establishment of the tabernacle and priesthood. Their generous response in giving, leads to a greater blessing. God’s continued presence among them as God spoke to Moses “from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim” (verse 89). The tabernacle was no empty shrine but was the palace of the living God. This chapter emphasizes that sacrifice and ministry are essential to the life of God’s people.

As the people of Israel had been generous in giving to the construction of the tabernacle (see Exodus 35:4-29), they showed the same generosity in its dedication.

Verses 1-9: This chapter points back a month to when “the tabernacle” was completed and dedicated, the first day of the second year of the Exodus (Exodus 40:2). Moses distributed “oxen” and “wagons” to the Levitical families of the Gershonites and Merarites, but none to the Kohathites (3:16-39; 4:1-33), because they were to carry the sacred objects “upon their shoulders” (4:15).

Verses 7:1 – 9:15: The events recorded here precede the ones of chapters 1-6.

Numbers 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;"

“Had fully set up the tabernacle”: According to (Exodus 40:17), the tabernacles was raised up on the first day of the first month of the second year. Thus, the tabernacle was set up 11-1/2 months after the Exodus from Egypt.

Every item in the tabernacle was anointed and dedicated to the service of God. Even the anointing oil that was used was holy.

Exodus 30:25-28 "And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be a holy anointing oil." "And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony," "And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense," "And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot."

The following is a little further expansion on this.

Exodus 40:9 "And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that [is] therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy."

Numbers 7:2 "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:"

"The princes of Israel": The leaders of the 12 tribes were those named (in 1:5-15), who oversaw the numbering of the people. The order of the presentation by tribe of their offerings to the tabernacle was the same as the order of march given (in 2:3-32).

This is speaking of those who had been chosen to be the princes over each of the tribes. They were head of the tribes, at the time of the numbering. Each tribe had given what they should to God for use in the tabernacle. The following is just one example of what they brought.

Exodus 35:27 "And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;"

Numbers 7:3 "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."

Before the tabernacle, as it is afterwards explained, where he had now taken up his habitation.

"Six covered wagons, and twelve oxen": According to the number of the twelve tribes, of which they were princes. Two oxen for each wagon, which were to carry the tabernacle, and its vessels, from place to place. And which wagons were covered, not only to hide the things to be put into them from the sight of the people. Not only because they were sacred, but to preserve them from the rain, dust, and the like. And no doubt, but as they were made of the best materials, so they were covered with rich coverings for the honor of the vessels put into them. Being the presents of princes, and in which they joined, and could not be ordinary carriages. The word is rendered "litters" (in Isa. 66:20). And by some, "coaches"; the Targum of Jonathan is, "six wagons yoked," or drawn with a yoke of oxen. And Aben Ezra says, it signifies a kind of oxen which drew wagons. But the Targum of Jonathan, Jarchi, and Ben Gersom interpret it "covered", as we do.

"A wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox": Two princes joined in the present of one wagon, which shows it could not be a common wagon, but rich carriage. And ornamented, as the Targum of Jonathan adds. And each prince presented an ox, so that there was a yoke of them for each wagon.

"And they brought them before the tabernacle": The Targum of Jonathan says, Moses would not receive them, and therefore they brought them before the tabernacle. And so, says Jarchi, Moses received them not at their hands, until it was declared to him by the mouth of the Lord what he should do, as follows.

These covered wagons were needed for transporting the things of the tabernacle. This is a good example of God sending exactly what was needed to do a certain job. The most important thing in giving, is to make sure we give from a free heart.

Exodus 25:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering."

Numbers 7:4 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Out of the tabernacle, before which the wagons and oxen were brought.

In this case, Moses was not sure whether to accept this gift for the tabernacle, and he needed an answer from God. The LORD answers Moses.

Numbers 7:5 "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."

The present of the wagons and oxen, by which it appears that this freewill offering of the princes was according to his mind and will. And what they were influenced and guided to by his Spirit, and was well pleasing in his sight, and acceptable to him.

"That they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation": Be made use of, and employed in carrying the tabernacle. And the things of it, from place to place, when the Israelites journeyed.

"And thou shalt give them to the Levites": To ease them, whose business it was to bear and carry the several parts of the tabernacle, and the vessels of it.

"To every man according to his service": Whether lighter or heavier, for such difference there was in the three divisions of the Levites. And according as their work was, they had more or fewer wagons and oxen given them, as it follows (Num. 7:7).

The boards and the heavy parts of the tabernacle, that had to be carried from place to place would require covered wagons and oxen to pull the heavy load. The LORD instructs Moses to receive the offering, and give them to those who are called to carry the heavy burden of the tabernacle. The person in charge of the burdens, will receive the wagons and the oxen.

Numbers 7:6 "And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites."

"The wagons and the oxen": These were to be used in the transportation of the tabernacle. According to (verse 9), the sons of Kohath did not receive a cart because they were to carry the holy things of the tabernacle on their shoulders.

The Levites are a large tribe. We will see that Moses gives them to specific people of the Levites in the ministry of carrying the tabernacle and setting it up.

