

Numbers 7-10 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Numbers gets its name from the 2 censuses of Israel that were taken,

One at the beginning of their wilderness journey.

The other, some 38 years later at the end of the journey as they were preparing to enter Canaan.

So the book spans nearly 40 years.

In the first 8 chs. deal mostly with how the nation of Israel was organized both when they journeyed & when they set up camp.

Outline

D. Various Rules for the Camp Chs. 5-8

- 1. Dealing with the unclean 5:1-4**
- 2. Confession & restitution 5:5-10**
- 3. Dealing with jealousy 5:11-31**
- 4. The Nazarite vow 6:1-21**
- 5. The priestly blessing 6:22-27**

6. Leader's offerings Ch. 7

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

This seems out of chronological order. The Book of Exodus closes with Moses erecting the tabernacle & preparing it for holy service, so why do we read about it here?

This isn't a different event; it's the same thing as Exodus 40.

Moses repeats it here because he has more *detail* to add to it.

He wants to describe the dedication offering the leaders of the tribes brought.

²Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses, who were the leaders of the tribes & over those who were numbered, made an offering. ³And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered carts & twelve oxen, a cart for every two of the leaders, & for each one an ox; & they presented them before the tabernacle. ⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁵"Accept *these* from them, that they may be used in doing the work of the tabernacle of meeting; & you shall give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service." ⁶So Moses took the carts & the oxen, & gave them to the Levites. ⁷Two carts & four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service; ⁸and four carts & eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. ⁹But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs was the service of the holy things, *which* they carried on their shoulders.

The 12 head-elders of each of the tribes brought an ox, then went together by 2's to donate a total of 6 wagons.

When they heard that the Levites would be carrying the tabernacle furnishings, they knew that these wagons & the oxen to pull them would prove invaluable.

God told Moses to give 2 of the wagons to the Gershonites & the other 4 to the Merarites.

You'll remember from last week that the Gershonites carried curtains while the Merarites carried the heavier wood panels & metal hardware that ganged them & held them up.

The **weight** of what the Merarites had to carry demanded twice as many wagons as the Gershonites.

The Kohathites received no wagons because they transported the sacred furniture of the sanctuary & these had to be carried by poles on their shoulders.

There's an important **symbolism** in this.

Those sacred pieces of furniture in the sanctuary all spoke of the intimacy of the people's relationship with Yahweh.

They were special symbols of their covenant relationship with God.

God didn't want them to think of Him in the way the pagans thought of the idols they worshipped – as fickle & capricious deities who had little real interest in human beings, except as toys to play with.

He wanted Israel to relate to Him as a caring wife to her loving Husband.

So the fixtures that formed the heart of their worship of Him, the sanctuary furniture, were not to be carried on carts or wagons as though they were common objects.

These things spoke in the most intimate way of their covenant with Him.

They had to be carried by hand.

Growing up, my dad got transferred often: San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Detroit, Chicago, & OC.

Movers always came & packed up our stuff. But in one of the first moves, they broke some of our antiques & my mother was crushed because they irreplaceable.

From then on, whenever we moved, there were always certain items she didn't trust the movers to pack & move; she packed them herself & we took them with us in our car. Family pictures, delicate glass, fragile things that held for her special meaning – irreplaceable things.

God allowed the curtains & boards & basic hardware of the tabernacle to be transported on wagons, but the sacred furniture, the heart of the tabernacle & the symbols of their intimate covenant with Him were not to be treated as utilitarian & common – they must be carried by hand.

What's the lesson in this for us?

God does not want our relationship with Him to decay into a mere ritual, a formula, a routine.

There must be nothing "wagon-like" in our worship.

God wants us to carry Him on our lives **personally, intimately**.

When was the last time you enjoyed God?

I don't mean when was the last time you enjoyed *church*. **God!**

¹⁰Now the leaders offered the dedication offering for the altar when it was anointed; so the leaders offered their offering before the altar.

The altar that's meant here is the altar of burnt offering that stood outside the door to the sanctuary.

This is where all the offerings made by the people were sacrificed.

¹¹For the LORD said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar."

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

For 12 consecutive days, the head-elder of each tribe came & offered their dedication offering.

The order they came in is the same order the camp was arranged in & the tribes would journey by – so Judah was first & Naphtali was last.

Each of the leaders brought the same offering.

● Fine flour & oil in 1 Silver platter weighing 130 shekels & 1 Silver bowl weighing 70 shekels.

