



Numbers - Chapter Seven

I Numbers 1:1-10:10 - Israel Prepares to Enter the Land (continues)

Summary of Chapter Seven

The opening statement: <<On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings>> places these events a month before those described in Chapters 1-6, for example: <<On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting>> (Exodus 40:2), and: <<The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying>> (Numbers 1:1). If the opening chapters of Numbers had not been placed first, it would have been more difficult to grasp the significance of what is described in this chapter. Numbers Chapters 3-4 describes the duties of the priests and Levites; Chapter 7 shows how the other tribes supported them. First, they supplied wagons and oxen to help the Levites carry the tabernacle. The Gershonites, carriers of the tabernacle curtains and hangings (4:25-26), were given two wagons and four oxen (v.7). The Merarites, carriers of the poles, frames, and bases (4:31-32), were given four wagons and eight oxen (v.8). The Kohathites, who carried the tabernacle furniture on shoulder poles, received none (v.9).

On twelve successive days the leaders of the twelve tribes, one leader per day, brought gifts to show their tribes' support for the official worship. Each tribe gave exactly the same thing: one silver plate and one silver basin, each filled with flour mixed with oil. They also offered one golden dish full of incense. The lower weight of 4 ounces or 113g of the dish makes commentators think it may have been more like a ladle or spoon. Then there were a variety of animals to keep the regular sacrifices going. The summary of all the donations in vv.84-88 shows that the animals were not sacrificed immediately after they were

offered but were kept for the appropriate occasion. The exact repetition of the donations of each tribe underlines that all the tribes were equally committed to supporting the tabernacle. It is also noteworthy that, as in Chapters 1-4, the tribe of Judah takes the lead.

I.e Numbers 7:1-89 - Offerings of the Leaders

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings, and had anointed and consecrated the altar with all its utensils, ² the leaders of Israel, heads of their ancestral houses, the leaders of the tribes, who were over those who were enrolled, made offerings. ³ They brought their offerings before the Lord, six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; they presented them before the tabernacle.

Numbers 7:1-3

On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle. As stated in the chapter summary the Book of Numbers is out of chronological order here. This special offering may have happened before the events of Numbers Chapter One.

The leaders of the tribes brought their offerings before the Lord. The leaders of each tribe bring a total of six wagons, one for every two of the leaders, and twelve oxen, for each one an ox, given to transport the various components of the tabernacle through the wilderness.

Six covered wagons and twelve oxen. At this time, such carts were a great luxury, and no doubt, a significant offering from the tribes. It is not revealed whether the wagons were newly built or taken from existing stock. The former is most likely as they were gifts to the Lord. The cost of each wagon would have been shared equally between two tribes.

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses: ⁵ Accept these from them, that they may be used in performing the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each according to his service. ⁶ So Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. ⁷ Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the Gershonites, according to their service; ⁸ and four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the Merarites, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

⁹ But to the Kohathites he gave none, because they were charged with the care of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulders.

Numbers 7:4-9

Accept these from them. God informs Moses that these items are acceptable to him as gifts for the service of the tabernacle.

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

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

But to the Kohathites he gave none. The family of Kohath received no carts, and no oxen; they were to carry the holy furniture of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:4), and were to carry all things on their shoulders, so, to remove the temptation to disobey, Moses gave them no carts!

¹⁰ The leaders also presented offerings for the dedication of the altar at the time when it was anointed; the leaders presented their offering before the altar. ¹¹ The Lord said to Moses: They shall present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.

Numbers 7:10-11

The leaders also presented offerings for the dedication of the altar. In addition to the required transportation, the leader of each tribe came one day at a time to offer additional gifts. By doing so in this way they made this a twelve day ceremony of dedication. Although unrelated, this ceremony bears similarities to the later tradition of the twelve days of Christmas, which itself is believed to have been adapted from a pagan ceremony celebrating the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere.

¹² The one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah; ¹³ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ¹⁴ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ¹⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ¹⁶ one male goat for a sin-offering; ¹⁷ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two

oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

Numbers 7:12-17

The one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon. As with their ordering in camp and on the march, Judah was given the honour of being the first tribe to make their offering.

His offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels. Each offering was identical and significant in terms of its value. Each leader brought a silver platter and a silver platter, each full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; a gold pan with incense, a bull, a ram, a male lamb, a young goat, two oxen, five rams, five adult goats, and five more lambs.

Each silver plate weighed about three pounds, each silver bowl about two pounds, and a gold shovel about four ounces. Clearly, this was generous giving. God must show Promised Land people how to be givers, one of the best measures of one who has moved from a slave mind-set to a Promised Land mind-set. The slave by nature is a taker, because he is often unsure of provision. Promised Land people are generous, because they trust in a God who promised to meet all their needs.

The repetition of each offering may seem like taking up unnecessary space in Scripture so it seems that the point is to show that each gift was equally accepted because each was given with the right motivational heart. This shows that it was the motivation behind the gift and not its intrinsic value that is of interest to God, as was the case when Jesus witnessed a widow giving a small amount into the offering, yet it was all she had thereby giving it far greater value in the sight of God (Mark 12:42-44).