Numbers 7:7 "Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service:"

The eldest son of Levi.

"According to their service": Which was to bear and take care of the curtains, coverings, hangings and rails of the tabernacle. And which, when carrying from place to place, it was proper they should be covered from being exposed to rain and dust. And being so many as they were, must be heavy, burdensome, and cumbersome. And therefore, two wagons with two yoke of oxen were given them, to ease them.

Two wagons would be plenty to carry the curtains and the furniture of the tabernacle. The tribe of Gershon was in charge of them.

Numbers 7:8 "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."

All the remaining wagons and oxen, which were double the number given to the Gershonites.

"According unto their service": Being much heavier than theirs, having all the boards, pillars, sockets, pins; cords, etc. to bear and carry. Thus, Moses was directed of God wisely to dispose of those carriages, in proportion to the services each was employed in. And in a spiritual way, as the day, duty, and service of the people of God be, he proportions grace and strength to them to answer thereunto.

"Under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest": Under whose care, inspection, and direction, were both the Gershonites and Merarites (Num. 4:28). And by whom were delivered, according to the instruction of Moses, the several wagons and oxen, to them.

It was necessary for the tribe of Merari to have four wagons, because the boards to the tabernacle were large, heavy, and bulky. This is not showing favoritism to this tribe. This is necessary for the carrying of the material of the tabernacle. Ithamar, the son of Aaron we remember, was in charge of this. He supervised their service.

Numbers 7:9 "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."

Being all disposed of to the sons of Gershon and Merari: the reason of which follows.

"Because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders": As the ark with the mercy seat, and cherubim, the showbread table, the candlestick, and the two altars. Though in later times we find the ark was sometimes not only carried by the priests, but upon a cart (Joshua 3:17).

We remember the sons of Kohath were in charge of the holy things. It would not be right for them to be handled with animals, or on a cart. They are hand-carried by the members of the tribe

chosen to carry them. There would be no need for wagons, or oxen. They used poles run through sockets to carry the heavier items.

Verses 10-88: The gifts of the dedication offering from each tribe were presented in sequence on the first 12 days of the month. Each leader brought identical gifts to Yahweh, including a “silver charger” and a “silver bowl”, both fill with flour and oil as a “meat offering”; a gold spoon filled with “incense”; three animals as a “burnt offering”; a young goat as a “sin offering; and an impressive number of animals as “peace offerings”. The fact that each of the identical offerings is listed separately suggest:

- (1) A congregational pattern of worship;
- (2) The significance of the gifts from each tribe;
- (3) The delight of each tribe as its gifts were honored.

Numbers 7:10 "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."

The altar was dedicated by pouring anointing oil over it. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on it as well. The offerings from the princes were brought to be offered. Whether they were actually offered on this particular day, or on another day, we have no way of knowing.

Numbers 7:11 "And the LORD said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar."

For before this was said to him, even what follows, Moses knew not, as the same writer observes. How they should offer, in what order, whether according to their birth. Or whether according to the journeying of their camps, or whether they should offer together. Or one after another, one day after another; this affair is set in a clear light.

"They shall offer their offering each prince on his day": One on one day, and the other on the next, and so on successively for twelve days running. And this was ordered for the greater solemnity of the service, and that it might be taken notice of. And each have the honor and credit of it. And this was done, not according to the order of their birth, but as their standards were fixed. First Judah, and those under him, and so the rest in course.

"For the dedicating of the altar (see Num. 7:10).

This would cause you to believe the offerings of the princes occurred on several days. They brought it to be offered earlier, but rather than rush the whole thing through, they took a special time for each to make his offering.

Numbers 7:12 "And he that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah:"

“The first day”: I.e., the first day of the first month. The gifts of the leaders to the tabernacle were given over 12 successive days.

Now, we see the prince who represented the tribe of Judah, Nahshon, offered his offering on the first day.

Numbers 7:13 "And his offering [was] one silver charger, the weight thereof [was] a 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:"

Or dish, like one of those used in the showbread table to hold the bread in. Only they were of gold, this was of silver, and belonged to the altar of burnt offering. The use of which might be to hold the meat offering in. As it may seem from the latter part of the verse, or the wave breast or heave shoulder, which belonged to the priest.

"The weight thereof was a hundred and thirty shekels": Which were sixty one ounces, four drachms, one scruple, and seventeen grains.

"One silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary": The standard that was kept in the sanctuary. This was a lesser vessel, and was either for holding the drink offering, or receiving the blood of the sacrifices. Its weight was thirty three ounces, five drachms, and three grains.

"Both of them were full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering": Which always attended other sacrifices after mentioned. Part of which was burnt on the altar of burnt offering, and the rest were the perquisites of the priests.

This offering is of great value. You remember, that 5 shekels of silver was the redemption price of the firstborn. The silver charger weighed 5 pounds' troy weight. The silver bowl weighed just under 3 pounds. We have touched before on the fact, that the meat offering is made up of the makings of bread. Jesus is the Bread of life. He is also the Meat offering. All of the offerings symbolize Jesus in some way. "Silver" has to do with redemption.

