

NUMBERS

Lesson 11 - Chapter 10

The preparations by God, through Moses, for establishing Israel as a nation of people under the banner of Yehoveh are nearly complete. Last week, in Numbers 9, we saw Israel celebrate the **first memorial** Passover. That is, the Passover in Egypt was not an observance; it was the actual event itself. It was that dreadful and wonderful night that God delivered the Hebrews from Egypt. The Passover of Numbers 9 is looking back, as a remembrance, of that event that had taken place one year earlier.

So for the next 1300 years or so Pesach, Passover, was observed by Israel as a day to celebrate their Exodus. That is why on Passover of about 30 A.D. Yeshua transformed the Passover celebration from not only a remembrance of Israel's redemption from Egyptian slavery, but also to a remembrance of HIM and the unmatched redemption that He offered. He even used the word remembrance: do this (the Passover Seder with unleavened bread and wine representing his body and blood) in remembrance of ME. And this was because indeed His followers were being redeemed from the bondage to sin, and the wages of sin. And with all this talk of remembrance let me remind you that the WAGES of sin equates to the curse of the Law....it's two ways of saying the essentially same thing. Please hear me and take this in not only for yourself, but tell especially your Believing brothers and sisters that the curse of the Law is not the Law itself, the curse of the Law is the consequence of breaking the Law. And that consequence is death. The curse of sinning is not sin itself, the curse of sinning is the consequence (or wages) of sinning: death. What defines sin? What tell us which behaviors and attitudes are in line with His will and which are not? God says it is His Law..... the Torah. We must do all we can to educate a very unenlightened church about a terrible false and unscriptural doctrine that the Law is a curse. For the Giver of the Law is God, the Law is good, and God does not change. The Lord does not give us what is bad and then tell us to be obedient to it, only to turn around later and say that it was actually bad and that to obey it is wrong. If He would do that, why would He not abolish what He has done in the New Testament, via Yeshua, declare it bad and wrong and then give us something else?

The next thing we dealt with in Chapter 9 was the fire-cloud and it was the sign of God's presence with Israel. But it was also to be Israel's navigation system. When the fire-cloud moved Israel moved and followed it. When the fire-cloud came to rest so did Israel. There could be no finer nor simpler example of what it means to walk with God, to follow God. When He moves we move. When He rests we rest. All else is futility and self and meaningless activity.

Let's read Number chapter 10.

READ NUMBERS 10 all

This is the last preparation before Israel's march into the Wilderness begins. And that last preparation involves the use of trumpets. The idea is basic: the Silver Trumpets are used to signal to the people that an instruction from God has come; and it then signals how the people are to respond in a general sense. The trumpets are like air raid sirens or a weather alert radio.

The trumpets are to be made of hammered silver. The Bible doesn't give us much information about how they look. BUT.....Josephus does and we have ancient coins from Israel that picture the Trumpets. There is even an engraving of the Silver Trumpets on the Arch of Titus (the Roman who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and looted the Temple of it's gold and silver objects), which is located in Rome. So we know what the Trumpets looked like; they were a straight tube, flared at the end. They were something less than 18" in length.

And verse 2 tells us exactly what they were to be used for: to summon the community of Israel and to set the divisions in motion. In other words they were blown when it was necessary for Moses to tell the people something; or they were used to tell the 4 divisions of Israel to get up and move. Recall that Israel's 12 tribes had been grouped into divisions of 3 tribes each and each 3-tribe division was assigned a specific place of encampment around the Wilderness Tabernacle.

Beginning in verse 3 the actual calls of the Trumpets (the different ways they are played) are defined so everyone will know what they mean. Obviously this system of directing the actions and movements of people by means of sounding a horn or beating a drum was neither new nor invented by Israel. This system had been in use for centuries before them in almost all known cultures; and then as here for Israel, the main use was military.....it was for directing an army.

Let's talk about these trumpets for a couple of minutes. First know that these Silver Trumpets are not the same thing as shofars. We can know that by their description and their specific names. In Hebrew these Silver Trumpets are called **hatsotserah**, while **shofar** is the Hebrew word for an animal horn or antler. A shofar is NOT an earlier more ancient and primitive version of a **hatsotserah**, a metal trumpet, as some have supposed.

