**Numbers Chapters 7-9**

Chapter 7 begins with Moses anointing the tabernacle. As we have previously discussed, the Bible normally proceeds in chronologic order but not always. The anointing of the tabernacle was described in the last chapter of Exodus and occurred the beginning of the second year after the Israelites left Egypt. The book of Leviticus covered a period of about a month as they were camped at the base of Mt. Sanai. God chose to separately describe the offerings made by the various tribes in this chapter perhaps because it follows the numbering of each individual tribe. The leaders of the tribes listed in chapter 1 were the men who presented the offerings. The first offering made was for carts and oxen to transport the tabernacle which were given to the Gershonites and Meraites. Since the Kohathites were to carry the holy things on their shoulders, they were not provided with carts and oxen.

The remainder of the chapter is devoted to describing the offerings made for the altar. Each tribe beginning with Judah presented an identical offering of a silver plate, a silver bowl containing a grain offering, a gold dish with incense along with bulls, rams, lambs, oxen and goats for burnt, sin and fellowship offerings. Note that despite the fact that the tribes varied significantly in size and thus means, all the offerings were equal. The offerings were made on 12 consecutive days by the tribes in the order of their position in the camp as described in chapter 2.

Chapter 8 begins with Aaron setting up the lampstand with its 7 lamps. The lampstand was described in detail in Exodus chapter 25 and here it repeated that the lampstand was made in one piece. Several commentators note that there were 3 branches with lamps on each side with another lamp on the main shaft. Six is the number of man who is only complete with Jesus who represents the 7th lamp. The lamps are also thought to symbolize the 7 churches in Revelation.

The rest of the chapter focuses on the purification of the Levites to prepare them form service. They were to shave their bodies and wash their clothes after which they were to be presented along with sacrifices as a wave offering to God. God repeats that the Levites are given to him in place of the firstborn of all the tribes which belong to him (see 3:45 and Ex. 13:2). They were to work under the supervision of the priests (initially Aaron and his sons). Only Levites directly descended from Aaron were permitted to be priests. Levites of other clans performed other duties associated with the tabernacle and were eligible to serve between the ages of 25 and 50.

In chapter 9 God directed Moses to have the Israelites celebrate the Passover in accordance with His requirements as set forth in Exodus chapter 12. This would have been the first time it had been observed since they left Egypt. People who were unclean because of being in the presence of a dead body were allowed to celebrate Passover in the following month. Contrast their determination to celebrate this holiday ordained by God with those who use the thinnest of excuses to skip a church service. Conversely, God said that those who were clean who failed to celebrate the Passover must be cut off from their people (see Ex. 12:19). The chapter ends with a description of the pillar of cloud and fire that guided the camp during their travels (see Ex. 13:21-22).

My favorite place to prepare notes for our Wednesday night services is sitting at our breakfast table which has a view of the pond and our deck which is a magnet for all manner of birds due to the multiple feeders available to them. Michele is much more skilled than I am in identifying species of birds, I mostly just refer to them as solid or striped, occasionally speckled. I find hummingbirds particularly interesting since most of them migrate from South or Central America travelling sometimes thousands of miles. Most birds, including hummingbirds, leave their nest within a few weeks of birth and strike out on their own. Unlike unsuccessful children in their 20’s, returning home to live in the basement is not an option for birds. They have to make it on their own. Consider the elaborate preparations that God made for the Israelites. Beginning with the 12th chapter of Exodus, God carefully and meticulously revealed to them His laws they were to follow. He created a structure which was to be carried out by the priests. He described in detail how they were to worship Him and how they were to treat one another. Numbers may be viewed as sort of a graduation ceremony. The people had received all God’s instructions and they were ready to begin their journey toward Canaan. The pillar of cloud and fire showed them that God’s presence went with them wherever they went. God made multiple promises that He would never leave nor forsake us (see Deut. 31:6, Heb. 13:5).

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