¹⁸ On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, presented an offering; ¹⁹ he presented for his offering one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ²⁰ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ²¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, as a burnt-offering; ²² one male goat as a sin-offering; ²³ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

Numbers 7:18-23

On the second day Nethanel presented an offering. The second gift was from the tribe of Issachar, who were to camp next to Judah and march in their group.

²⁴ On the third day Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the Zebulunites:
²⁵ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ²⁶ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ²⁷ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ²⁸ one male goat for a sin-offering; ²⁹ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

Numbers 7:24-29

On the third day Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the Zebulunites. The third gift was from the tribe of Zebulun, who were to camp with Judah and Issachar and also march in their group. The gifts from the east side of the camp were complete.

³⁰ On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites: ³¹ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ³² one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ³³ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ³⁴ one male goat for a sin-offering; ³⁵ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

Numbers 7:30-35

On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites. The tribe of Reuben were the leaders of the group that were to camp on the south side of the camp.

³⁶ On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the Simeonites: ³⁷ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ³⁸ one golden dish weighing ten shekels,

full of incense; ³⁹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁴⁰ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁴¹ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

Numbers 7:36-41

On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the Simeonites. The tribe of Simeon came next and were to camp and march under the banner of the tribe of Reuben.

⁴² On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the Gadites: ⁴³ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁴⁴ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁴⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁴⁶ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁴⁷ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

Numbers 7:42-47

On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the Gadites. The tribe of Gad were the sixth to make their offering and completed the group that were camped on the south side of the tabernacle.

Deuel is elsewhere called Reuel (2:14). The letters D (ד) and R (ר) are easily confused in Hebrew script. Deuel is most likely the correct version as it is used here and in 10:20.

⁴⁸ On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraimites: ⁴⁹ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁵⁰ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁵¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁵² one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁵³ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

Numbers 7:48-53

On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraimites.

The tribe of Ephraim were the first to make their offering of the group that would camp on the west side of the tabernacle.

⁵⁴ On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites: ⁵⁵ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁵⁶ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁵⁷ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁵⁸ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁵⁹ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

Numbers 7:54-59

On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites.

The tribe of Manasseh were descendants of Joseph, as were Ephraim, and were encamped close to their nearest kin.

⁶⁰ On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideoni, the leader of the Benjaminites: ⁶¹ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁶² one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁶³ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁶⁴ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁶⁵ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan son of Gideoni.

Numbers 7:60-65

On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideoni, the leader of the Benjaminites.

The tribe of Benjamin completed the offering from the groups on the west side of the camp. Benjamin was the only full brother to Joseph and it seemed appropriate that his descendants should march with his descendants.

⁶⁶ On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites: ⁶⁷ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to

the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁶⁸ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁶⁹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁷⁰ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁷¹ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

Numbers 7:66-71

On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites. The tribe of Dan were the lead group camped on the north side of the tabernacle.

⁷² On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ocran, the leader of the Asherites: ⁷³ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁷⁴ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁷⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁷⁶ one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁷⁷ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ocran.

Numbers 7:72-77

On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ocran, the leader of the Asherites. The tribe of Asher made their offering next and were camped under the banner of Dan.

⁷⁸ On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites: ⁷⁹ his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering; ⁸⁰ one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; ⁸¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt-offering; ⁸² one male goat for a sin-offering; ⁸³ and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

Numbers 7:78-83

On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites. The leader of the tribe of Naphtali made the final offering of dedication for the altar, thus

completing the sequence in the same order as the tribes are listed in Numbers Chapter Two.

⁸⁴ This was the dedication-offering for the altar, at the time when it was anointed, from the leaders of Israel: twelve silver plates, twelve silver basins, twelve golden dishes, ⁸⁵ each silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels and each basin seventy, all the silver of the vessels two thousand four hundred shekels according to the shekel of the sanctuary, ⁸⁶ the twelve golden dishes, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece according to the shekel of the sanctuary, all the gold of the dishes being one hundred and twenty shekels; ⁸⁷ all the livestock for the burnt-offering twelve bulls, twelve rams, twelve male lambs a year old, with their grain-offering; and twelve male goats for a sin-offering; ⁸⁸ and all the livestock for the sacrifice of well-being twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the male lambs a year old sixty. This was the dedication-offering for the altar, after it was anointed.

Numbers 7:84-88

This was the dedication-offering for the altar, at the time when it was anointed. This summary statement gives the totals of the offering of the twelve tribes who were to contribute. The Levites made no contribution to the offering as they were dedicated to God and anointed to his service for life; that was their offering.

⁸⁹ When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy-seat that was on the ark of the covenant from between the two cherubim; thus it spoke to him.

Numbers 7:89

This verse emphasises the awesome responsibility of Moses, who often went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, and who then heard the voice of God speaking to him, in order to receive and communicate God's instructions for the people. This verse also reinforces the importance of the tabernacle, for it was there that Moses heard God speaking to him from between the two cherubim. For a description of the cherubim on the ark, refer to Exodus 25:10-22.