And their uses are different not so much in **what** they are used for, but rather **WHO** uses them. In the Bible the common people use a shofar, but the Silver Trumpets can **ONLY** be blown by priests. As some examples we find that shofars are used to frighten an enemy (Judges 7), to warn that an enemy is coming (Hosea 5), to call the army to battle (Judges 6), to call for the army to stop fighting (2 Samuel), to call people to rebel against injustice (2 Samuel). A shofar was even blown to declare the coronation of a King (Kings 9) and to bring down the walls of Jericho. Yet in the same story of the walls of Jericho we'll find that Silver Trumpets are also blown.

We see in Hosea 5 and 2Kings 9 the use of Trumpets for basically the same reasons as blowing the shofar. In fact we often find that **BOTH** shofars and Silver Trumpets are blown at the same time for similar purposes. That has led to many Bible versions completely mixing up shofars and trumpets and using the terms interchangeably (an error to be sure).

It's also important to know that priests were always an integral part of an army. Today we have chaplains. In ancient cultures there were "war priests" and that was almost universal among all civilizations and societies. It was no different for Israel; whenever Israel went to war some priests were involved, and one of their duties was to sound the Trumpets.

I'm not going to delve deeply into all the different horn blasts and signals, but recognize that the various alarms could be played EITHER on a shofar or a trumpet; what could NOT be changed, however, was that only PRIESTS could blow Trumpets. In general it could be said the longer blasts were for calling either the leaders of Israel together, or for assembling all the people of Israel. The shorter more staccato sounds were used in battle for directing troops. In Hebrew the longer blast were called **taka** or **takia** and the shorter blasts called **teruah**. It is a certainty that the way it worked in battle was that the military commander would tell the priests what signal to blow and the priests would blow those signals to the army from the most strategic point that was available, using those Silver Trumpets. Then the field commanders and leaders of divisions and units would repeat those calls on shofars, the horn of the non-priests, throughout the battlefield.

Verse 5 tells us that when the Silver Trumpets are used to signal for the divisions of Israel to move, that the FIRST time the Trumpets are sounded using **Teruah**, or short blasts, it is the division that camps to the superior EAST side of the Tabernacle that is to spring into action: the division led by Judah. The 2nd round of **Teruah** says that those camped on the South (the 2nd most prestigious camping position), led by Reuben, are to move.

One of the key purposes of the horn blast says verse 9, is that when the horns are blown during battle the Lord will remember and Israel will be delivered. In essence the Silver Trumpet blasts are like a prayer; a prayer to remind God that even the blowing of the Trumpets is itself His Command to Israel, and so His Law is being obeyed. Interestingly the Essenes in the Dead Sea Scrolls had much to say about the use of Trumpets as a device of worship and war. They speak of, "**trumpets of remembrance**" and of the use of trumpets for, "**the vengeful remembrance at the appointed time of God**".

At the appropriate time (and I really don't know when that is, yet) I'll speak to you in depth about phrases we'll find Jesus using that are uniquely Essene word structures; phrases that we'll find almost word-for-word in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Phrases that don't necessarily identify Messiah with the Essenes (Yeshua was NOT as Essene) but phrases and terms He uses that often REFER to the Essenes. In fact the Essenes were big on "end times" doctrines and teachings and more and more we're discovering their influence on the people of Judah at the time of Jesus and before, as well as on the writings of the New Testament.

Point being that the Essenes' teaching on the holy use of trumpets (remember they were to be used only by priests) is echoed in the New Testament comments of Jesus and others as they describe end times happenings. I gave you one prominent phrase found in the Dead Sea Scrolls about Trumpets being blown for "the vengeful remembrance at the appointed time of God". And, what better term could we find to describe the wrath that Yehoveh will pour out on the world as the coming of Christ nears than "vengeful remembrance of an appointed time of God".

Let me list for you just a few places in the NT where we'll find the blowing of Trumpets signaling this "vengeful remembrance":

NAS Matthew 24:31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

NAS 1 Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

NAS 1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

NAS Revelation 8:13 And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

NAS Revelation 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

The thing is that trumpets are used to call the congregation together for a message, for worship, for warning, for action and for war. Further they are to be used by priests; or put in another way, used only by those anointed to special high-holy status. Therefore that is why we'll see trumpets being blown in Heaven by angels because they are certainly beings of a special high-holy status. But even more the use of trumpets in the NT is but a precise extension of the God-pattern laid down in the Torah (always a good thing to recognize).

