

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 9:1-14**  
**“The First Annual Passover”**

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
charleshjensen@aol.com

**Numbers 9:1-14**

**Verses 1- 5**

*The LORD spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. He said,<sup>2</sup> “Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time.<sup>3</sup> Celebrate it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with all its rules and regulations.”<sup>4</sup> So Moses told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover,<sup>5</sup> and they did so in the Desert of Sinai at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses.*

- The story of the Passover is more fully told in Exodus 7-12. The rules for its observance are fully given in Exodus 40. It is the story of God's intervention in history to set the Hebrew people free from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. When the angel of death passes over the land of Egypt killing the first born at God's command, the Hebrews are told to smear the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes. This blood becomes the sign by which the angel of death knows not to strike. Thus, Israel is "saved by the blood of a lamb." This becomes a picture, or type, for our own salvation. We are saved by the blood of THE Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.
- Israel was commanded to observe the Passover Celebration every year at the same time. The celebration is to remind them of what God did on their behalf. This text records the story of the first annual celebration of the Passover.

**Verse 6-8**

*But some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body. So they came*

*to Moses and Aaron that same day<sup>7</sup> and said to Moses, “We have become unclean because of a dead body, but why should we be kept from presenting the LORD’s offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time?”<sup>8</sup> Moses answered them, “Wait until I find out what the LORD commands concerning you.”*

- But the text presents a new problem. Some of the Israelites who want to eat the Passover are not able to do so because they have had contact with a dead body. This contact makes them unclean, unfit to eat the meal as required by God. Since their hearts are right, and they desire to do what God requires, they want to know if they can eat the Passover at the required time. If not, they will not be able to eat the meal for an entire year.
- Moses does not know how to answer their question. So he tells them to wait while he asks God about this matter.

#### **Verse 9-12**

*<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>10</sup> “Tell the Israelites: ‘When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they are still to celebrate the LORD’s Passover, <sup>11</sup> but they are to do it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>12</sup> They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. When they celebrate the Passover, they must follow all the regulations.*

- In response to Moses’ inquiry, God says that those who are away on the day the feast is celebrated or who are ceremonially unclean on that day are to celebrate the Passover one month later. This will mean that those who are away will have been able to return to the Hebrew community and that those who are unclean will have had time to perform the required ritual for their cleansing.

#### **Verse 13**

*<sup>13</sup> But if anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, they must be cut off from their people for not presenting the LORD’s offering at the appointed time. They will bear the consequences of their sin.*

- God says that those who can eat the Passover, but willingly refuse to do so, will be "cut off." Those who will not accept what he has done for them cannot be saved.

- And they cannot say that this is God's fault. They must bear responsibility for rejecting his path to salvation. They bear responsibility for the consequences of rejecting God.

#### **Verse 14**

<sup>14</sup> ***“A foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the LORD’s Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for both the foreigner and the native-born.”***

- God allows non-Jews to join with them to celebrate the Passover provided they follow all of the rules for eating the Passover that the Jews do.
- There is no permission given for non-Jews to hold their own Passover.

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