● Incense in 1 Gold pan of 10 shekels

● For the burnt offering - 1 young bull, 1 ram, 1 male lamb

● For a sin offering - 1 kid goat

● For the peace offering - 2 oxen, 5 rams, 5 male goats, 5 male lambs

A shekel was about a half ounce.

So the silver platter & bowl weighed 6¼ lbs.

The golden pan weighed about a third of a lb. so it was probably gold plated.

The burnt offering was wholly consumed on the fire, symbolic of the total dedication of the tribe to the Lord.

The peace offering was large, some 17 animals, because the head of each family of the tribe would take a piece of it back to be enjoyed by his family.

With the thousands involved, they wouldn't get much, but it wasn't meant to be full meal – just a picture of the fellowship they enjoyed with God.

In vs. 18-88 we read about the other 11 tribes all bringing the exact same dedication gift on consecutive days.

They all brought the same gift because this is the gift God told them to bring.

It was a generous.

You see, God was training these former slaves to be free-men.

Freedom isn't merely a political condition; it's a state of mind & though the Jews were in fact no longer in bondage in Egypt, they had yet to start thinking like the free people they were!

A slave is someone who has nothing, so he/she is constantly in a *taking* mode.

They never know when the next bite or drink will be coming or from where it will arise.

Survival is often a precarious thing that has to be protected with ceaseless vigilance.

Because slaves serve through coercion, they're not givers by nature, they're takers.

But free men who are destined for The Promised Land are givers.

They have complete dependence on God to provide for them in abundance, so they give as an act of blessing.

God had to tell the Israelites what to give in the offerings because they were still thinking like slaves & not as the free-men they now were.

What was true for them is true for us.

We are no longer slaves to sin & death but free in Jesus.

We enjoy the abundance of God's grace & the awareness that He is the Author & Source of our lives.

The Christian is not a taker but a giver.

It's important that we start thinking that way – being what in fact we are.

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

The main place God spoke to Moses was inside the tabernacle.

While the general rule for the people was that no one was allowed into the holy of holies except the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement, while Moses lived, he was granted access regularly.

God spoke to him from above the Ark of the Covenant, & between the two golden cherubim which were a part of the lid, the mercy seat that covered the ark.

7. The golden lamp 8:1-4

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Speak to Aaron, & say to him, ‘When you arrange the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.’” ³And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the LORD commanded Moses. ⁴Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

The golden lampstand was on the left hand side of the holy place as one entered the curtained door.

On the right was the table of showbread with its 12 loaves symbolizing the 12 tribes, & straight ahead standing just in front of the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place was the golden altar of incense which represented the prayers of the nation arising before the Lord's throne. The golden lamp was a symbol of Israel's call to be a light to the world as she lived by God's Word & enjoyed her covenant with Him. The lamps atop each of the 7 branches of the lampstand were oil lamps, oil being a symbol of the Holy Spirit Who alone illuminates us. The lamps themselves were shallow bowls in which a wick was placed. God told Aaron, whose job it was to tend the lamp daily, that he was to lay the wicks in such a way that they burned toward the front of the lampstand as it sat in the holy place. This way the lamps light would fall on the table of showbread & the golden altar. The symbolism being that our fellowship with the Lord & with one another has to be that which is made real by the illumination of God's Word. Our faith isn't merely some emotional thing, nor is it religious sentiment alone. It has real substance & content because it's grounded in the light of God's Word which the Holy Spirit reveals to us. The light of the lamp also shone on the golden altar, speaking to the fact that our prayers must also be informed by the Word & inspired by the Spirit.

8. Dedication of the Levites 8:5-26

⁵Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁶“Take the Levites from among the children of Israel & cleanse them *ceremonially*. ⁷Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, & let them shave all their body, & let them wash their clothes, & so make themselves clean.

Aaron & his sons had already been consecrated to their service as priest in Leviticus 8 & 9 – this is the dedication of the rest of the Levites to their roles as under-priests.

They were to shave all their body hair, just as a leper would do when he/she was healed.

The picture here is that of being made completely new, like a baby.

They would wash their clothes, then Moses would sprinkle them with the water of purification.

All of these images spoke *strongly* to them of being made new.

Friends, there is something to be said for the importance of ceremony & ritual in our worship of God & our on-going relationship with Him.

You certainly would have to say that in the OT, God was into rituals & special ceremonies as a way to communicate to His people that their relationship with Him meant something special.