Then in verse 10 we see something else about the Silver Trumpets: they shall be blown on joyous occasions..... those occasions being the 7 Biblical Feasts AND New Moons (meaning the start of each new month). And during those festivals and new moons (and there seems to be some interpretive room for sounding them during other joyous occasions in honor of Yehoveh) they shall also be blown during the sacrifice of the burnt offering and the offering of well being (in Hebrew, the 'Olah and the Shelamim).

BTW: let me point out that this is NOT about playing music, songs, on a Trumpet. This is about sounding the detailed blasts as defined in the earlier verses. This is NOT a musical instrument. They Levites had dedicated musical instruments and they played them. usually while accompanying the singing of Psalms. Silver Trumpets were Torah ordained communication devices.

Verse 11 begins a momentous time in the Torah, the beginning of the journey into the Wilderness and it begins on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year after they left Egypt (that is, 13 months and 20 days). Now I will tell you that there is some minor disagreement over whether they were gone from Egypt at this time for 11 months or 13 months. And it has to

do with some ambiguity over whether the references to months and years were based on the date they left Egypt or based on a pre-existing calendar. I think it was based on the amount of time after they left Egypt.

The first period of time surrounding Israel's Exodus (from the leaving of Egypt to the arrival at Mt. Sinai, the receiving of the Law, the building of the Tabernacle and ordination of the priesthood, and the census and now the construction of the two Silver Trumpets) was boot camp. It was preparation for what would begin on this the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year.

As had been ordained, the trumpets blow and the first division to move (verse 13) was Judah; this meant not only the tribe of Judah, but also the other two tribes associated with it, Issachar and Zebulun.

In the procedure of striking camp the next thing to happen was that the Tabernacle was to be disassembled and the clans of Gershon and Merari would load up the portion of the Sanctuary they were responsible for and put it in wagons. They would go ahead of the clan of Kohath who would be carrying the Ark of the Covenant and other sacred furniture, because this way the Tabernacle could be re-assembled at their stopping point, ready and waiting to receive the sacred Tabernacle objects and the Ark when they arrived.

After the Gershonites and the Merarites (remember, these were all clans of Levi), then the 3rd tribe of the division of Reuben would be mustered. After them the division of Ephraim, and then at the rear of the column would be the division of Dan.

The proper way to think of this (if you've been in the military this will be more understandable) is that they set out in battle order. Let us never forget that the way the camp and the march were organized was to create a cohesive and enormous army. They were going to have to take the Land of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, by force. All the prayer and worship and ritual and observance they engaged in was but preparation and obedience; it was what preceded action and it was what came before doing battle. This is something Christians need to re-think. Somehow or another because Christ is (correctly) referred to as the Prince of Peace, we have reached a point of absolute passivity. It has been implied (if not outright taught) that with the advent of Yeshua our Savior we're supposed to pray and then sit and wait for God to do everything. Not true. We're supposed to wait to be **called to action** BY God, and then before we go into action, prepare through learning and prayer. Today most Western Christians find it easier to outsource the action part. Better to pray and write a check and hire somebody than to get up and (yourself) be in service to God. Learning and prayer is never a substitute for action, and action without the direction of the Lord is futile. We are going to get our hands dirty; we're going to get battered and bruised in the process. That IS the intended Christian walk, that's how it works.

Verse 29 shifts gears on us a little. We have this sudden insertion about Moses appealing to a fellow named Hobab, son of Reuel the Midianite, to come along with Israel on their journey. And Hobab is reluctant to go. He says he'd rather return to his native land, Midian.

Now who is this Hobab fellow? Well that has always created some controversy. He is identified in Numbers as Moses' father-in-law. Yet in an earlier book (Exodus) Moses' father-in-law is identified alternately as Reuel and Yitro (Jethro). There a number of solutions to explain what is happening here and in general they revolve around the way families are spoken of in the Bible; that is tribe and clan usually arrange them. We in the West are used to dealing with first and last names, which can be pretty useful in identifying a person and their family tree. The Hebrews, as most ancient cultures, did not use such a system.

Reuel is probably the name of one of many Midianite clans. Jethro is but a member of that clan. Hobab is either just another name for Yitro (in another language), OR, it is also possible that Hobab is a brother-in-law to Moses, and therefore of the same clan of Reuel.

In other words don't think in terms of "error" or "inconsistency". Rather think in terms of trying to understand the way ancient cultures operated. In fact even the term "father" can be applied equally to a person's biological father OR grandfather in the Bible.