Numbers 7:14 "One spoon of ten [shekels] of gold, full of incense:"

Its weight was according to the shekels, its matter of gold. It weighed four ounces, one drachm, and nine grains.

"Full of incense": This looks as if this spoon was designed for the golden altar of incense, which might be at this time also dedicated. But Jarchi understands it as for the altar of burnt offering, and observes, we never find incense belonging to a private person. Nor to the outward altar (the altar of burnt offering), but this only, and which was temporary.

"Gold" symbolizes the purity of God. The spoon would weigh 50 dwt. of gold. The incense is to be burned, and rise to heaven. This symbolizes the prayers of the saints that rise to heaven.

Exodus 30:7-8 "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it." "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations."

Numbers 7:15 "One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:"

Of three years old, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem.

"One ram": Of two years old, as the same Targums.

"One lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering (of which see Lev. 1:3).

These burnt offerings were a shadow of better things to come. Jesus was a male with no blemish. The difference being, that the blood of animals cannot do away with sin, it can just cover the sin. The blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb sacrifice, abolished sin for all who would believe. Jesus was God the Son.

Numbers 7:16 "One kid of the goats for a sin offering:"

Though these offerings of the princes were by way of thanksgiving. And to express their joy and gladness at the erection of the tabernacle, its altars, and the service thereof. Yet as this might not be without sin, which attends the best and purest performances of men, a sin offering was required. Teaching us to look to Christ, who was made an offering for sin, for the taking away the sins of our holy things.

The burnt offering and the peace offering consisted of more than one animal to be sacrificed. The sin offering consisted of just one animal.

Numbers 7:17 "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."

So that here were all sorts of offerings on this occasion. Meat and drink offerings, burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings. And for the latter were brought:

"Two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year": The reason why so many were brought and used for this sort of sacrifice was, because with these a feast was made, of which not only the priests partook, but the princes. And as many of their friends and acquaintance as they thought fit to invite.

"He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon": Of the tribe of Judah. Judah having had the precedence assigned to it. The prince or head of that tribe was the first admitted to offer as its representative. And his offering, as well as that of the others, is thought, from its costliness, to have been furnished not from his own private means, but from the general contributions of each tribe. Some parts of the offering, as the animals for sacrifice, were for the ritual service of the

day. The peace offerings being by much the most numerous, as the princes and some of the people joined with the priests afterwards in celebrating the occasion with festive rejoicing.

The number two speaks of agreement. The number five speaks of the grace of God. Nahshon offered for his whole tribe.

Numbers 7:18 "On the second day Nethaneel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, did offer:"

See (Num. 1:8).

Nethaneel represented the tribe of Issachar.

Numbers 7:19 "He offered [for] his offering one silver charger, the weight whereof [was] a 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:"

See (note on Num. 7:13).

This is the same offering Nahshon made for the tribe of Judah.

Numbers 7:20 "One spoon of gold of ten [shekels], full of incense:"

See (note on Num. 7:14).

This is the same offering also.

Numbers 7:21 "One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:"

See (note on Num. 7:15).

Numbers 7:22 "One kid of the goats for a sin offering:"

See (note on Num. 7:16).

Numbers 7:23 "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."

See (note on Num. 7:17).

These offerings were on the second day. They were all made for the entire tribe. Nethaneel represented the tribe of Issachar.

Numbers 7:24 "On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun, [did offer]:"

See (Num. 1:9).

Each of the tribes had their special day. Eliab represented the tribe of Zebulon.

Numbers 7:25 "His offering [was] one silver charger, the weight whereof [was] a 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:"

See (note on Num. 7:13).

Numbers 7:26 " One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense:"

See (note on Num. 7:14).

Numbers 7:27 "One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:"

See (note on Num. 7:15).

Numbers 7:28 "One kid of the goats for a sin offering:"

See (note on Num. 7:16).

Numbers 7:29 "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."

See (note on Num. 7:17).

Again, this is the very same offering that the other two had made. Each prince offers for his tribe he represented.

Numbers Chapter 7 Questions

1. What did Moses anoint?
2. What happened to everything that was anointed?
3. Who offered in the tabernacle?
4. How many covered wagons did they bring?
5. How many oxen did they bring?
6. Was this an acceptable offering?

7. What would the covered wagons be used for?
8. Who would use the wagons?
9. Two wagons and four oxen go to whom?
10. What were they responsible for transporting of the tabernacle?
11. Why did Merari get twice as many of each?
12. What was the reason Kohath did not get any?
13. How was the altar dedicated?
14. Who offered first?
15. What tribe did he represent?
16. How much did the silver charger weigh?
17. How much did the silver bowl weigh?
18. What was brought for a meat offering?
19. What does the meat offering symbolize?
20. How much gold was brought?
21. What did they do with the incense?
22. What was brought for a burnt offering?
23. What is the difference in the blood of these animals sacrificed, and the blood of Jesus shed?
24. What was brought for a sin offering?
25. What was brought for a peace offering?
26. Who was Nahshon's father?
27. Who offered on the second day?
28. What did he offer?
29. Who offered the third day?