Let's read on; there's more here -

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

⁹And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, & you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. ¹⁰So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, & the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; ¹¹and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD. ¹²Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, & you shall offer one as a sin offering & the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites. ¹³“& you shall stand the Levites before Aaron & his sons, & then offer them like a wave offering to the LORD. ¹⁴Thus [like this, in this manner] you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, & the Levites shall be Mine. ¹⁵After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them & offer them like a wave offering. ¹⁶For they *are* wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. ¹⁷For all the firstborn among the children of Israel *are* Mine, *both* man & beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. ¹⁸I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. ¹⁹And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron & his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, & to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.” ²⁰Thus Moses & Aaron & all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them. ²¹And the Levites purified themselves & washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them *like* a wave offering before the LORD, & Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. ²²After that the Levites went in to do their work in the tabernacle of meeting before Aaron & his sons; as the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.

All the people came & in one massive ceremony they laid hands on the Levites & appointed them to the service the Lord had called them to.

Imagine what this would look like from above!

In the laid back & casual culture of California many people have adopted a determined anti-authoritarian & anti-tradition stance that has had some terribly damaging results.

Many have an attitude of defiance toward anything that looks like a time-honored tradition of the past.

The marriage ceremony is one example that has taken a huge hit. The way we see this anti-tradition culture is in some people's attitude toward the ordinances the Lord gave the Church; baptism & Communion. These are specific rites Jesus commanded us to practice, & yet some look on them with disfavor, or as if they were optional & not really very important. Think about how important this ceremony of dedication was to the Levites. They shaved off all their body hair, washed their clothes, stood before Moses as he sprinkled them with the water of purification, then all the people gathered round & laid hands on them. Every person was connected – all 2½ million of them! Then they stood before Aaron & in a united movement swayed back & forth as a wave offering to the Lord, offering themselves in dedication to the Lord's work. Do you think this might have a profound impact on them for the rest of their lives? That's the whole point – God intends these special ceremonies to be markers, turning points, significant moments that change the way we see ourselves & so behave. Without them, we gut the power of the message of God's grace by not giving that grace a chance to work in us. This is why we do altar calls. People need to have a chance to make a *definite* response to the invitation God gives.

²³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴“This is what pertains to the Levites: From twenty-five years old & above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; ²⁵and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, & shall work no more.

In ch. 4 we learned that the age of service for a priest was between 30 & 50.

So why is 25 mentioned here?

At 25 a Levite became an apprentice. His apprenticeship lasted for 5 years.

At 50 he was done & would retire.

²⁶They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties.”

While the Levites had to retire at 50 & could not longer do any of the actual work of serving & moving the tabernacle, they could assist in other ways.

There would always be a need for priests who could teach the Law & judge between people's civil conflicts.

The experienced men would also stand & supervise in the breaking down & setting up of the tabernacle when they moved & made camp.

E. The Second Passover Ch. 9:1-14

¹Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: ²“Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. ³On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you

shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites & ceremonies you shall keep it.”⁴ So Moses told 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 twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.

This was now only the 2nd Passover they had observed.

The 1st was one year before when they had left Egypt.

Every Passover they would from now on observe was a memorial to that 1st one that brought about their deliverance from slavery.

⁶Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; & they came before Moses & Aaron that day.⁷ And those men said to him, “We *became* defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the children of Israel?”

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

I like this. Instead of Moses coming up with his own idea about how to solve this problem, he went to the Lord & asked what to do.

This is what we ought to do with our problems & needs – go to the Lord.

Don't be so quick to just jump at the first & most likely solution or answer.

Your very first thought ought to be to turn to the Lord & say, “Jesus,. What do I do?”

Then trust that He will lead you.

Listen - I'm all for *common sense* & for using the means the Lord has given to live life & get the job done.

I have little patience for the attitude that says, “Lord, do you want me to get out of bed today? Should I brush my teeth? Should I wear white or brown socks?”

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm speaking about facing those issues that call us to make a decision that is *not* ordinary or daily.

One day after the Jews had entered the Canaan & were taking possession of the land, a group of travel weary visitors arrived before Joshua saying they were from a far distant land.

They said they'd heard about Israel's great power & favor with God & wanted to strike a deal with them. It was a peace treaty.

Joshua was under strict orders from the Lord not to make peace with any of the Canaanites – but all the evidence said these people were from well beyond the borders of the Promised Land.

Why, just look at the tattered clothes & thread-bare sandals.