Now those of you that have been learning from me for awhile know that I think that the location of Mt. Sinai was NOT in the Sinai Peninsula (at the traditional location where St. Katherine's Monastery is located), but rather it was on the Arabian Peninsula. I won't go over all the reasons again today, but Paul states that Mt. Sinai was in Arabia; Josephus says it was and so says Philo. And the Bible also makes it clear that when Moses was in Midian it was THERE, in Midian, that he was called to the Burning Bush. And the mountain of the Burning Bush is EXACTLY where Moses was to lead Israel when they left Egypt. In other words Mt. Sinai and the mountain of the Burning Bush are one in the same. Frankly that part IS the usual teaching; but what is NOT usual is the actual location of that mountain that I say was in Midian.

Here in Numbers 10 is more evidence of this, in my book. Hobab, a man who's home was Midian, was currently staying with Israel. It says he wanted to go home. Moses says, "no, continue with us in the Wilderness". WHY did Moses want Hobab to come along? Look at verse 31. It was because Hobab, "..... Knows where we should camp and can be our guide....". Well, we find out in Joshua that Hobab the Midianite is also called a Kenite. Is this a conflict? No. Being a Midianite identifies the tribe, and being a Kenite is the place or location. Look: you can be a Smith or a Jones and also be a Floridian, right? One denotes the family, the other the location. The Kenites operated primarily on the Arabian Peninsula just north of Midian, and then also off to the west a bit, onto the upper Sinai and into Canaan, just past where the Red Sea ended. Kenite is but a word play on Canaanite. Canaanite not necessarily in the sense of bloodlines but rather location. A Kenite was a person primarily of the tribe of Midian, who lived near the land of Canaan.

Where I'm heading is that Moses wanted Hobab to guide them because Hobab was obviously well familiar with where they were and how to get where they were going (at least for part of the journey). Israel was on the Arabian Peninsula, immediately east of the Gulf of Aqaba (a finger of the Red Sea), and home to the Midianites and Kenites.

This make a whole lot more sense than thinking that Hobab was somehow familiar with the Sinai Peninsula wasteland that really was only inhabited by a few Egyptian military outposts

and a handful of Bedouins who wandered through it.

As we near the end of Chapter 10 we see that the first leg of their trek was a 3 days journey, which means that at the most they traveled about 30 miles, and I suspect somewhat less.....probably 25. However saying that it was a 3-day journey does NOT mean that they traveled for 3 days. The vernacular of the time didn't express distance in miles or kilometers or something like that. Rather distance was expressed in time. In the modern day of the automobile we often unthinkingly do the same thing. Some one will say: how far is it from Cocoa Beach to Daytona, and the answer will be something like "about an hour and a half". A 3-day journey was like saying "30 miles". So they may well have, and probably did, take more time than 3 days to cover that "3-day journey" distance due to the fact that they weren't used to striking camp, they weren't seasoned travelers, and they were an enormous and unwieldy population that included children and the elderly.

Israel followed the fire-cloud. Though it doesn't say they stopped and camped each evening certainly they would have. There was no hurry, no reason to hasten.

Just so we understand one another; each time they stopped and camped overnight they did NOT set up the Wilderness Tabernacle. It was only when the fire-cloud "rested".....meaning that it had come to place where they were supposed to sojourn for a time..... did they go through the arduous process of re-assembling the Sacred Tent.

Verse 33 presents us with a problem; it says that the Ark of the Covenant LED the column of Israelites. Earlier in this chapter, it indicates that the Ark traveled in the midst of Israel, with Judah leading. Rabbis have tried to hash this out over the years to resolve this obvious conflict. Some Rabbis think that at times the Ark led, and at other times it did not. Still others think there could have been two Arks.....that one is a REAL stretch for me.

I cannot tell you that I know the answer to this. That the Ark may have led sometimes and not others could make sense, depending on the situation. We do know, for instance, that after 40 years, when Israel made ready to cross the Jordan, the Ark DID (for sure) lead, because we're told that the moment the feet of those carrying the Ark touched the water on the eastern bank of the Jordan, the water got dammed up, upstream, and created a nearly dry river bed for Israel to cross. It could just as easily mean "led" in a more general sense in that it was always the presence of God that went before Israel when they journeyed.