Their hair was long & their food stale it was so old – surely these people had come from a great distance!

No, it was a ruse - they were Canaanites who had found an ingenious way to trick Joshua into making a treaty.

Walking in the Spirit means living in such close communion with the Lord that you will know when you ought to turn to Him & ask for His intervention & insight into what to do.

⁹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD’s Passover. ¹¹On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread & bitter herbs. ¹²They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

God used the case of these unclean men as a way to make what we would call “case-law.”

If a person was unable through uncleanness or because of travel to keep the Passover on the 14th day of the 1st month, then he/she could keep it one month later.

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

Anyone who just decided not to keep the Passover was to be put to death.

The Passover was a commemoration of the redemption God had wrought for them, delivering them from slavery & making them free.

To neglect it would be a profound act of defiance & rebellion that was dangerous to the entire nation.

Such a spiritual & moral cancer had to be removed before it did worse damage.

¹⁴‘& if a stranger dwells among you, & would keep the LORD’s Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover & according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger & the native of the land.’”

While v. 13 gave the punishment for any Jew who neglected the Passover, v. 14 gives the consent for any Gentile who wanted to observe it.

The only stipulation was that he had to observe it exactly as it had been designed. Innovation would not be tolerated.

II. THE JOURNEY TO CANAAN BEGINS Chs. 9:15-10:36

A. Knowing When to Move 9:15-23

¹⁵Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire.

When Israel first came out of Egypt, the pillar of cloud by day & fire by night had led them all the way to Mt Sinai.

When the tabernacle was finally built, the pillar moved to hover over the tabernacle itself, showing God’s acceptance of the tent as the place where He would meet with them.

Many scholars believe that the cloud covered the entire camp protecting them from

the scorching rays of the desert sun.

At night, it glowed to provide a light for their camp.

The glow would then diminish as the hours for sleep came.

¹⁶So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, & the appearance of fire by night. ¹⁷Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; & in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. ¹⁸At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, & at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. ¹⁹Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD & did not journey. ²⁰So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, & according to the command of the LORD they would journey. ²¹So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. ²²Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped & not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. ²³At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, & at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

When it was time for the Israelites to move, the cloud of God's presence would lift off the top of the tabernacle.

This was the signal to pack up.

The cloud would then retake its form as a pillar & go before them to lead them.

When they arrived where they were to camp, the pillar would once more spread out above them as a kind of atmospheric awning.

Sometimes they would stay in a place for only a day, other times they might be there for over a year.

Their marching schedule was determined by the Lord's guidance.

It had to be quite a remarkable thing to be able to just go out of your tent & no matter where you were in the camp, look up & see the visible manifestation of God's presence.

These people had a constant reminder of God among them.

For some time now it has been my earnest desire to live every moment with the awareness of God's presence – to never lose that sense that God is right here, right now.

I want to live "coram deo" – before God's face.

But how often I forget!

When Moses saw an Egyptian abusing a Jewish slave, he looked this way, & that way, then murdered the Egyptian.

Moses looked this way & that way, but he forgot to look *up*!
It would be some time before he would discover the God who is everywhere & sees all.

B. Signaling the Time to Move 10:1-10

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation & for directing the movement of the camps. ³When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The camp of Israel was going to need some kind of mass-communication device.

God told Moses to make 2 trumpets of silver which could be used to signal different messages.

The typical horn they used was the shofar, the ram's horn.

The problem with the shofar is it only makes one sound.

The silver trumpets were true musical instruments capable of making different notes.

When both of them were blown in unison, it was a call to summon the entire nation.

⁴But if they blow *only one*, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you.

If only one trumpet was sounded, it was a signal that only the head-elders were to gather.

⁵When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey.

A different trumpet call altogether would be used to let the eastern tribes know it was time for them to set forth.

⁶When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys.

When the song of advance was played a 2nd time, the southern division would set out.

It's not said that this was done & 3rd & 4th time for the northern & western divisions but that's the idea.

⁷And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance.

In other words, there were different tunes used for the different functions of the trumpets.

⁸The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; & these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.

⁹“When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, & you will be remembered before the LORD your God, & you will be saved from your enemies. ¹⁰Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, & at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the

trumpets over your burnt offerings & over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; & they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God.”

Other tunes were to be played for other occasions.

One was a battle cry.

Another was a tune of joyous celebration.

One was to announce the commencement & ending of the feasts.

The first day of every month had a different tune.