Before we depart this chapter let's talk about the Ark of the Covenant for a little while. In this portion of Numbers it is clear that the Ark is seen as serving a definite military function for Israel. It serves as a guide, a protector, and it is also the sign of the God of Israel's presence among them. What that Ark meant to the people of Israel, and what it meant to their enemies, is rather well demonstrated in 1 Samuel chapter 4. There we have this interesting little tidbit: ***"When they learned that the Ark of the Lord had come into the camp, the Philistines were frightened; for they said, 'YHWH has come to camp.....woe to us! Who can save us from the power of this mighty Elohim (god)'".***

The Philistines (as was standard procedure in most armies) brought with them their images

and banners of their own gods when they went to war. The Philistines obviously recognized the Ark of the Covenant as representative of the God of Israel. What is equally as interesting is that they **KNEW** the God of Israel's name (something that is masked by practically all Bible translations). Because in verse 6 of 1Sam. 4 it does NOT say that "God" has come to camp, it says that Yuh-Heh-Vav-Heh has come to camp. And the Philistines (as did every nation within a thousand miles of Egypt) knew full well that YHWH, this powerful god of the Hebrews; had devastated Egypt and it scared the wits out of them.

But it also demonstrates something that adds to our understanding of the Hebrew mindset in that era, and the Lord's willingness to permit that mindset to continue for a time, and even that the Lord Himself gave Israel a way to understand Him that was quite in harmony with the way that all the peoples of the earth understood their gods. If the Lord had **not** instructed Israel to make that Ark, and to carry it into battle with them, then Israel naturally would have assumed that their God preferred not to be with them in battle (a definite disadvantage for Israel). Of course that wasn't the reality of God's essence or nature that He was somehow **INHABITING** the Ark or limited to having power only where the Ark was presently. But that is NOT something the Hebrews were prepared to fully comprehend.

Along with that is that if their enemies saw that they had no representation of their god with them, it would have emboldened Israel's enemies and given them courage and a hefty moral boost because to their minds it meant that Israel had no god to help them in battle.

We can look at that and chuckle a little at the silliness of it, but it was quite real to all peoples of the earth at that time and just as much so to the Hebrews. You don't completely change men's minds about centuries of what seemed as self-evident fact and custom just by demanding it, even if you are the God of the Universe. Therefore the Lord seems to have graciously given to Israel what it needed: a golden Ark that symbolized His presence with Israel that served as both an encouragement to Israel and a warning to those who would confront Israel.

Let me amend that a little however by saying that even though the Philistines and others would see that Ark as an image or representation of the deity of Israel (as they understood their own gods with their images), that is not precisely how Israel saw it. Rather they understood that the Ark was God's footstool and even though it was a very dangerous footstool when approached by the unauthorized, yet it was NOT God Himself. So in some ways the difference between how the Philistines and the other nations saw their god images and how Israel saw hers was a matter of degree.

One other important difference that bears mentioning is that the Israelites recognized that the Ark was NOT Yehoveh's permanent residence (but the other nations DID think that the **image** of their god and the god him or herself was one in the same). The idea for Israel is that when the Lord deems that He wants to communicate with Israel or make His will and presence known, it is above the Ark where He will come.

This chapter closes with a poem that actually embodies the understanding of just how the Ark operated and the Lord God in relation to it. Many Bible translations begin the poem with the word, "advance", in Hebrew it is **kam**. **Kam** is used here as a verb and what it means is to

move into a position to attack. So advance isn't wrong, but "arise" gives us a better word picture of its sense.

Moses well understood that the divine rules as given in the Torah were that it was above the Ark where the Lord manifests His presence; but the Ark was to be within the tent sanctuary when that occurred. Therefore the Lord did NOT (insofar as Moses was aware) become present above the Ark when the Ark was traveling. Further since the Lord God promised Moses that He would defeat Israel's enemies ahead of Israel, the word picture expressed in this poem is that the Lord rises away from the Ark and goes out to do battle ahead of Israel.

Thus in verse 36, when the battle is over and the camp of Israel comes to a rest (and therefore the Ark comes to a rest), the Tabernacle is re-erected, the Ark is set in it's proper guarded place, and then Moses beseeches the Lord to "return". This beautiful and joyous hymn that glorifies the God of Israel was placed here for emphasis and to display some irony; because after all this praising of Yehoveh, and His invincibility, and His perfection, and the fear simply the sight of the Ark produces in Israel's enemies, almost immediately complaining and rebellion begins anew among the Hebrews. This attitude of reluctance and rebellion is what we're going to see emerge starting in Numbers chapter 11, which we'll begin next time we meet.