And they were to blow the trumpets when they were sacrificing at the altar on behalf of the nation.

C. The Departure from Sinai 10:11-36

¹¹Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony.

This was the sign it was time for them to strike camp.

¹²And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. ¹³So they started out for the first time according to the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

[Show Map]

¹⁴The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according to their armies; over their army was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. ¹⁵Over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethanel the son of Zuar. ¹⁶And over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon.

The Eastern Division of tribes set out first.

Then came the Gershonites & Merarites carrying the curtains & boards of the tabernacle.

¹⁷Then the tabernacle was taken down; & the sons of Gershon & the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle.

Next comes the Southern Division in vs. 18-20.

²¹Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival.)

Last week we saw that the Kohathites carried the sacred items of the holy place after they had been properly covered & prepared by the sons of Aaron.

In vs. 22-24 the Northern Division of tribes sets out next & then in vs. 25-27 the Western 3 tribes bring up the rear guard.

²⁸Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they began their journey.

²⁹Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, & we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel."

30 And he said to him, “I will not go, but I will depart to my own land & to my relatives.”

Hobab was Moses’ brother in law. Reuel, also known as Jethro, was Moses’ father in law.

As they are camped now at Mt. Sinai, they are Moses’ in-laws ancestral neighborhood.

Now that they are setting out toward Canaan, Moses asks his brother in law to come along.

Hobab declines. But Moses urges him to come.

31 So Moses said, “Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, & you can be our eyes. 32 And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be—that whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same we will do to you.”

Hobab comes from a long line of desert dwellers who know how to survive in the wilderness.

Though Moses has lived some 40 years in this region himself, he knows his level of expertise is nothing compared to Hobab’s & knows he can provide great intelligence as they travel.

Now, why would Moses want Hobab along & look to him for guidance when the Lord Himself was leading them?

Is this a lack of faith on Moses’ part?

Not at all! Moses understood that God might very well want to use a man like Hobab to help lead his people.

Friends, depending on the Lord does not mean presuming that God is going to answer all our prayers & meet all our needs in some dramatically miraculous fashion.

The person who says, “Lord, give me this day my daily bread” & then sits at his table waiting for a loaf of French bread to suddenly appear before him is a fool.

God gives us our daily bread by giving us the strength to go out & work & earn a wage so we can purchase bread.

Think about how much more blessing comes from working to earn bread than just having it appear on a plate.

When you go to work, you provide a service or produce a product other can use or sell. This generates revenue that is then dispersed to many others.

Like you in the form of your wage, which you take to the market & buy a loaf of bread.

Okay, you have your bread, but your money goes into the store, which pays the baker & its employees, who can also buy bread now with their wages.

When a loaf appears miraculously in front of you, whose blessed – You!

When you earn a loaf of bread, dozens of people are blessed!

The point to remember is that it’s God who gives us the ability to provide bread.

Moses knew God was guiding them but he knew that God could use Hobab to help provide that guidance as they sought to live in the wilderness.

33 So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; & the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them

for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

³⁴And the cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp.

This suggests that the ark went out in front of the tribes.

The way to understand this is to see the pillar of God's presence hovering at the eastern edge of the camp.

Once the tabernacle was taken down, the bearers of the ark would carry it to the edge of the camp as near the pillar as they could get.

The pillar of cloud would then go forward & the ark would follow close behind.

Because the ark could travel much faster than the entire camp, it would go on ahead until it got to the place the Lord wanted them to camp.

Then it would spread out again as a cloud over the ark, showing where the center of the camp & the tabernacle were to lie.

³⁵So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, & let those who hate You flee before You." ³⁶And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel."

As God went out ahead of them to lead them, Moses would pray that any enemies they might encounter would be scattered.

Friends, God never leads us to a place He hasn't first prepared for us & us for.

& when God guides us, He will deal with anything or anyone that would stand in the way of what it is He wants to do in us.

That is not to say the way won't be difficult & that there will be no battles on the way.

Israel was harassed & attacked as they made their way to Canaan.

But as long as they were faithfully following the Lord, they were victorious.

Remember, God was turning Israel from slaves to an army, & soldiers are only forged in the thick of battle.

You & I are called to be soldier as well.

This planet is a battlefield & we are to take ground for the Kingdom of Christ - Not physical territory, but the hearts & souls of men & women, boys & girls.

As Moses prayed, so can we as we start our day - "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, & let those who hate You flee before You."

Then when we come home at night, "Return, O LORD, To those who look to You."